IPFW’s Montesino Studies
Cultural Subtleties of Training, Management

In 1996, Max Montesino, assistant professor of organizational leadership and supervision, was contacted by Training Resource Group of Alexandria, VA, to conduct interviews in El Salvador, Honduras, and the Dominican Republic as part of a management competency study. The purpose of the interviews was to evaluate the effectiveness of the American-style management training program being used at Plan International, a development organization that operates in Third World countries. Realizing this would give him an opportunity to collect data for his ongoing research in managerial behavior in Latin American countries, Montesino accepted the offer.

A similar opportunity occurred in the summer of 1997, when Montesino traveled to Ecuador and Bolivia for Training Strategies, Inc. of Kalamazoo, MI. He collected data for the evaluation of another American-style management development program at Plan International.

Born and raised in the Dominican Republic, Montesino was an excellent choice for these two projects because he brought to the interview process an understanding of the cultures and traditions of these countries. Within this context, he was better able to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs being studied.

There are many cultural factors that come into play within any work environment, and though they may be very subtle, they can have major impacts on the work place. Montesino refers to this as “cultural collision.”

“In Latin America, for example, based on strong traditions, there tends to be a more authoritarian managerial style,” says Montesino. “This manifestation of social tradition within the workplace could affect how much support is given to something like a participative management program.”

Latin American society also is based on a strong tradition of communal life. In U.S. society, where individualism tends to be strong, this may be viewed as a negative thing, but Montesino disagrees. “From the communal tradition in Latin America, we can study the benefits of ‘participatory management,’” he explained. “When a communal group is watching those who engage in ‘social loafing’ in the workplace, they put pressure on those who are doing the loafing. This will often help solve the problem.”

Montesino cites the success of quality circles in Colombia and self-directed teams in Peru, Chile, and Bolivia as examples of successful management programs that support the cultural traditions of employees instead of colliding with them.

This past summer, Montesino continued his research with the help of an IPFW Summer Research Grant. He traveled to the Dominican Republic in July and August to study leadership/followership styles and the support for participative management in three work organizations: government, nongovernmental organizations, and private business. He is currently analyzing the data from the trip.

Montesino has written several articles and has had several papers accepted for presentation on this subject. While in the Dominican Republic this summer, Montesino presented “Leadership and Followership at Work: The Reciprocity Hypothesis” to the faculty, staff, and students of UCDEP University in Santo Domingo.

In August, Montesino presented at the Midwest Consortium for Latino Research. His presentation, entitled, “Is Self-Direction at Work Impossible in the Context of the Latin American Managerial Culture?” was part of the IUB-sponsored conference focusing on the issues, challenges, and success stories of Latinos and Latinas in the midwestern United States.

And on Nov. 7, 1998, Montesino will present a collaborative effort, “Evaluating Management Development in a Cross-Cultural Environment: Tales from Africa and South America,” with Diane Braatz, a professional colleague at Training Strategies. In addition to his ongoing projects, Montesino plans to write a book on managerial styles in Latin America.