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HISPANIC MARKETING INSIGHTS  
INSPIRED BY LATIN AMERICAN  
AND US POPULAR LITERATURE

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AT THE  
CENTER FOR HISPANIC MARKETING COMMUNICATION  
FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY  
2007



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| INTRODUCTION.....                                 | 5  |
| Marketing Insights from Hispanic literature ..... | 8  |
| Appearance and impressions .....                  | 8  |
| Collectivism.....                                 | 11 |
| Communication (or Lack Thereof) .....             | 12 |
| Destiny and fatalism .....                        | 14 |
| Discrimination/Race .....                         | 16 |
| Duality and conflicting identities.....           | 18 |
| Education .....                                   | 21 |
| Family .....                                      | 22 |
| Fiesta: Celebrating for any reason .....          | 24 |
| Food.....   | 26 |
| Gender Roles.....                                 | 28 |
| Harmony.....                                      | 30 |
| Health .....                                      | 31 |
| Home Ownership.....                               | 34 |
| Intuition and Instinct.....                       | 35 |
| Joy and Pain.....                                 | 37 |
| “Just enough, but not too much” .....             | 38 |
| Language.....                                     | 39 |
| Magic and Storytelling .....                      | 42 |
| Money and Resourcefulness .....                   | 43 |
| Names.....  | 45 |
| Nature and the Natural .....                      | 47 |
| Oral Tradition .....                              | 49 |
| Privacy and Space .....                           | 51 |

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Quality .....                                 | 52 |
| Religion(S) and Spirituality.....             | 53 |
| Shame, Guilt, and Embarrassment.....          | 54 |
| Stability (through Order, Form, Ritual) ..... | 56 |
| Time.....                                     | 57 |
| CONCLUSION.....                               | 61 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY .....                            | 62 |

## INTRODUCTION

Marketing messages are designed to travel to the consumer's heart and mind. Today, marketing communication is found everywhere, from subway walls to cell phones to internet sites to the television programs and movies we see on a daily basis. Consumers have learned, for the most part, how to tune out messages which don't appeal to or connect with them. Marketing, then, is becoming a much more sophisticated practice which requires practitioners to have an intimate knowledge of their consumers in order to connect with them on a deeper level. This is further evidenced by the increased presence of account planners in advertising agencies, whose job it is to find the insights in market research which help creatives make advertising which breaks through the clutter to reach consumers.

The same concept also applies to Hispanic marketing. For many years advertisers were able to sell their products simply by translating "general market"<sup>1</sup> advertisements into Spanish and advertising on Spanish-language television networks. However, as spending in Hispanic marketing has grown, this market too has grown cluttered with advertisements, leading Hispanics in the US to feel overwhelmed by the number marketing messages and available information sources. Account planners are now popping up in the major Hispanic advertising agencies across the US. Their goal, like the goal of those in the general market, is to understand consumers and translate that understanding into insightful communication with consumers.

Much research has been done regarding the character, values and beliefs of US Hispanics. However, the search for insights requires looking for new and non-traditional sources of information. The culture of a people manifests itself in many different areas, all of which are of interest to marketers looking to understand consumers. Culture manifests itself in, among other things, traditions, clothes, music and literature. A closer examination of the literature of a people can reveal much about its culture. Furthermore, literature has the advantage of allowing the reader to experience the story as if he or she were actually a part of it. For this reason, I decided to examine both Latin American and US Hispanic modern literature in order to conduct a search for Hispanic marketing insights. Some of the insights I discovered are simply confirmations of existing popular wisdom, research studies,

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<sup>1</sup> While we recognize that the "general market" is a construct that has no denotation in the real world, marketers have used this concept to refer to everyone that is not singled out as a special or unique audience.

and marketing assumptions regarding Hispanic consumers. Others are more subtle, but provide an important view into inner thoughts and feelings.

All of these glimpses into their lives and culture add to an understanding of Hispanics on more than a mere consumer level. The hope is that these insights, by creating a more profound understanding, will also lead to more meaningful and effective marketing communications directed towards Hispanics. I should note here that culture and marketing have an interesting and circular relationship. Ilan Stavans, in The Hispanic Condition, states that “the transformation of culture in the United States today, no question about it, is accomplished not through guerilla warfare, but from within the marketplace. *Abajo la revolución! Viva lo commercial!*” (169). Marketers investigate and study culture in order to create more effective marketing communications, yet it is these very campaigns which are in turn influencing the culture, in a circle of mutual causality.

This project began with a selection of novels and prose from renowned Latin American authors. The works, chosen for their potential to provide meaningful insights and the reputation of their authors as pillars of Latin American culture, were: Pedro Páramo by Juan Rulfo, Aura by Carlos Fuentes, One Hundred Years of Solitude and Of Love and Other Demons by Gabriel García Márquez and The Labyrinth of Solitude by Octavio Paz. I also read The Buried Mirror: Reflections on Spain and the New World by Carlos Fuentes, which discusses both Latin American culture history and US Hispanic culture.

After a close reading of these works, I also analyzed the writings of the most popular US Hispanic authors. Currently, the canon of US Hispanic literature is small, but my aim with these selections was to cover authors from various countries of origin and locations in the United States. The books selected for the project were: The Hispanic Condition by Ilan Stavans, Caramelo and The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros, Bless Me Ultima by Rudolfo Anaya, How the Garcia Girls Lost their Accents by Julia Alvarez and The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love by Oscar Hijuelos.

Many of the insights were evident in both the Latin American and US Hispanic novels. However, a close reading reveals that there are important differences between Latin American and US Hispanic culture which marketers need to be aware of. Many of the cultural orientations present in Latin American culture carry over into US Hispanic culture. However, a number of new cultural factors are present in the US Hispanic population, arguably due to contact with US culture. These cultural factors were then organized and

analyzed in order to extract marketing insights. Here the insights are organized alphabetically for easier reference.

## MARKETING INSIGHTS FROM HISPANIC LITERATURE

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### APPEARANCE AND IMPRESSIONS

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*“Inside the mother fussed at them – their sloppy clothes; their long, loose hair; their looking tired, too skinny, too made up, and so on.” How the Garcia Girls Lost their Accents, p. 25*

*“To make matters worse he was a bit chubby and much-too-much-too Indian for mother to approve. She was always concerned with the *el que dirán*, the *what-will-they-say*.” Caramelo, p.271*

*“In its Mediterranean roots, romance Latin style is directed toward a first impression and a first encounter.” The Hispanic Condition, p. 111*

In both the Latin American and US Hispanic works, numerous references are made to appearances and impressions. Physical appearance, the first impression in particular, is particularly important to Hispanics and is evidenced on numerous occasions in the literature.

In How the Garcia Girls Lost their Accents, one of the “Garcia girls” returns to her home country of Puerto Rico after growing up in the United States. When she arrives at her aunts’ home, she is wearing a black cotton skirt, a jersey top and sandals, with her hair held back in a headband. While this style of dress might seem completely normal in Anglo US culture, her cousins note that she is dressed “like a missionary” and “like one of those Peace Corps girls who have let themselves go” (p.3), because she no longer conforms to their standards of appearance. These expectations for dress and appearance are not isolated to the island. The girls’ mother, as seen in the first quote above, still scolds her adult daughters for what she sees as lacking in their appearance.

The importance placed on appearance is also witnessed in other works. In The House on Mango Street, Esperanza talks about her mother’s hair, saying “my mother’s hair, my mother’s hair, like little rosettes, like little candy circles all curly and pretty because she pinned it in pincurls all day” (p.6). Later, her mother confesses that she actually quit school because she was ashamed to not have nice clothes (p. 91). These instances support the claim that physical appearance is of essential importance to Hispanics, especially Hispanic women. Furthermore, an appearance that is considered lacking can cause shame to the individual and the family.



Octavio Paz elaborates these concepts related to appearance and impressions in The Labyrinth of Solitude. He holds that clothes are actually a part of the person and much more than just something to wear. “It is not a suit of clothes that we are in the habit of wearing, not something apart from us: we *are* our bodies” (p. 35). Paz also comments on the acceptance and joy that Mexicans, in particular, feel towards their bodies. This is in sharp contrast, he explains, to the typical North American “fear” of the body. Carlos Fuentes also discusses the body in The Buried Mirror, saying that “culture is above all our bodies, our bodies so often sacrificed and denied, our shackled, dreaming, carnal bodies” (p. 351). Therefore, Hispanics often stress the importance of appearance as a recognition of the body and an expression of culture.

This also affects Hispanics’ choices in clothing. Because clothing is also an expression of culture and of identity, clothes are often chosen for their capacity to express a Hispanic identity or connect the person with their roots. In Caramelo, by Sandra Cisneros, the *rebozo* exemplifies this function of clothing. The *rebozo*, a type of silk scarf, signals a very strong connection with Mexican culture. In the novel, a *rebozo* is passed down through the generations of women and also represents a family connection. This article of clothing carries such an emotional connotation to it that the narrator frequently uses the *rebozo* as a metaphor for her own life.

Another insight related to impressions, but not dealing directly with physical appearance, deals with doing what is seen as correct or proper in the eyes of others. This acute concern with what others think is seen in many of the novels, beginning with Caramelo. The quote above provides a perfect example of how much decisions can be swayed by the *el que dirán*. In How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents, the mother makes sure to remind her daughters of proper manners before a dinner out with another couple. “No elbows, no Cokes, only milk or—” Mami paused. Which one of her four girls could fill in the blank of how they were to behave at the restaurant with the Fannings?” (p. 168). Hispanics are very concerned with making a positive impression on others and fear their negative judgments.

Making a good impression is important, even if it means telling a lie. In The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love, by Oscar Hijuelos, Cesar Castillo works to maintain his reputation as a famous mambo musician, even if it means lying to people. “When people asked what he was doing, he just shrugged again. His face would turn red. But then he

decided to fall back on the explanation that he was putting together another orchestra, and that seemed to satisfy other people” (p. 250). In many cases, it seems as though making a good impression on others is more important than the truth. This is also related to the concept of saving face, which has numerous implications for marketers and market research.

This same situation can be seen in Caramelo, where a family in Mexico always made sure that others knew they were one of *las familias buenas* with their coat of arms from Seville and spacious house. The narrator notes, however that “if the truth must be mentioned, though it seldom was – who would want to mention it? – los Reyes were far from wealthy” (p. 114). The important thing was not that they be wealthy, but that others believe they were wealthy.

### **Implications for Marketers**

- Remember that Hispanics want to make a good impression. How can the product or service help Hispanics make a good impression? Show Hispanics how the product or service will improve their appearance or help them make a good impression on others. Show the potential benefits that come from making a good impression.
- Looking good is a way to celebrate the body and Hispanic culture. Clothing, colors, and products which allow Hispanics to reconnect with or express their roots are likely to have success.
- Hispanics may be inclined to say or do that which will make a good impression, whether it is truthful or not. In market research, however, we need the truth, rather than what sounds good. Make sure to remind Hispanic research participants that the truth (their actual income, shopping habits, etc.) is very important and that they will not be judged by their responses.
- The opinion of others is important, thus grass-roots/word-of-mouth marketing efforts are more likely to resonate with Hispanic consumers. Creating buzz about a product or idea can have a strong impact among these consumers.

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## COLLECTIVISM

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*“Because we’re raza, Mars says, shrugging. —Know what I’m talking about? Because we’re familia. And familia, like it or not, for richer or poorer, familia always gots to stick together, bro’.” Caramelo, p. 281*

*“He was still playing the big man, hiring friends, like the brothers from Cuba, keeping two waitresses on salary, a cook named Esmeralda, Frankie behind the bar, and dishwashers, and, on top of that, giving meals and drinks away, and paying his musicians decently, regardless of the take at the door.” The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love, p. 362*

*“In that dark she created by keeping her eyes shut, she would pray, beginning with the names of her own sisters, for all those who she wanted God to especially care for, here and back home. The seemingly endless list of familiar names would coax her back to sleep with a feeling of safety, of a world still peopled by those who loved her.” How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents, p. 165*

Collectivism is a generally recognized cultural characteristic of Hispanics. It is the notion that Hispanics depend on “others” who are significant to them for managing their lives and expressing their identities. This section, along with the section on Family, provides numerous examples of this collectivism in different situations. In addition, it shows what the consequences, good and bad, of collectivism are.

Collectivism, in one sense, means helping out friends, family, and other Hispanics in need. In Caramelo, Mr. Reyes was able to come to the United States and get his start because a fellow Hispanic, Mars, gave him a start. When asked why he did such a favor for someone he didn’t even know, Mars replied that it was because they were *raza* and *familia*, as seen in the first quote above. In a similar vein, Cesar Castillo goes broke trying to help his friends by giving them jobs in his nightclub. He gives jobs to all the Cubans he knows, whether he can afford to or not. In this sense, collectivism can have negative effects on the person who is willing to sacrifice his own interests for the good of the group. It also signifies, however, that collectivism is a powerful motivational force.

In How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents, collectivism is more of a protective force which makes those within the society feel safe. Carla puts herself back to sleep at night by praying for all the people she knows, and this comforts her. In Caramelo, however, collectivism is expressed as a consciousness that all lives are connected. “The universe a cloth, and all humanity interwoven. Each and every person connected to me, and me connected to them, like the strands of a *rebozo*. Pull one string and the whole thing comes

undone. Each person who comes into my life affecting the pattern, and me affecting theirs” (p. 389). This sense of collectivism is very different from the traditional Anglo individualism, which holds that we are responsible for ourselves and no one else. It is a completely different way of seeing life and interpersonal relations. In collectivistic cultures, people take care of each other and are often willing to sacrifice their personal happiness for the common good.

### **Implications for Marketers**

- When Hispanics make a purchase, they will be thinking about how this purchase will benefit not just themselves, but the whole group (family, friends, etc.). Marketers should shy away from marketing campaigns which emphasize the selfish benefits of a product and instead show how the product will benefit the group, including their loved ones.
- In some cases, Hispanics can be encouraged to change their behavior by reminding or showing them how their actions affect others. This tactic might be particularly effective for social marketing campaigns. For example, in a no smoking campaign, showing Hispanics the negative effects second hand smoke can have on others might be a more effective deterrent than explaining that smoking causes lung cancer or other problems.
- Collectivism is likely to induce joint decision making processes in the family, thus making it important to speak to different members of the family before they make a decision. This means targeting kids and adults with culturally relevant messages through touch points appropriate to each.

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### **COMMUNICATION (OR LACK THEREOF)**

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*“She did not come out and disagree with her husband’s plans. Instead, she fussed with him about reading the papers in bed soiling their sheets with those poorly printed, foreign tabloids.” How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents, p. 144*

*“And when he saw his nephew sitting nearby, he called the boy over—well, he was a man, wasn’t he?—and grabbed him by the shoulder and squeezed. “Well, you glad I’m ok? It was really nothing.”*

*His nephew was silent.  
(Yes, Uncle, nothing. Just three days of being sick to our stomachs that you were going to die, of sitting beside you and feeling the whole world was going to fall away.)*” The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love, p. 275

*“--You’re not supposed to ask about such things. There are stories no one is willing to tell you.  
--And there are stories you’re not willing to tell. Maybe father has his own questions. Maybe he wants to hear, or he doesn’t want to hear, about me and Ernesto, but he doesn’t ask. We’re so Mexican. So much left unsaid.”* Caramelo, p. 428

Open and honest communication is difficult for most people, but certain characteristics of Hispanic culture seem to make this type of communication even more complex. One of the factors affecting this lack of direct communication is Hispanics’ tendency towards high context communication (see Edward T. Hall’s Beyond Culture). This means that most of the message is implied rather than directly stated. An example of this can be seen in the first quote above. Rather than just tell her husband that she doesn’t want to move back to the Dominican Republic, she complains about his “foreign” newspapers and how they stain the bed. This way, she hopes he will understand her without having to directly discuss the subject. Denigrating Dominican newspapers becomes an indirect way of avoiding the more serious, and probably “face losing” notion of not going back “home”.

A similar kind of communication strategy is used in The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love. The second quote above shows the difference between what is said (in this case, nothing) and what the speaker is attempting to communicate. The problem with this communication strategy is that it often leads to misunderstanding and frustration when the correct messages are not received.

Another roadblock to effective communication in Hispanic culture is the idea that some things should not be discussed. The quote above from Caramelo states it perfectly: “You’re not supposed to ask about such things.” And the result of not asking about such things: “So much left unsaid.” Topics that are considered to be unpleasant are often not discussed. This is also connected to the desire for harmony, and keeping the peace in the family. Another example from the same novel arises when Soledad finds a suspicious picture in the house and confronts her husband about it. When she discovers that he was with another woman, she almost seems more upset that she asked than that it happened. “—And this? How many have started trouble with just these two words? If you poke under

the bed, expect to find dirt” (p. 183). The moral of the story to her seemed to be “don’t ask what you don’t want to know.”

### Implications for Marketers

- Recognize that honest and direct communication does not come naturally for many Hispanics. This means that market research, especially qualitative, requires the sensitivity to put Hispanics at ease and allow them to open up in a no-pressure environment. Keeping a non-judgmental attitude and showing Hispanics that they can say anything without fear of repercussions is essential.
- Social marketing programs, such as those which encourage parents to talk to their children about drugs or sex, need to be presented in a different way to Hispanics. Marketers need to continue to encourage dialogue about traditionally taboo subjects, but also need to recognize the discomfort and embarrassment these topics can cause for Hispanics.
- Direct, western approaches to selling products/services can backfire by producing “face-saving” agreement at first but rejection when the actual decision making takes place.

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## DESTINY AND FATALISM

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*“Marin, under the streetlight, dancing by herself, is singing the same song somewhere. Is waiting for a car to stop, a star to fall, someone to change her life.” The House on Mango Street, p. 27*

*“Death followed him everywhere, sniffing at the cuffs of his pants, but never deciding to give him the final clutch of its claws.” One Hundred Years of Solitude, p. 6*

*“Think of the most unbelievable thing that could happen, and believe me, Destiny will outdo you and come up with something even more unbelievable. Life’s like that. My Got! What a telenovela our lives are!” Caramelo, p. 428*

As evidenced in the quotes above and in numerous other occasions in the literature, Hispanics believe that their lives are guided by destiny. This means that they feel that some kind of outside source is responsible for their fates. This orientation also leads to feeling a lack of control over one’s own life or fatalism. People don’t take control of situations, rather they wait patiently for something to happen to them. Octavio Paz asserts this same idea in

The Labyrinth of Solitude. Speaking of the Aztecs, he explains that “everything was examined to determine, from birth, the life and death of each man, his social class, the year, the place, the day, the hour. The Aztec was as little responsible for his actions as for his death” (p. 55). It seems as though over hundreds of years very little has changed. This belief in destiny also has serious implications for health, as seen in the “Health” section of the paper, and is closely related to religion, as seen in the “Religion and Spirituality” section of the paper.

In One Hundred Years of Solitude, destiny manifests itself in the names of the characters. When a child in the Buendía family is given a name, he or she always has the same character and ultimately the same fate as the others of the same name. The power of destiny can also be evidenced in the second quote above, where Death has the ultimate power to choose when someone lives and when they die. Destiny exists, and Hispanics resign themselves to their destiny, allowing it to take control of their lives. This resignation is an acceptance that “I can’t control my own life” and is seen throughout the novels. In Anglos, however, this belief is notably absent. In Caramelo, Celaya notices this because Americans never add “if God wills it” to their plans, “as if they were in audacious control of their own destiny” (p. 208).

Destiny also plays an important role in Caramelo. It is talked about frankly by the members of the Reyes family, as though it were something obvious and unquestionable. When the family maid disappears, the only response to her disappearance is “*El destino es el destino*” (p. 69). In fact, when destiny is mentioned in the novel, it always appears with a capital “D,” the same way most people write “God” with a capital “G.” Destiny is the reason the maid disappeared, the reason that Uncle Old and his sons look pitiful (p. 137) and the reason Celaya is still alive after getting beat up by schoolgirls (p. 357).

### **Implications for Marketers**

- This is a difficult situation to tackle, because marketers need to work to show Hispanics that they don’t have to be resigned to destiny. The aim of marketers here needs to be showing Hispanics how to make smart decisions which *can* affect their future and give them some control over their lives.
- That Hispanics are more likely to be fatalistic is important because, for one thing, that means that living for today is important and that means spending today as well.

Also, the reader should consider that fatalism, though an important part of the culture, may not necessarily be the ideal. The reason so many Hispanics have immigrated and continue to immigrate to the United States is to achieve control over their lives. Marketers can provide solutions to feelings of lack of control.

- In the health field, special emphasis needs to be placed on educating Hispanics about preventive care. Again, it is necessary to show Hispanics that small changes in their behavior can give them more control over their health.
- The same kind of education would also be effective for the insurance and financial services industries. For the insurance industry, it is important to show how having insurance can change a huge unforeseen tragedy into something more bearable. For the financial services industry, educating Hispanics about how to build credit and invest their money will allow them to buy homes, save for retirement, and pay for their children's education.

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## DISCRIMINATION/RACE

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*"She would have the words to describe them: their mean, snickering faces she knew by heart. Their pale, look-alike sickly bodies. Their high voices squealing with delight when Carla mispronounced some word they coaxed her to repeat."* How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents, p. 164

*--Hey hippie girl, you Mexican? On both sides?*

*--Front and back, I say.*

*--You sure don't look Mexican.*

*A part of me wants to kick their ass. A part of me feels sorry for their stupid ignorant selves. But if you've never been father south than Nuevo Laredo, how the hell would you know what Mexicans are supposed to look like, right? There are the green-eyed Mexicans. The rich blond Mexicans. The Mexicans with the faces of Arab sheiks. The Jewish Mexicans. The big-footed-as-a-German Mexicans. The leftover-French Mexicans. The chaparrito compact Mexicans. The Tarahumara tall-as-desert-saguaro Mexicans. The Mediterranean Mexicans. The Mexicans with Tunisian eyebrows. The negrito Mexicans of the double coasts. The Chinese Mexicans. The curly-haired, freckled-faced, red-headed Mexicans. The jaguar-lipped Mexicans. The wide-as-a-Tula-tree Zapotec Mexicans. The Lebanese Mexicans. Look, I don't know what you're talking about when you say I don't look Mexican. I am Mexican."* Caramelo, p. 353

Discrimination against Hispanics is not discussed much, especially in marketing, yet it is a presence in their daily lives which affects their identity, their relationship to others and, ultimately, even their consumer habits. Instances of discrimination from outsiders were



found in almost all the novels, but were most poignantly articulated in How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents and The House on Mango Street. They don't recount as many instances of institutional discrimination, which are already obvious in our society. Instead, they focus on the instances of individual discrimination, allowing us to see how it feels from the Hispanic perspective. The first quote above illustrates the frustration and anger Carla feels when she is made fun of for not pronouncing words correctly.

Esperanza in The House on Mango Street feels the discrimination in an indirect but very powerful way. She is saddened that her friend Cathy is moving away. Cathy's family, who says that the neighborhood is getting bad, will, in Esperanza's words, "have to keep moving a little father north from Mango Street, a little father away every time people like us keep moving in" (p. 13). She also knows that outsiders who come into her neighborhood are scared of them. In a chapter entitled "Those Who Don't" Esperanza tells that "those who don't know any better come into our neighborhood scared. They think we're dangerous. They think we will attack them with shiny knives. They are stupid people who are lost and got here by mistake" (p. 28). The existence of these barrio-like neighborhoods and the isolation caused by others' fear of them is a form of institutional discrimination which becomes much more powerful when seen from the point of view of a young girl who lives in there.

Discrimination is not merely a vice of outsiders. Hispanics too, discriminate against each other. In Caramelo there are numerous examples of this kind of racism, both in Latin America and in the United States. After her move to the United States, the Grandmother suffers this type of discrimination. "In the neighborhoods she could afford, she couldn't stand being associated with these low-class Mexicans, but in the neighborhoods she couldn't, her neighbors couldn't stand being associated with her. Everyone in Chicago lived with an idea of being superior to someone else" (p. 289).

In this novel, we can see that everyone is both a perpetrator and a victim of this racism. Mexican Americans look down on the Mexicans (p. 216) and less-aculturated Hispanics harbor bad feelings towards those who are more acculturated. Take this example of how Celaya is taunted by other Mexicans in her school for acting too "white": "What are you looking at, *bolilla*? Think you're so smart because you talk like a white girl. *Huerca babosa*. You think you're better than us, right? *Pinche* princess, you're nothing but *basura*" (p. 356). The issues that cause racism and discrimination are omnipresent. Ilan Stavans also

admits that “from bronze-skinned to mulatto, from snow white to *indio*, ours are wide-ranging colors—but a long-standing, rampant racism running through our blood remains unanalyzed” (p. 104).

### **Implications for Marketers**

- No one wants to talk about discrimination. Everyone, including marketers, would rather pretend that it doesn't exist, showing a happy mix of Hispanics, Anglos, and others in a suburban setting as if it truly reflected the way things are. While there is nothing wrong with projecting an aspirational image, it is important that marketers be sensitive to the fact that Hispanics do experience discrimination and that they may not respond well to advertising which doesn't reflect their reality.
- Hispanics also want to be reached on their turf. They want to know that people and companies are not afraid to come to them, to market to them in their neighborhoods. This could be an important opportunity for marketers to sponsor local events, on the neighborhood level even, and truly get into the community. Companies who aren't afraid to reach Hispanics where they are will be more likely to gain the trust of this group.
- Messages of acceptance and inclusion can create brand loyalty among Hispanics, who take note of companies that recognize them and their culture.
- Finally, marketers must be sensitive to racial discrimination among Hispanics, and work not to commit their own racial discrimination when choosing people for advertisements. Merely seeing an actor who speaks Spanish won't mean that all Hispanics see themselves reflected in that person. Research into the ethnic and racial makeup of the desired target audience could assist marketers in painting a more accurate picture of Hispanics in their advertising.

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### **DUALITY AND CONFLICTING IDENTITIES**

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*“A rooster in the United States sings cock-a-doodle-doo; another in Guatemala says qui-qui-ri-qui; and a third one, a Latino, cock-a-doodle-doo and qui-qui-ri-quis simultaneously.” The Hispanic Condition, p. 123*

*“Tonight she felt beyond either of her parents: she could tell that they were small people compared to these Fannings... What did she care if her parents demanded that she eat all of her pastelón. She would say, just as an American girl might, “I don't wanna. You*

*can't make me. This is a free country.*" How the Garcia Girls Lost their Accents, p. 184

*"No doubt many aspects of the pachuco are lacking in this description. But I am convinced that his hybrid language and behavior reflect a physic oscillation between two irreducible worlds—the North American and the Mexican—which he vainly hopes to reconcile and conquer."* The Labyrinth of Solitude, p. 18

Duality is the sense of having two (or more) often conflicting sets of values, customs and beliefs inside. This is a common theme in Latin American and US Hispanic literature. Latin Americans live with a combination of Native American, African, Spanish and Arab influences; US Hispanics have all of these plus the US culture to negotiate. These negotiations can cause internal conflict. Ilan Stavans exposes the duality in many cultural factors including religion, language and identity in The Hispanic Condition. Because of the numerous influences on Hispanic culture, answering the question "Who am I?" is a complicated task. Stavans recounts the many Latin American authors, including Octavio Paz and Gabriel García Márquez, who have referred to the Hispanic psyche as "linear and circuitous, inextricable and impenetrable, the maze—complex, curved, distorted, wandering, winding, with constant double tracks" (p. 93).

Religion is also affected by this duality. When the Spanish invaded Latin America, they built churches on pyramids and temples, and replaced old gods with Catholic saints. Rather than choosing one set of beliefs, Hispanics were able to incorporate both into their repertoire. Stavans states, "When parishioners pray on their knees to Saint Lázaro in the Caribbean, they also pay tribute to Babalú, although their temples are separated. Catholicism, and Yoruban spirituality, Catholicism and Aztec myths, cohabit" (p. 96). In the US, this duality extends itself even further and incorporates the very means of communication: language.

Stavans explains that negotiating between two languages is an act of translating oneself. US Hispanics who converse and live in two languages, often simultaneously, must constantly engage in this translation. Ultimately, however, US Hispanics see embracing both cultures, both worlds, as the preferable goal. The US Hispanic authors examined in this project all seem to come to the same conclusion: that both cultures are worth holding on to, and both are necessary to survive.

In The Labyrinth of Solitude, Octavio Paz uses the example of the *pachuco* to illustrate what happens when duality is rejected as a possible way of life. The *pachucos* are

boys of Mexican origin who form gangs in Southern cities. They, in a certain sense, reject both Mexican and North American culture, and are therefore forced to live in the fringe of society (p. 16). Paz describes them this way: “the *pachuco* is an impassive and sinister clown whose purpose is to cause terror instead of laughter. His sadistic attitude is allied with a desire for self-abasement which constitutes the very foundation of his character” (p. 16).

The Garcia girls experience the opposite problem in dealing with duality: they want to live in both worlds. This is not always easy and often causes conflict with less acculturated parents, who fear their children’s “American-ness.” The girls dream about the benefits that being “American” can bring them and even fantasize about being adopted by American parents (p. 173). Still, being a part of both worlds is not always easy. Yolanda, one of the sisters, dreams of finding a man who will understand her “peculiar mix of Catholicism and agnosticism, Hispanic and American styles” (p. 99). Duality, then, is a characteristic that sets Hispanics apart from other people in the United States, but also one that binds them together. Negotiating two languages, two cultures, and two worlds is something that is not easy to understand for someone on the outside. Yolanda here shows us that Hispanics are in need of someone who can understand them.

### **Implications for Marketers**

- Sometimes, all that is necessary to reach Hispanics is some recognition. In this sense, it means making Hispanics see that we understand that being a Hispanic in the United States is complicated. We know that it requires an enormous amount of strength to constantly negotiate between two different cultures. It also means recognizing that US Hispanics are culturally different from other groups in the United States *and* from Latin Americans.
- Hispanics in later generations seem to experience this duality more than their parents or grandparents do. This means that marketers need to be especially perceptive to how these generations feel about this combination of cultures. The literature showed examples of the positive and negative aspects associated with this duality. Additional research can help marketers to discover exactly where the negative aspects are in order to help Hispanics relieve that tension, and build upon the positive aspects of being bicultural.

- Marketers who want to reach Hispanics must also speak to them in their languages. In a world of duality, we can not expect only Spanish or only English to connect with all consumers. The majority of Hispanics in the United States today speak both languages, and marketers who do not take advantage of both languages are bound to alienate many consumers.
- An important implication is that entertainment and news media should aim to show Hispanics in their duality in the United States as opposed to trying to represent them as they were, once upon a time, in Latin America. That gives advertisers stronger vehicles for communication.

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## EDUCATION

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*“If there’s one thing that I learned in the army, it’s that the guy with the education gets ahead.” Bless Me, Ultima p. 73*

*“Father says as long as they’re in school, it doesn’t matter if the older boys stay in Chicago.—So they won’t have to work like me. And then he adds for the benefit of us younger kids,—Study and use your head, not your hands. He holds out his palms to scare the hell out of us. Hands as hard as shoe leather, layered and yellow like a Bible abandoned in a field.” Caramelo, p. 300*

Hispanics know that, in order to succeed in the United States, an education is essential. Many Hispanic parents were not able to obtain an education in Latin America, but they make sure that their children take education seriously in the United States. There is a sense that an education will give children more control of their futures. As seen in the quotes above, an education will help you “get ahead” and allows for more job opportunities.

Education is referenced various times in Bless Me, Ultima. Of the Marez brothers, the two who actually get their education are seen as the wisest and the ones with a prosperous future. The youngest brother, Antonio, is captivated by school. On his first day, he sees the teacher write his name and instantly realizes that the letters are magical. “I wanted to ask her right away about the magic in the letters, but that would be rude and so I was quiet. I was fascinated by the black letters that formed on the paper and made my name” (p. 58).

The children in the Reyes family are also provided a good education in Caramelo. When the family moves to Texas, the older boys are allowed to stay behind in Chicago to

finish their education. This is especially significant considering the importance of “sticking together” in Hispanic culture. The father knows that an education will allow his children to have a more comfortable life than he had, which is part of the reason many Hispanics come to the United States in the first place. Furthermore, no expense is spared on a good education. When Celaya, the daughter, complains that she would rather go to public school than take the bus across town to the Catholic school, her father replies that “we can scrimp on lots of things, but not on your education” (p. 313).

### **Implications for Marketers**

- Their children’s education can be a powerful motivator to make Hispanics think about financial planning and insurance. Marketers should work to educate Hispanics about how much a college education costs, and show them how smart financial planning today will allow them to provide a good education for students tomorrow.
- Education about the academic requirements for getting into college is also necessary for both students and parents. Many children don’t know how to prepare themselves academically and otherwise to make themselves more appealing to a university. Social marketing campaigns should take into consideration how they can help young Hispanics prepare themselves for a bright future.

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## **FAMILY**

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*“It made him feel good to be around his uncle, a simple feeling of connection like a thread in the air.” The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love, p. 248*

*“But my mother wanted a garden and I worked to make her happy.” Bless Me, Ultima, p. 10*

*“And of course there is the family—family commitment, fighting to keep the family together, perhaps not avoiding poverty but certainly avoiding a lonely poverty. The family is regarded as the hearth, the sustaining warmth. It is almost a political party, the parliament of the social microcosm and the security net in times of trouble.” The Buried Mirror, p. 347*

As Carlos Fuentes explains above in The Buried Mirror, the family is at the center of Hispanic life. There is a sense of devotion and responsibility to the family that affects Hispanics’ daily lives. In The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love, Cesar continues to spend

most days with his dead brother's wife and children, "mainly to make sure that he was around his dead brother's children and that their stepfather, Pedro, was good to them" (p. 257). The family connection is also the reason his nephew feels such a strong connection with him, as seen in the first quote above. Furthermore, it is the reason why Cesar, no matter how much he struggles, continues to send money home to his brothers and his daughter in Cuba (p. 287).

As seen in The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love, family extends beyond the nuclear family to include uncles, cousins, grandparents, etc. The Garcia girls in How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents grew up surrounded by their extended family. Yolanda remembers: "Back then, we all lived side by side in adjoining houses on a piece of property which belonged to my grandparents. Every kid in the family was paired up with a best-friend cousin" (p. 225). From this statement, we can see that these are families that truly enjoy spending time together, and cousins are not just cousins but also best friends. They go everywhere together, and what one does, the others do as well (p. 241).

These strong connections mean that family members are willing to sacrifice to help their families and make them happy. Cesar sends money to his brothers in Cuba, and the Grandmother in Caramelo loses rent money on her apartment by keeping it vacant for when her children arrive. In Bless Me Ultima, the sacrifice is Antonio's. As seen in the second quote above, he works land that is not fertile until he is able to grow a garden to make his mother happy. In the case of the Garcia girls, sacrificing means that all four sisters take the blame when they get in trouble, no matter who actually committed the offense. The girls remember that "our habit had been to share the good and the bad that came our way" (p. 115).

Even when the family members want to break free from the family, a sense of pressure is created which persuades Hispanics to fulfill their familial responsibilities. Esperanza (The House on Mango Street) knows that since her sister is younger than she is, her sister is *her* responsibility (p. 8). In Caramelo, Celaya tries to rebel from the family but receives this response: "Oh, so your friends are more important than your father? You love them more than me? Always remember, Lala, the family comes first—*la familia*....Only your family is going to love you when you're in trouble, *mija*" (p. 360). The same type of tension also arises in Bless Me, Ultima. The older brothers, who had lived their entire lives at home fulfilling the dreams of their parents, decide that they want to move away. This is to the

despair of their mother, who claims that they are “forsaking” the family (p. 73). Whether they like it or not, Hispanics are closely tied to their families, and this affects almost all other aspects of their lives.

\* Note: Family is also closely tied to collectivism. For more information, see the section on collectivism.

### **Implications for Marketers**

- Marketers might attempt to reduce this tension between wanting to break away from the family and feeling pressure to be a part of it. Airlines, for example, can show how flying home often will allow children to live their own lives but still take part in the family life. Phone companies and internet companies can also consider similar positioning.
- Similar to collectivism, remember that Hispanics usually consider the entire family in their decisions, rather than just themselves. For this reason, marketers must show how a product or service will benefit the family, rather than the individual.
- Because the typical Hispanic family is so close and comprises extended family, programs which encourage word of mouth advertising, like referral incentives, are likely to succeed with this group. On the flip side, however, marketers must also beware that a negative experience with a product will also be shared with the entire family. Thus, word of mouth can work for or against a product, depending on its perceived quality and value.

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### **FIESTA: CELEBRATING FOR ANY REASON**

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*“The solitary Mexican loves fiestas and public gatherings. Any occasion for getting together will serve, any pretext to stop the flow of time and commemorate men and events with festivals and ceremonies.” The Labyrinth of Solitude, p. 47*

*“Progressively integrated into the modern day parade, the carnival is a larger-than-life blender, where individual identity is simultaneously bidden behind masks and openly revealed, lost and reshaped, where people momentarily cease to be themselves...what characterizes the Latino fiesta is the possibility of dissolving racial, cultural, and social boundaries.” The Hispanic Condition, p. 100*



The fiesta has been frequently used (and overused) by marketers in Hispanic marketing campaigns. The sense of celebration is most often represented as a party or gathering in Hispanic advertising, yet the true concept extends far beyond a simple party. It represents celebrating the moment, as communicated in the expression “*lo bailado nadie te lo quita* (what you have enjoyed is yours to keep).” While no one can doubt the significance of this concept in Hispanic culture, it is necessary to examine *why* the sense of celebration holds such a prominent place in the culture.

In Caramelo, Celaya’s father suffers a serious illness which almost kills him. When he recovers, he decides to throw a huge 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary party for himself and his wife. “—*Mi aniversario*, he keeps saying. His thirtieth wedding anniversary, although we know Father and Mother haven’t been married thirty years. It’s more like twenty-something, but Father’s afraid he won’t live that long” (p. 415). Therefore, the fiesta is a means to escape reality and the inevitability of time. Stavans puts forth a similar hypothesis in The Hispanic Condition, explaining that, during a fiesta, people can replace the mask they wear everyday (reality) with something completely different.

As Octavio Paz mentions in the first quote above, fiestas are also an occasion to stop time. Time eventually leads to death. Consequently, another one of the functions of fiestas is to celebrate life, which exists today and might not tomorrow. In The Labyrinth of Solitude, Paz illuminates other possible motives for the fiesta. He notes that fiestas are “the only luxury” of the poor man. He also points to the fiesta as a chance to break free from the social order. “In certain fiestas the very notion of order disappears. Chaos comes back and license rules. Anything is permitted: the customary hierarchies vanish, along with all social, sex, caste, and trade distinctions” (p. 51). Stavans also mentions this aspect of fiestas. This characteristic of fiestas demonstrates the tension that all of these hierarchies create, and the need that arises for Hispanics to momentarily break free from this tension.

### **Implications for Marketers**

- The fiesta is a way for Hispanics to break free from a rigid hierarchical order. Marketing messages which break free from social order to show all people as equal might give Hispanics the same feeling of freedom as the fiesta does.

- Products and services related to entertainment and diversion are likely to succeed with Hispanics. Like the fiesta, entertainment is a way to forget about reality and enjoy the present.
- The notion of “enjoying the moment” or “capturing the moment” is inherent in Hispanic culture and marketers can use this to connect with Hispanics.

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## FOOD

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*“And to show their hope they rubbed the dark earth of the river valley on the baby’s forehead, and they surrounded the bed with the fruits of their harvest so the small room smelled of fresh green chile and corn, ripe apples and peaches, pumpkins and green beans”*  
Bless Me, Ultima, p. 5

*“Over his shoulder, he hears Carmen call after him, ‘Have you eaten, Victor?’ These Latin women, even when the bullets are flying and the bombs are falling, they want to make sure you have a full stomach, your shirt is ironed, your handkerchief is fresh.”*  
How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents, p. 207

*“Celaya, you didn’t even touch your mole... You like chocolate, don’t you? It’s practically all chocolate, with just a teeny bit of chile, a recipe as old as the Aztecs. Don’t pretend you’re not Mexican!”*  
Caramelo, p. 55

In US culture, food is nutrition. We like it to be fast, simple, and not so expensive. In Hispanic culture, however, food represents much more than just nourishment. It is a connection with tradition for those who have gone far from home, a form of stability for those living in uncertain times, and a symbol of love and affection for those the food is prepared for.

Many of the novels written by Hispanic authors in the United States show food as a way to maintain a connection to Latin American roots and family. In this sense, we can see that Celaya’s rejection of the *mole* (from the last quote above) is viewed as her rejection of her Mexican heritage. Rice and beans are also preferred comfort foods of the Garcia girls in How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents (p. 55), allowing them to preserve a connection with their roots. When certain foods can’t be obtained in the United States, it can cause a great deal of nostalgia. In Caramelo, the grandmother laments “Manila mangoes are sweeter. I’m not lying to you. Manila mangoes are the best, that’s why they don’t let them pass. That’s why you never see Manila mangoes in the States. Those border agents, they know what’s good” (p. 277).

Just the memory of this food is often enough to keep that connection alive. Cesar Castillo, in The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love remembers his dead mother by recalling the foods he associates with her: “And that’s where he stood now, in the kitchen watching his mother peel off the thick skin of plantains, and through the window he could see the plantain trees outside, and the mangoes, papayas, *guanábanas*, *yuca*, and avocados growing here and there. Genebria chopping up garlic and onion and tomatoes, and, cooking in another pot, *yuca*. Beautiful to see that again” (p. 428). Coming to the United States, many aspects of the culture are impossible to recreate. The landscape is different, the architecture is changed, even the language people speak is another. Food is one aspect of the culture that can more or less be preserved no matter where you go.

Food also represents a sort of tradition, which creates a feeling of stability in unstable times. The above quote from How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents illustrates this idea perfectly. When life is unstable, Hispanics can count on the ritual of food to bring a sense that everything is not changing.

Maybe the most important function of food in Hispanic culture is its ability to show love and devotion. Mexican cooking requires the cook to always be on her feet, so that nothing gets cold and is always freshly prepared (Caramelo, p. 121). In this sense, it requires a labor of love that begins when the food is prepared and continues while the others are relaxing and enjoying their food. Though the cook might complain about these activities, she also relishes them as a way to show affection. This is particularly true for the female characters in Caramelo. “Mother has a steak sizzling on one burner, *tortillas* on another, and on another she’s reheating *frijoles* for Father’s dinner. –All hours, all hours I’m heating and reheating food. She complains, but food is the only language she’s fluent in, the only way she can ask, *Who loves you?*” (p. 400).

### **Implications for Marketers**

- For the food and beverage industry, and other industries as well, emphasis needs to be placed on the authenticity and the quality of the product. Importing products directly from Latin America might be a good option, as Hispanics feel a strong connection with the products from their own countries.
- Marketing campaigns should consider the strong relationship between food and memory, food and tradition, and food and love. A product has the possibility to

differentiate itself from many other of the same kind of product if it has more than simple nutritional benefits, such as:

- the taste, brand name, appearance, etc of a food reminds Hispanics of home;
- the food is a connection with Latin American culture and allows Hispanics to maintain a connection with their culture; or
- the food is shown as a method for demonstrating love to one's family and friends.

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## GENDER ROLES

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*"He's almost seventy, for God's sake!" the daughters said, defending the father. They were passionate women, but their devotions were like roots; they were sunk into the past towards the old man."* How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents, p. 24

*"Ursula's capacity for work was the same as that of her husband. Active, small, severe, that woman of unbreakable nerves who at no moment in her life had been heard to sing seemed to be everywhere, from dawn until quite late at night"* One Hundred Years of Solitude, p. 9

*"The Grandmother only became visible when her body changed and garnered the trophy of men's attentions. But then she had lost their attention as her body shifted and slouched into disrepair after the birth of each child. And then when she was no longer vain and cared about taking care of herself, she began to disappear. Men no longer looked at her, society no longer gave her much importance after her role of mothering was over."* Caramelo, p. 347

One of the most discussed characteristics of Hispanics which differentiate them from Anglos is traditionally defined gender roles. The respective roles of men and women are apparent in both the Latin American and US Hispanic novels. Women, in general, are seen as either the virgin-like mother figure or the manipulative, evil whore. They are valuable only when they are young and fertile, as seen in the last quote above. Women are submissive to their husbands (One Hundred Years of Solitude, p.7) and generally cater to their husbands' wants and needs. In Caramelo, the wife often serves her husband dinner in the living room while he watches television from his La-Z-Boy (p. 14). Men's fears in respect to women were being trapped (The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love, p. 56) or shamed (p. 332).

On the other side, men are usually represented in the typical macho fashion, and women are warned to guard their bodies “like hidden treasure and not let anyone take advantage” (How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents, p. 235). However, gender roles are constantly changing and while this may have been an accurate portrait of Hispanic male/female relationships a few years ago, it is not necessarily true today. Furthermore, harping on traditional gender roles can be seen as offensive to those who have worked hard to move beyond the stereotypes. For this reason, here I will focus on two other aspects of gender roles which appeared in the novels: androgyny and parent/child relationships.

Androgyny is the presence of both male and female characteristics in the same person and Hispanics have been considered more androgynous than their Anglo counterparts (Korzenny and Korzenny, 2005). The second quote above, from One Hundred Years of Solitude, speaks of one of many women in these novels who show traditionally masculine characteristics, like strength. This strength can be shown through physical labor, as in the case of Úrsula, or through emotional strength. In The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love, Cesar remembers that the wife of a friend “sighed a lot, but immediately after sighing, she smiled, a statement of fortitude” (p. 38). Conversely, one can see Mr. Reyes in Caramelo, debilitated by a headache, with his wife’s stockings tied around his forehead, lamenting and watching *telenovelas* (p. 14).

The other aspect of gender roles that surfaced in this project was the special relationship of fathers and daughters. In the first quote above, the special relationship between the daughters and the father is apparent. They leave their husbands for a couple of days each year and return to stay in their parents’ house for their father’s birthday. A special relationship between father and daughter can also be witnessed in Caramelo. In the story, Celaya’s mother and grandmother decide it’s time for her to cut her hair. Before she knows it, her long braids are gone. As she cries, the only one to comfort her is her father, who reassures her: “I’m going to throw you a big party with everyone in gowns and tuxedos, and I’ll buy a big, big cake, bigger than you are tall, and a band will play a waltz when I take you out to dance. Right, my heaven?” (p. 24). Celaya also knows that her father learned to change her diapers, something he “had never done for his sons” (p. 232).

## Implications for Marketers

- Be sensitive to changing gender roles and the tension that exists when gender roles change. This means doing research to see how US Hispanics live gender roles today, which may be very different from Latin Americans and Anglos. Try to paint an accurate picture which represents US Hispanics as they are or as they want to be.
- There seems to be a special connection between fathers and daughters and mothers and sons. Marketers might be more successful in evoking an emotional response if they make use of these relationships in their marketing campaigns.
- Recognize androgyny as a strength of Hispanics, which allows them to be sensitive when necessary and strong when required. Affirm this characteristic as something positive and show how it makes Hispanics unique.

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## HARMONY

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*“What a liar you are! Mother says. –You didn’t go to Camp Blanding! You went to Fort Ord. Can’t you even tell a story straight? I can’t stand liars.  
–It’s not lying, Father says. –It’s being polite. I only say what people like to hear. It makes them happy.” Caramelo, p. 309*

Caramelo is full of situations in which people said or did what they thought others wanted, in order to keep the peace. Hispanics are known for their tendency to keep the harmony, even if it means sacrificing what they want or lying. This behavior is closely connected with collectivism. In the situation above, Mr. Reyes tells a customer that he was stationed with the customer’s father, and that he was a great man. In reality, Mr. Reyes had never even met the man, yet he wanted to make the customer happy, so he lied. He tells these “healthy lies” (p. 56) on numerous occasions to keep the peace in the family. He also works to resolve family conflicts, urging his family members to “let it go” (p. 240) for the good of the family.

Mr. Reyes knows that politeness and harmony are also the only ways he will get ahead in society. For this reason, he memorizes some passages from the ‘Polite Phrases’ chapter in his English phrase book: “I congratulate you. Pass on, sir. Pardon my English. I have no answer to give you. It gives me the greatest pleasure. And: I am of the same opinion” (p. 208). While these expressions may help him advance in society, they require

him to deny himself and his own opinion for that which keeps the harmony with everyone else. This desire to please others has serious consequences when it becomes necessary to lie in order to maintain harmony. In situations with doctors, for example, this type of behavior can be disastrous.

### **Implications for Marketers**

- Remind Hispanics, especially in health-related situations, that the truth is important. Hispanics might not want to admit to unhealthy behaviors, or they might be tempted to say they understand something when they really don't, all in the name of harmony. Hispanics need to know that they won't receive the proper treatment without honest communication with their health care provider.
- The tendency towards harmony is especially important to remember in qualitative research situations. Hispanics need to be made comfortable, so that they will reveal their actual feelings rather than what they think the researcher wants to hear. This also holds true for quantitative research, where questions need to be phrased in such a way that no expectations or "correct" responses are implied. Without this understanding, researchers and marketers risk creating campaigns based on false responses.

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## **HEALTH**

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*"One day I believe she was swimming, and the next day she was sick. Maybe the sky didn't look the day she fell down. Maybe God was busy....But I think diseases have no eyes. They pick with a dizzy finger anyone, just anyone."* The House on Mango Street, p. 59

*"Even so, it still surprised him, as if all his years of drinking and eating and doing just as he pleased would never catch up with him. He'd had the symptoms for a long time, going back years (to 1968), but he'd always ignored them."* The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love, p. 272

*"Tatica renders herself dramatically larger by always dressing in red, a promesa she has made to her santo, Candelario, so he will cure her of the horrible burning in her gut."* How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents, p. 204

Habits and beliefs regarding health seem to be something that Hispanics carry with them from Latin America to their new homes in the United States. In Latin America, beliefs about health are also closely tied to concepts such as religion and fatalism. Preventative health care is not widely practiced and many people don't seem to understand the true origins of illnesses, often blaming them on feelings of shame or fright. Methods for dealing with illness are also considerably different. Korzenny and Korzenny (2005) discuss certain illnesses which are referred to as either hot or cold, also designating the recommended cure. In addition, the use of home remedies and *curanderas* are widely accepted practices in Latin America.

The US Hispanic literature shows that a number of these practices have been carried from Latin America to the United States with Hispanics. This supports a growing number of research studies which have found that Hispanic beliefs about health are considerably different from the mainstream.

The random and unpredictable nature of illnesses, and their attribution to things like fear and shock, can be seen in such works as The House on Mango Street and The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love. In the first novel, we see that illness is not connected with a particular lifestyle or health habits, but rather a random or fate selection process. There is no sense that illnesses progress either. Esperanza states that "one day she was swimming and the next day she was sick" as if one day she was completely healthy and the next day she was not. In The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love, Cesar Castillo, as seen in the second quote above, lives a very unhealthy lifestyle but is still surprised to discover that his liver is failing him. His father also suffers from eczema and other maladies, which he believes were caused by "bad moods, debts, and hard work" (p. 235).

Caramelo also contains instances of these types of beliefs. One of the characters suffers *un fuerte coraje* and dies from a cerebral embolism (p. 143). This attribution of illness to other causes is also present in the following passage: "The diagnosis was a collapsed lung, but the real cause of Narciso Reyes' trouble, as Regina never tired of explaining, was *susto*, fear, a Mexican malaise responsible for centuries of harm." (p. 132).

Another significant insight is one related to how illnesses are cured. Cures usually take one of two forms, either a home remedy or the help of a shamaness or curandera. Bless Me, Ultima tells the story of a young boy destined to follow in the footsteps of the local curandera, Ultima. She teaches him her ways and shows him how to collect and use herbs to



cure illnesses and spells. In the last quote above, a character in How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents is entreating her illness and its cure to her saint, believing that dressing a particular way will cause him to cure her. A shamaness is consulted in Caramelo to cure insomnia (p. 192). Home remedies are used when the illness doesn't require professional help. Chamomile tea, the "Mexican antidote for everything" (p. 392) is used in the novel to treat everything from menstrual cramps to depression. In The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love, Cesar and his family tend to use a shot of whiskey as the universal cure.

As I mentioned before, fatalism also plays an important role in how and when illnesses are treated in Hispanic culture. There is a sense of being resigned to one's fate. Cesar Castillo, for example, doesn't want to go to the hospital or get treated for his liver problems. He simply exclaims, "Then, *coño*, if I'm already at death's door, I'll die and then I'll find out a lot of things, won't I?" (p. 271). Because Hispanics don't feel a sense of control over their lives and destinies, they are less likely to submit themselves to medical treatment, preferring to resign themselves to fate.

Finally, closely related to physical health is mental health. The concept of mental health seems misunderstood in Hispanic culture. Many people don't understand what it is or believe that it is indeed a serious illness. Cesar Castillo in The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love notes that "Cubans then (and Cubans now) didn't know about psychological problems. Cubans who felt bad went to their friends, ate and drank and went out dancing. Most of the time they wouldn't think about their problems. A psychological problem was part of someone's character" (p. 125). Psychological problems are also discounted in Caramelo. When Celaya admits to her mother that she's depressed, her mother only responds: "Depressed? You're nuts! Look at me, I had seven kids, and I'm not depressed. What the hell have you got to be depressed about?" (p. 364). Therefore, not only are psychological problems misunderstood, but they are also something that can potentially cause embarrassment or shame.

### **Implications for Marketers**

- For Hispanics, alternative and herbal remedies are often preferable to pills and chemical remedies. Companies may want to look at certain remedies, such as teas, herbs, etc. which are successful in Latin America and could also be successful among Hispanics in the United States. In addition, health care providers should work to

balance out pharmaceutical prescriptions with natural remedies when possible, perhaps prescribing some of each.

- Also, health care providers can consider enhancing patient loyalty and compliance by acknowledging traditional practices in conjunction with modern medicine.
- Education on methods of illness prevention and treatment are important. If Hispanics understand that they can prevent or treat certain illnesses, they are less likely to resign themselves to fatalism and more likely to take control of their health.
- Hispanics also need to be educated about mental health. This seems to still be a taboo subject in Hispanic culture. It needs to be presented as an illness like any other, which must be treated and taken seriously.

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## HOME OWNERSHIP

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*“The house on Mango Street is ours, and we don’t have to pay rent to anybody, or share the yard with the people downstairs, or be careful not to make too much noise, and there isn’t a landlord banging on the ceiling with a broom.” The House on Mango Street, p. 3*

*“—¡Mi vida! ¡Ya tenemos casa!  
—A house, Lala! Think of it. Finally, after all these years.” Caramelo, p. 299*

As seen in the quotes above, home ownership represents an important goal for US Hispanics. It is a place where the family can make as much noise as they want and have their own space. Owning a home gives a sense of stability to US Hispanics and allows them to replant the roots they left in their home countries. In both novels, the houses are old and falling apart, and the children are quite disappointed. Esperanza talks about her house on Mango street with true disappointment. “The house on Mango street is not the way they told at all. It’s small and red with tight steps in front and windows so small you’d think they were holding their breath. Bricks are crumbling in places, and the front door is so swollen you have to push hard to get in” (p. 4). The parents, however, see the house as a symbol of “making it” in the United States and feel no shame in it.

Esperanza too, holds her own hopes for owning a home one day. In a chapter entitled “A House of My Own,” she dreams of “a house all my own. With my porch and my pillow, my pretty purple petunias....only a house quiet as snow, a space for myself to go,

clean as paper before the poem” (p. 108). The desire for homeownership remains, though it seems that the later generations want a home for themselves, rather than for their family.

### Implications for Marketers

- Owning a home is definitely part of the US Hispanic dream. It is something that Hispanics work towards, but often they are uninformed about the necessary steps to get there. As mentioned numerous times, education is necessary to teach Hispanics about how to build credit and prepare themselves for the purchase of a home.
- Remember the different priorities of first generation Hispanics and later generations. First generation Hispanics may be more inclined to see the home through collective eyes, as a place for the entire family and extended family to live. Later generations, however, seem to see the home as something different. For them, the home is a quiet haven from all the noise and confusion of their daily lives. Depending on the consumer, the marketing message should be aimed at showing how a home can either keep the family together or allow for a little privacy. In many families with members from different generations, one house may need to serve both functions for different family members.

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## INTUITION AND INSTINCT

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*“Every year I cross the border, it’s the same—my mind forgets. But my body always remembers.”* Caramelo, p. 18

*“When his mother had died in 1962, the news came in a telegram from Eduardo, and a funny thing too, because he had been thinking about her a lot that week, almost a soft pulsing in his heart, and his head filled with memories.”* The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love, p. 285

The Hispanic trust in intuition has been generally accepted by marketers, and the evidence found in these novels tends to support that concept. First of all, it is interesting to note the marked difference between the location of intuitive and rational thoughts. As seen in the first quote above, the mind is the home of rational thought, and the body—the heart, soul, and gut—is the home of intuition. When characters in the novels refer to intuition, they always speak of “feeling” something. This is also evidenced in the second quote above,

when Cesar Castillo heard of his mother's death, but had already been feeling a "soft pulsing in his heart" for a week.

In Caramelo, Celaya's aunt Norma tells her the story of how she discovered her husband was with another woman. When Celaya asks how she knew, the aunt simply states, "I just knew. There's some things you just feel right here, you know. Right here I got a sick feeling, like if my heart was a *limón* being squeezed. And I just knew" (p. 273). Intuition for Hispanics is not a random thought, but rather a combination of mental and physical feelings.

This trust in intuition also signifies a distrust in traditional rational thinking and scientific methods. Stavans in The Hispanic Condition credits this to a long history of paganism and idolatry and affirms the Hispanic "faith in the unproved and unscientific, alternative modes of belief, folk wisdom, and superstition" (p. 121). While this comment also offers insight into Hispanic beliefs about health, its comments on this faith in the unscientific also indicate a distrust of that which is scientific. This distrust is clearly seen in Bless Me, Ultima. The villagers blame the harsh winter on the atomic bomb that had recently been invented. "Man was not made to know so much...They compete with God, they disturb the seasons, they seek to know more than God himself. In the end, the knowledge they seek will destroy us all" is the claim of the old women of the village. These beliefs present an interesting challenge for marketers who can no longer count on the rational appeal to win customers.

### **Implications for Marketers**

- Don't exclusively rely on rational appeals to persuade Hispanics that your product is the best. An emotional appeal which touches Hispanics on a deeper level is likely to be more successful.
- What non-Hispanics call gut feeling, Hispanics call *corazonada* (from the heart) and this is the intuition that can guide decisions. Marketers can appeal to the heart as a way to connect. If a product gives the consumer a "*corazonada*" that can mean a sale.
- Recognize that intuition is more valid than a scientific and rational approach for Hispanics. This means that companies, especially in the customer service department, also need to be prepared to accept complaints, comments and rationales related to intuition rather than fact. This might be difficult for others to understand, but companies must not discount this characteristic of Hispanics.

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## JOY AND PAIN

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*“Beautiful days, beyond all pain, beyond all suffering.”* The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love, p. 39

*“But the mother tried to convince her daughter that it was better to be a happy nobody than a sad somebody.”* How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents, p. 46

*“Life was cruel. And hilarious all at once.”* Caramelo, p. 30

I titled this insight “Joy and Pain” because it deals with the omnipresence of these two emotions in Hispanic culture. This is one of the major themes of One Hundred Years of Solitude. Despite the novel’s tragic story, which tells of the demise of the Buendía family in the mythical town of Macondo, the story is filled with humorous situations. Humor is an essential coping mechanism for hard times, and Hispanics seem to have a special propensity for taking a difficult situation and finding the joy in it. They are able to laugh when situations are at their worst, and even find a certain comfort or happiness in the pain itself. Think, for example, of the singer who tells of his lost love in a song, a song which brings immense suffering but which he can’t stop singing. This is the case is The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love. Nestor Castillo loved “the torture of composition” (p. 43) and his brother Cesar used to sing “*Mi siento contento cuando sufro*” (p. 256).

Caramelo also deals with issues of concurrent joy and pain. The grandmother and her granddaughter Celaya discuss a time in Mexico’s history when access to church bell towers was prohibited due to the rampant number of suicides committed from the towers. The granddaughter comments astutely that “if this were a movie from Mexico’s Golden Age of cinema, it would be black-and-white and no doubt a musical. A perfect opportunity for humor, song, and, curiously enough, cheer” (p. 98).

The idea is that while you may not control what happens, you can control how you react to it. Later in Caramelo, Celaya reminds us that “you’re the author of your *telenovela* all right. Comedy or tragedy? You choose” (p. 399). For Hispanics, what essentially determines whether their lives will be a comedy or a tragedy is not what happens to them, but how they react to what happens to them.

## Implications for Marketers

- In commercial messages, show Hispanics the bright side of negative situations. Recognize this unique ability to see joy in painful situations as a strength of Hispanics.
- Contrast joy and pain to show product/service virtues.

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## “JUST ENOUGH, BUT NOT TOO MUCH”

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*“Just enough, but not too much.” Caramelo, p. 92*

*“Still, we take what we can get and make the best of it.” The House on Mango Street, p. 33*

*“For five days he lay next to this man, and despite his own pain, the Mambo King kept thinking, God, I’m glad I’m not him.” The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love, p. 276*

The title for this section comes from Caramelo. The phrase is used repeatedly throughout the latter half of the novel, and signifies both using moderation and being happy with what you have. In the good times and the bad, the characters in Caramelo seem to seek out the happy medium. When things are good, they are good enough. When things are bad, they are not too bad to handle. This theme runs throughout many of the novels. The quote above from The House on Mango Street also exemplifies making the most of what you have. Even the Mambo King, Cesar Castillo, knows that things could be worse when he is in the hospital. Instead of focusing on his own misfortune, he reminds himself that he is lucky not to be as sick as his hospital roommate.

As the Old Testament of the Bible says, “the richest man is the one happy with his part.” The capacity of Hispanics to be happy with what they have is something that sets them apart from mainstream Anglo culture, which is more driven by success and a constant desire to have more. This means that though Hispanics have lower average incomes and less financial wealth than Anglos, they tend to be more satisfied overall with what they have.

## Implications for Marketers

- Marketers must remember that the typical Anglo drive to always have something more or something better doesn’t apply as much to Hispanics. Therefore, having the

latest or newest or most expensive product might not carry the appeal for Hispanics that it does for the general market. Something that will make the group or family happy, however, is powerful.

- The notion of being too ambitious has to do with tempting faith. Messages can be directed to the proud but humble side of Hispanic identity.

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## LANGUAGE

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*“The word is our sign and seal. By means of it we recognize each other among strangers, and we use it every time the real conditions of our being rise to our lips. To know it, to use it, to throw it in the air like a toy or make it quiver like a sharp weapon, is a way of affirming that we are Mexican.”* The Labyrinth of Solitude, p. 74

*“The poet she met at Lucinda’s party the night before argued that no matter how much of it one lost, in the midst of some profound emotion, one would revert to one’s mother tongue. He put Yolanda through a series of situations. What language, he asked, looking pointedly into her eyes, did she love in?”* How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents, p. 13

*“Somebody said because she’s too fat, somebody because of the three flights of stairs, but I believe she doesn’t come out because she is afraid to speak English, and maybe this is so since she only knows eight words. She knows to say: He not here for when the landlord comes, No speak English if anyone else comes, and Holy smokes.”* The House on Mango Street, p. 77

Language has probably been the most discussed issue regarding Hispanics in the United States. There are numerous issues connected with the use of both the Spanish and English languages and how they affect the people who use them to communicate. Marketers have long assumed that they needed to communicate with Hispanics in Spanish, but the growing number of English dominant and bicultural Hispanics has led many to question whether or not language is really the most important factor in reaching these consumers. The literature examined in this study provides many useful insights into language and the issues that surround it.

In The Buried Mirror, Carlos Fuentes addresses the debate over bilingualism. California has decreed its official language English in response to the fact that English is no longer the “official” language. At the same time, bumper stickers in Texas read “Monolingualism is a curable disease.” What becomes evident is that both languages exist simultaneously, and that neither is heading out (p. 347). Ilan Stavans also discusses the

Spanish language, and its power to unify Hispanics. “Unlike other ethnic groups, we Latinos are amazingly loyal to our mother tongue. Because of our geographic closeness of the countries of origin and the diversity in the composition of their communities, Spanish remains a unifying force” (p.123). Paz, in the first quote above from The Labyrinth of Solitude, also speaks to the importance of the Spanish language as a cultural sign.

Spanish, even for Hispanics who do not speak it perfectly, has a very deep emotional connection to Latin American roots. The second quote above, from How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents, connects emotion to language, specifically mother tongue, well.

Yolanda doesn’t speak English well as an adult, though it was the first language she learned as a child. Still, in her moments of intense emotion, she retreats into Spanish. “*Cielo, cielo*, the word echoed. And Yo was running, like the mad, into the safety of her first tongue, where the proudly monolingual John could not catch her, even if he tried” (p. 72).

Spanish allows for a deep emotional connection, but it also helps others to make a connection with Hispanics. Hearing a few words in Spanish lets Hispanics in the US know that someone does know they’re out there and someone is trying to specifically reach them. In The Mambo Kings Play songs of Love, Cesar and Nestor listened to the local radio and were “happy whenever the percussionist bandleader would say a few words of Spanish between numbers: ‘And this is a little number for my *compadres* out there...’” (p. 40).

While Spanish obviously holds an important place in Hispanic culture, there is no denying the necessity of English either. In The House on Mango Street, characters who don’t speak English are destined to stay locked in their homes (as in the last quote above) and their barrios. Not speaking English is also something that causes shame. A neighborhood girl, Marin, lets the neighborhood know that she didn’t care about breaking up with her boyfriend because he was “just another *brazier* who doesn’t speak English...the ones who always look ashamed” (p. 66).

Not speaking English can be a great cause of stress, but when children learn to speak a language that their parents don’t understand, the stress can be just as great. A woman called *mamacita* on Mango Street doesn’t speak English, and when she hears her son singing a Pepsi commercial in English, she loses it. “No speak English, she says to the child who is singing in the language that sounds like tin. No speak English, no speak English, and bubbles into tears. No, no, no, as if she can’t believe her ears” (p. 78).



Issues with language go beyond *which* language is used and encompass *how* language is used. *Caramelo* repeatedly brings up the differences in formality between English and Spanish. Celaya's father, Mr. Reyes, called English a "barbarous" language, in which "no one preceded a request with a --Will you be so kind as to do me the favor of..." and added that it was "curt as the commands of a dog trainer. --Sit. --Speak up. And why did no one say, --You are welcome. Instead, they grunted, ---Uh-huh, without looking him in the eye, and without so much as a--You are very kind mister, and may things go well for you" (p. 209). Celaya is also offended that the *güeros* who come into her father's shop address him as Innocencio instead of Mister Reyes. She asks the question: "if we know enough about their culture to know what's right, how come they can't bother to learn about ours?" (p. 308). The lack of formality, whether speaking in English or in Spanish, is seen as a lack of respect. Formalities in language run throughout the novel, but Celaya even admits that "Spanish is very formal and made up of a hundred and one formalities as intricate and knotted as the fringe at the end of a *rebozo*" (p. 106). Still, these formalities are part of the cloth of Hispanic culture and must be considered, whether the communication takes place in English or in Spanish.

### **Implications for Marketers**

- The first lesson taken from this section should be that Spanish is not the only language of Hispanics. The fact is that many Hispanics in recent and, of course, in later generations are either bilingual or might not even speak much Spanish. At the same time, there are many Hispanics who haven't yet learned English. Therefore, in order to reach the maximum number of Hispanics, marketing campaigns should include both Spanish and English components.
- Bilingual campaigns also serve as educational tools for Hispanics learning English. Learning English is essential for Hispanics, who may be looked down upon even by other Hispanics if they don't eventually learn the language. For this reason, Hispanics who are learning English may pay special attention to bilingual advertising which allows them to improve their English.
- Hispanics want to learn English. Those who can't speak the language are often relegated to their barrios and even their own apartments, afraid to come out and interact with people and unable to fulfill their own basic needs. This represents an

- opportunity for English language schools, tapes, etc., but also for companies looking for a way to get involved with the Hispanic community. English language programs in the community might be an excellent way to connect with Hispanic consumers.
- Regardless of whether English or Spanish is used, marketers must consider other factors of language such as the level of formality, tu vs. usted, and how to address Hispanics by name. More research needs to be done regarding how Hispanics like to be addressed and what level of formality is appropriate. This is likely a factor which varies by generation, with the older generations preferring a higher level of formality and the younger generations preferring a lower level of formality.
  - Finally, marketers should keep in mind the emotional connection that Hispanics feel to the Spanish language. This connection seems to exist even for those who learned Spanish as children but now speak mostly English. Using a Spanish component in the advertising, especially for emotionally charged subjects or words, can create a strong connection with Hispanic consumers.

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## MAGIC AND STORYTELLING

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*“A short time later, when the carpenter was taking measurements for the coffin, through the window they saw a light rain of tiny yellow flowers falling. They fell on the town all through the night in a silent storm, and they covered the roofs and blocked the doors and smothered the animals who slept outdoors. So many flowers fell from the sky that in the morning the streets were carpeted with a compact cushion and they had to clear them away with shovels and rakes so that the funeral procession could pass by.” One Hundred Years of Solitude, p. 153*

One Hundred Years of Solitude is known for the style in which it was written, known as *realismo magico*. This style, which erases the lines between fiction and reality, is also present in Of Love and Other Demons, Aura, and Pedro Páramo. In a sense, this style allows the authors to confront reality, which can seem absurd, with equal absurdity. It shows that the line we draw between history and a story is an artificial one. Latin American history is full of histories created by the colonizers; One Hundred Years of Solitude tells the story of the colonized. In a way, magic is a coping mechanism for when reality leaves something to be desired.

*Realismo magico* recognizes that history is never quite real, and emphasizes the story over the truth. While the style of *realismo magico* doesn't really exist among US Hispanic

authors, the emphasis on the story rather than the truth does exist. In the introduction of Caramelo, Celaya admits that her story is part truth, part exaggeration, and part invention. In the end, she says, “only the story is remembered” and “the truth fades away.” Nearly all of the US Hispanic novels in this project focused on a personal point of view to tell the story, never aiming for an objective truth. This may signal that an absolute truth is not the most important factor to Hispanics, or that they see the truth as something that is impossible to obtain.

In addition, while they didn’t contain overt references to magical occurrences, the US Hispanic novels did contain numerous instances of supernatural events. These were mostly in the form of visits from dead friends and relatives, which the characters seemed to regard as completely normal.

### **Implications for Marketers**

- Advertisers should make sure that they are telling a memorable story to Hispanics in their advertising. Ads need not be completely realistic if they tell an interesting story and make a cultural or emotional connection with consumers.
- Miracle cures, remedies, and magical cleaning and happenings can be appealing and should be considered when not misleading.

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## **MONEY AND RESOURCEFULNESS**

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*“It is no disgrace to be poor, Uncle says, citing the Mexican saying, --but it is very inconvenient.” Caramelo, p. 10*

*“To pay for the vacation, Uncle Fat-Face and Aunty Licha always bring along items to sell. A year’s worth of weekends spent at the Maxwell street flea market collecting merchandise for the trip south.” Caramelo, p. 6*

*“After his cake and candles, the father distributed bulky envelopes that felt as if they were padded, and they were, no less than several hundreds in bills, tens and twenties and fives, all arranged to face the same way, the top one signed with the father’s name, branding them his. Why not checks? the daughters would wonder later, gossiping together in the bedroom” How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents, p. 25*

How US Hispanics think of, use, save and earn money is of direct interest to marketers. Generally, marketers have held various assumptions about Hispanics and money, including their preference for cash and their price consciousness. A review of US Hispanic literature illuminated some similar insights related to the desire for money, resourcefulness and a preference for cash.

The first quote above is very enlightening in its contrast of Latin American and US Hispanic beliefs. The Mexican saying states that “it is no disgrace to be poor.” For Latin Americans, it seems there are many things that are more important than material wealth. This has implications for spending habits, motivation to improve one’s social status, and the desire to save money. US Hispanics, however, often come to the United States with the explicit motive of improving their economic situation. This explains the uncle’s comment that being poor, while not a disgrace, is “very inconvenient.” This recognition that economic success is important marks a change in the way of thinking. In Caramelo, the father explains that the most important lesson he’s learned in life is that “*El dinero no vale pero ayuda mucho*” (p. 411). While this doesn’t represent a hunger for wealth or riches, it does show a change in the emphasis placed on money.

One way that US Hispanic families go about accumulating money is through their resourcefulness. This means coming up with new and creative ways to earn money, as seen in the second quote above, and not wasting anything. One example of this can be seen in How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents. Yolanda remembers her childhood and how she was urged not to waste anything, not even a pencil. “*Jolinda*, that’s what this pencil used to say. In fact, it was so worn down, only the hook of the J was left. We didn’t throw things away in my family. I used both sides of the paper” (p. 90). This economy, however, is willingly put aside when a special occasion arises. When going to an important dinner with the family, Mr. Garcia passes up the usual bus route and takes his family to the restaurant in a taxi, a sign to his girls that this event is something significant.

One way that Hispanics don’t seem comfortable getting money is through charity. At the same dinner with his family, Mr. Garcia exchanges “a helpless look” (p. 190) with his wife when another couple offers to buy dolls for the four Garcia daughters.

As mentioned above, a final insight relating to money deals with the Hispanic preference for cash, as opposed to checks or credit cards. This is a well-known and widely

accepted assumption in Hispanic marketing. In the third quote above, we see further evidence of this insight.

### Implications for Marketers

- Remember that Hispanics in the United States want to earn money and often find new and creative ways to make money. This is an opportunity for marketers to find monetary incentives for Hispanic consumers. Giving cash back on purchases, money for referrals, or earning money for completing a customer satisfaction survey are just a few of the ways marketers can increase business through cash incentives.
- Hispanics typically don't waste money or products. Considering new packaging or product features which make sure that none of the product is wasted (food products, health and beauty products, etc.) could be an incentive for these consumers.
- Today's US culture is very credit-oriented. Many establishments are no longer capable of handling cash. Many Hispanics, however, don't have credit cards or even checking accounts and prefer to handle their transactions, including large ones, in cash. For this reason, businesses should think of alternative modes of payment for Hispanic consumers. In addition, companies like Wal-Mart that offer services such as money orders might consider using this as an incentive to attract more customers to the store.

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### NAMES

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*“Ay, Yolanda. Her mother pronounced her name in Spanish, her pure, mouth-filling, full-blooded name, Yolanda. But then, it was inevitable, like gravity, like night and day, little apple-bites when God’s back is turned, her name fell, bastardized, breaking into a half dozen nicknames—‘pobrecita Yosita’—another nickname.”* How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents, p. 81

*“It is in the blood of the Lunas to be quiet, for only a quiet man can learn the secrets of the earth that are necessary for planting—They are quiet like the moon—And it is the blood of the Márez to be wild, like the ocean from which they take their name, and the spaces of the llano that have become their home.”* Bless Me, Ultima, p. 41

The names people and things are given are very significant in Hispanic culture. Almost all of the novels make references to the significance of names and of the way they

sound when spoken. In One Hundred Years of Solitude, the name a child is given actually determines what he or she will become. All of the Jose Arcadios act the same way and suffer the same fate. This is also true for the other characters who share a name.

A similar fate is seen in Bless Me Ultima. In this case, the two families, the Luna and the Márez family names actually represent how the members of the family live and act. The Luna family is quiet and peaceful like the moon, whereas the Márez family is wild and takes their name from the ocean. Antonio, who has both names, will inherit qualities from both of the families. Esperanza also contemplates the meaning of her name in The House on Mango Street. “In English my name means hope. In Spanish it means too many letters. It means sadness, it means waiting” (p. 10).

Names are important not only for what they represent, but also for how they sound. In How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents, the mispronunciation of her name by a teacher is a sign to Yolanda that she is not like everyone else, and she feels “profoundly out of place” because of this (p. 89). She also hates it when her name is “bastardized” and turned into nicknames by her family, friends, and partners. She is “Jo” to her American boyfriends, “Yo” to her family, and “Yolanda” only when the situation is serious enough to merit using her whole name (p. 81). Similarly, Esperanza also notices that “at school they say my name funny as if the syllables were made out of tin and hurt the roof of your mouth” (p. 11). She, however, is disappointed that she doesn’t have a nickname, and is jealous of her sister Magdalena, who can come home and be “Nenny,” while she must always remain “Esperanza” (p. 11).

Names have such an important power that in Caramelo, Aunty Light-Skin cannot bear to say the name of her ex-husband as she tells the story of their relationship, referring to him only using “he”. Celaya notes, “She can’t say his name. No one says his name. Ever. To say his name would wake the grief asleep inside her heart and cause too much pain” (p. 264). It is apparent that names are very significant in Hispanic culture, for their meaning, their sound, and the feelings they bring up.

### **Implications for Marketers**

- Because names are so important in Hispanic culture, marketers should do careful research to determine the best name for their products. Names can have a very

- powerful connotative meaning which could make or break a product. Marketers should consider both the meaning of the name and the way it sounds when spoken.
- When using direct mail, make sure to get Hispanic names correct. Names are closely related with identity, and in order to make a connection with consumers it is important that marketers show they know who their consumers are. When possible, use full names.

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## NATURE AND THE NATURAL

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*“You all see that cloud, that fat one there? Darius said. See that? Where? That one next to the one that look like popcorn. That one there. See that. That’s God, Darius said. God? somebody little asked. God, he said, and made it simple.”* The House on Mango Street, p. 34

*“For Ultima, even the plants had a spirit and before I dug she made me speak to the plant and tell it why we pulled it from its home in the earth.”* Bless Me, Ultima, p. 39

*“A crack of lightning reminded him that he had once been a little kid dancing on the patio tiles and spinning in circles, euphoric under the downpour.”* The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love, p. 310

Hispanics have a special relationship with nature, as witnessed in the quotes above. Nature is closely related to religion and spirituality and to memory. The relationship between nature and religion comes from native religions in Latin America, which were closely tied to the earth. Bless Me, Ultima is a novel which is largely based on a spiritual connection with nature. The art of *curanderismo* requires the *curandero* to be very in touch with nature. In this novel, nature and religion are not separate; they are parts of each other. Antonio tells that “in the summer the dust devils of the llano... come from nowhere, made by the heat of hell, they carry with them the evil spirit of a devil” and the only way to ward off the dust devils is to “lift up your right hand and cross your thumb over your first finger in the form of the cross” (p. 55). The quote above from The House on Mango Street makes a very poignant, yet simple connection between nature and religion: the cloud *is* God.

Just as nature is not separate from religion, it is also not separate from the human being. Nature is human, and human beings are nature. For Octavio Paz, nature is reality: “Reality—that is, the world that surrounds us—exists by itself here, has a life of its own, and was not invented by man as it was in the United States” (p. 20). So, in contrast to US culture,

Hispanic culture recognizes nature as reality. Returning to Bless Me, Ultima, Antonio offers nature as a metaphor for why people act the way they do. He says, “dark buds appeared on the branches, and it seemed that the same sleeping sap that fed them began to churn through my brothers. I sensed their restlessness, and I began to understand why the blood of spring is called *the bad blood*” (p. 65). For Antonio, what happens in nature directly affects how people act and feel. In Caramelo, a simile expresses the human connection with nature. Celaya’s grandmother is referred to as being “ripe for the taking as a mango” (p. 102).

Esperanza in The House on Mango Street also has a very personal relationship with nature. She sees herself in the four trees she sees outside her window. “They are the only ones who understand me. I am the only one who understands them. Four skinny trees with skinny necks and pointy elbows like mine. Four who do not belong here but are here” (p. 75). Esperanza sees the same qualities in the trees that she sees in herself, both physically and emotionally.

Nature is closely associated with memory. The quote above from The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love shows the power of nature to bring back a memory. This happens more than once for Cesar, who also remembers how his mother used to fill the house with flowers (p. 316). There are special connections, then, between nature and religion, nature and identity, and nature and memory.

Finally, connected with nature is the idea of doing things in a natural way. This idea carries over to food, as seen in the “Food” section of the paper and is even seen in Caramelo as the grandmother, who has recently lost her husband, peruses some personal ads. Though she is lonely and likes the idea of meeting another person, “she could never bring herself to put an ad in the paper like a side of beef for sale” (p. 285). Artificial means for doing these things aren’t looked upon in a positive manner.

### **Implications for Marketers**

- When possible, use images of nature in advertising. Furthermore, positioning the product as something natural or coming from nature can have positive effects for Hispanic consumers.
- Be sensitive to the Hispanic preference for doing things the natural way. For example, show that food products are made in the natural way and then brought directly to consumers. Or, for a dating service, reassure Hispanics that, though they



may meet in a nontraditional setting, the fundamentals of courtship will still happen in the same natural way.

- Because nature and identity are closely related for Hispanics, there may be some room for the use of metaphors associated to nature in Hispanic advertising.

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## ORAL TRADITION

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*“The truth, these stories are nothing but story, bits of string, odds and ends found here and there, embroidered together to make something new. I have invented what I do not know and exaggerated what I do to continue the family tradition of telling healthy lies. If, in the course of my inventing, I have inadvertently stumbled on the truth, perdónenme. To write is to ask questions. It doesn’t matter if the answers are true or puro cuento. After all and everything only the story is remembered, and the truth fades away like the pale blue ink on a cheap embroidery pattern”* Caramelo, introduction

*“Latin America is seen as being devoted to eternal truths, to the act of recalling, to continuity through oral tradition...enchanted with the past...[it] safeguards what is gone”* The Hispanic Condition, p. 174

“—I remember, I say.

—How could you remember? You weren’t even born yet! Rafa says.

—You mean you remember the stories someone told you, says Mother.” Caramelo, p. 19

Latin American history has often had two versions: the one that was written, and the one that was unwritten, the history of the colonizer and the history of the colonized. Ilan Stavans comments that “it is not surprising that the Spanish word for both history and story, past and fiction, is *historia*” (p. 94). He continues to explain that the “official” history in Latin America has always excluded, rather than included, its people.

This dual history, what the books say happened and what really happened, is evident in One Hundred Years of Solitude. When the workers of Macondo strike, it is placed under martial law. Pretending to seek a resolution, the government invites the workers to the train station for a meeting. At the station, the army kills all 3000 workers with machine-guns. Jose Arcadio Segundo, who was there, wakes up on a train filled with corpses. He jumps off the train and returns to Macondo. When he arrives, however, he realizes that the town has no

memory of the massacre and has accepted the government's version of history, stating that the massacre never happened (p. 331).

For this reason, Hispanics have tended to rely heavily on oral tradition and storytelling to maintain and pass on their history. In Bless Me Ultima, Ultima passes down all of the secrets and traditions of curanderismo to the young Antonio orally. There are no books to study, just the words of Ultima which remain with Antonio throughout his life. In addition, the histories of his family are told to him by his relatives. As Stavans states in the first quote above, the oral tradition is a way of safeguarding the past and giving some continuity to the present. Even the novels selected for this project show evidence of the importance of the oral tradition in the way they are written. They are extremely heavy on dialogue, and make explicitly clear to the reader that the story being told is a personal recounting of the events that happened.

Caramelo is a novel about Celaya telling the story of her grandmother's life, and it exemplifies the emphasis placed on oral tradition in Hispanic culture. In fact, these stories and histories are so integrated into Hispanics' lives that at one point the grandmother asks, "I thought you were telling *my* story?" and the granddaughter responds, "your story *is* my story" (p. 172). Through telling the story of her grandmother, Celaya is able to understand her history, which helps her understand herself. However, as stated in the first quote above, Celaya acknowledges that every time she tells a story, exaggeration and invention are inevitable. Maybe the truth, however, is not the ultimate goal. Maybe it's just the story that's important.

The tradition of oral history extends far beyond actual storytelling into everyday life. For example, as soon as Celaya's father comes home from an unpleasant encounter with the INS, the first thing he wants to do is to call everyone he knows. "And just as soon as the *susto* is over, Father is on the telephone to anyone and everyone who will listen. Monterrey. Chicago. Philadelphia. New Mexico" (p. 378). There is a sense of trust in hearing something that comes from someone's mouth, especially a familiar person, that doesn't exist in the "official" version of things.

### **Implications for Marketers**

- Word of mouth advertising is likely the most powerful form of influence on Hispanic consumers, as it is often the most trustworthy source of information on

products and services. Marketers must investigate how their product can benefit from this type of consumer to consumer advertising. New technologies such as blogs, instant messaging, and ratings and reviews websites have made the diffusion of this type of information even faster and easier.

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## PRIVACY AND SPACE

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*“To tell the truth, nobody knows what I want, and I hardly know myself. A bathroom where I can soak in the tub and not have to come out when somebody’s banging on the door. A lock on my door. A door. A room. A bed. And sleeping until I feel like it without somebody yelling, --Get up or do I have to make you get up. Quiet. No radio jabbering form on top of the kitchen counter, no TV thundering in the living room.”*  
Caramelo, p. 315

*“A house all my own...My books and my stories. My two shoes waiting by the bed. Nobody to shake a stick at. Nobody’s garage to pick up after.”* The House on Mango Street, p. 108

One of the most interesting insights from this project relates to privacy and space, and how those concepts change in later generations of Hispanics. Hispanics are known to have a more flexible sense of space and privacy. However, in Caramelo and The House on Mango Street we see explicit requests from the later generations for more privacy. They dream of having a house or even a room to themselves, where no one makes noise and where their only responsibility is to themselves.

Celaya notices the lack of privacy early in her life, when she is staying at her Grandmother’s house in Mexico. On her father’s birthday, the family begins the morning this way: “Everyone who can be forced to pay their respects—the cousins, the aunts and uncles, my six brothers—all parade into our bedroom while we are still asleep under the sheets, our crusty eyes blinking, our breath sour, our hair crooked as brooms—my mama, my father, and me” (p. 48). Later in life, she yearns for her own space. When she can’t leave, she resorts to daydreaming. She states, “It’s a way of being with yourself, of privacy in a house that doesn’t want you to be private, a world where no one wants to be alone and no one could understand why you would want to be alone” (p. 364). Reconciling these desires for privacy with the needs and desires of the families can cause stress for second and third generation Hispanics who are pressured into collectivistic behaviors and crave a space of their own.

## Implications for Marketers

- Marketers must be sensitive to the fact that privacy and personal space are important, especially for later generations of Hispanics. This can create tension with parents and grandparents, who may not see the need for privacy as their children do. Products or services which can help to alleviate this tension should be well-received.

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## QUALITY

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*“The Mexican works slowly and carefully; he loves the completed work and each of the details that make it up; and his innate good taste is an ancient heritage.” The Labyrinth of Solitude, p.70*

*“Got to have pride in your labor, Innocencio. Put your heart and soul into it. You don’t want to be famous for making junk, do you? After all, your work is your signature, remember that.” Caramelo, p. 213*

Both in the Latin American and US Hispanic literature, the importance of quality is evident. Octavio Paz explains how the Mexican takes pride in his work down to the small details. This is also true in Caramelo. The Reyes brothers, a family of upholsterers, are very concerned with the quality of their work and products. “They are craftsmen. They don’t use a staple gun and cardboard like upholsterers in the US. They make sofas and chairs *by hand*” (p. 8). This causes problems later in the novel when, in order to compete with other companies in the US, the brothers need to start making cheaper products of lower quality. One of the brothers refuses to give in, and ends up losing his business because his mostly non-Hispanic clients are not willing to pay the extra price for quality work.

This preference for quality and authenticity also extends into the Hispanic kitchen. Making food from scratch and by hand is very important for Hispanic women. The older women in Caramelo, for example, won’t even use a blender to grind ingredients that “have to be ground *by hand*, or it never comes out tasting authentic” (p. 54). This can sometimes cause conflict between the older and younger generations, who are more willing to accept these shortcuts (p. 54). Regardless, quality is very important to the Hispanic producer and the Hispanic consumer, whether that be in a business or the home.

## Implications for Marketers

- Emphasize the quality of products, especially if the prices are higher. When possible, have some parts (if not all) of the product made by hand. While Hispanics are price conscious, they seem to be willing to pay more for something that is of higher quality.
- Quality is especially important for food products and restaurants. The quality and preparation of foods is especially important to Hispanics, so the mode of preparation should be emphasized. In addition, ingredients which allow cooks to prepare foods “the old fashioned way” might be successfully marketed in this fashion.

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## RELIGION(S) AND SPIRITUALITY

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*“The Mexican is a religious being and his experience of the divine is completely genuine. But who is his God? The ancient earth-gods or Christ?” The Labyrinth of Solitude, p. 106*

*“The top of the refrigerator busy with holy candles, some lit, some not, red and green and blue, a plaster saint and a dusty Palm Sunday cross, and a picture of the voodoo hand taped to the wall.” The House on Mango Street, p. 63*

Octavio Paz’s answer to his own question above is, of course: both. Religion is one of the finest examples of the Hispanic capacity to take varied and often conflicting elements and meld them into something new. In The Buried Mirror, Carlos Fuentes asserts that one of the greatest gifts Latin Americans have to give to the United States is their unique take on religion. Because it combines elements of both Catholicism and native beliefs, it brings with it “a sense of the sacred, a recognition that the world is holy” (p. 346).

The juxtaposition of seemingly contradictory religious symbols and practices appears in many of the novels. In the last quote above, we can see that holy candles, a cross, and a voodoo hand coexist in the Hispanic household. In The Mambo King Plays Songs of Love, Cesar can obtain the same relief from his problems by going to a *botánica*, where a saint pours magic herbs over him, or by going to confession at the Catholic church (p. 126). It seems as though there is no internal conflict with accepting and using both kinds of religion. Rather, a “the more, the better” mentality is applied to religion.

Religion and spirituality in Hispanic culture are yet another example of duality, discussed in the section of the paper of the same name. Also connected to these concepts of religion and spirituality are beliefs about fatalism, destiny, and a special relationship to nature, which are examined in this paper.

### **Implications for Marketers**

- The knack for adapting is a characteristic that defines Hispanics. Recognize Hispanics for their unique ability to take many different cultures, religions, and traditions and meld them into something original and useful.

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## **SHAME, GUILT, AND EMBARRASSMENT**

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*“He had returned out of guilt: his mother had written him letters saying things like ‘At night I pray to God that I see you again before I am too old. My arms feel empty without you, my son.’”* The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love, p. 227

*“I wanted to run away, to hide, to run and never come back, never see anyone again. But I knew that if I did I would shame my family’s name, that my mother’s dream would crumble.”* Bless Me, Ultima, p. 59

*“My own old world parents were still an embarrassment at parents’ weekend, my father with his thick mustache and three-piece suit and fedora hat, my mother in one of her outfits she bought especially to visit us at school”* How the Garcia Girls Lost their Accents, p. 9

An examination of how and why Hispanics experience certain emotions is essential for an understanding of Hispanic identity. Here, we take a look at how Hispanics live their shame, guilt and embarrassment, and what causes these emotions.

Shame often derives from guilt, and guilt induction seems to be one of the preferred methods for Hispanics, especially Hispanic mothers, to control the behavior of others. This is clearly seen in the first quote above from The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love. Rather than simply ask him to come home, Cesar’s mother uses guilt to ensure that her son will return to Cuba to see her, also reminding him that she is old and won’t be around forever. The mother in How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents also knows how to make her four

daughters feel guilty. If any of her daughters criticized her, she “took the opportunity of crying a little and saying that she had done the best she could by the four girls” (p. 42).

Even the grandmother in Caramelo wastes no opportunity to guilt her children into doing what she wants them to do. Celaya remembers a vacation when the grandmother “sighs so much that Father has to ask her to come along” (p. 68), much to the dismay of the other family members. When she wants her sons to help her in the house rather than hiring extra help, she scolds them: “What do you take me for, a machine?...And did I mention the expenses?...We’ve lost the income from the two apartments this summer; because I asked the tenants to vacate and leave the rooms for you all. No, I’m not complaining. Of course, I’d rather have my family near. What’s money compared to the joy of having one’s family close by?” (p. 67).

When family expectations are not met, Hispanics experience shame. Shame can also be a powerful reason to *not* do something, as in the case of Antonio in the quote from Bless Me, Ultima above. He wants to run away, but the shame he would cause his family keeps him from carrying out the act. His parents remind him and his brothers that any bad manners or misbehavior on their parts will cause shame to the entire family (p. 7). Furthermore, avoiding this shame is the motivation the parents use to convince their children to act in a certain way. It is not just bad manners that can cause shame to the family.

This feeling takes a new form with later generations of Hispanics in the United States. Now, it is no longer just the children who risk shaming the parents, but also the parents who are at risk of embarrassing their children for their out of place behavior. As Hispanic children acculturate into US society, they often feel a sense of embarrassment at their parents “Hispanic-ness.” In the last quote above, that is represented in different ways of dressing. However, this embarrassment is also felt by children, whose parents don’t speak English well or conform to mainstream society in other ways.

### **Implications for Marketers**

- Marketers should generally aim to relieve Hispanics of their shame, guilt and embarrassment when possible. However, sometimes avoiding these feelings can be a powerful reason to do or not do something. Social marketing campaigns might consider using these emotions as a motivator to change behavior in Hispanics.

- Guilt, as an internal mechanism, can be relieved by giving family and friends what they need or want. This can be a powerful motivation.

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## STABILITY (THROUGH ORDER, FORM, RITUAL)

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*“Form surrounds us and sets bounds to our privacy, limiting its excesses, curbing its explosions, isolating and preserving it. Both our Spanish and Indian heritages have influenced our fondness for ceremony, formulas, and order...the Mexican also strives to be formal in his daily life, and his formalities are very apt to become formulas.”* The Labyrinth of Solitude, p. 32

*“—Always, always, keep a neat bed, the Grandmother said, pinching and tugging the chartreuse bedspread until it was taut.—You can tell the character of a woman by how she makes her bed. Show me her bed, and I’ll tell you who she is.”* Caramelo, p. 288

Latin America has had a very turbulent history of colonization, invasion, political regimes and economic instability. For this reason, Hispanics have tended to balance out that instability through other means. Rigid senses of order, form, and ritual allow for a sense of stability in daily life. As Paz states in the first quote above, form surrounds the Mexican and provides him with some kind of protection. He comments that this need for form is evident in many aspects of Mexican culture: the formality used in language, the preference for closed poetic forms, and even the love for geometrical forms in the decorative arts (p. 32). He also admits that colonization actually aided in the “creation of a universal order” (p. 103) in which each person has a place. Knowing your place, no matter how low that place may be, is a form of stability. This partially explains why Hispanics are so willing to accept hierarchical structures and power distance.

On a very basic level, this desire for stability can be seen through a very small action, such as “keeping a neat bed” in Caramelo. It can also be seen in the formality of the Spanish language, discussed at length in the “Language” section of the paper. Another way of maintaining this sense of stability is through traditions and ceremonies. When the Garcia girls leave the Dominican Republic in How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents, the housemaid won’t let them leave without performing a native protective ritual on them (p. 221).



## Implications for Marketers

- Find simple ways to give Hispanics a sense of stability in their lives. This might be through products which help them keep the house clean and orderly, or through the celebration of Hispanic traditions.
- Be sensitive to the fact that hierarchical structures actually give a sense of stability to Hispanics, even if they are on the bottom of that structure. For this reason, they may be more comfortable speaking to “experts” using terms like “Sir” or “Ma’am” and may have difficulty adjusting to the typical US social order in which people are equals.

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## TIME

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*“Remembering is the hand of God. I remember you, therefore I make you immortal. Recuerdo. I remember. Un recuerdo. A memory. A memento.” Caramelo, p. 194*

*“Chronometric time is a homogeneous succession lacking all particularity. It is always the same, always indifferent to pleasure or pain. Mythological time, on the other hand, is impregnated with all the particulars of our lives: it is as long as eternity or as short as a breath, ominous or propitious, fecund or sterile...Life and time coalesce to form a single whole, an invisible unity.” The Labyrinth of Solitude, p. 209*

Numerous insights related to time and time perception can be taken from the Latin American and US Hispanic works. One important differentiation made between Hispanic and Anglo cultures has always been time. Time can further be divided into time orientation and time perception. Time orientation refers to whether attention is placed most on the past, the present, or the future. Time perception refers to seeing time as either linear or non-linear. Traditionally, it has been accepted that Hispanics are past and present oriented in time, and that they tend to see time in a less linear way, also known as polychronism. All of the novels examined for this project supported these assumptions. Even the style in which the novels are written is a reflection of a very particular view of time.

Many of the novels are written through the point of view of a character’s memory and simultaneously exist in various times. In The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love, for example, the present and the past coexist. The novel is divided into sections which remind

us of the novel's present, like "In the Hotel Splendour 1980", "Sometime later in the night in the Hotel Splendour" and "Toward the end...". At the same time, the entire novel is Cesar Castillo's memory of everything that happened to himself and his brother from their childhood up until that night in the Hotel Splendour. These memories are not told in a linear fashion, but rather are interspersed with flashes of childhood in Cuba and the present time in the hotel. This method of storytelling can be seen in the other novels as well.

Caramelo is told in much the same way, with a very loose sense of time and fluidity in moving between the past and the present as though it is all the same. In a footnote, the narrator explains her reasoning for telling the story as she does: "Because life contains a multitude of stories and not a single strand explains precisely the who of who one is, we have to examine the complicated loops that allowed Regina to become la Señora Reyes" (p. 115).

How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents is told from many different perspectives, and actually works backwards in time. Each daughter has a few chapters in which she tells her story and the story of her family, not as a chronological sequence but as a series of her own memories. The novel begins with Yolanda's return to the Dominican Republic to reclaim her roots, and ends with the story of the girls in the Dominican Republic and the family's decision to leave. In this way, the author is able to show not only a certain non-linearity in time, but also its circularity. The end is the beginning, and Yolanda ends (or begins?) her journey in the Dominican Republic, her home.

The circularity of time is one of the major themes of One Hundred Years of Solitude. Though the story is told in a linear way, the characters seem to be stuck in a vicious circle, merely repeating the stories of their predecessors. Márquez shows his readers that while the outside world follows a linear path, the characters do not. This proves disastrous for them as they are not able to adapt to the changing world. The novel shows the beginning and development of Macondo, the city where the novel is set. As it changes and grows due to the arrival of the train, new technologies and new people, the Buendía family becomes more and more incapable of living in harmony with the outside world. This incapacity to conform to the structures of time ultimately signals the demise of the family. While falling back on the ways of the past allows the Buendías to escape an uncertain future, it also makes progress impossible. At the same time, they are constantly haunted by their

past. Characters who have died come back to haunt the living, who are consequently unable to break with the past and move forward (p. 24).

Octavio Paz and Ilan Stavans discuss Hispanics and time from a more philosophical and academic standpoint. In The Labyrinth of Solitude, Paz discusses Aztec beliefs about time and how they influence modern day Mexican culture. He talks about the Aztec view of time as circular, stating that “time...was not only something living that was born, grew up, decayed and was reborn. It was also a succession that returned: one period of time ended and another came back” (p. 94). Furthermore, Aztec time was closely related to destiny and space. “To be born on a certain day was to pertain to a place, a time, a color, and a destiny” (p. 55). The effects of these beliefs are evident today, both in the literature and in life.

Paz and Stavans also discuss the flow of time for Hispanics. As seen in the last quote above, Paz explains the difference between chronometric time, which he associates with Anglo culture, and mythological time, which he associates with Hispanics. Mythological time cannot be separated from life itself, and takes as long as it needs to. Stavans presents a similar idea in The Hispanic Condition. He refers to time for Hispanics as “slow, mythical, ahistorical” (p. 101) and shares a story told by Carlos Fuentes illustrating how time works in Latin America: “Some time ago, I was traveling in the state of Morelos in central Mexico, looking for the birthplace of Emiliano Zapata, the village of Anenecuilco. I stopped and asked a *campesino*, a laborer of the fields, how far it was to the village. He answered: ‘If you had left at daybreak, you would be there now’” (p. 101).

### **Implications for Marketers**

- Remember that time is perceived very differently in Hispanic culture. Hispanics don’t feel the pressure to do things “now” because their sense of the circularity of time signifies that they will have other opportunities in the future to do the same thing. Marketers may need to emphasize a sense of urgency if they are looking for an immediate action from consumers.
- Time measurement is also notably different between Hispanic and Anglo cultures. The past and the present are not separated in Hispanic culture as they are in Anglo culture. This requires sensitivity on the part of market researchers and customer service representatives who interact with Hispanic consumers, as the way a story is told may be nonlinear and have a loose relationship to time.

- Past and present time orientations, fundamental characteristics of Hispanics, signify that marketers for the insurance and financial services industries, among others, will have to convince their consumers to think about their future. This is also true for health care professionals and real estate professionals. Changing such long-held beliefs is not simple.
- Marketers advertising entertainment or leisure products and services can actually benefit from past and present time orientations to encourage Hispanics to enjoy life today by purchasing their product or using their service.

## CONCLUSION

A marketer's job is to better understand consumers. Marketers who truly understand their target audience will be able to create more powerful and effective marketing strategies which resonate with consumers. In attempting to grasp consumers' wants, needs, values and beliefs, marketers have traditionally turned to market research. While both qualitative and quantitative research can provide important insights to marketers, it still remains an incomplete source for understanding people and cultures at their deepest levels. In order to continue to communicate with audiences in a way which touches them, all those in the fields of marketing and advertising need to constantly search for new avenues and ways of locating insights.

Literature, I believe, is one of those avenues. Literature allows its readers to take off their own shoes, if only for a short time, and experience life through the eyes, ears and heart of someone else. Readers become a part of the story itself and often begin to feel the emotions the characters feel, think about the world from their point of view, and understand why people are the way they are. This means that one need not belong to a particular group of people or culture in order to experience their life and lifestyle. Literature permits us to be, albeit vicariously, Black, Hispanic, homosexual, rich, or crazy without ever leaving our desks. For marketers, this means *experiencing* what consumers think and feel firsthand versus learning about what they what they are hearing and seeing through research.

In the field of Hispanic Marketing Communication, Latin American and US Hispanic literature can help non-Hispanics to better understand and witness the cultural characteristics which have traditionally been associated with Hispanics. Collectivism, destiny, and religion all acquire new life and significance when they are witnessed in specific examples in literature. Though I am not Hispanic, concepts which had previously been foreign to me came to life as I experienced them through the stories, feelings, and lives of the characters in the novels I read. Literature can also help to develop imagery and settings which appeal to Hispanic consumers. At its core, literature *is* the culture of a people, in their own words.

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