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LATINO VOICES OF WORCESTER

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Emily P. Martin
Michael A. Sangillo

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Approved:
Professor H.J. Manzari, IQP Advisor

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Introduction

For decades, scholars of Latino studies have conclusively referred to one definition, that Latinos have ethnic roots originating in Latin American countries; everything else in Latino studies is much more problematic. The Oxford English Dictionary defines *Latino* as “a Latin-American inhabitant of the United States”. The same dictionary also defines *Hispanic* as “pertaining to Spain or its people”, and “a Spanish-speaking person especially one of Latin-American descent living in the United States”. It can be inferred from these definitions that Latinos are recognized as being a part of the larger group Hispanics. “In the past two decades, the term Hispanic has come into general use in the United States to refer to all people in this country whose ancestry is predominantly from one or more Spanish-speaking countries” (Oboler, 1). These two terms are often used interchangeably, without awareness of their differing definitions; however, renowned scholar, Ilan Stavans of Latino Studies at Amherst College, makes the following correlation in his book, The Hispanic Condition, on how Americans use these terms:

Although these terms may seem interchangeable, an attentive ear senses a difference. Preferred by conservatives, the former [Hispanic] is used when the talk is demographics, education, urban development, drugs, and health; the latter [Latino], on the other hand, is the choice of liberals and is frequently used to refer to artists, musicians, and movie stars. (Stavans, 23)

The United States uses these terms to easily encompass this group of Spanish-speaking individuals.

Hispanic is a term selected by the government after Hispanics lobbied successfully to have the government acknowledge that they were a group impacted by prejudiced laws and social systems. It allowed for the government to track the needs of Spanish-speaking people around the country as civil rights laws were being created and enforced. (Vázquez)

It is in the confusion of these subtle distinctions that many take offense to the use of either term. The growth of the Spanish-speaking population has influenced American culture, and American society is slowly learning to accept their changing culture.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Latinos are currently the largest ethnic minority present in the United States, and are also the most rapidly growing ethnic minority in the U.S. today.

The growing proportion of Hispanics in the U.S. population constitutes one of the most dramatic demographic shifts in American history. The number of Hispanics is increasing almost four times as fast as the rest of the population, and they are expected to surpass African-Americans as the largest minority group by 2005. It's projected that nearly 1 of every 4 Americans will be Hispanic by the year 2050, up from 1 in 9 today. Yet other Americans often have no clear idea of just who these 29 million people are. (U.S. News & World Report, May 11, 1998)

The increased numbers of Hispanics has triggered many changes in American culture¹.

BBC News reports, "Spanish has become the most popular foreign language in American high schools and universities. Public officials are also being encouraged to learn the language" (BBC News, November 5, 2003). "Language courses for city employees, especially police, are common in areas with established Spanish-speaking populations. Tucson police, for example, earn extra pay if they become bilingual." (USA Today, December 26, 2006) It is becoming ever present that a balance must be found, forcing adaptations from both the Latinos and the Americans.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the United States experienced what many historians call the "melting pot". A large wave of European immigrants moved to the United States during this period, which sparked a gradual transformation of American

¹ U.S. Latino population: 9,294,509 (1970); 14,603,683 (1980); 22, 354,059 (1990); 35,305,818 (2000)
www.census.gov

culture. At that time, American culture became a montage of the many different cultures.

A century later, the United States is undergoing a second episode of the “melting pot”.

From the data, Americans are now learning that the turn of this century is very much like the turn of the last, a story of the role of immigrants in national life, but this time with immigrants from fundamentally different origins. The impact of this is being felt powerfully in major urban centers, particularly the brawny burghs that first helped define this nation to the rest of the world. (U.S. News & World Report, April 2, 2001)

The mass influx of Latinos has initiated the merging of these two cultures as one. A prime example of this effect is the recent debate over the song, *Nuestro Himno*, the Spanish version of our National Anthem. On April 28, 2006, President Bush, the voice of the American people, conveyed his discontent with the prospect of the National Anthem, an epitome of American culture, becoming a bilingual tribute to the United States. *The New York Times* reports Bush’s belief that “the anthem would not have the same value in Spanish as it did in English” (New York Times, April 29, 2006). The controversy over the Spanish rendition of the National Anthem is a typical example of Latinization, or the process of changing words to make them Spanish in nature. The debate over the National Anthem illustrates both the defiance of the American culture to change, and the influence that the Latinos are having on American culture.

Despite the changes that the American culture is enduring, Latinos experience their own difficulties with assimilating to American life. “Latinos in the U.S. ...find themselves subordinated in the social hierarchy and subjected to various forms of economic, linguistic, racial, or cultural exclusion” (West-Durán, 23). Substantial evidence to Hispanic discrimination, as recognized by the Federal Courts, was the gerrymandering of the voting district boundaries in heavily Hispanic populated areas in the 1960’s.

Diluting effect of minorities' votes by adoption of particular election plan, or gerrymandering of election district, as violation of equal protection clause of Federal Constitution. 27 ALR Fed 29 (USCS Const. Amend. 14, § 5)

Since then, this problem has been corrected; however, Latinos still face challenges, such as the struggle to find desirable and well-paying jobs to sustain themselves. Other challenges include language barriers, and facing the generalized, negative connotations concerning Latino groups.

The city of Worcester, Massachusetts has a large Latino population, about 26,155 people according to the 2000 Census (www.census.gov). This accounts for approximately 15 percent of the total population of Worcester, at about 172,648 people, and it is almost 18 times the population of the Latinos in Worcester in 1970, about 1,486 people (US Bureau of the Census, 1972). A graph featured in Appendix B illustrates the exponential growth that Worcester has experienced since the 1970's.² The population statistics, from 1970-2000, show an increase in each distinguishing group of Latinos as listed on the census: Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and other.³ Puerto Ricans are the majority group among the Latinos in Worcester, and the Census Bureau projects that the entire Latino population will continue to increase exponentially.

Research has indicated that there are insufficient amounts of documentation of the origin of the Latino community in Worcester, and their integration into American culture. We believe that the city of Worcester serves as a model for other Latino communities in the Northeastern Region of the United States. We have found that Worcester has a similar trend line in Hispanic population growth as Springfield, Massachusetts and Providence, Rhode Island. Similar assumptions could be applied to Springfield, Massachusetts and

² See Appendix B for illustrations of Hispanic immigration trends for the following cities: Worcester, MA, Springfield, MA, Rochester, NY, Providence, RI, Union City, NJ, and Hartford, CT.

³ For additional population statistics refer to Appendix A.

Providence, Rhode Island, because the Northeastern Region of the United States was regarded as a prominent industrial area, but now it has redeveloped itself as being in the service industry sector. Reports on Latino employment in the manufacturing sector for Worcester in 2006 were collected by the Worcester City Managers Office. This information is solely based on Latinos who are registered with this office and cannot be considered all inclusive for the Latino population of Worcester; however, the information clearly shows a shift in employment from the manufacturing industry to the service industry. The industrial boom explains the original immigration of Hispanics to this area, but it does not explain why there continues to be an influx. Can the growth be solely attributed to the second and third generations of Hispanic immigrants or are many still immigrating? If they are immigrating, what is the attraction to Worcester and other similar cities nearby? Has the Hispanic community reestablished themselves from the industrial workers to a new area of employment? Many scholars of Latino studies are finding that these questions have gone unanswered; so, it is our hope to answer these questions and gather the necessary pieces of Worcester Latino culture, by means of interviews and historical documents, and compile them into one resource, the Latino Voices of Worcester.

Literature Review

Analyzing relevant literature resources is a pertinent step in defining, developing, and deducing a research topic. Defining the topic facilitates a complete understanding of the goal at hand. Developing the topic aids in encompassing the breadth of information. Deducing the topic utilizes the information to draw new conclusions. The relevant literature for this topic comprises a broad spectrum of Latino life, including information under the common themes of: population, cultural assimilation, and Latino literature.

Part One: Population

In order to understand the Latino community in Worcester, it is necessary to first look at the population trend lines. Various census data and state documents provide an inside look as to when and why Hispanics came to Worcester. These documents also help to explain the reasons for the rapidly growing population of Hispanics in the United States. It is vital to answer these questions before delving into the current status of Hispanics in Worcester.

As submitted by The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Commission on Hispanic Affairs, Hispanics in Massachusetts: A Demographic Analysis (1986) organizes and analyzes the Hispanic population data for the state of Massachusetts. It attributes the growing Hispanic population to both immigration and a higher average number of children per woman. “Hispanic women bear an average of three to four children each, a rate almost identical to the fertility of the White women during the baby boom of the 1940’s and 1950’s” (MA Comm. on Hispanic Affairs 1). The analysis shows that the majority of working Hispanics in Massachusetts have low-paying positions in “unstable

industries”. It also shows that the two most popular job types among Hispanics are the manufacturing industries (41.3%) and the service industries (30.2%).

In the study, Worcester Ethnic Groups: a Bicentennial View, Cohen writes about the origins of the Black and Latino communities in Worcester. The first census held in 1790 revealed that there were 51 blacks in Worcester. In the 1850’s and 60’s, Blacks accounted for about one percent of the population of Worcester. After ten decades of the Black population remaining at one percent, it reached two percent of Worcester’s population between the 1960’s and 70’s. Cohen mentions that it may have been the presence of the Ku Klux Klan in Worcester in the 1920’s that prevented the numbers of Blacks from growing. The 1960 U.S. Census revealed about 24 Spanish-speaking people in Worcester. This number climbed to an impressive 1,700 people in the 1970 U.S. Census. Cohen writes that many of the Black and Latino newcomers in the city of Worcester came from New York or another city in the United States, as opposed to having originally immigrated directly to Worcester. Jobs in Worcester seemed to be the most popular attraction for immigrants.

By far the largest numbers in all earlier migrations came at a time when Worcester was still in the process of industrialization so that jobs were in most cases readily available. (Cohen 48)

Since then, the industry has declined and jobs are not as readily available, but the numbers of immigrants are still on the rise.

Melvin Delgado notes the attraction of Hispanic families to Worcester in his study, A Socio-Demographic Study of Spanish Families in Main Street South, Worcester, Massachusetts. “Employment opportunities are the main attraction for 35.8 percent of the

fathers and 27.7 percent of the mothers” (Delgado 11). Other attractions noted include: family and educational opportunities.

These documents enhanced the understanding of the Hispanic population trends for Worcester, Massachusetts and four surrounding communities. The census data showed that the initial influx of Hispanic migrations to the Worcester area occurred mostly around the 1970’s and that the population has been growing exponentially ever since. State documents provided insight to the reasons for migration to Worcester. It showed that employment opportunities were the main attraction for men. Worcester being an industrial area attracted Hispanics to the manufacturing sector of the job market. Answering the questions pertaining to when and why Hispanics moved to Worcester built a foundation that will help answer questions about the status of Hispanics in Worcester today.

Part Two: Cultural Assimilation

As the Hispanic population increases, the Hispanic people collectively affect American culture. Pieces of Hispanic culture are slowly interweaving into every part of American culture: media, arts, literature, entertainment, food, politics, and many more. American society is enduring a second round of “the melting pot” but this time they are not giving in so easily. Society’s fight against Latinization takes a toll on the Hispanic citizens of the United States.

The article “A Nation of New Cities”, by Angie Cannon; Kit Roane; and Stephen Sawick of *U.S. News & World Report*, identifies the effects that the mass influx of Hispanic immigrants has had on specific cities in the United States. Some cities like Hartford have endured negative changes, like the erosion of its population.

Hartford, which was among the nation's wealthiest communities a century ago, has lost 13 percent of its population since 1990 as 18,000 people repeated a troubling pattern: fleeing in search of better schools and less crime. (U.S. News & World Report, April 2, 2001)

While other cities like New York "would be struggling if not for immigration" (U.S. News & World Report, April 2, 2001). The United States has been both benefited and impaired from the large waves of immigration that have occurred throughout the 20th century.

"Latino Culture Sweeps across the US", an article by BBC News, is about the growing presence of the Latino culture in the United States. Latinos, now the largest ethnic minority in the United States, have made their presence known in the American culture through various outreaches such as: Spanish-speaking television and radio networks, an increase in the study of Spanish as a foreign language in schools and universities, bonuses for public workers that are able to speak Spanish, political debates and children's cartoons offered in Spanish, and many more. These changes suggest that there is an inevitable shift occurring in the American culture to accommodate to this growing minority, something that has never occurred before in American culture.

In the article "Bush Enters the Anthem Fight on Language", Jim Rutenberg of the *New York Times* reports President Bush's disapproval on the song "Nuestro Himno", a Spanish rendition of the United States' National Anthem. "Immigrants should learn to sing the National Anthem in English...the anthem would not have the same value in Spanish as it did in English" (Rutenberg 2006) Bush's disapproval was contested by Adam Kidron, the chief executive of Urban Box Office Records, the label that released "Nuestro Himno". Kidron believes that this version will help Spanish-speakers better understand the song and its importance in relation to American culture.

The article “Hispanic Influences on Culture and Politics” from Worldbook Encyclopedia explains how Hispanic culture is influencing American culture. Hispanic is a term that encompasses many different Spanish heritages, but it is the similarities among the Hispanic groups that influence American culture.

Many Hispanic Americans feel that they should not lose contact with their cultures or their language. Instead, they seek to be bicultural and bilingual. (Hispanic Influences on Culture and Politics, Worldbook 1999)

Examples of Hispanic influence on American culture today are present in dance, the salsa; music, artists such as Gloria Estefan and Carlos Santana; literature; media and entertainment; holidays such as Cinco de Mayo; and sports figures, Roberto Clemente and Jose Canseco. The political influence of Hispanics on the United States, an area that in the past had little influence, is beginning to make its mark. After gerrymandering was put to a stop in the 1960’s, more Hispanics are being elected into office. As the numbers of Hispanics increase, their influence on American culture grows stronger.

Heise’s article, “Hispanic American Influence on the U.S. Food Industry”, discusses the increased selection of Hispanic foods in restaurant and grocery stores. She attributes this increase to the growing Hispanic population and their “spending patterns”. “Hispanic purchasing power has influenced the marketplace. Hispanic shoppers spend more on food purchases because their families are usually larger. Hispanic families are more likely than other families to prepare and serve food at home” (Heise 2002).

The article “Hispanics’ Don’t Exist”, by Linda Robinson of *U.S. News & World Report*, refutes the label “Hispanic” and identifies this group of people by their country of origin. U.S. News pinpointed 17 Latino subcultures within the United States. Each subculture is recognized within the article. Many commonalities of each group are

revealed. For example, Cubans have the highest income of any Hispanic group, and Puerto Ricans have the highest rates of poverty, unemployment, and households headed by single females. The similarities between these subcultures are nominal. Each subculture within the Latino identity has its own uniqueness.

Ilan Stavans's book, The Hispanic Condition, discusses the similarities and differences between the cultures of five Hispanic groups: Cubans, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, Central and South Americans, and Spaniards. The similarities between these groups help to define the influence that Hispanics have on American culture, while the differences explain why it is so important for them not to be classified under the single name Hispanic.

Oboler's book, Ethnic Labels, Latino Lives, explains how the cultural differences between "Hispanic" people from different countries falsify what it means to be called Hispanic. The term Hispanic is used to unite Spanish-speaking people under a single label. Oboler exposes her readers to the reality that this label makes it difficult for these Spanish-speaking people to assimilate into American culture.

Savage Inequalities, by Jonathan Kozol, analyzes a form of discrimination that is unknown to many. Kozol writes about the large gap of funding for particular school districts in several cities in the United States. He finds that within the same city, certain schools receive less funding than others, and the schools that typically receive less funding have a high African-American and Latino population. He explains how the lack of money affects the children of these schools. Many of the children are discouraged, and don't receive the education that they are entitled to. This form of discrimination leads to the continued suppression of these ethnic groups.

Life on the Hyphen, a book written by Gustavo Pérez Firmat, is a literary work that enlightens its readers of the life of a Cuban immigrant. This book defines some key terms that aid in the understanding of what occurs when one must adapt to a new culture. The first term, one-and-a-halfer, describes the state that a young immigrant is in when they are born in another country but move to the United States at a young and impressionable age. “Because this group falls somewhere between the first and second generations. The Cuban sociologist Rubén Rumbaut has labeled it the ‘1.5’ or ‘one-and-a-half’ generation.” (Firmat 4) The second term, biculturation, explains the transition of a “one-and-a-halfer” from the culture of their country of origin to the United States.

Acculturation stresses the acquisition of culture, transculturation calls attention to the passage from one culture to another. Drawing on these two notions, I will use the term ‘biculturation’ to designate the type of blending that is specific, or at least characteristic, of the one-and-a-half generation. In my usage, biculturation designates not only contact of cultures; in addition, it describes a situation where the two cultures achieve a balance that makes it difficult to determine which is the dominant and which is the subordinate culture. (Firmat 6)

The use of these terms allows the reader to better understand the struggles of adapting to a culture.

“When the Valley Burned”, an article by Chet Williamson of the Worcester Magazine, is about the integration of Hispanics into the Worcester Community. Great Brook Valley, a housing complex owned by the Worcester Housing Authority, was and still is a highly populated Hispanic community in Worcester. In the 1970’s, Hispanics in the community were being harassed by police officers. After a Hispanic man was shot and killed by an officer, the community rioted until the police officers were removed from assignment within the community. This riot prompted many changes in how Hispanics were treated in the Worcester community.

The theme of cultural assimilation present in this literature not only explains the struggle that Americans are having with the growing Hispanic influence on their culture, but also the struggles of Hispanic people adapting to a “superficial” American way of life. Many Hispanics struggle with the American stereotypes with which they have been labeled. They live with the common classification as “Hispanic” rather than being classified by the country that they originated from. Americans take a single common root, the Spanish language, and label these people collectively as Hispanics. Along with the term Hispanic come negative connotations, which suppress this group of people and inhibit them from smoothly conforming to American culture. This in turn brings American society to its present state, adapting to the integration of Hispanic culture into American culture.

Part Three: Latino Literature

Latino literature is becoming more popular in North American society. A common theme included in their writing explains their experiences of transitioning into American culture. Many Latino/a writers use literature to expose their hardships of assimilating into a culture that they originally thought would be the end to their search for a better life.

West-Durán’s essay “Crossing Borders, Creative Disorders: Latino Identities and Writing” discusses how the Latino identity plays a role in their writing. The Latino identity varies from person to person, but more so from country to country. The essay explains different stereotypes of Latinos from different countries. West-Durán also notes how the Latino writers describe these stereotypes in their writing. West-Durán primarily

focuses on how the negative connotations associated with the Hispanic ethnic group as a whole affects their assimilation into American culture.

Torres-Saillant's essay "The Latino Autobiography" analyzes Latino literature from the aspect of autobiographies. Many Latino authors write autobiographies about their hunt for the American experience, and the struggles they are faced with in search of it. As many have already stated, the writing usually differs based on the author's country of origin. This makes sense for autobiographies, because waves of immigrants from specific countries came at different periods in United States history. They also immigrated to different places, which were usually based upon a family's needs or preferences. This variance presents a different story, and can even offer a different perspective from each author.

In the essay "Hispanic American Literature: Divergence and Commonality", Cuban-American author, Virgil Suarez, explains Hispanic American literature of today. He finds that most of the literature "confronts issues of identity, assimilation, cultural heritage and artistic expression." An example of this is the play, "Mambo Kings", put on by Teatro Campesino and his theater troupe about the plight of migrant workers. Suarez notes that while the literature of authors from Mexico, or Puerto Rico, or any other Central American country differs, all of the authors are linked under the same title of "Hispanic American literature" due one common aspect, bilingualism.

In the essay, A Poet's Truth: Conversations with Latino/Latina Poets, Bruce Allen Dick writes about how Latino and Latina poets view themselves within American poetry. This information, gathered through interviews with poets of Latin American origin,

addresses the importance of the topics that many Latino and Latina poets write about.

Dick writes,

These authors addressed both how to preserve their native heritage and how best to assimilate into their newly adopted land...the authors celebrate their varied heritages and work to preserve them through writing, teaching, and public speaking. (Dick 2002)

In the essay, “The Poetry Heritage of Puerto Rico”, Gray summarizes “the themes of island poetry and the movements that influenced Puerto Rican poetry in the United States.” (Gray 1) Many Puerto Rican poets incorporate decima, a form of poetry brought to the island by Spanish colonists. They also incorporate African influences due to the forced African immigration in the 1520’s. Gray identifies that New York City is the most prevalent Puerto Rican inhabited area in the United States. The Puerto Ricans in New York identify themselves under one name, *Nuyorican*. Many Puerto Ricans believe “that by giving up their Puerto Rican identification for the generic label of Hispanic, they would be losing part of their self identity.” (Gray 4)

In the essay, “Thirty years of Hispanic Literature in the United States”, Dr. Fernández writes about the increased prevalence of Hispanic literature in American society. “Hispanic writing is projected to become the most vital, innovative literature of the United States in the 21st century” (Fernández). He notes the differences in writing between Puerto Ricans and Cubans. He also states that the majority of Hispanic literature is written in English with the incorporation of some Spanish.

Analysis of Latino/a literature not only reveals the common themes in Latino/a writing, but also the discrepancies in writing between Latino/a writers that originated from different countries. It is not uncommon to read a book written by a Latino/a writer that is written entirely in English. Occasionally, like in the works of Ilan Stavans, Spanish

words are tossed in, which promotes the usage of “Spanglish”. Latino literature is enlightening American society to the common struggle that most Latinos endure throughout their process of assimilation.

The foregoing literature resources answer many questions, define many topics, and reveal growing trends. The United States Hispanic population is on the rise due to both the higher fertility rate statistics of Hispanic women, and the continued immigration of Hispanic people⁴. Their attraction to Worcester is attributed to employment opportunities in the manufacturing and service industries, and the similar population growths for four surrounding communities can be explained by modeling Worcester. Cultural assimilation is an extensively discussed topic among those of Hispanics. Evidence of this can be found in explanations of the struggles that Hispanics have with adapting to American culture. American society’s ardent resistance to change is also explained with examples like the opposition to a Spanish rendition of the United States National Anthem. Finally, Hispanic expression is illuminated in the stories of the common plights of Hispanics in assimilating to American culture.

⁴ Excerpt from the document: [Hispanics in Massachusetts: A Demographic Analysis](#)

Methodology:

For this IQP, “The Latino Voices of Worcester”, we planned to explain the actions of “Latino Assimilation” in Worcester, Massachusetts over the past century. This methodology section will describe the procedure used, in order to conduct the proper research, which will provide information in the following areas: Latino immigration into Worcester, Latino influence on Worcester in respect to crime, politics, culture, business, and food, and Latino history in Worcester.

Our research is part of a larger project in which Professor H.J. Manzari of Worcester Polytechnic Institute is trying organize a way to reach out to the Latino community of Worcester and finally piece together their history. Through our research, we believe that we have also found a way to describe four surrounding heavily populated Latino communities in the Northeast Region of the United States. We believe that by researching the actions and reactions of the Worcester community, we can create a well-rounded model that will also describe these four other communities. This will be based on a certain set of standards that will help us identify if our model can describe other cities. These standards include population growth, cultural reactions, and many more to be described in the later parts of this methodology section.

Introduction

The introduction section of this IQP, “The Latino Voices of Worcester”, allows us to express what our expectations of this project are. In order to really understand what our project was really about we decided to begin a large barrage of background research. From this research, we were able to draw our own conclusions and support other writers’ claims and conclusions.

After describing the purpose of our project through the introduction, we described some of the major issues in “cultural assimilation”. This is where we began to delve into the literature, describing how Latinos are assimilating into American society. The United States Census information from the years of 1940 to 2000 provided population information for the United States and the cities of Worcester, Massachusetts; Springfield, Massachusetts; Hartford, Connecticut; Union City, New Jersey; Providence, Rhode Island; and Rochester, New York. The census information from 1940 to 1960 did not provide accurate data of the Hispanic population. The Census Bureau only began to emphasize the Hispanic population in the 1970’s, once they realized the numbers for this group were rapidly increasing. The ratio of Hispanics to total population was calculated for each city from 1970 to 2000. The same ratio was calculated for the United States as a whole from 1970 to 2000. This information was used to create trend lines for the immigration of Hispanics over that past 30 years. The trend lines show an exponential growth of the Hispanic population for the United States and the cities of Worcester, Massachusetts, Springfield, Massachusetts, and Providence, Rhode Island. Since Springfield, Massachusetts, and Providence, Rhode Island most closely resembled the trend line of Worcester, Massachusetts, we decided to further investigate relevant statistics for the Latino communities of these two cities. The relevant statistics show that there was a shift in the labor market for Worcester from the manufacturing sector to the service sector of the industry.

Next, we compared the U.S. census data with the Worcester census data to see if there were any similar trends in population growth. Although they both seemed to grow exponentially over time, we began to realize that migration into the U.S. happened at

different times and for different reasons. For example, we found that Mexicans migrated into Texas for better financial opportunities, Cubans came into Florida with a large influx due to Fidel Castro's reign, and Puerto Ricans migrated into New York with large quantities for familial reasons and employment opportunities.

Because of the multitude of reasons for immigration to the United States, we thought that maybe we could compare Worcester to four surrounding cities between 1970 and 2000. The comparison would solely be based off their U.S. Census data and their similar reasons for the influx of Latino immigration. This opened a whole new area of research which we did not plan to conduct in the beginning, so instead of allowing it to govern the majority of our research, we decided to rely more on the U.S. Census reports for similar trend lines. Next, we were challenged to find other sources of information to base our claims of labeling Worcester as a model for the four surrounding cities.

We found that the Worcester Public Library contained an area designated and named "The Worcester Room". This room contained all the written history of Worcester that the library could find and had limited access. We found this resource through the recommendation of a writer from the Worcester Magazine. After searching many newspaper clippings and historical documents, we were able to draw some conclusions with substantial support about the reasons for migration into Worcester. While this information was helpful, it was dated. The statistics that we found on labor markets and fertility rates of Hispanics for the state of Massachusetts was from a document that was published in 1986. We therefore had to look elsewhere for a more recent source of this information. We found more recent data from the 2000 Census, and when compared to the 1986 data it showed a large shift in the labor market percentages.

Resources allocated in the Worcester Room of the Worcester Public Library provided evidence that jobs were the main attraction to Worcester for men. We also learned that the highest percentage of Latino held jobs were in the manufacturing industry. Since the Northeast Region of the United States is known for its manufacturing and textile factories, this led us to believe that Worcester could be considered a model for heavily populated Latino cities located in the Northeastern Region of the United States.

Literature Review

The literature review section is quite important. Since it helps explain how all of our research and pertinent work of other writers can all be interlaced with our study of Latinos in Worcester. We used libraries such as the Worcester Public Library and the George C. Gordon Library for research on previous newspaper clippings, written literature, and U.S. Census data. We also used the Internet as a source for research, because of its vast amount of resources and ease of use.

By using the written work of other writers, we were able to help support some of our claims about reasons for Latino migration. The literature review was written in a way that all the writings were summarized and interlaced into one piece. The organization of this review was sectioned off into three major parts, which included cultural assimilation, population, and Latino literature. Each summary was aligned in place according to their importance so that the review would flow nicely.

Interviewing Process

A list of interviewees was compiled based on the responses we received. Those who were born, raised, or currently live in Worcester were preferred. The interviews were primarily used to learn about the Latino history in Worcester from a first person

perspective. During each interview, we video-recorded the interviewee with their consent and asked them a series of questions. Every question asked was used to either piece together how the person felt about the Worcester community, or in order to receive answers to important questions. For example, we asked each interviewee if they had ever felt discriminated and/or excluded because of their ethnic background. This question was used in order to judge how well Hispanics are being accepted into the Worcester community. One question that was regrettably not included in the interviews was, asking how many siblings the interviewee had. We would have liked to have this information to support the statistics that we gathered that stated Hispanics typically have larger families than average American family.

The interviewing process included coordination between many people, including Professor H.J. Manzari who recommended a list of Latinos in Worcester. Our interviewees were mostly comprised of the well-educated side of the Latinos community in Worcester. We felt that they might have a different view of the Latino community and the rest of Worcester, compared to the less-educated Hispanics residing in Worcester, Massachusetts.

Next we transcribed each interview and analyzed each person's reaction to certain questions. By transcribing the interviews, we are providing a written documentation of the results. The interview questions, interview release form, and interview transcriptions can be seen in the following appendices: Appendix C, Appendix D, Appendix E and Appendix F.

The interviews were pertinent to this project because it filled the gap where documentation was lacking from our preliminary research. These interview videos will

also to be used in another IQP group of “The Latino Voices of Worcester”, that Professor H.J. Manzari is advising, in which they plan to upload our videos to a central website for others to see.

As our research progressed, we realized that many modifications needed to be made to the procedure. The first change required the use of more than just the U.S. Census information for Worcester alone; so, we gathered data on the Hispanic population of the United States as a whole. This allowed us to compare Worcester to the United States during the analysis process. After finding the U.S. Hispanic population from the 1970’s to 2000 accurately, we decided to record population data for four surrounding cities as well. After creating trend lines for the population data for the four cities, we realized that the information could be used for local comparison to Worcester. By doing substantial background research, we found a relationship between the rapid increases of the Hispanic population in Worcester. Finally, we interviewed 9 Hispanics living in the Worcester community. This allowed us to get a sense of their attachment to Worcester, whether it was for financial, familial, or fond reasons. With all of the information gathered, we believe that we have created a stable model that can be used as the foundation of the Hispanic history of Worcester, Massachusetts.

Analysis

The compilation of both the nine Worcester citizens that we interviewed and the three relevant, additional interviews have given us ample material to draw on some key concepts of the Latino community of Worcester, and answer many of the questions that were posed at the beginning of this project. Analysis of the interviews has allowed us to challenge certain literature, and support others. Most of the concepts from the interviews are drawn on the basis of age and amount of time in the United States. We were able to draw the most efficient information by separating the interviewees by whether they were native to their country of origin, first generation, one-and-a-half generation, or second generation Americans. The areas of analysis include: biculturation; preservation of language, politics, and family life; attraction to Worcester; the “Latino Community” of Worcester; and the term Hispanic as a label.

The most important information collected from the interviews was the idea of biculturation. “Biculturation designates not only contact of cultures; in addition, it describes a situation where the two cultures achieve a balance that makes it difficult to determine which is the dominant and which is the subordinate culture.” (Firmat 6) We observed that many of the interviewees feel connected to their culture; however, most do not keep their culture. Of the twelve interviews conducted, eleven of the interviewees claimed to have a connection with their country of origin. Four of the interviewees are native to their country of origin, two are first generation Americans, three are one-and-a-half generation Americans, and three are second generation Americans. We found that the connection to culture was a function of the generation and the frequency of visitation to the country of origin. Based on the interviews results, the interviewees that are native

to their country of origin were able to support their claim of connection by elaborating on many similarities and differences between their culture and the American culture, whereas those who were first and second generation Americans typically had difficulty answering the question, which resulted in vague and incomplete responses. We found that the one-and-a-half generation Americans knew more about their country of origin than the first and second generation Americans, having lived in their country of origin for the length of time, but less than the interviewees that are native to their country of origin. The interviewees who are native to their country of origin were able to elaborate on the political similarities and differences between their country and the United States, the one-and-a-half generation Americans knew a little bit about the politics of their country but more about the food and the traditions, and the first and second generation Americans typically only spoke about food, and some about traditions. Those who regularly visited their country of origin typically knew more about their native culture than those who had never been to their native country. This pattern of cultural awareness is analogous to that of the preservation of their native language.

Whether or not the interviewee has preserved their native language is an additional indication of their connection to their culture. Again, eleven of the twelve interviewees felt connected to their culture; however only eight of these people speak their native language fluently. The other four seldom speak it, but have a good understanding. Of the four interviewees that seldom speak their native language, three are second generation Americans, and one is a first generation American. In our interview with Arlen Acevedo, she makes a strong connection between family life and preservation of language.

But some kids here, they lose their Spanish language. It is really sad. Yeah, especially from the parents, Spanish, and English from the child. They understand everything you say, but because they don't practice it, that is how they lose. They stop talking, but if your parents demand that you also keep speaking it, then at least you don't lose it. So, it depends on how smart the parents are, and not to let their kids lose their language. (Arlen Acevedo)

We have found this statement to be true within our interviews. For example, Ronald Mendez, a first generation American, speaks his native language fluently. In his household, their native language is the only language spoken, as preferred by his parents. In addition, they frequently visit El Salvador, their country of origin. His frequent visits to his country of origin allowed him to truly connect to his culture. During the interview, he was able to elaborate on every question referring to the culture of El Salvador. The preservation of native language is dependent upon the exposure to it. Those who have spent time in their country of origin typically speak their native language fluently. Furthermore, those who were expected to speak their native language at home have retained it.

The data on the political views of the interviewees was relatively strewn. Political opinions not only differ from person to person, but also from culture to culture. This topic was of interest because of literature sources that claimed that the political influence of Hispanics in the United States is quite small but it is beginning to increase. The source attributed the little political influence to a lack of interest. Some of the interviewees responded in tandem with this claim:

We don't really do much in El Salvador, politically speaking...so they come over here and they sort of apply the same things...a lot of people are apathetic about it because...back there they didn't do anything, even more less so when they are here because they can say, 'Well, oh, I am also here in this country so there is nothing I can do to affect things over there'. (Ronald Mendez)

I found that at least 80 percent of the Puerto Ricans here do not have a clue of what politics is in Puerto Rico. (Ingrid Matos-Nin)

We don't have any connection really when we are in the island; with the politics of the United States...Puerto Ricans do not vote for the President of the United States...they won't ask down there, 'Are you a Republican or a Democrat?' because that's not the issue. They will say the three parties, 'Are you *a la independista, estadista, o estado librista?*' (Michelle Davila Gonzales)

These responses reflect the political differences between the United States and various Latin American cultures. Even Puerto Rico, a territory of the United States, has completely different political issues from the United States. Of the interviewees that were able to comment on politics, most validated the theory that Hispanics are apathetic to politics in general.

The most validated point, from the interview results, was the typical family life of a Hispanic family. Every interviewee commented on how close their family is. The common term used, "close-knit", was explained by the typical occurrence of extended family living in the same house, or very nearby, and having an important role in their life.

I even lived in the same house as an aunt and uncle and cousin, and an uncle lived across the street. So, extended family is an important role...I think that extended family plays a larger role in influencing how children are raised and its not uncommon for people to take care of other people's children. (Tiana Carrasquillo)

It's very, very tight knit. Pretty much everybody knows what's going on in everybody else's lives. We talk a lot. Have a lot of big family parties. (Natalie Velazquez)

Some commented on how aunts and uncles were regarded as having as much authority as their parents during their upbringing.

It's not like you can get away with doing something when you are with your aunt, or uncle, or with you older cousins, than just with your parents. I mean they are all, anybody older than you. Basically, you just have to make sure you listen, because...you know they basically have as much authority as your regular parents. Like when I was growing up, I would listen to my aunts, if not I would get it. (E.J. Ofarrill)

Due to the unanimous response from our interviewees, we feel that this type of family life is a cultural characteristic common to Latin American families.

One literature source attributed that the larger Hispanics families are influencing the United States Food Industry. They claimed that the spending patterns of the Hispanic families and the growing Hispanic population are the basis for the increased selection of Hispanic foods in grocery stores and restaurants. In addition, they claim that Hispanic shoppers spend more on food because of their larger households. Two interviewees support this assertion:

You go to the supermarket, now you'll find products from Latin America...I really didn't notice but you go to Shaw's, they have a whole section. I was like 'Wow, they didn't have that a couple of years ago.' So in a sense, there has been more acceptance. But hey, you could be cynical and think, 'Well, they are doing it for profit'. (Ronald Mendez)

I have all of my Goya products. So, I eat exactly as home...If you want to eat real Puerto Rican, you can just go to one of the little restaurants they have here. (Michelle Davila Gonzales)

This shows that the United States Food Industry is conforming to the needs of the Hispanic population. Furthermore, it provides another example of the growing influence of Hispanics on American culture.

The results of the interviews have collectively supported the information from Hispanics in Massachusetts: A Demographic Analysis, which analyzes the attraction of Latinos to Worcester. The percentages in the analysis, which show job opportunities and family as being the largest attraction to Worcester until the mid 1980's, were analogous to the typical answers that we received for the reason that a person or family moved to Worcester. A common theme was that a family moved to Worcester not only because of their family, but also because of the prospect of a job. Typically, a family member

already in the area would relay to the extended family that jobs were bountiful in the area. This type of family connectivity supports the theory of close-knit families as a cultural characteristic of Latin American families.

When we asked the interviewees about the “Latino Community” of Worcester, we received many different responses. Many of the interviewees stated that the community is very diverse and very spread out. The idea of a community is more or less a name given to a similar group of people in the area. It has implications that all Latinos in Worcester live in the same area; however, that is simply not the case. The Latinos are spread out around Worcester, and even the Greater Worcester area.

There is no such thing as a Latino Community. There is no geographical focus. If anything there are multiple communities of Latinos in Worcester. The concept of a Latino community came about in politics. They have a couple of representatives and ask them to speak for all. It represents the traditional position of politicians. It’s a very selective representation. (Rosa Carrasquillo)

The definition of the “Latino Community of Worcester” is a collective and diverse group of Latin Americans throughout the city of Worcester; however, using the label of “Latino Community” can give the wrong impression when used out of context.

The negative connotations concerned with the idea of Hispanic or Latino as a label is a debatable topic within this group of people. While much of the literature read prior to conducting the interviews for this project indicated that many Latin American immigrants in the United States take offense to one or both of the labels, Hispanic or Latino, the responses that we received completely discredited the literature that we read. Every interviewee responded with their preference between the two words, and indicated that they took no offense to the other term. On the other hand, there are terms that do offend Latinos. One interviewee stated:

If one's race is like Puerto Rican and you call them Salvadorian or Mexican then that's when they get a little offended, so that's the difference basically. But other than that, usually we are just Hispanic or Latino and that doesn't really bother us. (E.J. Ofarrill)

Labels can carry negative connotations; however, the results of our interviews show that the label Hispanic or Latino is simply a word to collectively describe a group of people that speak the same language; it carries no negative connotations.

One article, "Hispanics' Don't Exist" by Linda Robinson of *U.S. News & World Report*, claims that this group of people should be referred to by their country of origin, rather than the label "Hispanic". She then goes on to state characteristics of certain Latin American subcultures. She gives examples of Cubans and Puerto Ricans: Cubans have the highest income of any Hispanic group; and Puerto Ricans have the highest rates of poverty, unemployment, and households headed by single females. Only one Cuban was interviewed; therefore, we were not able to conclude whether or not the income of Cubans in Worcester is in fact higher than the average Hispanic income. Of the nine interviews conducted, seven were Puerto Rican; and from the gathered information, it was not apparent that any of the households were headed by a single female, nor were any of the interviewees unemployed. The results of our interviews neither support nor refute these claims due to both the small sample size, and the distorted group of interviewees.

While this sample of interviews is too little to make generalizations about the entire Latino population of Worcester, it has portrayed certain commonalities that may or may not hold true to the population. We believe that the arrival of Latinos not only helped Worcester grow economically, but they also increased the cultural diversity in the area. Prior to the arrival of Latinos, Worcester was a city predominantly inhabited by

citizens of European descent. The manufacturing boom in the area was the primary attraction for Latinos. This influx improved the economy of Worcester and introduced a cultural diversity to the city. In addition to these speculations, our interviews show that most of the Latino immigration into the United States has already occurred. Many of our interviewees are first and second generation Americans, and most have moved to Worcester from another city in the United States. Many stated that they came to Worcester for either the prospect of a job or family. The interviewees expressed various opinions about politics; a few related the low Hispanic political influence to their lack of interest for it. The literature sources that present the label Hispanic as having negative connotations within the Latino population were unanimously negated by the responses of the interviewees. In addition, the interviews show startling similarities in the description of family life as being “close-knit”. Finally, connections were made between biculturation and the preservation of native language based on the amount of exposure to American culture versus the amount of exposure to the culture of their country of origin.

Conclusion

For some time now, there has been a significant confusion about the terms Hispanic and Latino. The terms are used to identify a group of people that have a Latin-American background, meaning they have ancestry that can be traced back to one or more Latin-American countries.⁵ We introduced this topic with uncertainty, thinking that the term Hispanic would be offensive to the people that this label has been applied. Instead, through a small sample of interviews, we found that many Hispanic people believe that this term was given to them by the United States Government and they, in no way, find it offensive. The two terms have clearly been used interchangeably, but it seems as though these terms are used more often in certain contexts than others. For example, we have found that government uses the label, Hispanic, in statistical analysis, as it was defined in the mid 20th century. The term Latino is more often used in the context of art, creativity, music, acting, and more similar areas. Some indicate that the term Hispanic is often used when reporting crime, for example, which in turn gives the label, Hispanic, a negative connotation.

The U.S. Census Bureau states that Hispanics are currently the largest minority present in the United States. The U.S. Census Bureau also claims that they are the fastest growing ethnic minority, and with this rapidly changing demographic, they are hastily changing American culture as we know it today. In the beginning of the United States development, the country had undergone the Melting Pot Theory. Through research we have found that this Melting Pot Theory is occurring once again, but at a rate that is much slower as compared to the first occurrence of the Melting Pot Theory. This seems to be

⁵ From [Ethnic Labels, Latino Lives](#) by Suzanne Oboler.

due to the resistivity of change that the American culture is carrying out, because it has developed a strong foundation on which it stands. One example that can be seen in Worcester and almost every major city is how grocery stores are now accommodating Hispanic foods. Some might claim that this is due to the business of supply and demand, which in fact seems to be true, because Hispanic's cultural foods are very much an important part of their day to day lives. Another important example was the Spanish version the American National Anthem, although it was never officially declared, it did raise a high level of controversy.

By carrying out a small sample of interviews we were able to get a brief look into how connected Hispanics are with the culture of origin. There were many connection factors that we analyzed from our interview transcripts; noting the important factors as political knowledge, cultural foods, traditions, family life, and religion. We found that Hispanics that were born and raised in their country of origin tended to have a better knowledge of the political background. For example Ingrid Matos-Nin mentions that she lived in Puerto Rico for approximately 40 years, and she was in fact very knowledgeable of the political stance in Puerto Rico still to this day, as compared to Tiana Carrasquillo who knew very little about just the same thing. Another important factor in most Hispanic families is cultural foods and traditions that play a large role in family practice. We gathered enough information to claim that as more Hispanic successive generations were raised in the United States they began to lose the more subtle cultural connections, but still maintain important family/cultural practices. We believe that with each following generation that is raised in the United States they will soon lose most of their connections and become "Americanized". Biculturation is described as the point when two cultures

have bonded so much that one can no longer identify the dominant and subordinate cultures.⁶ This term is used to explain the reasons for why a single person might have lost their primary cultural practices, because they themselves will become bicultural.

Due to the lack of available information, we were unable to definitively conclude on whether or not the Latino population of Worcester can be used as a model for Springfield, Massachusetts and Providence, Rhode Island. Despite the lack of information on fertility rates and Hispanic employment, we were able to find information that supports the claim that the Latino population of Worcester shifted from the manufacturing to the service industry employment sector. Had we been able to find Hispanic employment information for Springfield, Massachusetts and Providence, Rhode Island that showed a shift from manufacturing to service, we would have been able to conclude that Worcester serves as a model for these two neighboring cities.

As our interview process was carried out we began to realize that we were getting some pretty similar results. At first glance this seemed to work well with our research because it would make for an easy correlation between a person and their culture while living in Worcester, Massachusetts. At second glance it seemed as though we were getting similar results because we were interviewing people that were well educated, which in turn would lead to higher salaries. By looking deeper into the relationship of salary and the Hispanics of Worcester, one could say that Hispanics who earn higher salaries may have a skewed view of the Worcester community. Meaning that they may not experience some of the hardships that other Hispanics in Worcester have, therefore we can not all inclusively claim that we have gathered a perfect representation of the Hispanic community of Worcester.

⁶ From [Life on the Hyphen: The Cuban-American Way](#) by Gustavo Firmat.

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Appendix A: Population Tables

Hispanic Population by Race

	1940	1950	1960
Other Races	78	66	1,307
Total Worcester Population	193,694	203,486	186,587
US Total Population	132,164,569	151,325,798	179,323,175

	1970	1980	1990	2000
Mexican	82	266	397	706
Puerto Rican	772	5,422	12,166	17,091
Cuban	116	221	380	399
Other	516	1,124	3,315	7,959
Total	1,486	7,033	16,258	26,155
Worcester Total Population	176,572	161,799	169,759	172,648
US Population of Hispanics	9,294,509	14,603,683	22,354,059	35,305,818
US Total Population	203,302,031	226,542,199	248,709,873	281,421,906

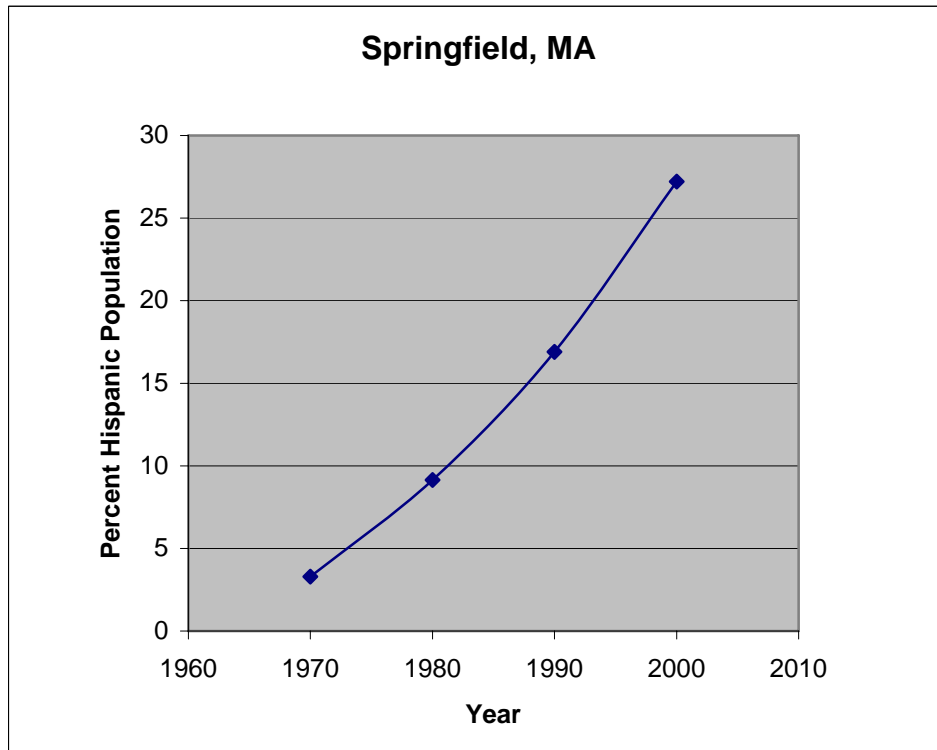
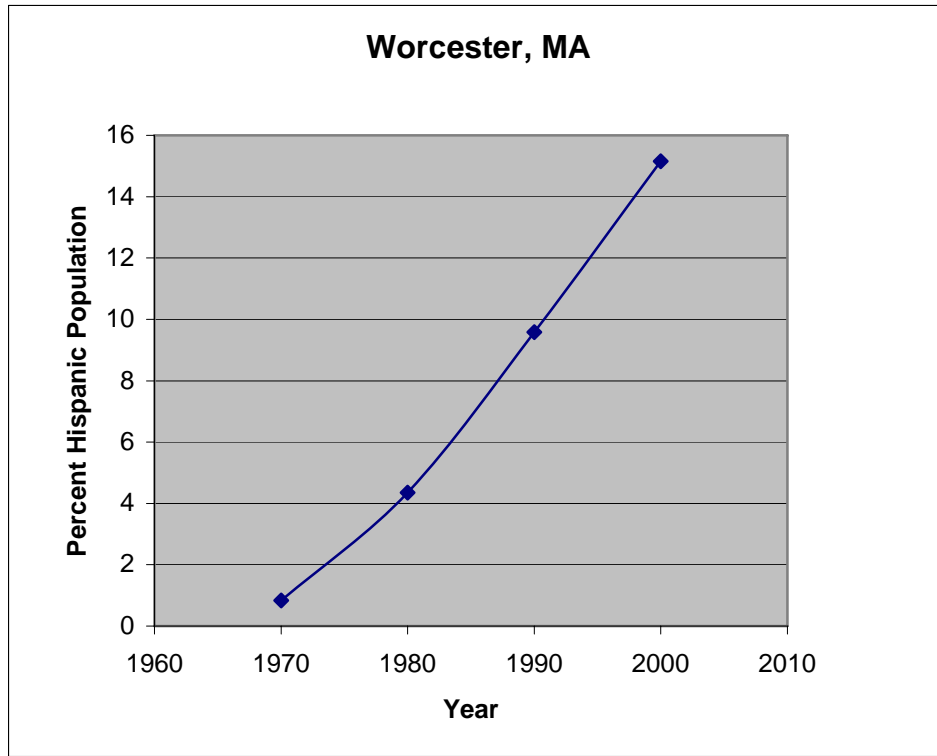
Total Hispanic Population

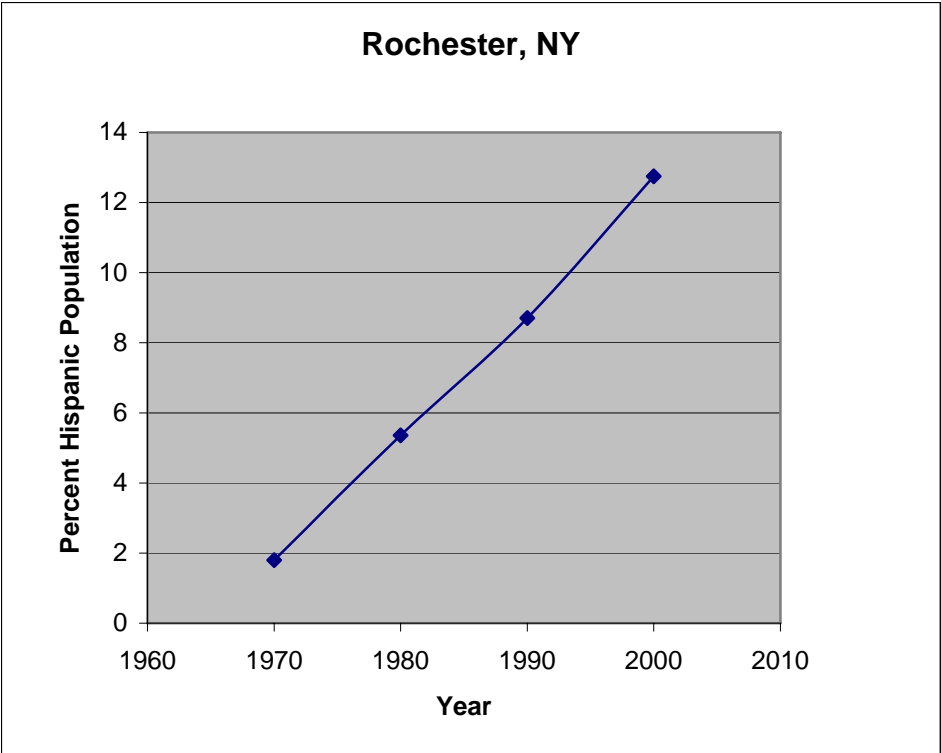
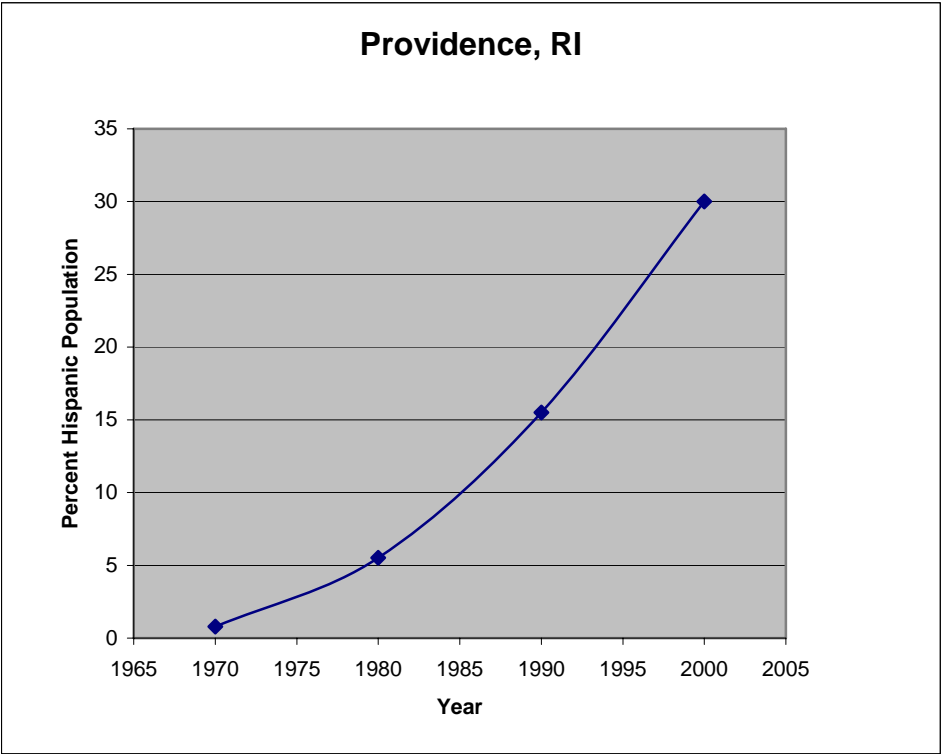
Year	Springfield, MA	Hartford, CT	Union City, NJ	Providence, RI	Rochester, NY
1970	5,408 (3.3%)	2,844 (1.8%)	3,102 (5.3%)	1,434 (0.8%)	5,332 (1.8%)
1980	13,922 (9.14%)	27,728 (20.33%)	35,563 (63.97%)	8,656 (5.52%)	12,957 (5.36%)
1990	26,527 (16.9%)	43,383 (31.6%)	43,887 (75.6%)	24,844 (15.5%)	20,086 (8.7%)
2000	41,343 (27.2%)	49,260 (40.5%)	55,226 (82.3%)	52,146 (30%)	28,032 (12.75%)

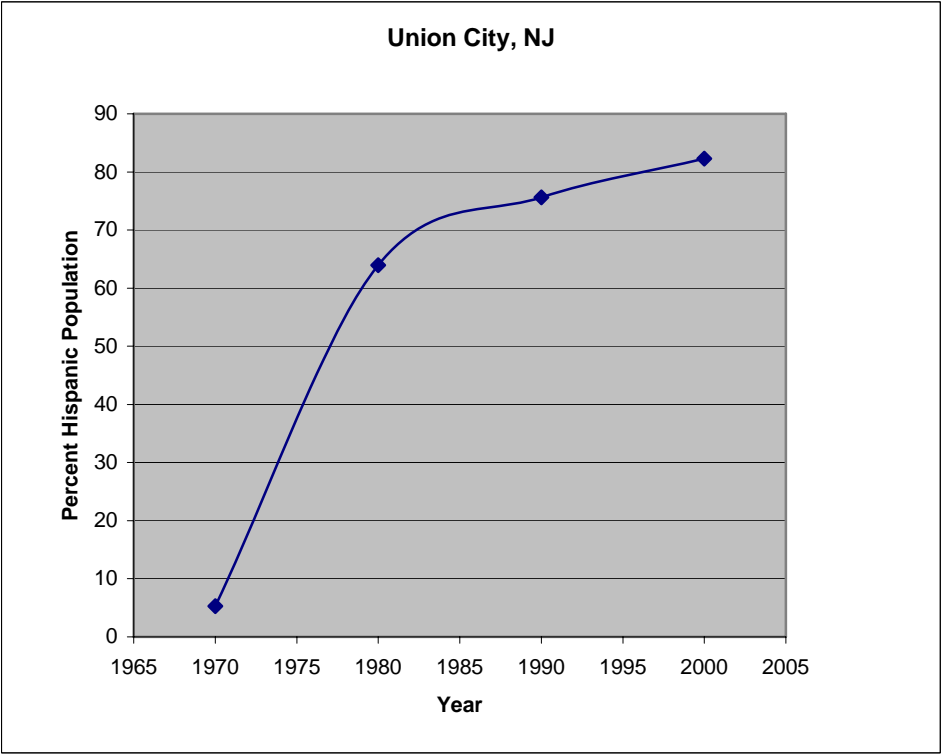
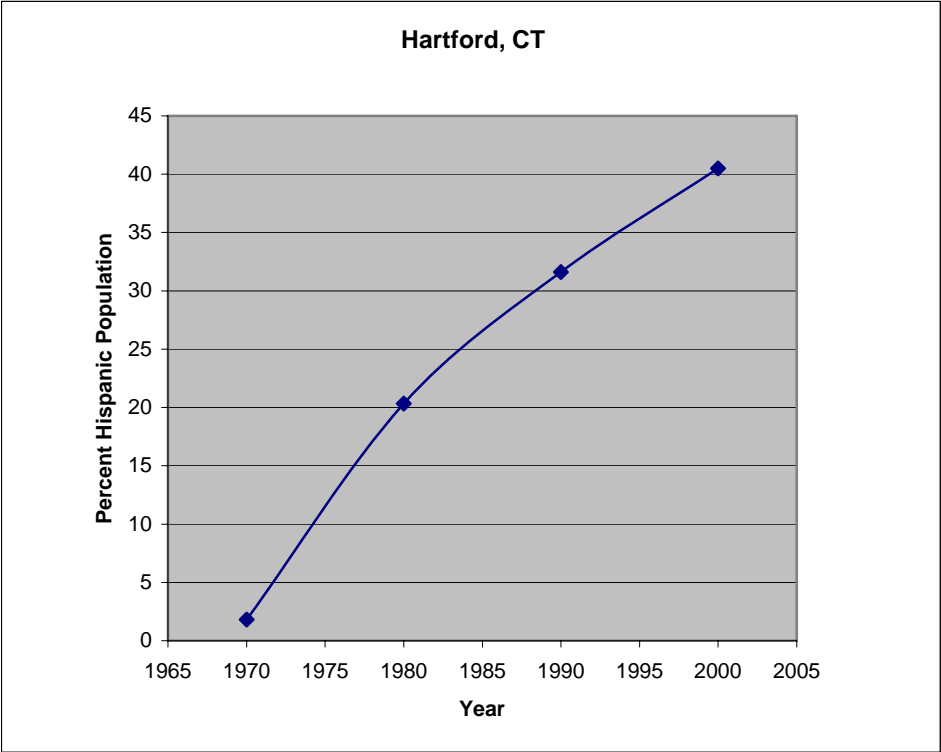
Total Population

Year	Springfield, MA	Hartford, CT	Union City, NJ	Providence, RI	Rochester, NY
1970	163,866	158,017	58,537	179,223	296,233
1980	152,319	136,392	55,593	156,804	241,741
1990	156,964	137,289	58,051	160,281	230,872
2000	152,082	121,578	67,088	173,618	219,773

Appendix B: Graphical Illustrations of Hispanic Population Growth







Appendix C: Interview Questions

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. How many people do you live with and what are the age ranges of these people?
4. Do you have any children? (if yes how many and where do they live now)
5. Where do you live (what part of Worcester do you live in)?
6. Do you work?
7. If yes, where do you work and what is your position there?
8. How long have you been working there? (if appropriate: approximately what is your average income?)
9. How did you get this job?
10. Do any other members of your family work with you/at the same company as you?
11. What is your educational background (what level of schooling did you complete)?
12. Where did you attend school?
13. If you attended school in Worcester or if any member of your family did, could you comment on that experience?
14. Where in Latin America are you originally from/where in Latin America is your family originally from?
15. When did you or your family originally come to the United States?
16. Where was the first place that you or your family moved to in the United States?
17. How did you choose that place to live in?
18. When did your family move to Worcester?
19. Why did your family move to Worcester?
20. Did you have family in Worcester before coming to this area?
21. Did you have a job in Worcester before coming to this area?
22. Have you heard of Centro Las Americas? If yes, what role has it played in your life?
23. Do you consider yourself Latino, Hispanic or another term?
24. Does the term Latino or Hispanic offend you in any way?

25. What have been your interactions with other Latinos in Worcester?
26. Where and when do you typically interact with other Latinos?
27. How would you describe the Latino community of Worcester?
28. What was the community originally like when you first came to Worcester and what is it like now?
29. What are the aspects of the community that you feel most connected to or that you feel have helped you during your time in Worcester if any?
30. What aspects of the community do you feel excluded from or do you dislike if any?
31. How would you describe your relation or the Latino community as a whole's relation with the greater community of Worcester?
32. Do you still have family back in the country you are originally from?
33. How often do you communicate with this family?
34. How often do you visit this family or does this family visit you?
35. Do you feel connected to the culture of the country you are from?
36. From what you know about the culture of the country you are from and the Latino culture in Worcester, how are they similar and/or different?
 - a. Politically
 - b. In terms of food and household
 - c. In terms of traditions
 - d. In terms of family life
 - e. In terms of language spoken
 - f. In terms of religion
37. Do you plan to continue to live in Worcester or move either to another place in the United States or to a different country?
38. Do you have anything that you would like to add?

Appendix D: Interview Release Form

Interview Release Form
Latino Voices of Worcester
Worcester Polytechnic Institute

Date: _____

Interviewer: _____

Tape number: _____

Name of person(s) interviewed: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Date of birth: _____

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Appendix E: Interview Transcriptions

Arlen Acevedo

39. What is your name?

Arlen Acevedo

40. How old are you?

58

41. How many people do you live with and what are the age ranges of these people?

I live with two other people. One is 8, and one is 30. My son is 30.

42. Do you have any children? (if yes how many and where do they live now)

Oh yes, I have two children. My son, and my daughter is older, a year older. Arlen is 31, I think, and Alex is going to be 30 now.

43. Where do you live (what part of Worcester do you live in)?

16 East Hampton Street, near Massasoit Road.

44. Do you work?

Yes, I am a professor at Becker college. I teach color theory, and I will be teaching drawing studio next semester. And right now, I am also working at H&R Block.

45. If yes, where do you work and what is your position there?

At H&R Block, I am a tax professional.

46. How long have you been working there? (if appropriate: approximately what is your average income?)

Becker, two or three years. Well, at Becker, they don't pay very much so they pay 1900 dollars for each course. So sometimes, it is like 2000, sometimes it is close to 4000. It depends on how many courses, because I am only an adjunct. They work with adjuncts generally.

H &R Block, I just started.

47. How did you get this job?

I applied to Becker, and I got a course, and I started teaching racket design and color theory. And at H&R Block, I went for services myself, and the lady told me, "Why don't you take our course," and I said, "Okay."

Because I am planning to have my own business, so I am going to need the knowledge anyway. So, she said, "Take it. It will do you good." So now I am also working there.

48. Do any other members of your family work with you/at the same company as you?

No.

49. What is your educational background (what level of schooling did you complete)?

I have a Masters in Fine Arts.

50. Where did you attend school?

That, I studied at Boston University.

51. If you attended school in Worcester or if any member of your family did, could you comment on that experience?

No, because my kids, well they studied in various places. They studied in California, and in Germany, and Puerto Rico, and then Arlen studied at Yale. So, they have been switching back and forth. Alex studied in UMass Lowell, but none here in Worcester.

52. Where in Latin America are you originally from/where in Latin America is your family originally from?

Puerto Rico

53. When did you or your family originally come to the United States?

We came here when I was around eight years old, and then after I graduated from high school, I went back to Puerto Rico and I got my Bachelors over there. And after that I came back here, and I went back and I have been going back and forth.

54. Where was the first place that you or your family moved to in the United States?

Chicago

55. How did you choose that place to live in?

My aunt lived there. We went there, and then we moved to New York. That is where I stayed for the rest of the time until we moved back to Puerto Rico.

56. When did your family move to Worcester?

I moved here after I graduated from Boston University. I came for a job here.

57. Why did your family move to Worcester?

I got a job here. Well, also my daughter lives in Leominster, so I wanted to be close.

58. Did you have family in Worcester before coming to this area?

My daughter and my son of course.

59. Did you have a job in Worcester before coming to this area?

No, that was afterwards.

60. Have you heard of Centro Las Americas? If yes, what role has it played in your life?

Oh yes.

Not really. I know Dolly. She goes to Arts Worcester, where I am a member of the Arts Worcester because I am an artist, so I see her there often.

61. Do you consider yourself Latino, Hispanic or another term?

Well, the name they have labeled us is Hispanic, so that is what I put when I fill out the forms.

62. Does the term Latino or Hispanic offend you in any way?

No, I see it as a background and that is it.

25. Do you believe that the name Latino and Hispanic are equivalent or do you believe that there is a fine line between them?

I don't really see the difference. I mean Latino, Hispanic, to me it refers to our common language of Spanish. That is what I think about.

26. What have been your interactions with other Latinos in Worcester?

Well, there are a lot of different Latin Americans here, so you meet up with them all the time, but I don't have very close friends. I just know them. I meet with them and talk to them whenever we are together, especially at Arts Worcester. You get a lot of different Latinos there.

27. How would you describe the Latino community of Worcester?

A lot of them are struggling. I would say others are very well off. It depends on their education and the opportunities that they have had, but a lot of them are struggling. They are trying to make it there.

28. What was the community originally like when you first came to Worcester and what is it like now?

Well, I noticed that they are trying to reach out more to the rest of the culture. I think they want to have a say, "I am here. Listen to me. I can contribute. We have an opinion. We can do as much good as any other culture. We don't want to be ignored."

29. What are the aspects of the community that you feel most connected to or that you feel have helped you during your time in Worcester if any?

Well, because of Arts Worcester, it would be the artists. Well, you get to know different people and their goals and what they want. It is always good to know the people and what they want to do in life.

30. What aspects of the community do you feel excluded from or do you dislike if any?

I have felt a tint of discrimination. Well, I don't really like to talk about it, but I noticed in my profession, as a teacher, there are definitely places where they want to put us, and they don't give us a chance to enter the same field as other people, even if we are at the same competency or even better. They don't let us just because, well my name is Acevedo, I have had a problem in one of the public schools here. When I try to teach English, they did not accept me because I was a Puerto Rican. How can I be teaching English to my American daughter or sons or whatever? Yeah, unfortunately it comes about I have seen it.

31. How would you describe your relation or the Latino community as a whole's relation with the greater community of Worcester?

Well, as I said, we meet at different occasions, and we try to share experiences, and help each other if we can. I don't know what to say about that. I am trying to make a home here, but I don't know if I will be able to

because of my background and my artistic aspirations. I might have to move somewhere else. I don't know.

32. Do you still have family back in the country you are originally from?

Oh yeah.

33. How often do you communicate with this family?

Well, I call them, or they call me once a month or whatever. It depends on the need, but I try to go there once in a while.

34. How often do you visit this family or does this family visit you?

Well, since I came, I have been there two or three times. I think since I came in 1998, no, four times since then. Sometimes friends drop by. They are visiting and they drop by.

35. Do you feel connected to the culture of the country you are from?

Oh yeah, that is where I was born. Of course, with me it is a little different than the people that were born and stayed there all their lives, because I have got two cultures in my personality, and I can't get rid of any of them. My Latin roots affect the American, and the American culture, I have picked up whatever I think is appropriate for me, and they are combined. So, in a way, I am one of those strange ones, because I grew up here, so it is not like living there all our lives. I have my own feelings, and my own beliefs, and I will fight for whatever I believe. I learned that from the Americans, and it is very different sometimes, because Puerto Ricans tend to lay low sometimes. They are not prone to fight for their rights all the time, and that is a part that I liquidated from my life. If I feel that I am right in something, I will fight for it, and that is my American side.

36. From what you know about the culture of the country you are from and the Latino culture in Worcester, how are they similar and/or different?

a. Politically

Oh yes, yes. The Puerto Ricans that have been here for a long time, what they have in their minds is like a dream, like a fantasy, like what they thought Puerto Rico was like, and they are like spaced out. I would have to say, they don't really know what living in Puerto Rico is unless they go

back there, and live there. So, they go, “Hurray, hurray! I’m Puerto Rican,” and all this, but they have no clue to what the people back there are living, and what they are going through.

b. In terms of food and household

I think that they are pretty strong with that. They remember the foods that they like, and they tend to eat them as much as they can. And of course, they also pick up the foods from here, so it’s a mixture.

c. In terms of traditions

In terms of tradition, some of them are kept, and they keep them pretty well, but a lot of our culture is lost when we come here. They start picking up the American ways, and the American way of thinking, and a lot of it is gone. So, a Puerto Rican here, and a Puerto Rican over there, they are two very different individuals.

d. In terms of family life

Well, I definitely would say so. As I said, when you come here, you pick up a lot of the new American ways, and they challenge their parents. They are a lot looser. They don’t respect as much. For some people, but it depends on your family. It depends on the tradition. It depends on how your parents are. I grew up here all my life, and my parents were very strict, and I was not allowed to become an American. You know, you live here, but you are Puerto Rican, and you act as such. So, a lot of the cultural dating and stuff, we weren’t allowed to do that, but here now you see a lot of people that a lot of the kids, they date like the Americans. So, it depends on your family, and how strict they are.

e. In terms of language spoken

That is a really touchy thing. A lot of the kids that come here, they tend to not speak Spanish. They get into the English, and then they don’t want to speak Spanish and all that. For whatever reason, maybe they don’t want to be connected because of the discrimination or whatever, but as I said it depends on your family. I grew up and I didn’t lose my language. I kept speaking it all the time. I spoke it with my parents. My mother spoke

English, but we still communicated. But some kids here, they lose their Spanish language. It is really sad. Yeah, especially from the parents, Spanish, and English from the child. They understand everything you say, but because they don't practice it, that is how they lose. They stop talking, but if your parents demand that you also keep speaking it, then at least you don't lose it. So, it depends on how smart the parents are, and not to let their kids lose their language, because you know the importance of learning two languages. You know, being able to communicate in it. Ignorance, I would say.

f. Religiously

It depends on each family. Some people will be as strict as ever with their religion, and stick to it, and others don't. I don't think it is a matter of living here, or living there. I think it's a personal thing.

37. Do you plan to continue to live in Worcester or move either to another place in the United States or to a different country?

Well, I don't plan to move to another country, but if I need to move from here to go elsewhere where it is more advantageous for me, I will.

38. Do you have anything that you would like to add?

I just wish we would listen more to each other, so that we could contribute more, and learn from each other, instead of fighting each other off just because the other is Puerto Rican or Colombian or American or Irish. In a country like this, where so many people live, we have to learn to respect each other and communicate, and work together.

Rosa Carrasquillo

1. What is your name?

Rosa Carrasquillo

2. How old are you?

I am 36.

3. How many people do you live with and what are the age ranges of these people?

I live alone.

4. Do you have any children? (if yes how many and where do they live now)
Nope.
5. Where do you live (what part of Worcester do you live in)?
The west side.
6. Do you work?
Yup.
7. If yes, where do you work and what is your position there?
I work at Holy Cross and I am an Assistant Professor of History.
8. How long have you been working there? (if appropriate: approximately what is your average income?)
This is my first year there. \$57,000.
9. How did you get this job?
In a national search, you apply. I was in Assumption College before, so I've been in Worcester for three years.
10. Do any other members of your family work with you/at the same company as you?
No.
11. What is your educational background (what level of schooling did you complete)?
I have a PhD in History and I did it at UConn. It is in Latin-American History.
12. If you attended school in Worcester or if any member of your family did, could you comment on that experience?
No.
13. Where in Latin America are you originally from/where in Latin America is your family originally from?
I'm from Puerto Rico.
14. When did you or your family originally come to the United States?
I came to study so I came alone. I came in 1993.
15. Where was the first place that you or your family moved to in the United States?
To Connecticut to the university.
16. How did you choose that place to live in?

For school, they gave me a very good scholarship and my brother was already living there so it made the transition easy.

17. Why did your family move to Worcester?

Because I got a job at Assumption.

18. Did you have family in Worcester before coming to this area?

No.

19. Did you have a job in Worcester before coming to this area?

Yes.

20. Have you heard of Centro Las Americas? If yes, what role has it played in your life?

Yeah, no.

21. Do you consider yourself Latino, Hispanic or another term?

Latino

22. Does the term Latino or Hispanic offend you in any way?

No

23. What have been your interactions with other Latinos in Worcester?

Well, I'm a board member in Latino Education Institute. So I interact through the Institute.

24. How would you describe the Latino community of Worcester?

That's a problematic question. There is no such thing as a Latino Community. There is no geographical focus. If anything there are multiple communities of Latinos in Worcester. The concept of a Latino community came about in politics. They have a couple of representatives and ask them to speak for all. It represents the traditional position of politicians. It's a very selective representation.

25. What was the community originally like when you first came to Worcester and what is it like now?

I have been here for too little so I cant' tell. Prices are going up and the cost of living is increasing.

26. What are the aspects of the community that you feel most connected to or that you feel have helped you during your time in Worcester if any?

Well, it's a small city so that makes it easier for me. It was important that they had Latino supermarkets because it is crucial that you can find food that you can relate to.

27. How would you describe your relation or the Latino community as a whole's relation with the greater community of Worcester?

I don't relate to the whole community. I only know parts of it. Most through LEI, the Latino Education Institute.

28. Do you still have family back in the country you are originally from?

Yup.

29. How often do you communicate with this family?

Almost daily.

30. How often do you visit this family or does this family visit you?

As much as I can. Twice a year. All my family is there.

31. Do you feel connected to the culture of the country you are from?

Yes.

32. From what you know about the culture of the country you are from and the Latino culture in Worcester, how are they similar and/or different?

a. Politically

I think issues in Puerto Rico are personal security. Rates for criminality are high and the economy is bad. Issues here are education and the gap that Latinos are having in education. Housing and immigrations are also issues.

b. In terms of food and household

No, I cook different stuff here.

c. In terms of traditions

Not really, I can't. I live alone, so I can't keep rituals. When I go back I do but here it's impossible.

d. In terms of family life

Well, I don't have family here so friends.

e. In terms of language spoken

Yes, I speak here.

f. In terms of religion

I can't tell.

33. Do you plan to continue to live in Worcester or move either to another place in the United States or to a different country?

So far no, so I'm going to be here for a while. So, who knows?

34. Do you have anything that you would like to add?

Well, I think that they are trying to improve public transportation. I think it's a good thing because it will improve the lives of Latinos because they don't have cars. I think improving transportation would be good for all of us.

Tiana Carrasquillo

1. What is your name?

Tiana Carrasquillo

2. How old are you?

26

3. How many people do you live with and what are the age ranges of these people?

I live by myself.

4. Do you have any children? (if yes how many and where do they live now)

Nope

5. Where do you live (what part of Worcester do you live in)?

Grafton Street

6. Do you work?

Yes

7. If yes, where do you work and what is your position there?

I work at WPI. Assistant Director of Admissions. I am also the Coordinator of Multicultural recruitment, so I am in charge of the outreach initiatives to help diversify the campus.

8. How long have you been working there? (if appropriate: approximately what is your average income?)

About a year and a few months. \$35,000 a year.

9. How did you get this job?

I applied. I looked online for jobs, and I sent my resume in after I graduated last year in May, 2005. I did a job search.

10. Do any other members of your family work with you/at the same company as you?

No

11. What is your educational background (what level of schooling did you complete)?

I have a Bachelors degree in Sociology and a Masters degree in Education. I am actually the first person in my family to go to college and only person.

12. Where did you attend school?

University of Connecticut and University of Massachusetts. Yes Bachelors at Uconn. Masters at UMass.

13. If you attended school in Worcester or if any member of your family did, could you comment on that experience?

I don't. I am pretty new to the area.

14. Where in Latin America are you originally from/where in Latin America is your family originally from?

My family is from Puerto Rico.

15. When did you or your family originally come to the United States?

I think 1950. My grandparents came.

16. Where was the first place that you or your family moved to in the United States?

New York City

17. How did you choose that place to live in?

I think my grandmother already had family here. I just remember she told me she came on a boat from Puerto Rico.

18. When did your family move to Worcester?

I moved here about a year and a few months ago for work.

19. Did you have family in Worcester before coming to this area?

Technically no, but I have good friends that I consider family like almost kind of like surrogate parents.

20. Did you have a job in Worcester before coming to this area?

No

21. Have you heard of Centro Las Americas? If yes, what role has it played in your life?

No

22. Do you consider yourself Latino, Hispanic or another term?

Yes, I say Latino but both would apply.

23. Does the term Latino or Hispanic offend you in any way?

From what I know Hispanic is a made up word that originated in the 50's or 60's, but I would prefer Latino.

24. What have been your interactions with other Latinos in Worcester?

Well, I love to dance, so I sometimes go salsa dancing and I have met people through the clubs and I also took a few classes. And that was probably my first contact with the people in the community, since I was new to the area. And also through my job. I met some other people in Worcester that work in the admissions office, like at Worcester State College. I think that is all I know for Latino people, but I have met some other people through admissions as well.

25. Where and when do you typically interact with other Latinos?

If I go out, or social gatherings, because here at work I am the only one in the office. It is a little hard sometimes. With students here on campus, because I am the Coordinator of Multicultural Recruitment. I work with a lot of students that work in the diversity office, or who are apart of the EMSET program, Excellence in Mathematics Science and Engineering program, or the Society of Hispanic Engineers. So, that would be my connection.

26. How would you describe the Latino community of Worcester?

From the people that I have met, very proud people that enjoy life. Very open to meeting other people. I would say pretty common to what I have seen other Latino communities in other areas, because I have lived a few places in Connecticut, also a few places in Massachusetts. I have gone to

school at two universities, so there is a common theme that runs through a lot of the Latino cultures, where I feel like it is easy to connect based on that.

27. What was the community originally like when you first came to Worcester and what is it like now?

No, I don't really have anything to compare to. I don't think I have enough information to comment on that.

28. What are the aspects of the community that you feel most connected to or that you feel have helped you during your time in Worcester if any?

It would have to be the dancing. And dancing has been a way to help connect with other people, meet people.

29. What aspects of the community do you feel excluded from or do you dislike if any?

No, I mean on campus it would be nice if there were more people that I could relate to in that respect, but I don't feel like I have been mistreated in any way.

30. How would you describe your relation or the Latino community as a whole's relation with the greater community of Worcester?

I feel that I haven't had as many opportunities that I would have liked to have to connect with more people. I think that it is because of my job, and where I work and other responsibilities that either I don't have the time to go meet more people, or I do still have more family that lives in Connecticut that I spend time there. So, it is not as easy to network here, because my family is somewhere else. But, I am slowly making my way into the community.

31. Do you still have family back in the country you are originally from?

Distant relatives, but most of my family did come during the 50's and 60's. And then I was born here, so my family has been here for a while.

32. How often do you communicate with this family?

I don't because most of my immediate family and my grandparents are here, so I communicate with them.

33. How often do you visit this family or does this family visit you?

Yeah, for work I have to go there. So, I went this past October, and I was there last November. The last time that I went before that I was eleven, and I went and I met my aunt's in-laws.

34. Do you feel connected to the culture of the country you are from?

I do feel somewhat disconnected, because I was not born there. I don't have family there anymore that I have contact with, and I think that because I have moved a lot in my life, it has been hard to maintain the connection with that. And also, as I get older my Spanish speaking skills get more rusty, and it was something that I just didn't continue and develop because I went on to school and moved away from my family so that has been a struggle in terms of keeping connected to my culture.

35. From what you know about the culture of the country you are from and the Latino culture in Worcester, how are they similar and/or different?

a. Politically

No

b. In terms of food and household

Oh yeah, definitely. I mean, I grew up with all the food, and it is very different in terms of taste and how it's prepared and types of food.

Household definitely. Extended family plays a larger role. In American society you have the traditional parents and kids, but with my family in Puerto Rico that includes cousins, aunts, and uncles, and I even lived in the same house as an aunt and uncle and cousin, and an uncle lived across the street. So, extended family is an important role.

c. In terms of traditions

Yes, different holidays. I know Three Kings Day, a holiday that is celebrated by Puerto Rican families.

d. In terms of family life

I think that speaks to Question B. I think that extended family plays a larger role in influencing how children are raised, and its not uncommon for people to take care of other people's children.

- e. In terms of language spoken

Well, I was raised by my grandmother, who is Puerto Rican, and she is bilingual. And I did learn to speak Spanish; however, the school systems discouraged that. So, she would speak English to me a lot. So again, that is where I struggled with being connected. And then at the same time, American society or school systems saying that its not okay that you need to only speak English, so I guess you could say yes and no.

- f. In terms of religion

Yeah. I was raised Catholic. We had a church that held mass in Spanish at night, and we would go to that sometimes. However, I am not Catholic anymore. I guess you could say that I was raised Catholic, but I don't practice anymore.

- g. Do you plan to continue to live in Worcester or move either to another place in the United States or to a different country?

I don't plan on living in Worcester for the rest of my life. Maybe for a couple more years. Then, depending on where I marry, spouse, whatever, I mean because I am in a relationship right now, and we plan to be together. So, depending on when that goes. Another country? Why not. If I can.

- h. Do you have anything that you would like to add?

I do like the diversity of Worcester. And when I came here I was very happy that there was a community that I could get involved with. And that there are Latino restaurants, and there are things like dancing, and salsa, and meringue, and the Worcester Art Museum. They just had an exhibit. The exhibit is still going on, about the culture and history of Puerto Rico, which I plan to go to. So, in terms of community, I like that aspect. But, in terms of WPI, I think that is where I would like to see it expand more.

Michelle Gonzales

1. What is your name?

Michelle Christine Davila Gonzales

2. How old are you?

3. How many people do you live with and what are the age ranges of these people?

Just one, my husband and me. He is 46.

4. Do you have any children? (if yes how many and where do they live now)

No

5. Where do you live (what part of Worcester do you live in)?

I live here, in front of the university. 60 Salisbury Street. It used to be the high school, North High Condominiums; it used to be a high school.

6. Do you work?

Yes

7. If yes, where do you work and what is your position there?

I am an assistant professor of Spanish and Portuguese at the Framingham State College.

8. How long have you been working there? (if appropriate: approximately what is your average income?)

I started last year, a year and a half. It is like \$48,000.

9. How did you get this job?

A colleague told me they were looking for someone to teach Portuguese over there. At the time, I was living in Brazil, and so I came and did an interview, and they needed someone with both languages Spanish and Portuguese. So, I was chosen.

10. Do any other members of your family work with you/at the same company as you?

No, in fact, I don't have any family members in the United States.

11. What is your educational background (what level of schooling did you complete)?

I have a B.A. and an M.A. in Comparative Literature from the University of Puerto Rico in Rio Piedras, and I have a Doctorate Degree in Hispanic Literature from the University of Colorado Boulder.

12. If you attended school in Worcester or if any member of your family did, could you comment on that experience?

No, I know people older than me that studied here in high school. That is why I know that where I live was a high school, because I have met people who have studied there at the high school, and I know students when I used to work here at WPI that studied here. But, besides that, no.

13. Where in Latin America are you originally from/where in Latin America is your family originally from?

Puerto Rico

14. When did you or your family originally come to the United States?

My story is funny. We did the opposite way. My mother and I were born in Manhattan, New York. She was born in Manhattan. I was born in the Bronx, and my mom met my father, that was born in Puerto Rico, in New York. And that was in the 50's, so they got married; they had me; they had my brother; and in 1965, we all moved to Puerto Rico. So, I was raised in the island. I came to the United States just to study my PhD, my first three years I lived here, then I didn't live until I came to do my Doctorate Degree. And I married, and stayed here until 2001. Then went to Brazil and lived four years over there. And I came back and I have been here a year and a half. So, it has been an on and off thing during my life.

15. Where was the first place that you or your family moved to in the United States?

New York

16. How did you choose that place to live in?

That is interesting, because there was a movement during the 40's and 50's, that many Puerto Ricans, everyone, went to New York to find a better life, because New York was the Mecca, and it still is in many senses. So, when you start, you start in New York. I know that my grandmother, she was a factory worker in New York, and after that, she moved and she became a secretary. So, everybody tried to move on to more. And after that, because of the high cost of living, that is why my parents decided to move back to Puerto Rico.

17. When did your family move to Worcester?

Okay, originally I moved to Worcester in 1998. I came from Colorado after I graduated, and got married, and we both came here, and we stayed from 1998 to 2001. And then now from 2005 on.

18. Why did your family move to Worcester?

That is where my husband found a tenure track job as a professor, here at the university, WPI.

19. Did you have family in Worcester before coming to this area?

No

20. Did you have a job in Worcester before coming to this area?

In a sense, yes, because I found here, and in Assumption College before I moved in.

21. Have you heard of Centro Las Americas? If yes, what role has it played in your life?

Yes, none.

22. Do you consider yourself Latino, Hispanic or another term?

For me Latino and Hispanic is the same.

23. Does the term Latino or Hispanic offend you in any way?

No

24. What have been your interactions with other Latinos in Worcester?

In two different ways, one professionally, because I teach Spanish and Portuguese so my colleagues here at WPI. We have the professors. We have Angel; we have Ingrid; we have Hector, and in Framingham, well its not Worcester, but in Framingham also I have a community of Latinos as a colleague. In other terms, I am a Jehovah Witness, so I participate in what you call church. You know, a congregation here, and they are all Latinos. I am in a Hispanic congregation, so everything is in Spanish. In reality, I speak more Spanish here in the United States than English.

25. Where and when do you typically interact with other Latinos?

In the university, and in the congregation. Those two areas.

26. How would you describe the Latino community of Worcester?

Poor. Really, in sense because it is the majority, and I know it because when I do my voluntary work in the streets I see them. So, I think the majority tend to be poor, and you see them in the Main Street, and you see them in Tacoma, and those are the two places. I go and visit people. They don't have an idea of what the education might do to them. It is like they tell me, "well my grandparent, my mother came here. They work in the factories, and they are gone, and we just got the check every month, so we stayed like that," so there is no sense that they can be different. I try to change their mentality a little bit with the people that I have contact with. Some of the people are trying, and they are working. I know people that are working. They leave Worcester to work towards the Boston area. And then from that group, I have the intellectuals that already have their doctorate degree. They are working in the universities, but I see it, those two groups don't meet too much. You have to make a special effort to have any type of contact.

27. What was the community originally like when you first came to Worcester and what is it like now?

Worcester has changed a lot. It looks better. I remember the first time I came, and that wasn't so long ago in 1998. Just to go to Main Street, it was scary. Just to go to the surrounding area of Clark University, and I felt like, "oh my god, this is my people, and look how they live," you know. And so, gradually very slowly, it is changing. It is getting a little bit better. I know people like for example, I met a teacher here at the Worcester Art Museum. She teaches mosaics, so she is involved in helping the community. And they have made some projects, really nice and you can see some of the streets with mosaics, and children and everything. So, I know there is an interest to better their surroundings. I know people that have moved since I have been here to better places. So, in a sense, I see that they are trying to better themselves, and the place itself, Worcester itself, is also. The government is doing something, the municipality; to least paint a little bit, the exterior. You know, to make it prettier, because

when you see things that are nicer looking, you feel like, “okay, then I can do something, because you can see the effort.”

28. What are the aspects of the community that you feel most connected to or that you feel have helped you during your time in Worcester if any?

The university, WPI, I think with us, with my husband and me, has been a factor, because it has helped us to meet people, to learn about things that we can do in the community. So, it was like the first contact here. I remember the first week. They gave us a book on what to do in Worcester and what things are know here and the history of Worcester. And I love history, so I have been to all the museums, and I know the smiley places from here, and those types of things. Because Worcester used to be a community very lively, and with money, and it is just because it still is not as important now than it was at the beginning of last century. It doesn't have all that going on, but still you can make your little group to go out and to have cultural things to do. I love the arts and crafts. I always take classes in the Worcester arts and craft. And there, I meet other people, other women, and so forth.

29. What aspects of the community do you feel excluded from or do you dislike if any?

No, no. In fact, everybody asks me that. I have never felt any discrimination what so ever. People don't think I'm Puerto Rican that's the first. They think I'm too white. They have the idea that Puerto Ricans are dark. I know this is a preconceived idea to many people, and I'm just like, “no, I'm not the exception,” you know, and even some Portuguese people in Framingham, there are a lot of Portuguese people over there from Portugal, they are always surprised when I say that I am Puerto Rican. And even in Colorado, when I moved to Colorado to study, I never felt any discrimination what so ever.

30. How would you describe your relation or the Latino community as a whole's relation with the greater community of Worcester?

Because I jump too much, I have lived in three countries, I am not sure that I am staying. I come and go. I don't feel a connection anywhere else except Puerto Rico. Although, I haven't lived in Puerto Rico since 1993, but I still feel that is home for me. So, it is the only place that I really have a connection. I love Massachusetts. I do like Massachusetts. During my Bachelors degree, I did an exchange students program for a year. I went to UMass at Amherst, so I already knew the state and I like it. I love Boston, and what I like is that I have the opportunity to teach here. So, it's a state with a lot of colleges, good colleges that give me the opportunity. So, in terms of work, its excellent, and for that I will stay. But, if I have free time and vacation, I wont stay here. I will go somewhere else.

31. Do you still have family back in the country you are originally from?

Yes, all my family. My mother, my grandmother, my father, my brothers, my nephews, my nieces, my aunts, they are all over there.

32. How often do you communicate with this family?

Oh, a lot. That is another advantage of being in Massachusetts. By plane, it is only 4 hours, and the telephone is like if I was calling somebody here. There is no problem with that, so it is just continuous.

33. How often do you visit this family or does this family visit you?

I try to go once a year. Yes, the have come. My mother especially, because my father is afraid of planes, so my mother has come here already several times. And friends, friends come here too.

34. Do you feel connected to the culture of the country you are from?

Yes

35. From what you know about the culture of the country you are from and the Latino culture in Worcester, how are they similar and/or different?

a. Politically

Many, many differences. They are two different communities. You can't say that a Puerto Rican that was raised in the United States has exactly the same culture as one that was raised in the island. It is different. First of all, in terms of language, language is a first. I have met Puerto Ricans in the

United States that do not speak Spanish. At first, this was shocking to me, because for me, Puerto Ricans are Hispanic, and Spanish is the language. But then I realized that many people here, they don't speak the language, or they don't speak it well. But they have their identity as Puerto Ricans, so that is something that I learned here in the United States. And in Puerto Rico, they are very involved with the political situation, because everything is done locally. We don't have any connection really when we are in the island, with the politics of the United States. They seem very far away. They are foreign. Puerto Ricans do not vote for the President of the United States, so that is never an issue. They won't ask you down there, "are you a republican or a democrat?" because that's not the issue. They will say the three parties, "are you a la independista, estadista, o estado librista" That is what they are going to be talking about, but here they kind of have the sense that the majority of Puerto Ricans that I have met here are independistas. And it is quite ironic, because many of them want Puerto Rico to be something separate from the United States, but they are not living in the island to know exactly what is going on. And it's very interesting; I have met very few people that want it to be a state. One that I have met here, she is from here, but it is different. It is for example, the museum exhibit of Puerto Rico exhibit. It's beautiful. It's gorgeous. When I went, I was revisiting something that I knew. Something that I saw in Puerto Rico the Museum of Ponce. For many Puerto Ricans here, it is the first time that they have seen that so its like, "Oh wow! Who are they?" But for me, that's normal. That's common. It's part of me, so I have had some experiences that Puerto Ricans here in the United States have never had. And vice versa, because many here have suffered from that discrimination that you were asking me about, that I haven't, because they have been here longer or for whatever reasons or skin color or social background. So, in a sense, I have been taken care of more in the island.

b. In terms of food and household

Food, I have all my Goya products here. So, I eat exactly as home. That's funny, and if you want to eat real Puerto Rican, you just go to one of the little restaurants they have here. Household activities, that is a very funny question. I have never thought of it. I don't know. I really don't know.

c. In terms of traditions

With the Puerto Ricans here, I know they celebrate Christmas as in Puerto Rico. Yes, there are differences in Puerto Rico. The time I was there, they used to do the Parrandas. Parrandas is that in the wee hours of the morning, you with a group of friends go and visit a house of someone that you know. You start singing songs. You wake them up. They have to wake up, let you in, give you food, you say goodbye, and then you leave and you do the same thing. I don't think that happens here, but my mother was telling me that people are a little bit afraid now. You know, being three in the morning around, because society has changed everywhere not only here everywhere in the whole world. Everybody says things are so bad here, and I then go from Puerto Rico to Brazil to the United States. I can see that in the three places it's the same thing.

d. In terms of family life

No, we are very close knit here too. And here, they try to maintain their children, even when they get married close by, and when they are not close by, mothers feel very sad. Yes, in that sense, it hasn't changed. We say that North Americans are more laid back in that you don't live with your cousins, or your aunts, or your grandparents in your house. For us, that is common, and I have seen it here, and over there.

e. In terms of language spoken

Yes, a lot, a lot. The way I speak isn't the way they speak over here. And it has to do with one thing: they didn't go to school in Spanish. So, Spanish was only spoken in their homes. Or, others are from the countryside in Puerto Rico. They never really had a longer education, so they come here, and they have shortcomings, and they know it. They will tell you, "Oh, I don't speak as well as you," but you know, I always make

them feel good. You know, don't mind the way we speak, I understand you. And, they say my accent is different. I always had a very strict sense of language, and how to speak, but I also think that because I am interacting in three languages so much, that it has changed my accent. So, that will be something as an exception. I will be the exception.

f. In terms of religion

They have everything in Puerto Rico. They have everything here. Okay, we are all raised as Catholics. That's the primary one, and everybody automatically is from the Catholic Church. After that, you start changing, and all the Protestant Religions are growing fast, very fast in all Latin America. South Americans say that Puerto Rico has more, because of the influence of the United States. Who knows that might be true. I don't know, but they also have a lot of African based religions in the island. And, Brazil is very strong too, and here I haven't seen it as strong, but I know that it is practiced. And I haven't seen it as much in the sense that many people that practice it, practice it calladamente. They don't talk about it. It's more like an underground thing.

g. Do you plan to continue to live in Worcester or move either to another place in the United States or to a different country?

My husband is Brazilian, so that's my Brazilian connection. He likes it better in Brazil. I cannot find a job in Brazil in what I do, so that's the point of contention between us. So, for a while, he said we were going to stay in Worcester, but you ever know. If I move, it will be to Brazil basically.

h. Do you have anything that you would like to add?

Maybe, and this is just me rethinking, everything. Maybe, I should be more involved in the community. But maybe, the community has to do something, the persons that are in charge, to make that connection to happen, because the museum is a good thing, but how many people can pay to go to the museum. It is one of the questions that I have. I tell everybody, "If you go Saturday morning, you can get in free," you know

trying to push them a little bit. I know some people from my congregation did that, and they loved it. “Oh so pretty, so nice,” but I know other people, how can they know about these things? I don’t know if there is really a communication going on. I know there is the Worcester Channel, and sometimes they have a Latino program. That’s too little. I think that’s too little.

Maribel Manzari

1. What is your name?

Maribel Vazquez Manzari

2. How old are you?

35

3. How many people do you live with and what are the age ranges of these people?

I live with my husband. He is 38, and two daughters, 5 and 2.

4. Do you have any children? (if yes how many and where do they live now)

Yes, two daughters and they live with us.

5. Where do you live (what part of Worcester do you live in)?

The part where Burncoat and Lincoln split. A street off of that.

6. Do you work?

Yes

7. If yes, where do you work and what is your position there?

I’m an adjunct instructor of Spanish, and I work at WPI.

8. How long have you been working there? (if appropriate: approximately what is your average income?)

A little over 4 years. My average income right now, it’s about \$28,000.

9. How did you get this job?

Basically, I had taught Spanish at UVA while I was working on my Masters degree. And when we moved to Worcester, because my husband got a tenure track teaching here, I was also pregnant at the time, actually about a month away from giving birth to my first child, and I didn’t want to return to work full time and so having had the experience of teaching

Spanish I went ahead and applied here because they needed somebody to work part time, so I started actually part time. I've gotten more classes over the years, and mostly because of the choices I made to not work full time and to be more flexible schedule because of the children.

10. Do any other members of your family work with you/at the same company as you?

Yes, my husband works at the same place.

11. What is your educational background (what level of schooling did you complete)?

I have a Bachelors from Penn State University, and that's actually in nutrition science and a Masters from UVA in exercise physiology.

12. If you attended school in Worcester or if any member of your family did, could you comment on that experience?

Yes, yes, my brother, my sister, and I actually all did, because my family all lives here. My parents, my brother, and my sister, and I was in the last year of elementary school when I moved to Worcester. And my brother and sister started in middle school. What was the experience? Very different from what we were used to, I remember the last year when I graduated, there were things going on that we were not really exposed to in Cuba like drug and stabbings. One stabbing that occurred my last day of high school. Then after that I heard that things got worse and worse, and they got metal detectors and everything for the schools.

13. Where in Latin America are you originally from/where in Latin America is your family originally from?

From Cuba

14. When did you or your family originally come to the United States?

In 1980, in June 4th of 1980

15. Where was the first place that you or your family moved to in the United States?

Florida

16. How did you choose that place to live in?

Basically one of my uncles, my mother is one of eight children. One of my uncles, because 4 of them left Cuba when Castro took over. One of them

went back to get us during the Marrial boat lift, basically president carter said any Cubans that wanted to come to the united states during that he would except us. He actually risked his life because he had been one of those people that were trying to over throw Castro at the begging, and had to flee and escape. So, in order to go back to get us he had to get I think fake papers and change his name just to go.

17. When did your family move to Worcester?

About two years later, so in 1982 and the reason was because I have a uncle and an aunt in Florida and I had an uncle and an aunt here in Worcester, my uncle past away about a year ago. So, there is the connection, basically it had to do with jobs. My dad had jobs in Homestead, Florida where we lived, but it was nothing permanent. My uncle that lived here kept telling us that the jobs here in Worcester were better and were permanent, and paid better. So, that's why we made the move.

18. Did you have a job in Worcester before coming to this area?

He came and got a job, at the same factory that my uncle worked

19. Have you heard of Centro Las Americas? If yes, what role has it played in your life?

Yes, only when I called them to, on a personal level, when I called them because my mother wanted to study for the US citizenship exam and I got information from them.

20. Do you consider yourself Latino, Hispanic or another term?

Cuban first, that is the first thing that I tell people when people ask me what I am. Hispanic is what I would chose over Latino.

21. Does the term Latino or Hispanic offend you in any way?

No, no.

22. What have been your interactions with other Latinos in Worcester?

You mean, what have they been like, positive or negative, or do you mean how do I interact with them. They are positive, students are a lot of them actually, but also friends of my mother.

23. Where and when do you typically interact with other Latinos?

In school a lot and also outside of the school.

24. How would you describe the Latino community of Worcester?

Definitely, it is like a melting pot, I think because we do have, it is not just Latinos, but if you just talk about Latinos you have so many different groups here. How do I describe them, having been to Hispanic countries also not just my own. Different from those who live in their country, even the way they dress, everything about them seems to be different. They adapt also more to the American culture.

25. What was the community originally like when you first came to Worcester and what is it like now?

It seemed like there weren't any Cubans really, but I am told now that they are the second largest group, which surprises me.

26. What are the aspects of the community that you feel most connected to or that you feel have helped you during your time in Worcester if any?

The aspects of the community, I think at first it was just being able to, because even when we moved here, and I thought I knew English I had lived in Florida for two years. I really didn't speak fluent English and I realized that in elementary school, and the people who helped me were Hispanics, other Hispanics, and I thought that that was really useful and helpful for me to have that support and also in understanding the culture. Sharing that sense of the way that we are is different than the American culture. So, it made me feel more comfortable knowing that there were other people that understood me. I think in that sense.

27. What aspects of the community do you feel excluded from or do you dislike if any?

In Worcester, the only experience that I had that was a little scary for me at the time, and I cant say for sure that is was because I was Hispanic, but in high school I was class Val Victorian. However one of the teachers that I had was sick at the time, and we had made an arrangement that, because they didn't offer the honors course that I was interested in. So, we made a

deal that I would do extra work and that I would write extra papers and things like that and he would give me the equivalent of a honors course, but he was sick and I guess he never actually made that change. So, it appeared that I was actually second and not first, and when I argued it they gave me a hard time, they wanted me to just accept not being class Val Victorian and of course the second in line was gonna be the first one and he was a white male, but they did get in touch with the teacher because I didn't just let it go and they finally did get in touch with him and he set everything straight, but even then they didn't, they basically made us Co-Val Victorian even though my average was the highest.

28. How would you describe your relation or the Latino community as a whole's relation with the greater community of Worcester?

I think we just didn't have any friends.

29. Do you still have family back in the country you are originally from?

Yes, most of my dad's family is still in Cuba and my mom has one sister who is still alive in Cuba and a few friends.

30. How often do you communicate with this family?

Personally not really, I learn information through my mom because tshe is the one who calls them and writes letters and receives letters. I used to write letters to my friend but I gave up awhile ago, well basically she stopped, and I dint wasn't to get her in trouble because I didn't know if receiving letters from somebody in the united states was somehow going to jeopardize her. So, when she didn't write back that was the last time I wrote back.

31. How often do you visit this family or does this family visit you?

I haven't gone back at all. I tried once, but actually my husband and I were both going to go, this was before we had children of course. They mixed, didn't anything up, they just sent everything really late, really late, the Visa, for example I was an American citizen but I had to get a Cuban passport. So, we started the process like a year before we had to go and you have to pay for that, of course it only lasts two years. Then you have

to also get a visa and my husband had to get a Visa. My stuff came I think two weeks before we were going to go, we hadn't bought the plain ticket thought because we didn't want to have to pay for if weren't going to be able to go, and his came like the week of, and by then the plain tickets would have been too expensive and we just didn't go. And we haven't tried again since.

32. Do you feel connected to the culture of the country you are from?

Yes

33. From what you know about the culture of the country you are from and the Latino culture in Worcester, how are they similar and/or different?

a. Politically

Yes, because first of all politically Cuba is, although it is really socialist and everybody thinks it is communist. So that's not, there are some Hispanics that support that view, that socialist view, but in reality unless you live under that type of political situation you don't understand why people do not want to live under Castro, and it is not the same when you go and visit as a tourist. For example other Hispanics can travel to Cuba because they do not have restrictions from the US Government, or even other foreigners that say oh I loved it, fine you know I am sure they did, but it is not the same because when you don't have the right to express your opinion or even go to church because then everyone is watching you. Everyone knows what you do and things like that are seen as negative and weak.

b. In terms of food and household

Basically in Cuba even if you have two households before Castro took over like what happened to my dad, he had to give one up completely and then we lived in the other one, but it still wasn't ours it belonged to the government, and so you just lived there.

And then with food, there was never an abundance of food, it was on the contrary. Everything was rationed and you had to stand in long lines and you still do I am told. You have to stand in long lines you'd get a little

notebook and it tells you based on number of family members in the household, how much you would get of lets sat rice and how much you would get of beans whatever else. And milk is also something that they only give to very young children and I don't even think they give it to the elderly, they stop after a certain age it stops very early on.

c. In terms of traditions

I think the traditions are still the same.

d. In terms of family life

Yes, I do, because here people tend to move through out the country, and so it is not the same as is setup in a country like Cuba, and you tend to stay where you grew up and where your family and friends are.

e. In terms of language spoken

At home we try to stick to Spanish, because of our daughters and we want them to be exposed to Spanish because we know that outside they are going to be expose to English. So, for their benefit and also just because we tend to speak mostly Spanish. Here at school I speak Spanish mostly to my colleagues, to those who speak Spanish of course, within the Spanish department and also obviously teaching in the classroom.

Yes, well until I was 8 years old it was all Spanish because that is how old I was when we moved to the United States when we left Cuba. Then slowly I started to learn English like I told you even, after two years that I thought I spoke English, but the exposer in Florida, your friends all spoke Spanish, and even your teachers spoke Spanish. So, your parents would put on television shows in Spanish, and so it was not an immersion to try and learn English.

f. In terms of religion

I am Catholic, and we were baptized in Cuba when we were babies actually, when we were infants, but it wasn't good for us to go to church, there were churches, but you kinda had to go sorta into hiding. So, it wasn't really worth the trouble. So, everything else we did was here, in terms of our first communion, but we were very religious because my

grandmother lived with us and she taught us along with my parents prayers at home every night and always would talk about god and Jesus Christ.

34. Do you plan to continue to live in Worcester or move either to another place in the United States or to a different country?

That's a good question because I have no idea. You know honestly it would be a struggle because if my husband were to make a decision to move to improve his career, for example just as a reason why might move. I know struggle with the idea of moving, not because I love Worcester but because I have my parents here, and now I am used to seeing them again, because I am coming back from college and from work. I just know it is going to be hard to leave again, but it is possible.

35. Do you have anything that you would like to add?

I guess I can tell you yes. I am not crazy about Worcester itself, because it is not an attractive city. In general the people from Worcester are not extremely friendly and I guess I would prefer that my daughters grow up in a nicer environment where people have better values.

Ingrid Matos-Nin

1. What is your name?

Ingrid Matos-Nin

2. How old are you?

48

3. How many people do you live with and what are the age ranges of these people?

Two other people. One is 30, the other one is 58.

4. Do you have any children? (if yes how many and where do they live now)

Not of my own.

5. Where do you live (what part of Worcester do you live in)?

In Worcester, southeast towards Millbury out on Massasoit? Road

6. Do you work?

Yes

7. If yes, where do you work and what is your position there?

I am a professor at the Worcester Polytechnic Institute. My position is administrator of Hispanic studies and activities and I am also an adjunct assistant professor.

8. How long have you been working there? (if appropriate: approximately what is your average income?)

I am in my fourth year. Plus 40k.

9. How did you get this job?

Well, I studied for my PhD. They were looking for an adjunct in Spanish here. I applied four years ago, and I got the position.

10. Do any other members of your family work with you/at the same company as you?

No, no none of them.

11. What is your educational background (what level of schooling did you complete)?

In Boston University. And I have a Masters from la Universidad Pontificia Catolica. I also have a Bachelors in Political Science from the University of Puerto Rico in Mayaguez in my hometown. And I also completed courses for a Bachelors in History. And I have another Bachelors in Science in Secondary Education and a private pilots license.

12. If you attended school in Worcester or if any member of your family did, could you comment on that experience?

No.

13. Where in Latin America are you originally from/where in Latin America is your family originally from?

I am from Puerto Rico.

14. When did you or your family originally come to the United States?

Well, I came alone in 1998 to study for my PhD.

15. Where was the first place that you or your family moved to in the United States?

Boston

16. How did you choose that place to live in?

I always liked to live around New England and I hit the lottery when Boston University said I was accepted.

17. When did your family move to Worcester?

I moved to Worcester six years ago. I thought it was going to be cheaper to live and it was. Boston is incredibly expensive.

18. Did you have family in Worcester before coming to this area?

No

19. Did you have a job in Worcester before coming to this area?

Yea, I started to work at Clark University as a lecturer.

20. Have you heard of Centro Las Americas? If yes, what role has it played in your life?

Yes.

Well, nope not really I just know Dolly Bascus and we worked together for the Latino Film Festival here.

21. Do you consider yourself Latino, Hispanic or another term?

Let me tell you something, I am an American first, and Puerto Rican always. So, to me if you ask me which of my kids is my preferred one, I cannot tell you so that is why. I am an American. I was born American. I am proud to be an American, but I come from Puerto Rico and I cannot deny that because I don't want to. I am Puerto Rican too. It is like probably the Irish here, or the Italians or the Jewish people. Same thing, but I don't mind if you call me Latin American. I am part of Latin America too.

22. Does the term Latino or Hispanic offend you in any way?

No

23. What have been your interactions with other Latinos in Worcester?

The only ones that I have contact with are people with my background because I am not a gregarious person.

24. Where and when do you typically interact with other Latinos?

For the Latino Film Festival.

25. How would you describe the Latino community of Worcester?

It is very diverse. The ones that I know, it is very diverse. I cannot say that I know all of them, or most of them. I know that they get segregated sometimes, because I have seen it. But I don't know specifically how can I describe them. Some are poor. Some are poorer. Some are surviving, but they are trying.

26. What was the community originally like when you first came to Worcester and what is it like now?

No

27. What are the aspects of the community that you feel most connected to or that you feel have helped you during your time in Worcester if any?

No. I help myself. I don't have any help. I have colleagues here that are sort of like my family, but I feel connected with academia. You know, the university environment and my colleagues.

28. What aspects of the community do you feel excluded from or do you dislike if any?

I don't feel excluded.

29. How would you describe your relation or the Latino community as a whole's relation with the greater community of Worcester?

I don't have any, unless it is Centro Las Americas with Dolly Vazque.

30. Do you still have family back in the country you are originally from?

Oh, Si. Yes, yes.

31. How often do you communicate with this family?

Every other day. My mother died not long ago, and I call my father every other day.

32. How often do you visit this family or does this family visit you?

As much as I can, but I cannot tell you it is three times a year, or once a year or once every two years. Probably once every two years or so.

Oh yes.

33. Do you feel connected to the culture of the country you are from?

Yea, especially in the food.

34. From what you know about the culture of the country you are from and the Latino culture in Worcester, how are they similar and/or different?

a. Politically

Oh, politically they are very different, 100 percent. I lived in Puerto Rico for forty years. I worked as a political writer. I worked in politics in Puerto Rico, and it is not that same here. I found that at least 80 percent of the Puerto Ricans here do not have a clue of what politics is in Puerto Rico. They act sort of like because of hearsay or because they are proud of the Puerto Rican heritage but they don't even know history, the history of Puerto Rico.

b. In terms of food and household

No, we have junk food like in the United States. We have our own food and we have American food. We have both in Puerto Rico.

c. In terms of traditions

Same.

d. In terms of family life

Same. You know, you have to adjust because you live in the United States, but it is basically the same thing.

e. In terms of language spoken

Yes, oh yea, in the household, yes. In my house, we speak both. It doesn't matter. It is the first thing that comes to your mind.

f. Religiously

They are the same.

35. Do you plan to continue to live in Worcester or move either to another place in the United States or to a different country?

No, I plan to continue to live in Worcester.

36. Do you have anything that you would like to add?

No.

Ronald Mendez

1. What is your name?

Ronald Mendez

2. How old are you?

24

3. How many people do you live with and what are the age ranges of these people?

I live with three other people. Two being my parents. One being my brother. My parents are about 47 years old. My brother is two years younger than I am.

4. Do you have any children? (if yes how many and where do they live now)

No

5. Where do you live (what part of Worcester do you live in)?

It's over between Webster Street and Cameron Street.

6. Do you work?

No

7. What is your educational background (what level of schooling did you complete)?

My educational background is a Bachelors and a Masters is in Civil Engineering. I don't work, not because the job market is bad, it's because I'm lazy. An extended vacation.

8. Where did you attend school?

Here (WPI)

9. If you attended school in Worcester or if any member of your family did, could you comment on that experience?

I attended middle school and high school and college. Prior to that I was in California and New York. Well, with the Worcester public school system, I felt that I had a fulfilling time. I really can't complain much about it. I kind of took advantage of it. Learned whatever, and went to college, which is what they sort of projected you to do. And as for WPI, I guess I think that I invested my time well.

10. Where in Latin America are you originally from/where in Latin America is your family originally from?

My parents are from El Salvador.

11. When did you or your family originally come to the United States?

They arrived here to the States in 1980.

12. Where was the first place that you or your family moved to in the United States?

They went to New York City.

13. How did you choose that place to live in?

They ended up choosing New York City because they had some friends there. When they came from El Salvador, they came with my father's sister-in-law, and she had friends and relatives in New York City. And they were like, "Come on. Let's go." They decided, "Why not? Let's go too," because she already had a contact there, and it was the most logical thing to do.

14. When did your family move to Worcester?

My family moved to Worcester in 1994.

15. Why did your family move to Worcester?

We moved to Worcester because we heard it was a better employment opportunity. Before, we were living in New York. I spent the first ten years of my life there. They just didn't like the neighborhood anymore. So, they decided to move to California, where I had an uncle of mine. And they said, "Well, let's give it a shot. Try it out there." And things weren't really coming out in California as they had thought. Especially job wise. We had another uncle here, of mine. There were better opportunities here. So, they decided, "Well, let's do that instead."

16. Did you have family in Worcester before coming to this area?

Yes. An uncle of mine on my mother's side.

17. Did you have a job in Worcester before coming to this area?

They did actually.

18. Have you heard of Centro Las Americas? If yes, what role has it played in your life?

Yes.

No.

19. Do you consider yourself Latino, Hispanic or another term?

To tell you the truth, I'm not really picky on that. So I mean, some people get offended on whether it's Hispanic or Latino. Because some people don't call themselves Hispanics, because they say it pertains to Spain and that they are also Spanish speakers. I have met some who are Brazilian. They won't call themselves Hispanics. They call themselves Latinos. Then Latino might be a better term, because it refers to Latin America, as opposed to Hispanic, which refers to Spain. I'm not really picky in that sense, but if I really had to pick, I would probably go with Latino.

20. Does the term Latino or Hispanic offend you in any way?

No, neither one. It really doesn't. At least they have a general idea. I think the one term that I really don't like is Spanish. "Like oh, he is Spanish." "Well not really," and they'd be like, "Why?" "Well because you speak Spanish." Well that would be like me saying to an English speaking person, "Hey you're English." But you're probably not English. You're I don't know French or something German.

21. What have been your interactions with other Latinos in Worcester?

I sort of hang out with anybody because all throughout high school it was sort of different. Because I did end up taking most advanced classes. So in those cases most of my classmates weren't really of my color. That you would probably find Caucasian, Asian, not really black. I was the only one. The only Latino in the classes. So, I mean that sort of affects because you spend most of the time with your classmates. But beyond classes, there was sports. Soccer, which you could play on the school team, as well as just pick up games around Worcester. Here in Worcester, for many years, this place by here, Foley Stadium on Chandler Street, where a lot of people, especially from the Spring, Summer, maybe until Fall go to play soccer in the evenings. Primarily those people are Latino of Salvadorian, Mexican, and a couple here and are Guatemalan and Honduran. But that was a sense of interaction for me. At the same time also to attend a church here. I have attended there since 1996, so it's a weekly almost daily interaction with a lot of people there. In that sense a lot of it has been

through my church. Just meeting people in general and hanging out at school or it's at church. The school over here sort of drains that in a sense because there are not many Latinos here. I remember when I came here to WPI, I sort of had an idea that it would be like this, but I think I didn't really brace myself for something like that. I was sort of in shock. I was like, "Damn, this sucks for me." But I don't know. All it means is just to make an effort, more so on your part, but I guess it's sort of like from my background and my experience high school was like very diverse. You could look at my high school. South High, one of the public high schools here in Worcester. That was a very diversified school. So then coming over here, it was a big change. It probably happened a lot in that sense we have a couple here but who I meet through organizations at WPI like EMSEP or the Society of Hispanic Professions BSU or NSBE. Groups like that, but my interactions are sort of limited here at school because of the amount of people we have. But then because I ended up attending church, I also went off campus a lot if times, I was actually able to make Latino interactions.

22. How would you describe the Latino community of Worcester?

It is kind of hard to tell the truth, because we are very diverse. In that sense, we have Puerto Ricans, Dominicans. We have some Cubans. There is Salvadorians, Mexicans, Peruvians, Ecuadorians, Brazilians. So, it's very different in a sense. I mean, we all have different perspectives. We all have our different needs. I mean these last couple of months there has been a lot of talk about illegal immigration. And in that sense, it also affects the Latino community, because for someone like a Puerto Rican, who doesn't really have to face any of those issues about immigration status, there have been some remarks on how, "Well, why should we care?" Because it doesn't really affect them. It's not really a concern to them. How to somebody else who from pretty much any other country, whether it be the Dominican Republic or let's say El Salvador, a lot of people, we end up finding are sort of illegal immigrants. In those sense,

it's a different concern. So, I think it also affects everything else, let's say politics. We are sort of not really any representation in politics. Well probably because some people don't aspire to it. We are not really taught. I don't know. I think it's a lot of cultural things that affect us because of our immigration status here, a lot of people tend not to push themselves. I think its like well because of their immigration status, they limit themselves. It's things like that that affect us. So like you say what we used to have Rivera who was the council member, some people might say he did a lot for the Latino community, some other people might say well he did nothing. It's just different points of view different needs. There is the Latino Festival. They are always trying to promote this, which is good, in a sense, because it brings us all together. Sometimes, we don't really know things. You'll say that you speak Spanish, and know a lot of different words, even then unfortunately we have among Latinos, we have our viewpoints, "Oh, well people from this country we sort of think that they are lazy." It's true like some people end up saying, "Oh, he's Puerto Rican. He's probably lazy. He's Salvadorian, well he probably likes to pick a lot of fights and he has a bad mouth," and stuff like that. And it goes on, "Well, he's Dominican. Well we don't know." And sort of tendencies like that that also seem to happen. Some people say you'll find some landlords they'll say, "Well Puerto Ricans tenants sort of went bad. I'd rather look for someone who is Salvadorian." They sort of think, "Well I can do better for some reason." So I think its things like that that sort of affect us as a community, because of the wide diversity that we have it affects us in that sense. I mean you'll go to a restaurant that's of your own ethnic background; you know Puerto Rican restaurants, Dominican restaurants. So there is a lot of different labels, and because of those different labels and then just the fact of all our differences and sometimes we are very apathetic about things that we don't really probably try something else out. So in some sense, you can probably say that we are united. But when it comes to other things, we sort of separate our guard

because we see the difference that we have, and we sort of leave them at that.

23. What was the community originally like when you first came to Worcester and what is it like now?

Well, I mean I came here when I was 12, so at that point I couldn't really tell you exactly how it was. The only things that I heard like comments, "Well at first here, Worcester, there was a couple. There was a good amount of Latinos, but not as many." I believe when they refer to not as many that we have grown in numbers. It's not just the amount of Latinos but in the variety of Latinos that we have had. So I can say that in that past couple of years, I think we have seen more of an influx of people from like Brazil and Ecuador. I think those numbers have grown. Maybe I have noticed them because in doing so I really didn't know a lot of people who are Brazilian and Ecuadorian, but in the past couple of years even more people have been here. Maybe they came from Ecuador. Maybe they have come from other parts of the United States. At the same time you could also say for Central Americans, "I have seen more Guatemalans, more Salvadorians as well." Yeah I think in a sense that it has happened. I couldn't really tell you how much, but I can say that there has been some change. Like you go to the supermarket, now you'll find products from Latin American. I was surprised a couple weeks ago, I really didn't notice but you go to the Shaw's, they have a whole section. I was like, "Wow, that wasn't there a couple years ago." So in a sense I think there has been more acceptance. But hey, you could be cynical and think, "Well, they are doing it for profit." And that makes sense because you got a supply of people, well, why not just answer to their demand. But in terms of another thing, like politics, to tell you the truth I haven't really kept notice of that I think people do realize there is a growing community, and they are trying to answer more. So you will see some services more so now that are bilingual, and people are trying to offer Spanish services or are more mindful of that.

24. What are the aspects of the community that you feel most connected to or that you feel have helped you during your time in Worcester if any?

Well like with that whole soccer, probably some activities, like the Worcester Latino Festival. I have attended, but it really hasn't drawn me. What has affected me in a sense I guess would have to be my church, because we have got faith, and the fact that we are trying to promote as that as church members, as Christians. We are trying to become better citizens, not only at our homes, but also in the community. And we also try to promote that in other people. Bring out the best in them. We try to push people to become better people. Don't keep yourself to your limitations. Just like our faith in God. He wants the best for us. Then that's how we sort of want to promote that to other people too. That's the way it has affected me the most. I feel like in that sense I have pushed myself even more to well. I mean you don't really see a lot of people who are Latino who can say, "Oh, I have a masters in something." Especially in the sciences or math or engineering or in that sense. So seeing those things like that push me more so to say, "Well, you know I'm going to help the first of many." I am trying to be an example to others that has been raised bilingual. In this world I think I should look at both cultures. To tell you the truth, its sort of sad when I see a child who has parents from somewhere in Latin America that barely speaks Spanish, because the reasons that I hear is that, "Well the parents didn't really teach me Spanish," "Because well I didn't want to do that because it might affect their English skills." Well its kind of sad because its like you can still learn English and Spanish without being affected. It's not something that really, I mean I did it I grew up at home we spoke Spanish and then elsewhere I spoke English. And I feel that I'm very comfortable with languages so I'm like well if I can do it well why can somebody else do it.

25. What aspects of the community do you feel excluded from or do you dislike if any?

Yeah, in some sense you sort of feel like some sort of feel a sense of confrontation. Occasionally, you'll see differences; fights you know people seem to exclude you. People seem to look down upon you. Like I have had my instances where it's like some people ask, "Oh well hey do you speak English?" And it's like, "Uhh. So for jokes I'm like yea a little bit." And then like when they start saying other stuff then when I come out speaking, "Hey you know what? I understood everything you did. I heard what you said." And their like, "Uhh man we dropped the ball on that one," or something. I guess in some sense you could probably say well it's natural; it's logical to say well you know a lot of people don't speak English as fluently. But still, I don't know, you'll hear some things where some people look down upon you because hey you know they're Hispanic. Or I don't know sometimes you sort of feel it. I guess in a sense that people look at you differently when you walk down the street or you're in a store or even if you're out at a restaurant. Have I been called a "spic"? Yes, I have. You know, it happens. I guess so you feel it in some sense but I don't know sometimes I think we go into these stereotypes. It's that they seem to draw it anyways.

26. How would you describe your relation or the Latino community as a whole's relation with the greater community of Worcester?

I feel very comfortable calling this home. I mean of all the places that I have been like New York or California or here in Massachusetts, I think I would pick Worcester. I don't know, it's where I feel more comfortable. And I enjoy this place most. So yes, I do feel I have a connection to Worcester because of school or anything. I guess I would say I really enjoy this place. As for Latinos in Worcester in general do they have a connection here? It depends. Some people come here and say, "Well, it's ugly and we'll only be here a couple years." So, I don't think they have any sense of connection to it. But I don't know, I guess in my case because I have seen. Let's say I look at how Worcester is developing and I see you know the mayor and the city councils and I see the school

committee. I feel a connection in that sense but some people don't keep track of those things. Unfortunately, they probably don't feel that much of a connection as to how some legislation might affect them or what things they see what services are offered or something like that. I think I have seen more so than a lot that people feel that well I'm only here I'll work and then I'll just go on and do something else. And then I have seen some who do end up developing a connection who say, "Well you know, I'm here in Worcester, and God knows why I'm here in Worcester, and we don't understand, but I'll make the best of it and this is the place where I am at so I'll take advantage of it."

27. Do you still have family back in the country you are originally from?

Yeah, the vast majority of my family, my grandparents, most of my aunts and uncles, are in El Salvador, as well as my cousins.

28. How often do you communicate with this family?

Yeah, I do. I probably communicate with them once a month.

29. How often do you visit this family or does this family visit you?

Recently it has been about every two or three years. Well growing up it wasn't really like that growing up. It was more like I went every year from about six to about twelve years old; I managed to go every year. After that, it was sort of like well two years went by and then the next year another two years went by. And I just goes on.

30. Do you feel connected to the culture of the country you are from?

Yeah I feel very connected. I guess I don't know, I always called it a second home or something like that. As a matter of fact, I remember going to El Salvador back in September. I don't know. I love the place. I absolutely enjoy it. I don't know, I almost thought of going to live over there but I don't know it's just certain things over there that I see that I don't know probably the reason why I became an engineer. It's like well I can affect things here and I can also affect things over there. So yeah, I feel a strong connection to El Salvador.

31. From what you know about the culture of the country you are from and the Latino culture in Worcester, how are they similar and/or different?

a. Politically

There is a similarity, for the worse. People end up saying, “Well, you know, we can’t really do anything. We don’t really do much in El Salvador politically speaking.” That’s a lot of been the people I’ve met I guess and so they come over here and they sort of apply the same things. But it also affects them in a sense because well and they also go by that I guess because I guess legally their status they can’t really do much when well there is a threat of being deported. I guess some people sort of shut down in that sense you know and I’ll stay away from anything. Yeah but a lot of people are apathetic about it because well you know back there they didn’t do anything even more less so when they are here because they can say, “Well oh I am also here in this country so there is nothing I can do to affect things over there either.”

b. In terms of food and household

Yeah, there are actually differences. Different foods, different ingredients. I hear people say, “Well I can’t find this type of vegetable or this type of herb here in the United States.” But they can find it over there so they start reminiscing, or you now things just aren’t the same here the types of foods. You’ll find some people try to take whatever they have from El Salvador and bring it over here like a “pupusa”. A pupusa is like a stuffed tortilla. They put refried beans or cheese or meat inside of it, generally pork. And they eat it, and it’s just as flat as a tortilla pretty much. And they serve it with like a brine cabbage called a cortido in like a tomato sauce. So that’s let’s say typical of El Salvador and if you go to any Salvadorian restaurant that’s one of the things that they serve. And I think it would be kind of odd or very odd actually to see a Salvadorian restaurant that does not serve this at all. I’d be like, “This isn’t Salvadorian. This is fake.” But yeah so people will have foods like that or other things. But there are some differences because of ingredients or you

know I don't know just how some people learn things. They try to bring also some products like you go to a store or even a corner grocery store or even one of the supermarkets like Price Chopper or Shaw's and you'll see that they have some of the ingredient, but there are different brands I guess and some people go by that also because it might be a Goya product as opposed to in El Salvador it was a different brand name. So they sort of feel that effects things also.

Yeah, it affects some things like for children. It's very important or very dramatic in the changes that there is, because as opposed to where people, a lot of people, might have come from the country side and unfortunately how a lot of people because their from the country side don't really end up studying or going to school very much. They probably go to the sixth grade and stay at that because their family needs to go to work like somewhere in the fields or elsewhere. But here I think it affects them in a sense because they come over here and they still sort of adopt that same mentality, which is unfortunate I think. Like you know now that their children have the opportunity to study and then do whatever they want. They don't really stress that, I think. It might be the case, "Well, I didn't have it. Well they shouldn't have it or why should they need it." And I think that's an unfortunate thing that that happens. But some people would say that because there is more liberty here, more freedom here in the United States you can sort of do what you want and not have to worry about what people say. Such as let's say friendship between genders. Some people say, "Well I'm sorry but you aren't allowed to do that." I mean it happens but it depends on the area whether it's like in the city where people are more liberal about that but if its in more of the countryside some people are more conservative about things like that. So especially for those that come from the countryside, they sort of feel some notions or thoughts are different here.

c. In terms of traditions

As for the traditions that change, actually yeah one of the biggest is well we don't have thanksgiving over there. So that's not a big thing over there. One of the other ones is actually Christmas. For us, Christmas isn't really celebrated. Like but generally well here's a big difference for us. Well in El Salvador, Christmas is celebrated more so on Christmas Eve. Christmas Day is more, well because of what we do on Christmas Eve. On Christmas Eve, we generally all get together, family friends whatever. We eat and this depends also on even the religious backgrounds. Some people go to church early in the day, like a service. Like if their Catholic that even affects them. We go to mass somewhere around 10 o'clock or 11 o'clock but either way for us the big thing is the actual 24th. We wait until its midnight, the start of the 25th. We stay up that night. We stay up that's the thing for us. We don't go to sleep thinking you know we'll find something in the morning. It's more so, we stay up the entire night, you know until it hits midnight, and that's Merry Christmas for us. Feliz Navidad. And that's where all the hugs and all the stuff. But in El Salvador you'll see that we sort of go crazy with fireworks. You know everybody you'll see goes out prior to Christmas. You'll see plazas and parks full of people selling all sorts of firecrackers and fireworks. So you'll see a child or people at home with their hands on a shopping bag full of fireworks. So they'll blow up throughout the night, but then more so when its 12 o'clock. And that's when you can start seeing everybody else's light up. It's like a war or something. I don't know but seriously its like boom you know its not just this little thing of light. The navy or something like that. So for us, you'll hear people say, "Oh you know it's so happy. There is more sense of an environment or atmosphere. You'd probably say I'd prefer that over there." And after midnight they go eat whatever and they go out to other people's homes, eat. So you probably go to sleep at 3 or 4 in the morning, even later, sort of like how we celebrate New Year's. That's for us how the 25th is, and then Christmas Day you probably sleep in, and then a lot of people in El Salvador tend to go out on like a trip.

They might go to the beach or a lake or something like that. It's not really a day where they spend inside their homes. If and when you go to a beach you see it's packed. Sort of like the 4th of July. But when they put that into passing here in the United States, people will still stay up. We still gather together in our homes or something like that, and we are up until midnight waiting for you know, when the clock strikes 12. But because of laws, we can't really blow up firecrackers. But either way I mean here whether it's been in New York or California or here, there is none of that. But it's just more so it's been, well because of that, it's just get together and eat and go off probably call it a night around 2 in the morning. But a lot of people I've heard say, "Well it sort of feels sadder over here." I think in a sense because of those things, but I think also because a lot of people that come here don't have their families. Like they might have they left their parents behind, or their siblings behind, or I don't know even their spouses behind and children. So, they feel that because they're not there, that sort of affects the most.

d. In terms of family life

A lot of people leave their parents behind, or kids behind. They are more or so independent now. You will see sons or daughters who leave their parents behind, but they support their families financially. You will see generally fathers and some mothers that leave their children behind because economically is it easier to do it more or so. I guess for women it is a huge factor that their husbands left El Salvador for the United States and supported them for awhile and just stopped. So, then they take the initiative. So, in the family it also affects because we might see so many relatives of our parents, we might see their cousins here, or you might see their friends here. I think families are in a sense affected because you don't have that close knit thing. They talk to my parents more on the phone more so than I do because I have my parents that talk to them. I call my grandparents and my cousins about once a month, as opposed to other siblings that may call El Salvador once every couple of days at least, some

time during the week. Then momentarily they send money back every week and others every month. I guess families are affected in that sense, those that establish families here are sort of affected in the sense that they have two things to go by, they have what the parents learn in El Salvador and they also can take in what they are learning here, you know languages or like I said the whole Spanish speaking English thing. For some people that don't speak it as well, some parents might think that if I don't speak it then I am only gonna hurt the kid if I only speak Spanish, when in fact we are start learning that being bilingual is a good thing, you know it doesn't matter if it is just Spanish, the more you know the better.

e. In terms of language spoken

In my case growing up because they only speak Spanish, I mean my father started learning English at the time, you know but growing up with them, through out the years I've only spoke Spanish with them, I really haven't felt comfortable speaking English with them, like I might say, how do you say this thing and I try to describe it in Spanish. I mean so I could know what the word is in Spanish, I am trying to describe it and learn it, but I really wouldn't try and say a conversation with them. Part of it is because they really haven't developed it as well, I mean they would understand me but I'd rather speak to them in Spanish because that is just how we have always spoken at home. With my brother we will go between Spanish an English, but when it comes down to my parents it is solely just Spanish, and there is some people that I might speak to in Spanish like my uncles, but I suppose my cousins that grew up here I'll speak to in English because I think that they feel more comfortable. Is there words that change, yah there is some people that might reminisce about the fact that you say a word out of the blue that you really don't hear anymore here because it just seems to be back in El Salvador lets say, and in a sense there also has to be some sort of control where you have to be aware of some words that you say because some words that you can say in Spanish in one country can be offensive in another. So we find that out and at the

same time people also adopt word from other countries. You know in El Salvador lets say for example the bus, in Spanish we call it "bus" but you will see Puerto Ricans call it "guagua", so I mean you might see a Mexican call it "camion", But in this case because Puerto Ricans are very dominant here in this city. You know you will hear us start saying "guagua" or something like that. In addition also to that you hear us distorting or warping some words that are in English or Spanish and that is what we call spanglish. Instead of saying a word exactly how it is in Spanish we might try to resort to sort of saying it in English but not really how it is said in English like for example mop in Spanish the word is "tropiador" but we might say "el mopo" just to try and get some resemblance to English original word but not trying to change it or something like that. You will see it also with freezer, instead of saying "congelador" which is long but it's in the freezer. They'll say the whole thing in Spanish but they'll through in freezer. So some words like that are also similar and change. When you look at kids sometimes you'll see that they say sometimes like two words in Spanish, two words in English and then they'll keep going like that conversation wise. They've changed in some sense.

f. In terms of Religion

Any difference in terms of practice of religion, yah there is some difference for example I would say Catholicism some people might be very devoted Catholics and because they might fear that some things here in the community are different they tend to be less so or perhaps even more so, but there has also been changes when you look at Costals or Born Again Christians which I am one there is some differences there to. Some people might end up being more strict or more liberal as opposed to lets say maybe years ago in El Salvador they might of thought lets say I kicked a soccer ball, that was like, I would've already committed sin or something like that. I guess it's changed over there, you don't really take. So religiously some people might end up saying something like, from my

experience having to talk to people about lets say with Christianity is what I believe what is the bible or to interpret. Or let's say if you were a born again Christian they say well Jesus died on the cross for us to have eternal life that we may prosper and that we might be saved from hell. You know some people might take that as something that you are trying to attack what they believe. Lets say the Catholic they say I am Catholic I don't agree with you whatsoever but that's not really the message that we are trying to, we trying to go towards a better life with a close relationship in god and someone might say no my parents taught me to be catholic. So there is some difference some people might choose to become atheist, some people might become believers, there is different ways about. So I think yah in a sense some things are changing.

32. Do you plan to continue to live in Worcester or move either to another place in the United States or to a different country?

It's kind of hard, I have thought about living here in Worcester, I like Worcester very much so yah I would like a future here in Worcester. Personally, and I am probably one of the few it is like a feel a strong attachment to El Salvador so I might even consider living in El Salvador although I was not born there. It is just I think there are thing that I think could be done in El Salvador. Like you will see people who work for ten hours a day and probably like 5 dollars the entire day, but you will see something's that are expensive for example you will walk into a Burger King over there and the prices are pretty much the same. You will buy a value meal to about 5 dollars give or take. So I think to me that stands out a lot, because I mean if you are only making the average of 5 dollars a day and you can and in a meal you can blow that off. That's like us working here, if you got a 7 dollar an hour job and what's that 56 you know take away taxes, 40 some odd and if you went to Burger King and you blew off your entire pay day there I mean to me that speaks volumes. So I think it is just despairing it seems to make no sense whatsoever to me, especially in a country like that, you know I think people are being exploited. I think at

the same time looking at it, I think at the same time we are killing ourselves because we are very relaxed about environmental laws and how things have been going. You know I was just reading today about China and how they just lost the White River Dolphin who was pretty much declared extinct because of their economic development. Although we are a small country, but I think that it's something that we've got to watch out now with what we have left for space. I think it is also a cultural thing that we are sort ignorant in the sense, and it is like well we don't, because of lack of schooling or something like that we probably going to have to read or try an find out what's going on. So like I said I enjoy Worcester, I would consider a future here, but at the same time I see things like that and it makes me want to tell people it can't wait. I can't wait for someone to take it, because things like that are very dear to me heart, because my family is over there and most people I know in general. So yah I like the atmosphere here in Worcester but it might be between Worcester and El Salvador it depends.

33. Do you have anything that you would like to add?

Back to the part about education, people are conformist and say they can just go to school. Probably being this, an engineer coming here or what ever. You know I would like to see more people push themselves for education. I don't think that parents come here and think well I want my kid to be the best assembler or alley jacker or something like that. You know but unfortunately I think that also affects us because you will see statistics, you know there is a lack of minority in general I would say in math and sciences and engineering. When we look at Hispanics, despite the fact that we are not said to be the largest minority in the United States we look at that in the college level and we are very well. I think that Worcester is another example of that. Let's see what else. Stereotypes, I mean you find out about them you hear about them. Things might affect us like I think that it was a couple of days ago, where they were trying to approve of a bill, where state troopers can question immigration status, I

heard it some where, but I heard something like that. I think that it would affect how people would go about their lives, I mean the general fear that you can be deported and I think this all goes back to a sense about how we are all different, like I said somebody who already has a residence or has their temporary work visa. You know that doesn't really affect them, but I think for those, and there is a good number, they are the people who you know from what I have seen are not really here to cause trouble or anything like that. They are not really trying to get somebody else's job. I think that this whole immigration thing that we have seen in the past is like, well some people might say, you hear, "lazy Mexican" although the Mexican is probably working and you are not. So you say immigrants are coming here and taking our jobs but you call them lazy Mexicans. So which one is it, is he lazy does he not have a job, or does he have a job. I think it is things like that that also affect the outlook on things of what people think, but like I said a lot of people I think come here for jobs you know because of what I said in El Salvador people earn jack, I think, compared to the amount of work that they do. They'll wait tables they'll be in a factory 10 hours a day probably more or so, for what I think is just meager savings. Like you will find a can of Coke that cost fifty cents over there, and so when things in El Salvador like food goes up, it goes up because they also raised wages, so what's the difference. So I think it is just things like that, like in El Salvador we now use the US dollar as our currency, we used to have what we called the "Colon". The Colon was named after Christopher Columbus, so that used to be our currency and the value for that was about eight seventy-five per dollar. So I think about how I had ten dollars when I was a kid there and I could do about anything pretty much, I mean you could buy firecrackers, I mean they are not illegal over there so you can buy them in the middle of July and start blowing up stuff and that's how people knew I was there actually. They hear fire crackers going off in July and they are like, "Hey it's not Christmas, it must be the Mendez kid who is back." But I remember how ten dollars

over there would last me a good amount, I could go out and buy drinks or whatever something like that, juices chips something like that. And now I look over there and ten dollars will get me you know maybe two things three things and I am like this is how people tend to live over there, they make ten dollars in two days. Yet you see these things that you know there are things that cost you like a buck or twenty-five cents but even then it adds up I think. Especially when you have family and kids, so I think it is things like that that also affect. I think they are generally probably coming to look for a job, maybe to look for an opportunity to look for there families for a better life, better things cause you will see that the vast amount of money sent from here to El Salvador are usually just for household uses, spending it for buying food or cloths or something like that. There is a push more from the south, from the government to invest this in the economy, because I think in 2004 the amount of money sent from here to El Salvador was about 2 billion plus, and I think that the economy there produce something slightly more than that, so I think that you got to kind of start seeing things like that. I think a lot of people that come here are for things like that not because they are out to get the benefit. Some people say that they are here to abuse the welfare systems; the thing is I really don't know anybody that are on welfare. I mean I can probably count them on my hand. The vast amounts of people that I know are saying, I need a job, I need a job, I'll work first shift, second shift, and third shift. So it is things like that like when we look at immigration that affect things. So the thing with Raimi you know people are afraid of getting deported, not because the really committed something, it is just more so if they get deported then they have to get back there and now they are financial condition is affected greatly. There is a question to that, people might be afraid to go out to venture anywhere. Already there is like a fear you know, when the police stops me he will be asking me for my identification, what am I going to do, some people are lenient and some people are not. I think that that might affect how some people look at it,

they might not want to do things as much, and they even isolate themselves more so. You might of heard about how Deval Patrick wanted to issue hazard interest and issue licenses to illegal immigrants, as opposed to my friend Kerry and he would say, no you hear those ads on TV they would like it on planes and how they might do things like terrorist acts. I don't discount the fact that there is possibility of something like that, this day and age, you can't be too sure, but when I look at it I am like well that they would do that. I don't think they are looking out to try and get a drivers license to board a plane. If you get a drivers license then at least we know who is on the road or something like that. So I think that it is things like that that would probably not just affect the city of Worcester but also Massachusetts as a whole. So you will see differences like here in how Worcester works and how Boston works, or in let's say Framingham or you know even Springfield. It is just things like that that I think are important to look at or to even consider.

E.J. Ofarrill

1. What is your name?

My name is Edgardo Ofarrill.

2. How old are you?

I am 19 years old.

3. How many people do you live with and what are the age ranges of these people?

One other person. 19.

4. Do you have any children? (if yes how many and where do they live now)

No

5. Where do you live (what part of Worcester do you live in)?

21 Fruit Street.

6. Do you work?

Yes.

7. If yes, where do you work and what is your position there?

I work at UPS. I am a supervisor there.

8. How long have you been working there? (if appropriate: approximately what is your average income?)

About later September of last year, 2006. About \$1600 a month.

9. How did you get this job?

Actually, one of my good friends of mine, his father works there, and I just graduated from school, and I needed a job so. Before then I was working at TJ Max and I didn't really like it there so. They had benefits, and they could help me out with school so I decided to go this route.

Basically I knew a guy in the company itself to help me get the job.

10. Do any other members of your family work with you/at the same company as you?

No.

11. What is your educational background (what level of schooling did you complete)?

High school diploma, and I am currently going for my Business degree, Business Management. I'm already in my first semester now.

12. Where did you attend school?

Worcester South High Community. I am at Quinsig, most likely going to transfer out after a semester or two to, maybe Worcester State or so.

13. If you attended school in Worcester or if any member of your family did, could you comment on that experience?

South is pretty good; it's a good school. Quinsig, I just started yesterday actually, so this is my first semester. I started yesterday so far its good.

Kind of can't wait to go back but I know its going to end after like the first two weeks. I just don't want to go back to school but its good.

14. Where in Latin America are you originally from/where in Latin America is your family originally from?

Actually I'm born here in Worcester, Mass. My mother is from Puerto Rico, actually from New York, but she was raised in Puerto Rico. My father, the same, he was born in New York, and they both came over here, and that's where I came in the picture.

15. When did you or your family originally come to the United States?

Actually, they were both here born here in New York. I don't know. My grandparents, that was like when my parents were really small. I have no idea.

16. Where was the first place that you or your family moved to in the United States?

Nope, just I know they were in Worcester, and then they went to New York shortly after, and that's where my parents were raised.

17. How did you choose that place to live in?

Family, I believe, I have everybody up here.

18. Why did your family move to Worcester?

More they were just basically missing the family. They just wanted to come and see them and then that's basically how they, because my family works everywhere from working for the city from just working in a regular convenience store or what not. So I mean it's basically they just came out here and they just had our family help them out.

19. Did you have family in Worcester before coming to this area?

Yes.

20. Have you heard of Centro Las Americas? If yes, what role has it played in your life?

Sounds familiar. I haven't heard of it in a while though. I don't recall what it is exactly.

No.

21. Do you consider yourself Latino, Hispanic or another term?

No. Latin, Hispanic, Latino.

22. Does the term Latino or Hispanic offend you in any way?

No, either or that's perfect. More of it I have noticed, I get offended, but it's like if one's race is like Puerto Rican and you call them Salvadorian or Mexican then that's when they get a little offended, so that's the difference basically. But other than that, usually we are just Hispanic or Latino and that doesn't really bother us because we are all speaking the same language basically in different ways.

23. What have been your interactions with other Latinos in Worcester?

Not bad, it's just good. Basically we all hang out have a good time. I try to keep some of my friends out of trouble.

24. Where and when do you typically interact with other Latinos?

Hanging out, family reunions, that's definitely a big one. At any kind of holiday, we all gather in one house and basically all the aunts and uncles, the uncles sit in a room watching baseball, football, aunts in the other room just sitting talking, and all my little cousins and baby cousins just have fun and play the whole time. So it's just a big reunion mostly when I interact, sometimes at work also.

25. How would you describe the Latino community of Worcester?

That's a good question. Good. I think they are doing better. You know some of them obviously, everybody goes through a struggle here and there every once in a while, but they don't really let it get to them. They try to work hard to feed their kids feed, their family members and what not and I would say that they are going in the right path. Hopefully they don't prove me wrong but I just hope they are doing good.

26. What was the community originally like when you first came to Worcester and what is it like now?

Actually yeah. For instance, when I was younger I remember when Lakeside, Great Brook Valley that used to be a really bad spot when I was a younger child, but as growing up it just its not as bad anymore as it was. Certain areas, obviously certain areas of Worcester are still bad, but not as it used to be. I mean they used to be really bad, I remember when I was a couple of years old, I remember clips and everything. It used to be bad but its better now definitely.

27. What are the aspects of the community that you feel most connected to or that you feel have helped you during your time in Worcester if any?

Just because I was born here I guess. Yeah, I really don't have an answer for that one. I can't really think of one.

28. What aspects of the community do you feel excluded from or do you dislike if any?

Once I came across racism, which I thought was over, but yeah there are still people that aren't fully in their mind, and actually thinking that we are all one person. So I've been across some racism. It sucks basically but it's life.

29. How would you describe your relation or the Latino community as a whole's relation with the greater community of Worcester?

Good, I get along with everybody.

30. Do you still have family back in the country you are originally from?

Yeah, I have from my mom's side. I believe I still have some aunts and uncles over there. I'm not quite sure. I went over there when I was a baby. I haven't been there since. I have been wanting to go back but other than that no.

31. How often do you communicate with this family?

Very, very rare because my family from over there would come over here to visit my family, so at that time, that's when I would go over and visit them and talk to them and see them, but other than that every once in a while.

32. How often do you visit this family or does this family visit you?

When I was a baby, yes. My grandparents go often. They moved a while ago to Florida, when I was eight, and every once in a while they would go over there, and every once in a while my family would take a trip down there and also go to Puerto Rico, so that's pretty good. At least once or twice a year I think. I see them at least once every year I'm not sure how often they come up, but I see them at least once.

33. Do you feel connected to the culture of the country you are from?

Yeah, there is Three Kings Day over there. It's like another basically, you celebrate, you know Jesus and the three kings and what not, and sometimes me and my family, we still celebrate that. Get three presents, one from each king, so yeah. The Latin Festival, that's a lot of fun to go to, especially getting all that food. That's where it's at.

34. From what you know about the culture of the country you are from and the Latino culture in Worcester, how are they similar and/or different?

a. Politically

There is, but I just can't remember what kind, but I know there is a slight difference and ways we would look at things over here, that they look at differently over there, I know there is. I just can't remember exactly what.

b. In terms of food and household

Yeah, food definitely tastes so much better over there, definitely, but obviously we have little Spanish community stores. They still sell the ingredients, but the little Spanish restaurants some of them are good, but not all of them. Rice and beans, pork shoulder, pork chops, chicken, there is a lot like *papa rellena* it's like mashed potato with hamburger meat but its all into a bun and you fry. It's really, really good. There is a lot of good stuff. Yeah and just on the weekday on a regular basis actually.

c. In terms of traditions

Well it depends, what kind of family. There is a lot of families out there that definitely goes exactly how it was over there, does it exactly over here, but there is some that does it just slightly different, so there is a little bit of a difference, but most of it is the same.

d. In terms of family life

No, family is basically the same. You have your family members like my family members, it's not like you can get away with doing something when you are with your aunt or uncle or with you older cousins than just with your parents. I mean they are all, anybody older than you, basically you just have to make sure you listen, because it's not because you know they basically have as much authority as your regular parents. Like when I was growing up I would listen to my aunts, if not I would get it.

e. In terms of language spoken

Both, because I was born and raised here. When I was younger I was just basically taught English, so I can speak it well enough so they understand what I'm saying, but not fluent enough, so, but there is a little bit of a

difference. Just a very slight with some words. There will be some words that they'll say over here meaning one thing and if you say it over here some of them really are like, "I don't know what that is," so if you were raised over there and then come over here, there is a little bit of a difference of a slang and how they say certain words.

f. In terms of religion

Not sure, probably the same but not sure.

35. Do you plan to continue to live in Worcester or move either to another place in the United States or to a different country?

I'm not sure yet. I'm not sure. I want to be able to have money first before

I can do any of that. Actually I'm not sure.

36. Do you have anything that you would like to add?

No, basically did everything all of it.

Natalie Velazquez

1. What is your name?

Natalie Velazquez

2. How old are you?

21

3. How many people do you live with and what are the age ranges of these people?

Currently two. I live with my grandparents. They are like 66 and 65.

4. Do you have any children? (if yes how many and where do they live now)

No.

5. Where do you live (what part of Worcester do you live in)?

Down by Shrewsbury Ave.

6. Do you work?

No.

7. What is your educational background (what level of schooling did you complete)?

I started college at QCC and then came here as a transfer student, currently at WPI.

8. If you attended school in Worcester or if any member of your family did, could you comment on that experience?

Mostly Quinsigamond. My experience at “Quinsig” is a lot different from WPI. A lot slower paced, more connection with the engineering professors.

9. Where in Latin America are you originally from/where in Latin America is your family originally from?

My mother’s side are all from Colombia. My father’s side are all from Puerto Rico.

10. When did you or your family originally come to the United States?

My parents are both first generation Americans. Early 60’s maybe like mid 60’s.

11. Where was the first place that you or your family moved to in the United States?

I think it was Worcester.

12. How did you choose that place to live in?

Someone else in the family lived here, and then they all just wanted to be by each other.

13. Did you have family in Worcester before coming to this area?

I think maybe one person.

14. Did you have a job in Worcester before coming to this area?

No, they didn’t.

15. Have you heard of Centro Las Americas? If yes, what role has it played in your life?

No.

16. Do you consider yourself Latino, Hispanic or another term?

Hispanic.

17. Does the term Latino or Hispanic offend you in any way?

No.

18. What have been your interactions with other Latinos in Worcester?

I have a few friends that are Hispanic. Friends of cousins and things like that.

19. Where and when do you typically interact with other Latinos?
School, or just hanging out after.
20. How would you describe the Latino community of Worcester?
It's very big. I call it one big community even though people live throughout Worcester. The church has a lot to do with it; the connections.
21. What was the community originally like when you first came to Worcester and what is it like now?
Pretty much how it is now.
22. What are the aspects of the community that you feel most connected to or that you feel have helped you during your time in Worcester if any?
Probably the church.
23. What aspects of the community do you feel excluded from or do you dislike if any?
No.
24. How would you describe your relation or the Latino community as a whole's relation with the greater community of Worcester?
I don't really do social activities. I mean there is festivities around the city like the Latin Festival.
25. Do you still have family back in the country you are originally from?
Yup.
26. How often do you communicate with this family?
I don't really. My grandparents mostly do.
27. How often do you visit this family or does this family visit you?
I haven't. I've been to Puerto Rico once, but not yet to Colombia.
28. Do you feel connected to the culture of the country you are from?
Yeah, our family tends to keep our culture.
29. From what you know about the culture of the country you are from and the Latino culture in Worcester, how are they similar and/or different?
- a. Politically
I'm not sure that they are democratic, or not, but I don't really know a lot about their politics.

b. In terms of food and household

It sounds kind of racist, but I term what Americans eat as white food and then what we eat as more Hispanic foods. There is a lot of flavor. I don't really know what to say about it. Yeah, we have a lot of rice and meat and potatoes are basically the three staples during every dinner.

c. In terms of traditions

No, I think we have kept most of them.

d. In terms of family life

It's very, very tight knit. Pretty much everybody knows what's going on in everyone else's lives. We talk a lot. Have a lot of big family parties.

e. In terms of language spoken

I don't speak Spanish to them, but they speak Spanish to me. So, I'm more of an understanding, more than talking because it's harder for me to talk.

f. In terms of religion

I think they have more get-togethers during holidays and during events that we don't consider holidays. I think they try and maintain the same.

30. Do you plan to continue to live in Worcester or move either to another place in the United States or to a different country?

I think so, or somewhere nearby. Possibly Rhode Island or southern New Jersey. Well, my father was in the Coast Guard, so we moved around a lot and those are a couple of places that I have been to that I liked.

31. Do you have anything that you would like to add?

No, I don't think so.

Appendix F: Additional Relevant Interview Transcriptions

Gladys Rodriguez Parker

Katie Elmes

Heather Hassett

Interview: Gladys Rodriguez Parker

KATIE: This is Gladys Rodriguez Parker

GLADYS: Mmhmm

KATIE: and, umm, we are going to ask you some questions about your experience both growing up in the Latino community of Worcester and what you are doing today.

GLADYS: Ok

KATIE: So, umm

GLADYS: Let's put this over here

KATIE: haha perfect, so, the first question is umm how old are you? We're just trying

GLADYS: Helllooo

KATIE: It's just for general information and so we know who we're talking to

GLADYS: I am 49 years old. I will be 50 in July

KATIE: Alright umm and where in Latin America are you originally from and umm or where would you

GLADYS: I'm from the Caribbean so I'm from Puerto Rico and umm I am actually from a place called San Lorenzo Puerto Rico with a little town called San Rodolbo and uh San Rodolbo is a umm in Puerto Rico what we would refer to as when I was growing up, as a campo. I grew up as a campasina, campasina. I grew up as a jíbara. And a jíbara means a country person so umm not necessarily a hick kind of person but a country person and umm umm I came to the United States when I was about 12, some where around there, 12 or 13 years old in 1969 however I was born in the United States I was born in Westfield Massachusetts because my parents had been migrant workers and in the umm 30s 40s and 50s people from the, from Puerto Rico, after Puerto Rico became part of the United States in 1917, umm Puerto Ricans became cheap labor and so Puerto Ricans from certain umm areas of Puerto Rico, especially some of the farming areas and some of the real poor communities, umm ahh planes that said PanAm on them real big would um come to Puerto Rico and actually pick up people and my mother along with aunts and

uncles and other people in my family used to come to the United States and so they ended up in New England and umm ahh picking things ...and tobacco and picking, you know all kinds of farm products and stuff like that. And umm I ended up in, being born in Westfield Massachusetts which was a real polish community and so when I was a baby my mother went back to Puerto Rico and that's why I stayed there – that was 1957 and I stayed there till 1969 so I say I grew up there but umm as a child and my mother knew all these other words in this language that we just had no clue what it was and it was the polish women who she used to work with had taught her like how to get by kind of words in polish so it was just really interesting and my and actually my baptism, no not my yes my baptism record is in polish.

KATIE: very interesting, very cross cultural community

GLADYS: well that's what happens you know, that was like the beginning of a lot of that stuff you know that's America actually. Yea

KATIE: umm would you consider yourself Latino, Hispanic, or is there another term that you would use to identify yourself?

GLADYS: oi you know when I was going through my high school days when I was trying to figure out who I was in life I mean I was definitely a puertorriqueña. I'm Puerto Rican all the way. And umm and then when I went off to college I became a Latina and I always, I never really liked the, the, umm the the term Hispanic only because it just it you know what I learned historically as a child and what I learned when I was in college about how we got that name you know. And so I like to say that I'm either Puerto Rican or I am Latina. And so I refer to most people as Latinos or Latinas although I have traveled a great deal across the country and I have traveled you know into Central America and there's a lot of people who will not be called Latinas they wanna be called Hispanic and so there is a lot of this whole debate in academia about which I think is just a real healthy way of people trying to figure out where they fit and all that other stuff but umm there's this whole different way of people trying to figure out who they are. You know. And when it comes to things like census, like in this office we deal a lot with, every 10 years the United States has undergone a census since like 1789 for every 10 years so we have information about people and you know the census is really important because it tells us, it gives us information on how much, on how many resources we have whether it's you know equipment or money or small businesses or whatever and then it tells the federal government some of the gaps that are missing and so it was the census, the census wanted to figure out how do we count all of these people that were sort of new. So of course I'm sure that there were no Puerto Ricans that were sitting at the table who were making these decisions so you know so umm

KATIE: umm speaking a little bit about education, what is your educational background?

GLADYS: I graduated from North High School umm here in Worcester in 1975. I went off...and by the time I graduated from high school in 1975 I had a 6 month old baby and I really didn't think that I was gonna be able to take up the the offer that had been given

to me. I had been accepted to UMass Amherst and I really didn't think that I was gonna be able to do that. And umm and sort of people who were mentors of mine back then who are still mentors of mine to this day umm looked for resources to help me, let me to happen, make it happen and so I went off to UMass and I studied history and political science there and I stayed there from 75 to 78. and UMass is a very transient sort of community and so umm I had a very hard time with people coming and you know coming and going and I was living as a single parent in married student housing and so it was very very isolating but anyway I ended up coming home in 1978 worked for about two and a half years and on the year that Ronald Reagan was elected I was working for a program called SIDA and the economy of the United States was not doing all that well so this was a public service job's program that was put together by the carter administration. It was on its last legs. Anyway I had gotten a job with the administration in the SIDA administration and when Ronald Reagan got elected I was laid off.

KATIE: ohh

GLADYS: and so by that time I had two children it was 1980 and umm I had 2 children. I had three years of college under my belt and I just decided if I go, if I continue to go to work and I don't finish my bachelors I'm going to be in trouble so I decided that even though I had two children I had to figure out a way to you know put some...some things together to go on to school so umm. Ended up graduating many years later – I graduated in 1984. So I tell people facetiously you know that it took me like 9 years to graduate from college.

KATIE: hahaha

GLADYS: So yea

KATIE: umm and so it um in your experience here in Worcester and in schools umm...did any other members of your family attend school in Worcester

GLADYS: you know, when we first came to the United States we lived in south Boston for a year in 1969 never know what was going to happen when we moved there. Umm my father had come up a year before umm before we moved here and had found us an apartment that was basically a studio my mother and father and 8 children I have 7 brothers and I am the only girl and umm my ahh father had found this studio in a right next to south Boston right on the edge and about three months after coming to the United States my mother just had to figure out how you know just how to figure out how to get a place that was bigger or how to get work we were not going to school and so she went to the local church and the local church helped to get an apartment in south Boston at D street projects and umm I must say it was the most horrendous experience if to the to date of my life it was a it was a really hard time. I guess in south Boston it was going through a lot of desegregation kinds of things and when the housing authority I guess gave us this a wonderful apartment which was 4 bedrooms and you know living room and dining room and all this other stuff we had no clue what was going on. Anyway umm suffice it to say that we spent about a year and we all enrolled in school and I think I was the only

one that did well there just because I wasn't sort of...I wasn't umm ummm...I stayed out of trouble I kept myself unlike my brothers who were in a fight very single day and umm it was just, it was just really chaotic. Anyway I often tell the story because you know it was that chapter number one in this country and number two I just didn't know how much part of history our family was, was. And in, on New Year's Eve of 1970 we literally had to leave with the clothes on our backs. Umm we left just about everything behind and we ended up in Worcester. And the reason we ended up in Worcester was because we had an aunt who had been visiting from umm Millbury Massachusetts which is a town right outside of Worcester and we ended up coming here. And uhh it wasn't until later that, that I was able to continue to go to school and figure out "oh my god you know we were right there." So in 1975 when I was watching the busing stuff that was going on in south Boston and stuff. There's an author that umm has written a couple of books about his experiences in south Boston and umm I've seen him and I've written. I've read some of the article and it's just really interesting you know the whole history. And ahh if if you would just let me go on I ahh went to el Salvador back in 1996, 97 I believe and I went with congressman McGovern my boss and congressman Moakley. Congressman Moakley umm who passed away umm a few years ago and we miss him dearly umm but congressman Moakley lived through all of that because he represented south Boston. And I was in this place in this hotel room, this hotel and in the lobby I found congressman Moakley and I was kind of leery about you know going and talking to him because he's, you know, but he called me over and I sat down and I talked to him and he asked me my story so I told him the story I'm telling you and he went on to talk about how hard it was and how difficult and and where he lived and he lived right next to the projects that I'm talking about and you know just how difficult and ahh you know it it was, it was sort of bitter sweet to talk to somebody at the highest level of government to sort of say this did happen, you know. Cause not everyone gets a chance to say this happened you know so umm. So I guess personally, I've been mad every since. And umm I've used that experience personally to, to really hone in on, on community and on justice issues and on those kind of issues. When I was in college, I thought I was going to go to law school because I thought that that was one of the ways that I was gonna right the wrongs of the world. And, and here I am working in politics which is the same thing.

KATIE: haha. You still have that same goal.

GLADYS: I do. I do. I mean a lot of people think you know I'm I'm...they call me umm the umm...you know people think I'm an idealistic and stuff and to some extent you know I am I haven't lost the idealism I've had all these years and I don't recommend that people give it up either. Especially now you know.

KATIE: right. How did your experience in Worcester either like help to push that anger towards wanting to change things or change it especially in the school system? What was your experience because I know there was some transitions...

GLADYS: yea you know when we first came to the United States and in my south Boston experience we learned how to speak English on the street and it wasn't anything formal. I literally sat in school for nine months when we first got here with my hands

crossed because I was taught to do that umm not that I didn't do that from what I came from. I had come from a place that had taught me how to add 2 plus 2 was 4 it wasn't 5. I had come from a place – I was in the 7th grade – umm so I knew, all I needed to do was just to learn the language to translate what I... but I didn't come here with any deficiencies in what I knew.

KATIE: right.

GLADYS: I just didn't know the language and so I I umm...I've always had this feeling for people who – and I don't care what part of the world they come from and if they don't understand the language and I don't care where we are in the world and if you don't understand something you should be able to have access to help. And so I've always...I felt really strongly about that. But when we came here I I experienced many things as a child and umm things from like going into the wrong room because I couldn't read whether it was boy or girl's room umm you know those kinds of things. And those kinds of things shape who you become and so from those experiences when I got to Worcester um I fought really hard to get into the right grade because even though I was in the 7th grade in Puerto Rico because I didn't know the language I was put in the 4th. And so when I got here, you know, just about a year and a half later, I had to really fight myself to be put into and my brothers had experienced the same thing. And we're talking at a time when 2 out of 3 Latino students were dropping out of school. And there was no access to bilingual education. And so umm it wasn't until many years later, it wasn't until after I had graduated from the Worcester public schools in 1975 in the city of Worcester umm actually there was a court umm decision that provided for the that had a consent decree that went into play to provide bilingual education to students in the city of Worcester. That was after I graduated from Worcester and so we lost a lot of kids we lost a lot of people, we lost a lot of people that I knew, you know. I shouldn't say that that's limited to Worcester. I was just talking to a professor from the university of Texas in San Antonio who I was talking...who I talked to him like two days ago and he did a study of all of the studies that have been done on Latino education in the last 25, 30 years and umm these are people from all over the country that with clean eyes took a look at this information and they concluded that we have lost in the last 25 to 30 years we have lost a million Latino students. Who never graduated from school. And so we have some of the same issues that we had when I was a child and when I first came to the United States long ago and umm we have a long way to go I mean Massachusetts – Worcester is doing a little bit better because of some of the things that we've been doing for example about six years ago Judge Perez and some other people in the community who have always looked at education as the way the Latino community is going to move forward. Umm we put together what is called the Latino education institute and umm we had a working coalition of people in the Latino community and over at Worcester state we now have this institute and umm we have after school programs that hone in on the holistic Latino child. Umm and so everyone that is working with that program, they wake up every single day trying to figure out how to make this Latino child succeed. So the people that are working there, they don't leave the community. They live within this community. They teach in this community. They umm and so...they go to church in this community. They shop where the community shops. So umm we felt that is was really important in the absence of not having that in the life of some of these children – I mean some of the

Latino children in any school system, not just the Worcester public schools can go their entire time and not have somebody from their own background who stands in front of them you know as a role model etc and I know for me umm it was very very important whenever I had somebody who came from our community or just it didn't even have to be someone who was Latino just someone who came in and all they cared about was whether or not you were gonna succeed. Now let me just say that umm in Worcester I had the fortunate circumstance of meeting people from all across the spectrum who were instrumental in helping me umm and I can name those people. You know how you still – you have one teacher or one principal still. I mean I have had those experiences. Umm should I say that things were totally simple? I don't think things were simple for anybody. Umm however I mean they were not I mean but you know people want to talk about whether or not the level of racism that I might have experienced or the level of umm yea we experienced – umm yea we experienced all of that. I'm a stronger person for it all umm but do I want other young people to have to? No I just want them to concentrate on what they need to concentrate on. Umm and our problems have gone beyond what they were when I was umm in school. That's the other thing.

KATIE: they've changed? The the problems have changed or just amplified?

GLADYS: the problems have amplified completely I mean we have youth violence right now that is so rampant you know. Ummm youth violence sometimes is sort of...sort of not, not readably understandable and so now the path for some young people in our community whether it's the Latino community or the African-American community, the poor community, you know the path is...some of the paths you know the path in some of the schools has been you get referred to different organization you end up in court I mean so the number of – when you speak with judge Perez you'll see I mean the number of Latino children and African American children who are involved in the juvenile justice system and then with the adult justice system umm is through the roof and we've got to figure out a way of making it possible for people to you know get an education that's gonna cost 8 thousand, 7 thousand dollars versus 30 thousand dollars that it costs you and me to keep someone in prison. Or to keep somebody out of a hospital or to keep somebody you know I mean its, you don't, the only thing we have as a community and I say this all the time is that we're going to be able to – the way we're going to be able to succeed is through education.

KATIE: umm to, switching gears a little bit umm, going back to what you were talking about you said you had family near by in the area when you first came to actually Worcester umm did that significantly influence why you came to this part of the country or...

GLADYS: oh absolutely, absolutely. We had aunts and uncles and stuff like that and I mean that's, I think that every immigrant group does that I mean people are doing that now. You know we have a strong Albanian community in this area right now. Why are they coming? Because other Albanians are here. Same thing with the Latino community. Umm it used to be that when we first came to to Worcester, Worcester was a very small umm Latino community but very small but it was 99% Puerto Rican community and now

its about umm 77% Puerto Rican and then it's everything else: Salvadorian, people from central America, the Dominican republic, Mexico so and I should say and I say this all the time that while we're all Latino, we don't agree on a lot of things, I mean every other Latino community except for the Puerto Rican community has to deal with the immigration issue. Puerto Ricans on the other hand are citizens, true citizens of this country. Many people in this country don't even know that that's the case and so Puerto Ricans suffer a great deal of stigmatation, whether its discrimination, whether they're looked at as umm immigrants when in fact we are citizens of this country. And so there are many people that just have no clue.

KATIE: right

GLADYS: and umm they go their whole entire lives I mean we have interns here from Clark university, Holy Cross, and I don't want to peg on them I mean from all over the country you know there are interns that have come through our umm through our office over the last ten years and there are some young people who have never met a woman who is from Puerto Rico. Umm you know because we live in such different kinds of areas and umm people just don't recognize the fact that, you know, that Puerto Ricans are, and appreciate the fact that Puerto Ricans are actually people who are U.S. citizens and then if you were to have this conversation and this was a heated conversation, people would go on to talk about, you know, all of the Puerto Rican soldiers who are in Iraq right now, all of the Puerto Rican soldiers who died in Vietnam, the Puerto Rican soldiers that died in Korea and made a name for themselves in Korea that gave their lives for world war II that gave their lives for world war I I mean so there is a history, a strong history, of military service of people from the Puerto Rican community to this nation and so that when you when you talk to the Puerto Rican community and their feeling like they're not appreciated or they're...they'll just talk about you know they just they cause Puerto Rico's not that big.

KATIE: right

GLADYS: You know. It's 30 miles. I mean so, it's this wide and this long. And from every single city and town you have people who have gone into the military and umm and and they do so with honor so

KATIE: umm can you talk a little bit about your adjustment period if there was one between coming from Puerto Rico to the United States and then specifically if there was a further adjustment period that you felt had to happen when you came to Worcester and how...

GLADYS: umm well I can say that, you know, as a 12 year old kid, I had sort of the the adjustment period that any you know any – I loved living on a farm, I I grew up amongst you know cousins. We didn't need any friends because we had so many cousins. I grew up you know very interment sort of setting, with you know grandparents and uncles and aunts and and and umm and so when we when we came here it was very isolating and we came here in one of the worst winters that new England had had up until you know I

don't know it was 19... February of 1969 and we came and I don't know there must have been in the first three months that we were here there must have been I don't know how many snowstorms and you know never having seen snow, never having felt that cold and you know I still remember very vividly you know those kinds of things and umm I think it I think it felt very isolating umm. It was very difficult to make friends. And then for me umm I always made friends from my umm you know students in the schools who were from Puerto Rico and umm other people who were not Puerto Rican and that caused a lot of conflict when I was a child because I had friends who were black who were white who were Spanish and back then as is the case today you know kids sit in the cafeteria with who they know and so but I happened to have belonged to the gang of the misfits you know so there was a little bit of everybody and umm we were always hassled over that stuff and ahh you know religiously we we were very tight in terms of going to church all the time and having to do that and when we were in Puerto Rico and then when we came to the United States it was sort of difficult to figure out where we fit in umm and so you know you had to figure out a whole new way. And that took time I mean I don't I... that took a lot of time. Nobody ever sits back and reflects on, unless you write a book or whatever, and you know you tell the story, nobody really reflects on gee what does that really mean and everything else. Umm but I I do remember you know there were, there were just so many different times when I just... you know I know that we're here because you know we didn't have enough to eat where we were and you know and I should say that you know for, for U.S. college student or any other student that may be looking at this down the line, you gotta figure out why people like me came to the United States in 19... what was going on in Puerto Rico that you had this exodus? Because in Puerto Rican society you had different exoduses and I don't... in the 20s and perhaps something else in the 40s, in the 50s and then in the late 60s. well by the late 60s a lot... let me back up a little bit. Puerto Rico had become a commonwealth of the United States in 1955 and so a 25 year tax agreement had been done with the island in which we became a commonwealth of the United States. We did not become a state of the United States we became this commonwealth. And a 25 year agreement was set in place where corporations from the United States could go into Puerto Rico for you know I don't know paying no taxes or what have you and a lot of land was given over to these corporations etc and we were farmers. And it was the last leg of the farming community and so why did people like myself and hundreds and thousands of others at the same time ended up coming to every city in the united state? It's because the other cultural community was dying and so all that we were sitting on, all these acres of land, we had you know my parents, my grandfather etc had no way of paying for what it took to operate that land which is why we ended up you know coming. And that's the same situation with a lot of people around the world now. People just don't you know... but it was direct policies of the main land that made it, that made it possible for us to have had to come to the United States

KATIE: so in coming from this really close community in Puerto Rico, did you... when you came to the United States you obviously had the, the friends and the family in Worcester, umm what was it... was the Latino community itself influential in helping you feel like you actually belonged...

GLADYS: yea actually it was the education issue that made it possible. One of...we, my mother and father enrolled us in school and umm there was a woman who came to our door and umm I don't know my mother, who never went to school didn't know how to read and write, would insist that we do our homework after school and wouldn't let us go out till you know. And this woman showed up one day and she was just a young kind, she was probably your age, she was 20, 21 years old and she showed up and she was doing one of these things probably that you are doing right now for school, she was going to Clarke University and she had just started doing a project with the Worcester public schools and they were trying to figure out gee how many, how Puerto Rican families are now living in Worcester and what kinds of services do they need and do these kids...these kids that don't speak any English, how do we help them etc. that was judge Perez's wife and they're still together umm so umm Lisa Perez and so we became very good friends. Well my mother and they and, we all became very good friends and they were very active in the community. And so from that my mother got involved with a group of women who umm were in her own situation, women who had not gone to school, women who had no education but who wanted to make sure that their kids were education and so they organized themselves and it was a group of those women who as I said earlier Worcester had to be taken to court, it was a group of those women that went to court. And umm it was that kind of activism that I started to sort of learn from so ahh I never undermine anybody that comes in here to talk about well we're gonna get together and we're gonna do this and I'm like that's how things get done you know and I never ever thought that these people were...you know I mean we used to enjoy getting together at holidays and stuff like that because you know it was just a small community and then it just started to grow. If you had the opportunity right now, the area that I'm talking about where we used to live, we ended up coming to live on Gardner street, Gardner street and main south which is up, going up towards Clarke University and at that time, a lot of the lots that you see now had huge three deckers and apartments etc and it wasn't through the 70s when I went off to college that umm a lot of the problems that were going on in those comm....a lot of the problems that were going on in our neighborhoods which had a lot to do with drugs and and drug trafficking etc umm a lot of those apartment buildings and three deckers were burnt. And it's kind of, it's a real sad history in our, in Worcester and the Latino community was dispersed throughout the city but it was very highly concentrated in these areas and we came to live there and it was the last leg of the manufacturing community. There were a lot of different umm you know low level low skilled paying jobs, shoe factories and stuff like that all of those in the late 60s and early 70s all of those were disappearing and they were all going to Asia and we happened to com in at that last tail end which was horrendous. Today umm if you go into that neighborhood there is a project called Gardner-Kilby-Hammond Project and umm that area, when I came to live here over 35 years ago, since that time, that area had not seen any major sort of improvements, infusion of dollars, nothing. It just, it just decay and decay and decay. There were some things that happened in the year 86 anyways to make a long story short, if you walked through that area right now there is about a 50 million dollar project going in place called the Gardner-Kilby-Hammond Project. There's a brand new boys and girls club, umm there is housing that has been saved, some of the three deckers that were just like on their last legs have been rehabbed and literally picked up and moved to different lots around the area. When all is said and done the boys club,

about 80 home owner occupied homes so people who lived in these three deckers, these three deckers are actually like condominiums right now, but they have gone to low income and moderate income people and umm a deal was struck with Clarke University to put together some athletic fields in that area. And who is still living there? People that are from our community, you know it's a little bit more mixed right now but primarily people from our community. So when I go to that neighborhood now I'm just like you know beaming at the fact that I'm at a place that I can look back and be like oh my god cause I remember exactly what this place looked like and it was just so horrendous.

KATIE: how many people did you live with when you were growing up here in Worcester? (34:12)

GLADYS: oh god. I have seven brothers, my self, my parents and whoever else used to come and you know and stay with...there was always an uncle or an aunt or family that didn't have a place to go umm so we always had a lot of family around.

KATIE: and did you move around a lot in Worcester or did you pretty much when you came...

GLADYS: umm

KATIE:...stay in one place

GLADYS: I have always moved around in Worcester. We moved from that area to a place called Plumley Village. Plumley Village was umm...is a housing project and we were one of the first families that moved in. and unbenounced to us, Plumley village was a was called the Laurel Clayton Neighborhood and the Laurel-Clayton Neighborhood was Worcester's black community. That's where they lived. And when 290, when they decided to take 290 and put it right through smack through the city of Worcester, they took over that entire neighborhood. And so for taking that neighborhood which was vibrant with stores and people, it was a poor neighborhood but people owned their own homes etc by eminent domain this city and this state took over that entire neighborhood. What people got back was Plumley village. But many families in the black community back then used to have 10, 12 kids – they were families there that had 10 or 12 kids and Plumely was a place where they were supposed to be...where they were supposed to come back to. The black community was dispersed all over the city of Worcester. They were supposed to – a lot of those families were supposed to come back and because of the size of the units of course they weren't going to come back and so here we go again. We moved from one place to another but umm we met many...many a people still from the black community stayed in that area and umm and we lived umm and we got to know a lot of people in the black community and, and for me it was a great experience growing up in , in that kind of umm area and umm and so I could say that I've lived in the Farming community, I could say that I've lived in a you know in a neighborhood and in a housing project.

KATIE: a little bit of everything.

GLADYS: yea

KATIE: umm growing up did you parents speak any English and what did they start to do for work when they came to Worcester?

GLADYS: well my father started to work in the Foundry, Standard Foundry, which was as I said one of those last leg kind of things. My mother umm had housekeeping kinds of jobs umm she retired as a housekeep and ahh I think my mother ended up making, at the end of the day...my mother will be 70 years old and I don't even want to tell you what she lives on for social security and and etc I mean its just you know everybody wants to talk about well what's this issue with social security and what this issue with prescription drugs well if you knew what it takes to be 70 years old, to have worked your entire life, raised a family etc and then have to you know get back you know not even nearly any time the amount that you put in umm and then and you know you get your health gets complicated and all those other things so umm you know...we're living that, we're living that. And my mother's very fortunate that she has a family that's able to...but I can't imagine what other families are going through right now because my mother's, what she, what my mother ended up getting basically pays for her prescription drugs, doesn't pay for rent it doesn't really cover her food, it doesn't really cover her utilities, you know umm her clothing, just all of these...and then I know that's just a Latino thing, that's very universal right now.

KATIE: and then did either of them, did your parents speak English?

GLADYS: no, they didn't and you know things...part of the reason why – it's so funny because you know people that will come here from Puerto Rico, from other parts of the country will listen to me talk and they're like wow you speak English so well and if they're adults they're afraid to speak because they they, they, hear what they sound like and they think they sound funny so you will have people who just will not speak because I mean I have an aunt who does not speak English for anybody and she has tons of children and grandchildren who don't speak Spanish which is one of the problems that we have now in the community but you will not hear her speak English because she thinks she sound horrendous...she's been here 50 years.

KATIE: right

GLADYS: umm you know it's not that she doesn't want to speak English it's just that she's just afraid and umm as if that's a real big thing but it is to her, you know it is to her and so no my parents didn't know how to speak English and I ended up having to translate all over the place and I ended up having to go through the doctors appointments helping them get their...my father I had to help him get his umm learner's permit because he didn't read and write so I had to read him all the stuff and he memorized all the stuff I mean and that's one of the other things I mean its like I cant imagine you know what it takes for somebody who cant read and write and having to memorize all this stuff and going on you know I mean I guess you do what you gotta do but you know my mother

who had to she had to know a great deal of stuff you know working in a huge hotel. And she did it by memory.

KATIE: that's amazing

GLADYS: you know she did...a lot of the stuff that she did she did by memory, you know.

KATIE: and did...and just to clarify did you come to Massachusetts in general as a family initially because your mom and dad had been here before working and...

GLADYS: yea we came, we came to Massachusetts originally because of that and we had had family here and stuff like that and umm you know, they you know, everybody you know, learned how to, how to speak the language and then that's another sort of like thing that it always have such an issue with. If you, if you listen to talk radio and everything else its as if we do not want to learn how to speak the language.

KATIE: right

GLADYS: well guess what, the middle class and the very well to do in Puerto Rico and in every other Latin American country sends their child here to go to college and pays do the best of the best English class. It is the poor that does not know how to do those things. They cant pay for them, they cant afford them and when people come to this country its not that they don't want to learn to speak the language they do know the language so my question to some of these folks sometimes is, wait a minute I k now a lot of English speaking people who are not given the opportunities that they may...that they are entitled to well they know the language so what is it? I don't know which one, you know, which one it is and sometimes the unfairness of it all and if you would just listen to these people you know the only problem is you don't know the language therefore you don't exist or you aren't entitled to anything or you're lazy or you're this or you're that and that's not the case. I mean I know plenty of people who are learning the language and are nurses and doctors and their computer people etc and umm you know they're working very very hard and they're doing the best that they can you know umm but they are learning the language and all of that. So it's this whole misnomer about the fact that Latinos and umm just don't want to learn English, the English language. I mean we have tons of people on waiting lists not just from the Latino community but from every other immigrant community umm so...

KATIE: and now so today, what language do you feel most comfortable speaking in, Spanish or English

GLADYS: well it's funny because I was talking to somebody yesterday, this gentleman who just came from Puerto Rico to be with his family because his wife, – they're both in the military and his wife is umm, has been called to go to Iraq and she's going to be there for a year and umm he's been there and now she's going and he doesn't want to be alone so he just came from Puerto Rico and came here to be with his family and so I was

talking to him in Spanish the whole time and I told him how, how I had to get used to the fact that I was talking to him just in Spanish because I don't get to do that all the time and you know I've been here since I was 13 years old and so umm I try very hard to watch Spanish TV and umm for a little while on a daily basis or a weekly basis and I, I keep up with reading the Spanish newspapers and stuff like that because I feel its really important, I think it's critical that you know, not only that I think it's a huge asset if you do have another language you know umm. And I tried really hard because we have a large Latino community as you know, like we've been saying but we have a large community, we have a community that has been able to access the congressman's office because he has somebody on staff, we also have, by the way, somebody who speaks Portuguese right next store to me and so umm and and that's another community that's huge in this area is the Brazilian community but umm you know having a second language I think it's a gift, I really really do. I'm going tomorrow December 8th umm I'm going to a thing called jolgorio and the jolgorio is a thing umm it's, it's our Puerto Rican umm Christmas sort of party. But see in Puerto Rico when I was a child, we used to celebrate Christmas as a Parranda and a Parranda meant that, today is Friday December 7th, we would get together today at say for instance our house and we would have family and food and drinks and you know all the specialties that you get and all that. It wasn't about gifts I didn't grow up knowing what Christmas day was on the 25th I grew up January the 6th was which was El Día de Los Reyes which was Epiphany which was Three King's Day. And so umm from a certain time in December you would start to have festivities, family oriented festivities up until January the 6th and then from January the 6th on you had to have like I don't know 12 more days to close the whole thing so the whole thing came you know went like this anyway. You would start at our, you know our house for a while and then you would you know somebody would come in with a guitar and somebody would else would come in with something else and then before you knew it you were singing those Christmas carols that are you know yours. And in this case we are talking about jíbaro music which is very folk orientated music and we would go from here to somebody else's house and we would do that all through the night and by the end of the night you end up at the person's, the well to do, the one with the most resources, you would end up at their house and this would go on for days and so umm you know we tried to a resemblance of that but that's where cultural differences come about. I mean when we first got here and we tried doing, you know, going from apartment to apartment the police would show up you know so (laughing) it didn't work out very, it didn't work out all that great. So now we have miniature kinds of things you know you adjust, you know families adjust and stuff like that but tomorrow there's a huge one in Boston where there's going to be thousands of people at the Boston convention center and so there's gonna be this kind of music like the whole night and stuff like that. So I'm like a little kid. I cant wait...and I'm gonna see people from the state that I haven't seen in...all year long and stuff like that. Yea

KATIE: sounds fun

GLADYS: yea!

KATIE: so now, where...do you live in Worcester today?

GLADYS: I do, I live right down town. I live right downtown in Worcester.

KATIE: and how many people live in your house

GLADYS: just my husband and I. my children are grown. I have two sons and thank god they're doing well. (knocks on wood) and ahh they're good people and umm and they're off on their own.

KATIE: do they live in Worcester?

GLADYS: no I have ahh, they live out of state. My two sons live out of state.

KATIE: ok and now in terms of where you work.

GLADYS: mmhmm

KATIE: what exactly is your is your role here, how does that role work with the Latino community?

GLADYS: umm I actually I actually given the nature of who I am I actually handle a lot of...I handle minority affairs for the congressman, I handle women's issues. We all in the office handle certain issues for the congressman and so umm I handle employment issues up until recently, economic development kinds of issues, I represent the congressman when he is not able to attend meetings or events or what have you within the community, I represent him and I often end up speaking on his behalf. Umm and I, we do a lot of constituency service and by constituency service I mean you know, by the time somebody comes to our office, they have gone through everybody. And they have not have had their concerns addressed and so I find it really umm rewarding that we're able to pick up the phone and we're able to call. Now you would think that you know everything we do has to do with the federal government a lot of the stuff that we do happens to be with umm whether or not it's a dispute or if it's a city issue or what have you but umm, I find it very rewarding that we're able to help people in every way, in every way. Umm there're a lot of times when the answer is no but we will get to whatever agency it is you know if it's the social security administration, if it's immigration if it's umm you know the federal homeland security whatever agency it is our job is to figure out ok, this person, something's happened and we want to get to the root of the matter and umm we're able to do that. Not always satisfactory but it doesn't mean that we aren't, that we haven't tried. And so I travel between Worcester and – we have four offices. We have an office in Fall River, Marlboro Massachusetts, Attleboro Massachusetts, Worcester. And then we have one in Washington. And Congressman McGovern is umm is – stand out for putting in most of his resources into his district operations. And so he next, next month when he is sworn in on January the 4th it will be 10 years that he is in office.

KATIE: wow

GLADYS: so umm he's worked really hard. He has not stopped working as hard as he started from day one. Umm it's been ten years of working very, very hard for people you know for people in this district and I feel extremely fortunate to be working for him as does the rest of the staff. We all really, really enjoy umm you know what, what we do. So

KATIE: how did you first become involved in working in...

GLADYS: I actually umm you know unlike a lot of people who ended up in different you know political jobs and stuff like that I didn't really work really hard on his campaign as a matter of fact I worked on umm a campaign for...he ran first and then didn't win. And the person he ran that ran against him was a guy name Kevin O'Sullivan who's a good friend of ours and we worked...I worked on his campaign.

KATIE: ok

GLADYS: and then when umm my boss ran a second time I worked for him and umm but I was, I've always been involved in community stuff so I came at this from a very community activist kind of role. I didn't come up through the machine of politics. Umm and so umm you know umm just felt really fortunate when he went sort of outside the box looking for a staff that sort of reflected the community etc and so I worked at Centro Las Americas which is a, which is a Latino agency here in Worcester, I was the executive director and then after that I went to work at UMass Medical School and so between there I had I don't know 10 or so years. So between education and community work and umm and then I came to work for him 10 years ago when he was first elected. And so yea

KATIE: excellent umm I think that we will pause for a moment here and take a quick break and then switch into the last...

GLADYS: ok, how many more?

KATIE: the last questions are kind of, are really, a lot of them you've already answered. They're really more...

HEATHER: ok can you elaborate a little bit more on your experience as to why you came to Worcester, what made you move from South Boston to Worcester?

GLADYS: well we were, we didn't have...it wasn't like we picked up and packed our things and moved. The evening of December 31st 1969 we were umm we we literally got into a car and ended up coming to the city of Worcester with an aunt and an uncle because umm of the violence that had occurred where we lived and umm we actually got Molotov cocktails thrown through our umm, our windows and we were fleeing for our safety. So that's essentially how we moved to Worcester.

HEATHER: ok and when you first came to Worcester what was your interaction with the Latino community? Was it strong, was there a strong base here when you got here?

GLADYS: yea you know when I talked a little bit before about moving into this neighborhood into the Gardner-Kilby sort of neighborhood, it was all people from the Latino community, people from umm, and mainly people from the Puerto Rican community that had umm that had come from all parts of, umm of Puerto Rico and even the country – people who were Puerto Rican who were moving from New York, who were literally coming into this area so we made some great connections with some great families many of whom are still umm friends and etc. you know there was just an article in the Boston Globe about the Puerto Rican community in the city of Boston. And there was this whole dynamic within the Puerto Rican community about the fact that there are, there is, there are issues like diabetes, there's some health problems like diabetes, depression, umm asthma is a huge issue within the Puerto Rican community its self and when they talked, and when these people who were doing the study were talking to people in this community, they were talking about why were the high levels of depression and they didn't know what came first the diabetes or the depression and, and they're very linked. And so umm some of them concluded and a lot of families were saying that the idea that a lot of family members are now moving away to warmer climates away from the family that brought them here or whatever is causing a great deal of stress in the community, the Puerto Rican community. And I can see that now, going back, looking back because many of the people that I came to know umm throughout my life you know are people who, we have a core still here but we have, people have dispersed throughout the country. You know looking for a way to make ends meet, looking for better opportunities, following jobs, following better educational opportunities etc.

HEATHER: and umm how would you describe your relationship with the Latino community now?

GLADYS: I have a really, umm healthy...because I think that that that my whole professional career has been around not only you know taking care of myself and taking care of my own needs but it, and, but has always sort of been you know looking out for the community and working in ways that bring more opportunities to the Latino community.

HEATHER: umm now how would you describe the Latino community now. Would you say that it's getting stronger, is it getting weaker, how is it changing?

GLADYS: it is changing in terms of the diversity of the Latino community that is here as I said before we have people from all over Latin America who is now living in the city of Worcester so it's changed that way. In many ways that is a great thing. In some ways these groups are adjusting to one another and in a lot of ways the general community and by that I mean the powers that be many times want to look at this as a monolithic community when in fact that's the furthest thing from the truth. And so there's just a lot of work that needs to be done in between all these different groups that are all trying to find their own way. What was the other part of the question, I'm sorry?

HEATHER: oh umm well actually you answered it so it's ok.

GLADYS: ok

HEATHER: umm just from the time that you spent here in Worcester what major changes have you seen take place in the Latino community?

GLADYS: we have a, we have a growing middle class. We have more of a stable community. There was not one family that you could talk to when I was a kid that wouldn't say I am here for a year or two and I'm going back to Puerto Rico and that's not the case any longer and ahh you know. That's you know and people continue to go back and forth. You know umm and the sense that the every other community, every other immigrant community that has come to this country has done a thing called assimilation. The Latino community has challenged the notion of assimilation because the Latino community wants to keep the best of its culture and in some ways some of the children that are doing – and you can look at the studies on this – some of the children that are doing better in our society in the United States that happen to be Latino or from the Asian community or – you can test this – of those young people who have maintained the traditions of their culture, church, family, those kinds of things, those young people who have nothing to hang on to in our society are not doing all that well. And so you know I would say that for me I have hung onto a lot of this stuff. And it's very very difficult to pass that on. Its difficult to you know its not an easy thing. But you know but I find that its one of the ways that I think that many of our Latino young people are doing. I think we have a more umm educated Latino community. More educated Puerto Rican community. Umm you know what happens in Puerto Rico is that everybody that is absolutely totally poor in Puerto Rico and decides to leave ends up coming to the main land and so and so then what you have is the educated class and the class that's doing well, they're the ones that stay there. And so its very and you know its almost impossible for somebody umm who is poor to make it in Puerto Rico now as an island because if the economy is bad in the United States, it is three times worse on the island.

HEATHER: umm what aspects of the community do you feel most connected to that you feel have helped you during your time in Worcester that you've spent here?

GLADYS: I think umm just family and strong friends. That's been sort of my network.

HEATHER: and are there any aspects of the community that you feel excluded from? Or that you dislike?

GLADYS: umm that's funny because umm

HEATHER: it could be just any of the time that you've...(Gladys laughing)

GLADYS: no, no, hey, you know, it's just all kinds of different groups and not just because you're Latino or you're not Latino. I mean if you're a woman I mean there are issues of you know the good old boys club so I mean we can go on and on and on but umm I have made it my business to have been umm in Spanish I used to be called when I

was a kid, literally, I used to be called entrometida. Entrometida means the noisy body. The one that's always...cause I was always speaking up for my brothers. I was always trying to figure – no that's not right, no you know they didn't invite me? I'm going you know oh they...that kind of thing. And I still do that to this day. I mean I don't wait for people to hand me anything or to ask me, I don't wait for an invitation. If I find out that something's going on and it's, especially if it's a public thing, you know umm I have said this before especially democracy and the way that I feel about democracy and the way that I feel about the party – the democratic party – and that is it doesn't belong to any particular group. Democracy is not a monopoly that belongs to a particular group it belongs to a group of people who look to those ideals and want to continue working and sometimes in those ways people think that that is so simplistic but its meant to be you know. Umm and I'm still idealistic in that regard.

HEATHER: how would you, or if you could make any changes in the Latino community what would they be and why would you make them?

GLADYS: I would hasten the umm the amount of time it would take for families to, umm you know to adjust. I would umm try to find ways to umm (pause) you know have more jobs available for people in the community and for people to be able to use what they already know.

HEATHER: and how would you describe your relationship with the Latino community as a whole in Worcester?

GLADYS: in general and as a whole I feel pretty you know I feel pretty much at home in many of these particular groups. Umm I have gotten to know people in the Salvadorian community. I have been to Cuba and sort of know about the Cuban experience. I have been to Mexico and know some of the...so I really feel that in terms of the Latino community I've done a lot of work within the Latino community and so...and I'm pretty proud of you know some of the work now. That doesn't mean that people agree with me on everything that we do here. I mean as I said we don't agree on anything including our dish which is rice. You know we don't even know, we don't even agree on how to make...which is great because everybody makes it a little differently and its really good but you know when you talk about party politics, I mean we just have these strong disagreements. I worked for the umm for the election in 2004 in Florida and it was like "but you're Latino how can you be thinking this way?" you know and and you know and so umm and you know Philadelphia Pennsylvania and just different places that I've worked on electoral politics and umm if people think that the Latino community is going to be locked in step anywhere they've got their work cut out for them. They really really do.

HEATHER: and now umm would you say that having your ties to politics here and studying politics in college has influenced your relationship with the Latino community, aided it in any way?

GLADYS: it has influenced and you know it has influenced it but you know like any other community people want to stay clear of politics you know. And I try to talk to people about the fact that you know while I, while I'm such a proponent of education I think that politics is the way to get things done. Before you can educate child you need the resources to hire the teacher, to build a school. And those are political decisions that get made and so people umm and you've got that on one end. But on the other hand in one of the things that I am so I mean I...somebody would have to shoot me between the eyes before I ever leave my boss, I'll work for him as long as he wants me to because this man has campaigned in every single little group there is and when – when I talk about party politics and stuff like that you know my boss in the beginning was told things like why are you going to that particular neighborhood? Those people don't vote. And we literally in Fall River, in Worcester we have these two housing projects and people had not gone out to vote. Well guess what? You don't ask people for their vote, you're not gonna get it. And my boss started going into these communities, kept on going into these communities and these people are voting at the same percentage if not higher then some of the other communities around the city of Worcester and Fall River and some other communities. And so to that extent, you know I am just you know just blown away by the fact that I'll say you know so and so is having an event in one of these places and he'll say well let's just drop by. You know umm so you know I know that people often look at politicians and they go oh that's just a politician etc but I'm really really proud of the fact that people in our community have looked to Congressman McGovern as their congressman. So

HEATHER: umm just switching gears a little bit, umm we, you obviously said that you worked at Centro before, can you just comment on the role that it's played in your life? Centro Las Americas...

GLADYS: umm Centro Las Americas was a, was a place where I literally, professionally, sort of you know grew up. Umm I was in my mid 20s I had just finished college and I didn't know what I was doing. I was a board member and had a good state job I could be retired by now but no I decided to take on this you know this work and it was one of the best experiences that I've had in my life. I mean it's one of, it's right up there with what I'm doing now. Umm but you know I was able to take this agency that was umm dying and just bring it back to life and ahh help a lot of people along the way and umm do some things that had, that were changing in the community. When I first came to Centro Las Americas unbenounced to me and unbenounced to what I thought the agency was supposed to do – the agency was, the agency as I saw it was not just about you know handing out food to people that needed it or information to people that needed it although that was very very important but umm a few things happened along the way. We had the first murder of a child in the Worcester public schools in 1989. and I had been at Centro for two years. Now I'll never forget getting a call, I was at a meeting and I got a call from the umm mayor's office in Worcester or the City Manager's one of those and ahh and it said get to south high school now and I hadn't experienced this and so I am like, I didn't even get a chance to ask why. My instincts were right and I got in my car and got to South high school. And what had happened was these two boys, got into a fight over something that had happened during the weekend and this kid walked into the

school armed umm and ahh and this other kid died as a result. And when I got to the school along with other leaders of the community umm from the church from umm psychologists, I mean you name it. People were asked to go to the school. So when we got to the school the black students were put in one area, the white students were put in another, the Spanish kids were put in a...I mean these kids were pissed, they were very very upset and rightly so. They wanted to be brought back together. And I didn't realize what I was going to have to do you know umm that day. And umm, and we did a lot of work with these young people and then as a result of that I continued to work with people and just you know really enjoyed the work that I was doing etc. and then got to know the problems that some young people were beginning to face. And umm so until yea I mean I look at the period in time that I spent at Centro Las Americas. Shortly after that we had a deisolation or a desegregation plan that needed to be worked on for the Worcester, in the Worcester public schools. And a deseg...a deisolation, it became a deisolation plan because Worcester didn't want to call it a desegregation plan, they called it a deisolation plan and it basically meant that we, and I had no clue what civil rights laws were in terms of educational opportunity, etc and I learned along the way with a group of other people about how it is that you bring equity to certain groups of students and in Worcester we did a pretty good job which we're still living from. We, the plan that we worked on back then is the plan that we're working on now umm and we did a pretty good job so much so that we still have in the Worcester public schools almost 90 percent of people who live in Worcester send their children to a public school. And you cant say that about a number of different communities. And so you know I'm pretty proud of having played a role in that and I, and I lived that through living it in this agency and so I owe a great deal to this agency.

HEATHER: umm can you just comment a little bit on the role that Centro has had on the Latino community as a whole?

GLADYS: well Centro's about 30 years old. It is still, it's been an agency that has struggled and continues to struggle but umm as a whole it has provided services to people and ahh leadership to many of the people. I mean judge Perez came out of that place, I cam out of that place. There're tons of different you know different sorts of role models that have come out of Centro and so you know, Centro's sort of the you know the voice you know that consciousness that voice that's out there that umm if if and they other thing is that no matter what happens in the community, it doesn't matter how much I was being paid you know, umm it doesn't matter the executive director that's there now, it doesn't matter how much he gets paid. If at two o'clock in the morning something is going on in the Latino community and it's a public thing, he's getting a call. Umm and so and it doesn't matter what it is you know. So whenever there is umm issues within the community, Centro is expected to be out there sort of you know out there championing the cause, whatever cause that is.

HEATHER: umm and now going back to family a little bit, do you still have family back in Puerto Rico?

GLADYS: I do. My grandmother is about, oh my god my grandmother's almost a hundred years old. I was talking to my mother earlier. And my grandmother still lives on her farm and she still lives her old fashioned way. And ahh I was just telling a colleague of mine that I need to make arrangements to go and see my grandmother because she's not going to be around for a long time but she's this short little lady. She still picks her, you know vegetables and stuff like that. And prefers to cook on a pit than cooking on a stove. Umm you know she's a sociologist's dream.

HEATHER: and now is your grandmother the only one that you have...

GLADYS: no I've got tons of cousins and uncles etc and to some extent my, my relatives that stayed behind are doing better than relatives that came here.

HEATHER: really?

GLADYS: the rates of divorce upon the people that came here, the rates of family separation etc are higher than they were there. I have aunts and uncles that have been married for 60 and you know 50 and 60 years that are there. And ahh so the families have paid a price.

HEATHER: mmhmm and now how often do you communicate with the family that you have in Puerto Rico.

GLADYS: umm we communicate on a regular basis. Umm I mean through phone calls or what have you so and then whenever there's a child coming from there to visit or to go to school or something they'll end up at my mother's house. I mean my mom is still here. My mom lives in Worcester and my father passes away not too long ago and umm my brothers are still in the area so...

HEATHER: umm now

GLADYS: as a matter of fact my nephew was just born like 3 days ago.

H and KATIE: aww congratulations

GLADYS: so I have one more

HEATHER: umm now how often do you visit them or do they come and visit you.

GLADYS: umm you know, I have not been to Puerto Rico in about 5 years so.

HEATHER: and do they come and visit at all here?

GLADYS: when somebody passes away we have family that comes here.

HEATHER: ok (laughing)

GLADYS: or when somebody is getting married. It's funerals or weddings.

HEATHER: ok umm and do you feel connected to the culture of the community that you are from?

GLADYS: I do. I do. Very much so. And you know we keep it very much, we keep it very much alive. I have a group of friends and when we get together we'll you know we'll talk about the old stuff but we'll also you know go out of our way to make our sofrito and you know sofrito is our blend of spices that we make that you know. From that you know I make a big jar of it and then that's what I rub my meats with and that's what I make my rice with and that's what I you know and so so there's both kinds of opportunities and stuff like that.

HEATHER: so would you say that some of the traditions that you had from Puerto Rico you have carried them over?

GLADYS: oh yea

HEATHER: ok. Ok and we just have a list of things that we just want you to compare and contrast what's different from Puerto Rico to over here. Umm so basically in terms of politics how would you describe the difference between Puerto Rico and then over here in Worcester?

GLADYS: people in Puerto Rico are, 90 percent of the people in Puerto Rico vote. Versus, not a lot voting on record of people from Puerto Rico has a lot to do with the fact that many of our politicians don't do the asking ahh we don't have enough candidates etc etc but it's growing.

HEATHER: alright and in terms of food and household what would you say is the biggest differences between Puerto Rico and then over here.

GLADYS: in terms of...

HEATHER: food and household.

GLADYS: umm (pause)

KATIE: especially related to the Puerto Rican community of Puerto Rico and the Puerto Rican or Latino community in Worcester.

GLADYS: (pause) well something's going on in Puerto Rico and that is that you know unfortunately with development and growth goes a lot of things and one of the things that I've noticed in Puerto Rico and that a lot of people talk about even in the Salvadorian community...I mean I had a young, a man from the Salvadorian community tell me that when a Salvadorian, this is El Salvador, they know that he just got off the plane because

his face will be a little bit thicker and his belly will be a little bit bigger. And when I was in El Salvador you know, you don't see that. Umm the same thing in Cuba. Puerto Rico, there is a MacDonald's in every corner just like there is here. And we had, the umm levels of obesity in Puerto Rico are huge, they are through the roof. And so diabetes in Puerto Rico is through the roof.

HEATHER: would you say that it's the same over here too?

GLADYS: it's, it's umm...they're high. Yes, they're high. And we have had, we have huge problems with getting our young people, just like every other young person, but we have problems with getting our young people to eat the traditional kinds of dishes umm which include a lot of vegetables, root vegetable especially and stuff like that then to have them eat all the you know the pizza and the junk and all this other stuff. And so it just, it's causing all kinds of problems.

HEATHER: umm in terms of traditions what would you say are the biggest differences between the two Latino communities?

GLADYS: umm I think that...well no I shouldn't say that. I should say that, and I think this is my, my observation along with conversations that I've had with friends and that is that there are those of us who think that we have tried to maintain the culture (pause) more than some people in Puerto Rico have tried to maintain the culture because people in Puerto Rico have tried to become very very American and we have tried to keep what we knew. And so there is this dynamic in this conversation that's going on between the Puerto Rican community. On the other hand, you have people in Puerto Rico that have maintained their culture, are very politically active and will look at a person like me and say you left. You have no business telling us how to be. So I could go and talk to my family there and we'll have a variety of different views on that subject.

HEATHER: in terms of family life what would you say are the biggest differences?

GLADYS: umm (pause) I think that when people come here they are more, that the family is more you know (pause) it loses some things. Umm (pause) it's more difficult keeping the family together. If you're poor and you end up having to avail yourself of housing opportunities for example, you know, you can't take everybody in. and in our community we take people in and if you're, if you know we take care of our elderly and so and when our elderly see grandchildren that they need to take care of umm they'll bring them in and sometimes that goes against everything that they're...so it's very, it's it's...to keep those kinds of family, kinds of things that are...are, are more difficult, they're more challenging. So that if you don't own your own home for example, and things like that, it makes it more difficult.

HEATHER: umm how about in terms of languages spoken...the biggest differences between the two.

GLADYS: umm well (pause) if people if people think that people in Puerto Rico don't speak English, if – they've been living under a rock because popular culture is very popular in Puerto Rico and so you know the whole thing around language is really screwed up in terms of how people think about people from Puerto Rico. The educated word, now that's a different story. You know, umm so it takes you know just because you know a language doesn't mean you know it in terms of the academic stuff that you need to do. Those things are learned you know, but umm I think that umm you know the language primarily in Puerto Rico is Spanish but you have so much spanglish going on and stuff like that so umm and we have the dynamics that a lot of immigrants before us have had and that is that our children don't understand Spanish and yet are living with a parent that does not know English completely, fully, or and then have extended families you know, grandparents, etc who don't speak the language. So it makes it difficult for families, it makes it difficult for children umm you know so.

HEATHER: umm and lastly, how about religious differences. Are there any major ones?

GLADYS: well, that's another two hour thing.

(laughing)

GLADYS: but umm suffice it to say, when I was a kid, in Puerto Rico, I would say 90 percent of people in Puerto Rico were catholic. It is down to less than 50. and umm other religions such as adventist and ahh protestant and Baptist and you name the religion and it's there. And so, umm you know but Catholicism is definitely, and you know we, we grew up catholic and ahh it is still the majority of people that I know but there are different store front sort of churches in every neighborhood where Latino's live in Worcester and in every other city umm and so to that end I don't even know what the percentage of Latinos never mind just in the Puerto Rican community, who adhere to just the catholic church. I couldn't even say. So.

HEATHER: this is our very last question for you. Umm it may seem kind of silly but you never know. Do you plan to continue to live in Worcester or are you going to move around from place to place?

GLADYS: no I, you know what? I consider Worcester home and and I should say that whenever people would say things like well why do people move to Worcester? You know, if you go out to western Massachusetts, it's just, it's very country oriented. And a lot of people feel very very comfortable so people that are from, that are Latino, that are from Puerto Rico that come here for very specific reasons, they didn't want to go to New York. They didn't want to go to Chicago. They didn't want to go to Boston. They wanted a more stable kind of place and a lot of people from, that I talk to, a lot of my friends will say you know Worcester is very doable. And so umm, umm yea I mean I call Worcester home. And I think that this will be my home until I decide to do something else with my life.

HEATHER: sounds good. And is there anything else that you would like to add?

GLADYS: no. thank you, thank you for this opportunity. No and thank you for your interest in doing this because we don't have umm you know I think that the last doctorate degree that was written, the first and last was done in the early 70s by a student at Clark University and that's the, that's the only one that we have so...we don't have a lot of sort of recorded history. Yea thank you. 1:24:24

Sam Rosario

Katie Elmes
Heather Hassett
Interview: Sam Rosario

SAM'S DAD: We're Americans.

SAM: right

SAM'S DAD: we don't need a passport. So my father was interested in her. And my mother came to experience this USA. And then my father of course met her, saw her again and then they started their relationship father found a job and he just went over.

SAM: what was he doing for work when he first came here?

SAM'S DAD: he was one of these guys that polishes (pause) the metals that they use...the company was called E...00:58

SAM: ok so it was a factory job right?

SAM'S DAD: right right.

SAM: and so when you, you were you were born and raised in New York?

SAM'S DAD: New York City. I was born Misericordia Hospital in New York, I was raised in Park Avenue, 111th street by the market.

SAM: umm ok and you were born December 9th 1940?

SAM'S DAD: 42.

SAM: 42. that's right. And today's your birthday so happy birthday again.

KATIE: yea happy birthday.

SAM: yea happy birthday. So,

SAM'S DAD: thank you.

SAM: then you...what was the reason...1:50...in 1969 how old were you? You were ahh do the math real quick 69 minus 42 is...

KATIE: twenty...

SAM: 69 minus 42 is twenty seven. You were twenty seven years old when you moved to Worcester.

SAM'S DAD: right

SAM: and you moved to Worcester cause you got broken into three times in New York and you were doing what at the age of 27?

SAM'S DAD: I was a photographer for ...2:18...the Alden Bright photo studios? in Brooklyn. I had a very good job. I even got offered more money but I was involved in the church I was a lay pastor and ahh I opted instead of taking a better photographic job I opted to take the pastor's job in Worcester which didn't pay anything by the way. (laughing) ahh so I went ahead and took the job, the pastor job at the Son's of Christ Church Christian Church? in Worcester at the time ...2:53...

SAM: and then how did you get involved at City Hall when you came here?

SAM'S DAD: since I didn't have a pay check coming directly from the church, and there was nothing here – there wasn't a Spanish congregation, there wasn't any Hispanic --- through the church ...3:14...I went and of course got myself a job in the Human Rights commission for the city. You know I had to work.

SAM: mmhmm

SAM'S DAD: ...3:29., after working as a volunteer in the courts as an interpreter so somebody came in, the needed some interpreting. I interpreted in the courts for free at that time cause they didn't have anybody. I did it for the service to the community.

SAM: yep. And that's how your name got to be known and there was, there was not too many Hispanic families in the city of Worcester at that time, right?

SAM'S DAD: at this time I think that there was maybe 15 no 12 thousand Hispanics

SAM: mmhmm

SAM'S DAD: ok and there was ahh a few churches in the, in the area so you know there was a community, there was people here. And ahh you know the church has grown a lot more I don't even know what the numbers are right now.

SAM: well they're not that...there're only 26 thousand that's been recorded are you sure, do you think it was that much? It must have been less than that back then.

SAM'S DAD: I'm taking a guess ...4:37...

SAM: alright so there was a group a people that came here?

SAM'S DAD: right

SAM: so what else can we ask him? Anything else ladies?

KATIE: umm just anything else about why his mom came? Was there any job or any family?

SAM: what was it that brought...well wait a minute that was going to New York.

KATIE: yea but just like originally.

SAM: what made them...you said you know that they were looking at umm coming to the mainland but what brought them to New York? Why not Michigan or Miami or some place else?

SAM'S DAD: well you had a governor at that time, Rockefeller, who went to Puerto Rico and bought Pueblo Supermarkets and he invited the Puerto Rican people to come to New York to vote for him and promised them that he would give them government assistance. So a lot of Puerto Ricans came to New York you know ahh saying well if we cant...if we vote for this guy he's going to help us get some assistance with the government and then that's how welfare became such you know a burden. It was you know because of one politician who wanted to get votes, grabbing the people and saying come vote for me. Ahh same thing that Chavez is doing. Ahh you now he's getting people from Ariz...from other places to come into Venezuela to vote for him. The people that the government hires is...he tells them if you don't vote for me you're out of a job. So you know landslide victory wow (laughing) who could have guessed ahh that he would do you know the things he did behind the you know the, in the background he told them you lose your job if you don't vote for me...what kind of government is that? Though it's the same thing that happened in Puerto Rico. He went to Puerto Rico and told many people come here to the United States to New York City, we'll have jobs, apartments, you know we'll have this we'll have assistance if we can't get a job and people fell for it. He managed to soak up 50 thousand Puerto Ricans from the island to come to the United States. And you know from New York of course they scattered. They went to Chicago, they went to Philadelphia. You know, we're good at that, we're good at multiplying everywhere we go. Puerto Rican – I don't care if you go to California, you're going to find us somewhere.

SAM: that's right. They want to know about your educational background. What was your educational background starting from

SAM'S DAD: graduated from high school, went to the marine corps, spent four years in the marine corps, went back, went to college on a part time basis, I don't have a bachelors per say I did study criminology and went into the police department umm I don't have all of my credits to have a full bachelors degree...ahh that's where I stand right now.

SAM: ok, that's it. Thank you

KATIE: thank you

SAM: thanks pop, talk to you later

SAM'S DAD: take care

SAM: happy birthday.

SAM'S DAD: see you buh bye

KATIE: this is Sam Rosario and umm so thank you for meeting with us.

SAM: uh huh

KATIE: so for our first question, how old are you?

SAM: I am basically 36 years old

KATIE: and umm where in Latin America is your family originally from?

SAM: Puerto Rico

KATIE: Puerto Rico...and how long have you lived in Worcester?

SAM: all my life.

KATIE: umm when did your family come to the United States, not specifically Worcester

SAM: umm back in 1969 I believe it was

KATIE: ok that was to the United States or to Worcester?

SAM: well to the United States no, that would have been probably back in 1940 and back then because my father and mother were both born in New York City.

KATIE: UMM AND SO now when you refer to yourself would you refer to yourself as Latino, Hispanic is there another term that you prefer to use?

SAM: I guess yea I think a Latino individual is probably what I would refer to. Umm so Hispanic is more South American than anything else so yea Latino

KATIE: and what is your educational background?

SAM: I have some college. Of course I did not finish my degree but I have basically about two years of college

KATIE: and umm where did you attend high school and where did you attend your college years.

SAM: Yep, in high school I went to North High School. I graduated in 1988. umm after that I wanted to be believe it or not an air force...a pilot, I wanted to go to pilot school so I attended Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach Florida

KATIE: ok

SAM: (smile, pause) for one semester, and that quite did not work out and then I ahh ended up coming home and went to Quinsigamond community college and then transferred in to Worcester State College. So...

KATIE: ok. What was your experience in the Worcester Public School system like?

SAM: I mean when I was growing up there was...I think it was a positive experience except for the fact that we always felt that there was the underlying tone or conflict in the schools. I mean we had, back when I was in I think 7th or 8th grade there was a conflict between a South High student who or it was a black student and a Hispanic student and one of them got stabbed and then killed and there was a big controversy back then (pause) but I think overall there was some teachers and some people that were not positive towards Hispanic students. I remember my guidance counselor telling me that I would never be good for college. That I should go in to a trade school or something else which of course was not what I agreed with

KATIE: right. So not very...did you find, did you have role models that you could look up to or did you kind of have to be independently, have your goals and work towards them?

SAM: I think it was more independent. I don't think that there was a lot of role models for the students of that day. That's why I was in ummm...growing up I was part of big brothers/big sisters

KATIE: ok

SAM: which was something helpful for me umm and that helped me to, give me lets say at least one individual as a role model as another Latino male who was a medical student so

KATIE: ok. So umm going back to your family a little bit, so they, both your mom and your dad were born in New York City

SAM: yep

KATIE: and then umm what year, so what year did they move to Worcester in?

SAM: from what I understand they moved to Worcester back in 1969

KATIE: ok

SAM: umm that's when I was born in 1970 here and umm I guess the rest, as you heard earlier the reason they moved was more for ahh we kept getting broken into in New York City and he just wanted to protect the family and move to a better area.

KATIE: where in Worcester did you live when you were growing up?

SAM: when I was a little kid, of course I remember certain places I mean I don't have the exact place where I was born and where I lived but I had an affinity for Blake Street. Um I do remember that we moved quite often. Umm we lived on a place that was on Park Avenue, I remember living a place umm you know Blake Street, I remember moving to another place on South, South Gate Street so when I was young we moved a lot. My first, I remember looking back on my student records, in the first grade I moved 4 times

KATIE: wow

SAM: so one of the biggest issues within the Hispanic community is mobility

KATIE: right

SAM: we tend to not own property and rent and when you have a problem with the landlord, they pick up and move someplace else. So that has been, always been an issue within our own family especially a neighborhood. You move into a neighborhood, then you have problems in that neighborhood, they don't like you and you get into fights or something else then you have to move out. (pause, shrugs) So that has been always been a big issue within the Hispanic community all the time.

KATIE: is that an issue that you think you still see today?

SAM: I still think the problems still exist and I think it's the stability of a neighborhood. I think it's the...I think it's you know that's why you create certain areas, people feel comfortable within their own kind and that's why you end up having these things that take place and as they say in the ghettos or whatever you want to call it but yea I think it still exists. I think it exists throughout and the mobility rates deal with job opportunities and umm the ability to you know find a decent apartment that's not roach infested and you know that has a good landlord and of course when properties turn over and someone sells the building and then they have another land lord and then they don't like them and then of course they pick up and move not realizing the effect that it has on their kids.

KATIE: right

SAM: how it goes into the next generation.

KATIE: how did moving around like that affect you in terms of making...connecting to the community, connecting to your school...

SAM: yea it's a good question because I always look back at it and one of the biggest problems I have is that I don't have that connectivity between myself and the kid I grew up with. I don't have that you know, this guy I've known him since elementary school like you have a lot of other communities. The Anglo community to use the expression where you know that from elementary school, middle school, high school, you've known that person throughout your entire life. Umm what I have is, I remember going to elementary school with you but that's it there's no connectivity to it all. So transferring from one school to another doesn't build the bond of friendships that I think most youth need and to have the stability of a neighborhood that's saying "I own this neighborhood, I've grown up in this neighborhood, I care about this neighborhood." so

KATIE: growing up, how many people were in your family, how many people did you live with?

SAM: I had two older brothers umm no sisters and of course my mother but then my mother and father divorced when I was around 7 years old so of course that...there was my mother was my father as they say so...

KATIE: did you have family when you came to Worcester when your family came to Worcester originally or did your family come as you were growing up here?

SAM: I think you know we had family in Rochester New York, we had aunts and uncles that lived in the area and umm I think that when we were here I think family did travel back and forth but once again I think it was the mobility of job opportunities, what's available, what was there and it was umm I had a lot of aunts and uncles around and then of course as I'm older they're not around any more so

KATIE: and umm so umm where do you live now in Worcester?

SAM: I live at 42 Forest Street in Worcester

KATIE: ok and what language do you speak, what language did you speak at home when you were growing up and what language do you speak at home now?

SAM: primarily English is what we grew up with

KATIE: ok

SAM: being born and raised in the country, being here as a second generation in a sense. Umm we, we were always brought up with English. So I mean we had some Spanish of course mixed into it but as an adult now I'm, my primary language is English.

KATIE: how comfortable are you in speaking in Spanish?

SAM: not very (laughing) to be honest with you. Umm it's just isn't something that I have had the ability to use often enough. Umm you know we of course communicate in Spanish with our kids but not to the point that it's in the written form, in the little form in socializing with others. So but, you know I'm not 100 percent comfortable, I understand it completely I just have a hard time because I think in English. That's the problem.

KATIE: and how many kids do you have?

SAM: I have three kids. Three girls, so, no boys.

KATIE: (laughing) and umm and just going back to your parents again, what were their jobs growing up, where did your mom and dad work?

SAM: my father was a photographer back then but as he came to Worcester he was a lay pastor of course. I think that was the reason why he came here originally. But then of course he needed a job to pay the pills and being a pastor of a small congregation is not going to pay your bills and he became umm as doing photography on the side and working for Marvin Richmond Studios, that used to be a big place back here in the old days of Worcester, umm he also got a job working at city hall which was the first Hispanic ever to work inside city hall which was a big controversy back then as an investigator for the human rights commission.

KATIE: mmhmm ok and what, did your mom work outside the home at all?

SAM: she was always into social work slash working in one of the social service agencies around and I don't know all of the history of where she was but I always remember her working in different like you know there was the Latin association for progress in action, umm and always working in either transitional assistance, welfare office, things like that.

KATIE: ok, what do you remember, growing up, how connected you were to the Latino Community? How did...did they help your family, did you help, did you interact with the community or was it really a lot of mobility and not a lot of public interaction?

SAM: I think there was, I mean as a kid there was more of a neighborhood street issue, more than it was a...who was on your street, who was in your neighborhood, who you knew. Umm I don't think it was anything of a Latino community as I see it today as a whole city. I was my block. It was my street. So if someone I didn't know was on my street then I would, we would have a problem because umm I grew up in a three decker where there was Hispanic kids that lived, there was another family underneath us and

they had nine kids and six of them were males and so, so we had our own gang. You know we, we the three of us and the six of them – that was a gang right there. So um you know fourth of July was a great time for us and we basically hung out in our own building and our own sidewalk and our own street. And of course walking to school, we used to walk up the hill to union hill school and the kids that we interacted with in the neighborhood was what we knew as our Latino community.

KATIE: ok. And growing up did you, were you aware of traditions or parts of your every day life that were directly related to your Puerto Rican heritage or culture? Or was it more I'm Puerto Rican and I live in the United States and this is how...

SAM: well I think the music of course is the one thing, the second thing would be the food which is the other thing. Umm the culture let's say if we talk about like arts and entertainment, I don't think we really, I didn't have that growing up, of understanding what it means to be celebrate three kings day, umm or anything like that. I think we had our own umm, you know it was what was in the family of what we believed in. umm we celebrated you know umm Christmas and the holidays that we all know but you know we were, I don't think there was anything in particular that was out there that was like the history of Puerto Rico or anything like that. I was never really into that. But the food I was.

KATIE: now coming back kind of to today, umm where do you work today?

SAM: I work for a company called Francis Harvey and Sons umm it's a residential construction company that's a third generation family run business.

KATIE: ok and what is your position in this company?

SAM: I am what's called a residential estimator which is basically a sales position. It's a position that deals with the homeowners that are looking for new construction projects, roofing, siding, windows, editions and kitchens.

KATIE: ok and how long have you been working there for?

SAM: I've been there since April of 1998 which is about 8 years if not going on 9. umm so it's, it's it's, we've been there a while.

KATIE: ok

SAM: so

KATIE: and how did you get this job? How did you start working there originally?

SAM: it's funny because I never got my job through an advertisement in the mail or anything like that. I knew the owner of the company because I had four other jobs prior to coming to work with him that he saw the tenacity of who I was and thought that I would

be a good fit to work for him. And asked me to come work for him. And at the time I had no experience whatsoever in sales

KATIE: ok

SAM: and I took a leap of faith and tried. So

KATIE: and it's worked out well?

SAM: it's worked out well, yes I would have to say it has worked out very well.

KATIE: and where did you work prior in Worcester or in the surrounding area prior to this...

SAM: prior to this job I worked at the department of social services. I was basically, the official title was clerk 3. but I dealt as a records manager transferring information from the DSS office to the state archives. Umm I also drove limousines as a part time job I also (laughing) installed home security systems for an alarm company. Umm and I was just, I was you know I was on my own. I didn't have you know a rich mom or a rich dad to send me money every day. And I had to pay for everything on my own, my car, my clothes, my apartment everything.

KATIE: and how do you see your kids in terms...involving in the Latino community or your family being involved in the Latino community each day at the educational level or just at the community get together level or just things like that.

SAM: well I think that we try to of course incorporate the culture and the history of what we're doing of Puerto Rico, of what's going on. Of course the art museum just recently had a program where it brings the art of Puerto Rico to Worcester and to understand what the pictures mean and say and what's the meaning behind them. I think our kids, my kids at least are you know, are learning the culture through food (laughing) and music and I think that it's ahh, you know I think I need to do more of course. But you know it's interacting with others within the community it's umm coming together outside of the family and meeting with others in the Hispanic community that celebrate different parts of it. There are some families still celebrate three kings day where others they don't celebrate Christmas or they do both which is really nice.

KATIE: and would you say that your kids are...enjoy speaking in Spanish or are comfortable with you know mixing some Spanish words, speaking completely in Spanish or is it something that they're not really that interested in?

SAM: (laughing/...) it's something that we wish they had more interest in but umm that is one of the things we may neglect lets say or we maybe, we need...we need to send them to PR for a year which wouldn't be a bad thing but no they mostly speak English because of course in school and everything else that they're turning out to be like their parents. So

KATIE: ok, excellent. We're going to take a little break and switch

HEATHER: ok we're just going to continue on with questions about the Latino community. Umm while you were growing up or even now what have been your interactions with other Latinos in the Worcester community?

SAM: well I, I have been very actively involved with the Latin American festival umm my, my involvement has been as the chairman for the past two years. This year I'm currently not currently the chairman but I'm still actively involved with organizing the events. Umm you know I've been a big advocate for Latino issues and or Latino involvement. I've been, of course I ran for school committee back in 1999 umm so I've always been trying to improve the opportunities for Hispanics in the city of Worcester. So you know I've been advocate of voting rights and making sure they use that right to vote so there's a long laundry list of things that we can talk about.

HEATHER: how would you say that the Latino festival has impacted Latinos in Worcester?

SAM: I'm sorry what was the...

HEATHER: how would you the Latino festival, how has it impacted Latinos in Worcester?

SAM: umm well I think that it introduces at least the culture of many different countries, remember when we talk about the Latino festival it is a of course 22 different countries of all across the world. So we try to provide a little bits and pieces of it not only through the food but through the music, through the art work that is there you know there is a there is...you know one of the things that Hispanics are really good at is coming together and throwing a good party. You know in Christmas time we do what's called Parranda. Don't ask me to spell it. Don't ask me to repeat it again but Parranda is basically where you know people are coming over, they come over usually late at night, they're singing, it's like how's this it's the Anglo version of Christmas caroling. Coming to someone's house but they know as they come they sing at your front door and you then invite them in for food and drinks and stuff like that and it's you know acoustic guitar and singing and they sing traditional songs so you know that's something that we used to do when we were growing up. As you get older you don't see too many people doing it at least in my family. Does it still exist out there? Yes it does umm but it was a very festive environment, a very party environment type of thing. So...

HEATHER: umm how often would you say you typically interact with Latinos on an everyday basis through the work place, through the festival...

SAM: well through the work place I have coworkers that of course that are Hispanics, that are Latino and/or Hispanics whatever you would prefer. But umm but I do work, I have some coworkers that are Latinos. Of course I'm still actively involved with many existing Latinos that are working other jobs that talk about political issues and social

issues and government or something. So I email and stay in contact with them quite often.

HEATHER: how would you describe the Latino community of Worcester today?

SAM: how would I describe it...hmmm

HEATHER: is it going strong, is it weakening, is it growing?

SAM: I would describe it as a 21 year old in college.

K and HEATHER: (laughing)

SAM: how's that? They haven't graduated yet, they don't know everything. They smart enough to be in college but they could make a mistake at any point. They need guidance. They need to be given a chance to succeed. The problem of course is the Latino community has a lot of things to fix but I think it's to fix within themselves. Not for someone else to fix it. So they have to understand where is their goals and objectives. At least that's my version of looking at it.

HEATHER: umm what was the Latino community originally like when you first came to Worcester or as you were growing up like the changes that you've seen.

SAM: the thing is that as...but it's the way I have seen them. I don't know what the way everybody else has seen them. So my vision of the Hispanic community may...is completely different than what everybody else would see. Umm but I didn't even really get involved until like 1997 into what was going on globally outside of my street. So that's the, that's the problem. I was you know I was young and not understanding of what was happening outside of my world so I saw things differently because I would say geez what a prob...someone would describe that I was the victim and not looking at what is it that I need to fix within myself and then I could help everybody else. Umm I think people tend to look at it saying geez why don't they do something for me and of course its not about that its about why don't you do something for yourself to make yourself a better person and then we can provide opportunities. I think Hispanics and we're talking about well what can fix for Hispanics...it's not about the race or the color of one group its what can we provide for everybody to everybody succeed. It's not about Hispanics its not about blacks its not about Asians its about providing the equal opportunities for all so.

HEATHER: umm what aspects of the community do you feel most connected to or that have helped you while you were growing up in Worcester?

SAM: and when you mean by aspects you mean...

HEATHER: family, friends,

KATIE: religiously or politically

SAM: I think what I feel more comfortable with umm of course I'm everyone labels me as the next candidate for office but umm the politics is what I like to believe in but I think that helps all of those. I think the politics of understanding helps the religious, the family, the social, and business you name it so I think that's what I like about politics itself it's more global than it is more street orientated

HEATHER: umm how did you get involved in politics here in Worcester?

SAM: well I think it all started when back when I was working at DSS and I was you know not happy at work you know and I needed to do something a little bit differently. Umm I wanted to become involved I wanted to come back and help my city, the city I grew up in. I didn't just want to just be a bump on a log and work a nine to five job and then go home, I wanted to volunteer. I wanted to do something either it was the big brother big sister program or it was you know working for the city which I found out, I was once reading the paper at work, and that there were positions available through the city to work as one of their advisory committees which was you know the human rights commission so my original intent was to go work for the human rights commission because my father did that. And I said well geez let me, it sounds really cool it sounds like what they it sounds like a good group to be a part of and then when I went in there I heard about the planning board and I went hmm I like that too that deals with business, that deals with this, it's making decisions, it's not a bad thing so I applied for both. And ahh I basically got accepted to the planning board back in 1997 and I served 10 years, 2 five year terms and that's really where my feet started to get into the politics side because before that I was working with Gladys Rodriguez Parker and helping her with Jim McGovern's campaign and his first campaign for congress and I didn't understand politics back then I didn't know...well I just knew Gladys told me to come work for her and I went ok and here go hold this sign and here go knock on this door and here go do this and I was like cool alright and so I got involved in that and then I got involved in a Latin, it's called ***WLRIC – the Worcester Latino Voter Registration and Education Project that was when I really started to get my feet wet which was where Marlin Reyes really helped me to understand he global aspects of it. Under the new leadership institute of Worcester which was a program that was available to teach people what is involved in government and all the different aspects of it which they don't do that any more which was a great program that was available. She also with State Senator ***Jaret Barrios of umm Cambridge I think he's from really put together the first ever summit that took place that was umm a candidate's training program and I was one of the first members to be a part of that and that was through a group called Oiste which is interpreted have you heard. And that that organization was founded in Worcester and it was actually started in someone's kitchen, in a three decker in Worcester and we founded it here and then it grew into something really big into Boston and now they're the Massachusetts Latino political organization for the entire state. So and that started in Anna Rodriguez's kitchen table and it started with a few key people and basically that's where I got my feet wet too cause I was involved in that and so I really got involved in a lot of things took quick and I became, I became as I said it the other day I became a board addict. I got into a lot of different boards and commissions and I had to slow down a little.

HEATHER: are there any aspects of the Latino life that you dislike?

SAM: that I dislike?

HEATHER: mmhmm

SAM: umm yes, there's many. (laughing)

HEATHER: could you elaborate on those?

SAM: umm were recording so I have to behave. No seriously I think there are a lot of things I dislike. I dislike the fact that the Latino community doesn't vote as much as they should but I also dislike the fact that most people don't understand how much their voting in because they don't understand the impact they can have. What do I dislike about the Latino community hmm I think it's the...one of the things that I think is so typical that I remember growing up with the Latino community is that if it doesn't work out I'll go back home to Puerto Rico. That's one thing that I really ant stand the mentality of it which is if it doesn't work out I'll just go home and they give up kind of quick and run so in that aspect I don't like that. I don't like the stereotype of the Latino community I think the stereotype that other people give to the Hispanic community is wrong to so

HEATHER: are there any changes that you could make to the Latino community as a whole

SAM: well, I, I would say that it would be umm first starting with empowering themselves hat they can do better I think its starting with the education with the kids that they need to stay stable, change the mobility rates within the city of Worcester. I think it's also having them show up to voting day and it cant be a 100 percent turn out as we know but at least a 40 percent turn out 50 would be even better. There are over 10 thousand registered names in the elections and maybe 35 hundred show up so we're at 35 percent maybe 30 which is a little bit more than the Anglo lets say of the 16 and 17 that you hear about but I think if they showed up in more numbers I'd like to see that change

HEATHER: um how would you describe your relationship with the Latino community

SAM: well I would describe it as great. (laughing) what would everybody else say about me that's the question I would have for you that you should come back and tell me man everybody doesn't like you (laughing). I think that I have served the Latino community well I think that I have tried I'm only one voice I'm not the whole answer you can interview you probably know Juan Gomez and you could talk to him and we tend to be arch rivals in a sense but I love the guy the guy has given his, he deserves the credit where it's due because he's actually ran for office three times, ok and eventually won and he spent his own money and invested his own time and energy so when you look at what's my interpretation of what I think, I'm doing my best. But I'm only one person.

HEATHER: obviously you're part of Centro Las Americas

SAM: mmhmm

HEATHER: and what role has it played in your life?

SAM: (pause) I currently serve as a board member of Centro Las Americas but whether you mean what did it serve in my life growing up? It was the agency as a young individual where we went to do after school programs or homework study groups and there were things like that that were available back then. I never really used the facility as much as others have because I've never really lived in the neighborhood and it was always usually a neighborhood based place but it was a place that we could come umm during the fight back at, in South High School when the kid got stabbed that was where the community all went to and we had a community discussion but growing up as a kid it wasn't, you know we knew that was a place where we go where my mom used to go and get turkey for thanksgiving and things like that and they had food, had a food pantry that was there too that was helping in that community in that capacity. But now as a board member of course my role with them is to help them to grow and provide a bit more services for the community as a whole

HEATHER: um could you just comment on the impact that Centro has had on the Latino community today?

SAM: umm I think that Centro's impact isn't where it needs to be at. I think that's one of the reason I've involved as a board member umm Centro's impact could be greater in this community but I think it takes the leadership of a board and a director to create that. The problem is that I describe it as the executive director is just trying to hold back the dam by himself and he just doesn't have the strength the ability umm to handle all of the fires that are basically going on. He's just running out of energy. So it think that you know he could do, he could probably do a better job of doing that but I think he has too many burdens, I think there're too many needs and too many wants within the community so being vocal about things that don't affect Centro is part of what I would do. For example, the tax rates go up. There should be a comment from that that says how does this affect the Hispanic community. The NAAPC is a perfect example of how they get involved in a lot of issues that doesn't affect them directly but it affects them indirectly but they still go to them as a person of you know the ACLU and all the other groups if there's an issue they go to one group and say hey how does this affect you. I don't think that there's a voice. I think that's where I have a problem with Centro. Where the voice of one person that represents Centro should be heard and they should be involved in all of the different aspects no matter what it is.

HEATHER: umm just switching gears a little bit. Do you still have family back in Puerto Rico?

SAM: I have family in Puerto Rico, yes

HEATHER: how...

SAM: aunts, uncles, umm how much family

HEATHER: I mean...

SAM: the grandparents no longer live there. Its' mostly aunts and uncles and cousins that are there.

HEATHER: do you ever communicate with this part of your family?

SAM: not often. Umm I usually communicate through my mom that stays in contact with them but that's about it.

HEATHER: so do you ever visit Puerto Rico?

SAM: I did on my anniversary. That's about it. We went back for a little weekend honeymoon getaway let's say. So

HEATHER: would you say that you feel connected to the culture of the country that you're from?

SAM: I think I could umm show you a piece of artwork that I have that I think its one of the best pieces of art work that I understand that just...it shows husband and wife standing in old San Juan here the cobblestones are a part of their legs and it's basically, it means you're rooted within your soil. And it, sure do I feel, I mean when you're there you feel it. You know you're home you know what I mean. It's like when you come back to wherever you guys grew up you're just...you're comfortable you know...

HEATHER: we have a list of things that we would like you to compare and contrast from the Latino community is that how...yea...so the differences between the Latinos and the culture of Puerto Rico and then the culture of here in Worcester. So in terms of politics what would you say the biggest differences are?

SAM: ohh big differences. Big differences in Puerto Rican politics. They vote 90 percent turnout if not greater, ahh their turnout is incredible and there's more passion involved in the politics down there. So there's a really big difference and that's one of the things that I don't understand is that why is it that everybody votes in Puerto Rico but when they come here they don't but I think its because there's no connectivity to the leaders, the politicians, the issues the discussions, you know. But when you start talking about raising taxes down there all of a sudden everybody's involved. So it's, there's, it's also a language barrier for some people. Everything's communicated in English but they feel more comfortable in their own language. And so they don't tend to mix the two together.

HEATHER: how about in terms of food and household?

SAM: well I think the food and household automatically transfers no matter what and I don't think except for the weather (laughing) that would probably be the one big thing that would be different but umm you know the style of houses I think the umm you know there's no such thing as hard wood floors. You know what I mean. It's usually tile or you know things like that. It's a tropical environment. So there's different bugs ahh that would be another thing. There's no "cucis" which is...(laughing) that's something else that you miss at night when you hear the "cucis" so that's one thing that's different.

HEATHER: um how about in terms of traditions?

SAM: once again I don't think that there is a difference I think umm you don't lose your traditions between from where you grew up and where you move to. I think you keep those traditions and you keep them with you. You never leave them behind.

HEATHER: and how about in terms of family life?

SAM: well in family life I think its again a little of the same except for the fact that you're and around here you're driving everywhere back depending on where you live in Puerto Rico depending on what parts you would be walking a lot. So you know there are differences but not so much just because if we lived you know in New York City we wouldn't have a car, you know so it's the same concept.

HEATHER: in terms of the language spoken.

SAM: well the language of course, everyone here speaks English. Everyone in Puerto Rico speaks Spanish. But they do speak a lot of English depending on what parts of the island that you're on. San Juan Puerto Rico everybody speaks English. (laughs) it's amazing but its, it's a mixture. It depends on what part you go to.

HEATHER: ok. And lastly, religiously.

SAM: well religiously, you never lose your religion and if you do something's wrong. I think religiously umm I think religiously umm you know people come to different areas and they find their new church or they find, when they do move, they tend to take their religion with them so...

HEATHER: and our last question for you is do you plan to continue to live in Worcester?

SAM: I plan on continuing living in Worcester of course but anything can happen and I think that's, I think why is it that Hispanics come to one particular area? I think it has to deal with jobs. Jobs is what drives people to another place. Umm, if someone wants to offer me twice what I'm making right now and move to Nome Alaska? Probably not (laughing)

HEATHER: ok well that's all I have for you unless...

KATIE: is there anything else you want to add about anything?

SAM: nope, I'm good

K and HEATHER: thank you so much

SAM: thank you

KATIE: we really really appreciate it.

Dolly Vasquez

Katie Elmes

Heather Hassett

Interview: Dolly Vasquez

HEATHER: ok, this is Dolly Vazquez and may I please ask how old you are?

DOLLY: Umm do I have to tell you? Laughing

HEATHER: it is just for research purposes.

DOLLY: I am over 50

HEATHER: ok that's good enough

DOLLY: more than 50 less than 55 hahaha

HEATHER: ok, what country are you originally from

DOLLY: Puerto Rico

HEATHER: Ok Puerto Rico. And when did you and your family originally come to the United States?

DOLLY: that was...I came with my husband and my child...she was four and a half about 20 years ago.

HEATHER: about 20 years ago. And why did you originally come here?

DOLLY: umm my husband got transfer to California

HEATHER: ok

DOLLY: and we moved there

HEATHER: ok great. And do you consider yourself Latino, Hispanic or anther term?

DOLLY: I consider myself first Puerto Rican then Latino

HEATHER: Latino? Ok and what is your educational background?

DOLLY: I have four years of college

HEATHER: four years of college? And what college did you attend?

DOLLY: Puerto Rico

HEATHER: Puerto Rico? Ok and you work here at Centro

DOLLY: yes

HEATHER: and what is your position here?

DOLLY: I am manager, program director of the institute of Latino arts and culture.

HEATHER: ok and how long have you been working here

DOLLY: 13 years

HEATHER: 13 years...and you said that the first place you moved to the United States was California. And when did you originally come to Worcester?

DOLLY: it was about 5 years after that. So I think it's been about 16 years that I moved to Massachusetts.

HEATHER: and why did you originally come to Worcester?

DOLLY: another transfer by my husband.

HEATHER: another transfer by your husband...and what was your adjustment period like when you came over here to the United States?

DOLLY: to the United States?

HEATHER: yea

DOLLY: ahh wow, well you know, I was working in Puerto Rico in the banking industry and when I moved to the states I decided to take some time off just to get adjusted ummm. Well 5 years less...5 years later I was still getting adjusted.

HEATHER: hahaha

DOLLY: so well, but but it was, it was more weather...

HEATHER: yea ok

DOLLY: that was harder to adjust. Even in California – I was in San Francisco which is not what I – you know living in Puerto Rico I always thought California was Beach boys, the beach, went to San Francisco with tank tops, I had to go buy sweaters and jackets so it was, it was windy and and a little cold so that got some adjusting. It was good that I moved from California, from San Francisco to Massachusetts because I think the change from Puerto Rico directly to Massachusetts would have been just awful. Yea

HEATHER: did you meet any adversity with you being Puerto Rican when you moved to California?

DOLLY: you know, not really and you know I have an advantage over a lot of people – it's my coloring. People don't see me as, as Latina. So I don't get, you know I don't get that...I've never felt that I was being judged by, for being Latina. Except when I spoke. But then, a lot of people would think that I was from some European country and to me it was just great because that's when I said you know I'm from Puerto Rico and we come in all colors. So, so you know I can...I'm not the right person to you know, because of my coloring.

HEATHER: that's fine. And, and when you moved here to Massachusetts umm how was your adjustment period over here with the weather and just everything?

DOLLY: I'm still trying to get used to it. I mean, you know I love it now that it's you know 40s and mid of December I wish it would stay like this all the time. It is, it is harsh this long winter. I'm still not used to it. I still don't know how to drive in the snow. I feel like I am back 16 years old, learning to drive when I drive in the snow. It's very hard.

HEATHER: haha. Uh huh. And what does your husband do for a job that made him move from Puerto Rico to California to...

DOLLY: he was in communications.

HEATHER: communications?

DOLLY: yes

HEATHER: ok and when you came here to Worcester how would you describe the Latino community?

DOLLY: (pause) oh my gosh it was...to me moving to Worcester, moving to the Worcester area I didn't...I live now in Worcester but at first I lived in Northborough. And I didn't know Worcester existed. So I would do all my things in Framingham. I would go to the Latino places in Framingham and then I discover Worcester. And now I

don't go to Framingham. Ahh but working at Centro Las Americas and I used to have a radio show on Puerto Rico on Dominique radio...4:55...and that opened the doors to a lot of things. And I got to meet a lot of people from the community that would hear the radio...it's...I feel like I'm in Puerto Rico. You know, I miss my family there yes but I speak Spanish all the time even at work, and and people have welcomed me and and some of them I consider even relatives because we're getting to be very close. So people are just you know trying to get by – a lot of people trying to get by, a lot of people moved here because (pause) the quality of life wasn't good in Puerto Rico and they tried to get something better for the family and themselves so they moved here. My, my reason for moving here wasn't that. It was...I wish I had stayed in Puerto Rico to tell you the truth, I wish I had stayed there but it was because of my husband.

HEATHER: mmhmm

DOLLY: so it wasn't economic reasons that made me move here like a lot of Puerto Ricans and Latinos here in...

HEATHER: so would you say that the Latino community was really helpful when you first came here to Worcester?

DOLLY: oh yes

HEATHER: ok

DOLLY: Yes, definitely. You know I felt welcome, I didn't, I didn't miss so much being in with my people there because I was with them here

HEATHER: mmhmm, and what was the community originally like when you first started to work here and then versus now?

DOLLY: ok umm, 13 years ago...it has changed a little but not that much in 13 years. Maybe if I go back 25 years it would be different but I wasn't here. Umm as now, the majority are from Puerto Rico and then Dominican republic, then Colombia. Now a days we getting a lot of Brazilians moving into Worcester. I would say in the last three or four years you see a lot...more Brazilian businesses and we have incorporated Brazilian acts in our Latin American festival now because there's a lot of Brazilians even though they don't speak Spanish but they're from Latin America. Soo, so we include them now.

HEATHER: ok, so you would say that the major changes you've seen are just the different types of Hispanics that are moving into Worcester?

DOLLY: exactly yea

HEATHER: umm ok when you first moved in here to Worcester what are the different aspects of the community that you felt most connected to?

DOLLY: of the Latino community?

HEATHER: mmhmm

DOLLY: (pause) can you repeat that question?

HEATHER: mmhmm when you first came here to Worcester and you started working 13 years ago what aspects of the community did you feel most connected to?

DOLLY: oh that that I was able to speak my language.

HEATHER: mmhmm

DOLLY: yea

HEATHER: the language:

DOLLY: yes

HEATHER: ok, wonderful. And were there any aspects of the community that you didn't felt connected to at all.

DOLLY: pause

HEATHER: and this could just be Worcester as a whole.

DOLLY: (pause) oh my gosh. (pause) you know I never, I never, never asked myself that question. And I, and I...

HEATHER:

DOLLY: I felt, I felt connected right away even with the Anglo community and the Latino community. Yea

HEATHER: that's wonderful. And this is just going...these questions will be strictly Centro related.

DOLLY: ok

HEATHER: umm what role does Centro want to have in the Latino community?

DOLLY: (pause) they want to empower. Empower the people. Umm (pause) instead of giving them a fish they want to show them how to fish for themselves.

HEATHER: Mmhmm. And what resources does it provide for the community?

DOLLY: oh my gosh, many. We have umm...the biggest one right now is ahh working English for non Americans. And umm it's umm it's classes here to teach them English

but for the work force. To go out and get a job. That's one of the things we do. We also do translations here. There a lot of...still, especially elders that don't speak English, it's hard to learn a language when you're, you know, of some age. So they come here and we try to help them with letters they get from housing or social security. We also have right now umm on Wednesdays we have a program for the elders. They come here on Wednesday mornings from 9-12 they have dinner here, they play domino, they dance and they just you know have a place to come and gather and, and gossip

HEATHER: mmhmm

DOLLY: which they love (laughs)

HEATHER: laughing

DOLLY: we also have umm a food bank. Ahh people of low income can come once a month and pick up a couple shopping bags of groceries, fresh milk, and also we have emergency food. We have, we have umm emergency clothing bank too something happens, people that come here without nothing we can give them something. We have many services. And we're not only here to Latinos. We serve anybody that comes through the doors so you don't have to be a Latino per say.

HEATHER: umm that's wonderful. What role does it actually seem to have in the community and how do people use the resources that Centro provides?

DOLLY: umm like I was hearing last week we have the food bank twice a week on a Wednesday and Thursday. On a Wednesday we serve a hundred and twenty people

HEATHER: wow

DOLLY: and on Thursday we...I think it was around 80. so there's like two hundred and fifty people...families that come a week...weekly at Centro to get food

HEATHER: wow. And umm do you rely on private donations to fund that?

DOLLY: nope we have donations from government and we write grants and we get some money specifically for, for certain projects or programs like for the work in English, for the cultural department and ahh and also you know we do a fundraising a lot, private fundraising.

HEATHER: umm what has been the response from the Latino community towards Centro and how has it changed over the years?

DOLLY: well you know they see Centro as a better organization now but you cannot please everybody all the time. Some people might be very happy with the service they got, some people come here with expectations – we are, we cannot do everything for everyone.

HEATHER: right

DOLLY: so then when they come here and we do not offer that service they you know they are a little mad at Centro for not offering it. But we try to guide them into where they can go for that service so at least they'll leave with some information.

HEATHER: umm what conflicts has Centro run into over the years. It could be a political side, cultural side, anything like that.

DOLLY: ahh, that's so specific. That's so specific. Umm (pause) you know what I cannot think of one right now.

HEATHER: ok. Has Centro encountered any obstacles in trying to work with the Latino community?

DOLLY: (pause) no the only obstacle we have is lack of funding to give more. So there's so much that we can give

HEATHER: mmhmm

DOLLY: because our resources internally are not enough to...to serve them a hundred percent.

HEATHER: and does Centro recognize within the Latino community people from different countries that have different backgrounds, traditions and ideas

DOLLY: oh we do, we do especially recognize people that have helped Centro even though they're not Latinos and we do you know public recognitions for them and awards.

HEATHER: so that's...my next question was how does Centro try to address these differences and that's just through public...you say public

DOLLY: which differences?

HEATHER: the, the different backgrounds and traditions and ideas. How do you try and incorporate all these differences into

DOLLY: oh yea well one thing we do with the Latin American festival that we have in august even though it's, it's, it's an event for Latinos but it's also an event for Anglos to learn about our culture and who we are. So you know education is part of it.

HEATHER: ok and does Centro work with the greater Worcester community as a whole?

DOLLY: oh yes definitely, yes

HEATHER: is there any specific instances where you've worked together to...just the festival?

DOLLY: well and the film festival.

HEATHER: the film festival?

DOLLY: you know, we have, we have the colleges, we have WPI umm Worcester state college, holy cross, Clark University, assumption college and you know these are entities that that serve everybody

HEATHER: mmhmm

DOLLY: so that's one of the ways.

HEATHER: mmhmm. And how would you say that Centro has changed over the years from when it first started to where it is now?

DOLLY: ok, when when Centro first started what I hear it was more like a, like a place of gathering

HEATHER: mmhmm

DOLLY: a place to have parties a place to, it has turned into a social organization

HEATHER: mmhmm and when it first started would you say that it provided all the services that it provides today such as the food bank and what not?

DOLLY: no, no, no

HEATHER: no? so that would probably be the biggest change then?

DOLLY: yes, yes

HEATHER: ok and what goals does Centro have for the future?

DOLLY: (pause) I mean, I mean to serve the Latinos best that we can and to you know raise our budget so you know we can offer more programs.

HEATHER: mmhmm and if you were to raise the budget what other...do you have any ideas of programs that you would be interested in trying ...

DOLLY: oh you know yes and we try to do it again umm immigration services

HEATHER: mmhmm

DOLLY: we don't have them here. We try to get money to start it again and ahh we didn't get that grant so what we do when somebody comes in here with immigration problems we refer them for the other agencies that do have it.

HEATHER: mmhmm umm what is your role at Centro?

DOLLY: My role at Centro is ahh (pause) to keep the culture alive, to educate the kids especially children that have been born here but are Latinos. On, on on being Latinos first and then giving help to the community. I think it's very important for children ahh from Latino parents even though they were born here to know where they come from because that will make them better persons when they grow up. Especially those that (pause) that think that speaking English only will help them in the future. You know it's very important to have two languages – Spanish and English – because in the eyes of a lot of the mainstream community, doesn't matter how well you speak English, you'll always be Latinos especially if you have the coloring.

HEATHER: right

DOLLY: so, so it's very important to know where you come from.

HEATHER: do you think it's harder for children to adjust here than adults?

DOLLY: not to the ones that are born here

HEATHER: mmhmm

DOLLY: it's hard (pause) no it's harder for adults.

HEATHER: it's harder for adults?

DOLLY: yes because children they come, even if they come not speaking the language they go into the school system and in a few years they'll be fully bilingual. So...

HEATHER: and would you say that when people come over here they have a hard time keeping their traditions and their cultures?

DOLLY: no they don't, they don't.

HEATHER: so you...they're still able to celebrate and things?

DOLLY: yes definitely yes

HEATHER: yes, ok and how does the Latino festival benefit the Latino community

DOLLY: it's it's just a matter of getting together and celebrating our culture. At least in Puerto Rico every town, every seventy...17:13...something town has a patron saint day

and there's a week long yearly in each town celebrating their culture and traditions and this is just a way of getting everybody together. In, in, in you know in two days. And just celebrating.

HEATHER: with Centro here and the Latinos in the community having this resource do you think that it's facilitated the process of them coming from Puerto Rico or any other country?

DOLLY: oh definitely yes yes

HEATHER: would you say that if they moved to a different part of Massachusetts that didn't have Centro would you think that the transition would be harder for them?

DOLLY: it would be harder if they needed services. It all depends why they came here for.

HEATHER: in terms of keeping their culture and their traditions would you say that Centro helped them with that?

DOLLY: yes, they...we do.

HEATHER: and as far as Latino festival is concerned, what's the ultimate goal of bringing that into Worcester?

DOLLY: the ultimate goal is to fundraise money for Centro. To keep giving programs to the community. And umm that's the main goal. And it's just a matter of teaching people from Latin American countries that we speak the same language but our cultures are different.

HEATHER: mmhmm

DOLLY: and in the festival you can see it especially by the music and the food.

HEATHER: mmhmm and do you have any ideas for the future of the festival?

DOLLY: no just you know now I have a really great committee that helps me in the festival and they keep bringing up new ideas the thing is that each idea costs money to put together. So, and it's hard to be tapping to the same sources all the time so you know if we come with a great idea we have to come up also how are we gonna pay for this because everything costs money.

HEATHER: right, and how would you say that the festival has grown or changed over the years?

DOLLY: well the festival started just one day. Umm you know a few hours and it has grown to two days and maybe we will add a third day

HEATHER: the festival you said incorporates the traditions of all the Latino communities that are recognized here in Worcester and how do you celebrate those differences?

DOLLY: by bringing ...forward...19:38...dance groups representing each country which brings the dancing and the music

HEATHER: mmhmm

DOLLY: and also I try to get (pause) food that represents some of the countries not just one also we try to get artists as craft people from different countries not just Puerto Rico.

HEATHER: mmhmm. And how has the greater Worcester community responded to the festival?

DOLLY: it's amazing how many Americans and you know I see also umm from other countries at the festival and each year you know we see more and more.

HEATHER: and as far as the film festival is concerned how has the greater Worcester community responded to the film festival?

DOLLY: I would say more, I would say about half of the attend the film festival are not Latinos.

HEATHER: wow. And would you say that there is any particular reason for that?

DOLLY: ahh well I guess the Latinos are more used to watching movies in Spanish in our you know Univision or Telemundo where the Anglos are not so they see this as an opportunity to see a foreign film

HEATHER: ok and when you first...how long has the film festival been going on?

DOLLY: the film festival? We're going into our 13th year.

HEATHER: 13th year? And why was that originally brought into Worcester?

DOLLY: it was because there was no opportunity for Latinos to see ahh movies from their countries here.

HEATHER: so that was the...

DOLLY: that was the main reason. Yep

HEATHER: and how has that grown over the years

DOLLY: well it first year it started with an idea that I had and Clark University jumped in

HEATHER: mmhmm

DOLLY: and then it has grown by bringing other universities other colleges into the plate. And we started showing it at cinema 320 and now we have cinema 320 and Russell Hall.

HEATHER: mmhmm and now going back to the festival how long has the festival been going on?

DOLLY: umm 17 years.

HEATHER: 17 years? And do you know why that was originally brought into the...

DOLLY: as just an excuse to party. (Laughing)

HEATHER: just an excuse to party (laughing) and how would you say...umm as you said it's just an excuse to party, how has that changed over the years?

DOLLY: it has grown, it has grown. Yes

HEATHER: in what ways

DOLLY: in, in the...the stage is huge now. Before we didn't even had a stage. Ahh the amount of people that come – we have people coming from Boston from Springfield you know ahh Rhode Island. Ahh everything has grown, the amount of vendors, the amount of information tables, we have organizations non-profit mostly, that take a table at the festival to display the programs they have. For everybody. So last year we had about 20 non profit organizations with table so it has grown in size. Yes

HEATHER: and when it first started did it recognize all the different Latino communities

DOLLY: it started as a Puerto Rican festival

HEATHER: originally?

DOLLY: yes

HEATHER: and it has just grown into all of them?

DOLLY: yes

HEATHER: ok and I have another set of questions for you. Ok we'll go back to your family. Do you still have family back in the country you're originally from?

DOLLY: yes

HEATHER: is it grandmothers, grandfathers, aunts, uncles? Both?

DOLLY: father, sisters, uncles, aunts. 22:58

HEATHER: so a whole bunch of family members?

DOLLY: I don't have a single family member here.

HEATHER: oh so it's just your husband and you?

DOLLY: well my ex, he was, it's now my ex husband so he's not even here. (laughing)

HEATHER: ok and how often do you communicate with your family at home?

DOLLY: weekly

HEATHER: weekly?

DOLLY: and I go probably two or three times a year.

HEATHER: to visit?

DOLLY: to visit, yea.

HEATHER: and do they ever come visit you here

DOLLY: only (pause) not really.

HEATHER: not really? And do you still feel connected with the culture of the country that you are from?

DOLLY: of course. Very much. Mostly because of the job I have here.

HEATHER: so would you say that if you didn't have the job here then you wouldn't feel as connected?

DOLLY: oh, oh yes. Yea.

HEATHER: do umm...are there any other organizations similar to Centro that like, in Boston, or Springfield or anything?

DOLLY: yes, there are. Boston has IBA, Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción. They have a huge cultural component to it and service also. Springfield has another one. I don't have the name. And Rhode Island has one. But Centro is the only central Massachusetts

HEATHER: mmhmm ok. And this is a little bit confusing but basically what I would like you to do is I'm going to give you a list of terms and I just want you to compare the difference between Puerto Rico and then over here.

DOLLY: ok a list of what?

HEATHER: I'm gonna give you a list of.... I'm going to tell you and you just tell me the major differences

DOLLY: ok

HEATHER: between Puerto Rico and then here

DOLLY: ok

HEATHER: so in terms of politics what would you say are the biggest differences between Puerto Rico and then here in Worcester Polytechnic Institute

DOLLY: oh in Puerto Rico even 8th graders, 8 year old kids know about politics in Puerto Rico.

HEATHER: mmhmm.

DOLLY: politics is very important to the Puerto Rican community there.

HEATHER: mmhmm and in terms of food and household

DOLLY: (pause) food here...you can get anything here that you get in Puerto Rico

HEATHER: so no major differences?

DOLLY: no.

HEATHER: would you say that...how is the food different I mean in terms of culture and what not is it different from Puerto Rico over here?

DOLLY: but comparing it to what I can get from Puerto Rico here or the...

HEATHER: just the differences, the major differences. What would you...I guess what I'm trying to say is the major food differences from here over to Worcester Polytechnic Institute

DOLLY: well but the thing is that in Worcester I still can get

HEATHER: I know that but I'm just saying what are the major differences in dishes that...from Puerto Rico to here?

DOLLY: oh ok alright well to us instead of a salad we have rice and beans in Puerto Rico. So...

HEATHER: and in terms of traditions what are the major differences

DOLLY: traditions?

HEATHER: mmhmm

DOLLY: ahh I think we're more family oriented

HEATHER: in Puerto Rico or here?

DOLLY: In Puerto Rico. When I say we I mean you know Puerto Ricans. More family oriented when we talk about family we talk about not only your immediate you know your kids and your...we talk about cousins, uncles, they're part of our family and when we have a gathering it's a huge party.

HEATHER: mmhmm and would you say that when people come over here from Puerto Rico or any other country they have a hard time keeping their traditions when they come over here?

DOLLY: it all depends how much, how many family members you have here.

HEATHER: mmhmm so would you say it's harder if you don't have any family members?

DOLLY: exactly yes

HEATHER: ok and in terms of family life what would you say the biggest differences are?

DOLLY: (pause) family life...but are we thinking in Puerto Ricans coming here?

HEATHER: yes. To Worcester

DOLLY: to Worcester. Family life. Well that also depends on how many family members you have when you move in here.

HEATHER: would you say it's a strain when they come over here on family life?

DOLLY: I would say so, yes.

HEATHER: ok and in terms of the language spoken what would you say are the biggest differences

DOLLY: for...well some of them come here knowing no English so that has to be really hard for everything.

HEATHER: mmhmm

DOLLY: cause you need, you need to know some English just to survive.

HEATHER: mmhmm. And last one. In terms of religious or religiously what would you say the biggest differences are?

DOLLY: well...here you still...you can get a lot of religious services in Spanish.

HEATHER: mmhmm

DOLLY: so if you're a really religious person you can, you can find it in your own language.

HEATHER: here in Worcester?

DOLLY: here in Worcester.

HEATHER: would you say it would be harder outside of Worcester?

DOLLY: yes.

HEATHER: definitely?

DOLLY: yes

HEATHER: alright. And do you plan to continue living in Worcester?

DOLLY: yes

HEATHER: and, and. So I know you say that you wish you had never left Puerto Rico

DOLLY: (nods head)

HEATHER: but would you ever consider going back to Puerto Rico?

DOLLY: yes but not now.

HEATHER: not now?

DOLLY: not now. And not until I retire.

HEATHER: not until you retire?

DOLLY: yes.

HEATHER: ok well that's all I have for you

DOLLY: oh my gosh!

HEATHER: is there anything else that you would like to add

DOLLY: ahhh (pause) no.

HEATHER: ok wonderful. I really, really appreciate your doing this.

DOLLY: sure, it was fun it was neat. 28:20