ABSTRACT

TITLE:	Baile Folklorico De Durango: Initiating Cultural Transmission Through Performance
AUTHOR(S):	Ostler, Melanie
PRESENTED AT:	6th Annual Natural & Behavioral Sciences Undergraduate Research Symposium Program, Fort Lewis College, 2011

ABSTRACT: The Hispanic community is underrepresented at Fort Lewis College and in the city of Durango, Colorado. Baile Folklorico is an important part of that culture, often serving as a symbol of Mexican heritage and tradition. Addressing the history and modern usage of the dance highlights issues faced by those associated with the Hispanic community, specifically, the issue of cultural continuance in a region where members face minority status. Data was collected from ethnographic interviews between January and April, 2011. Those interviewed included parents, dancers, facilitators, and dance instructors. Formal interviews were also held with the directors of the local multicultural community centers, Del Alma and El Centro de Muchos Colores. Interviews were analyzed by domains, or units of cultural knowledge, and then placed into categories based on relationships in order to reveal cultural themes. Data was then analyzed using the anthropological theories of globalization, symbolism, and performance. The data revealed the overarching theme "dance as cultural transmitter". The transmission of culture occurs on several levels. These include the self, the Hispanic community, and the Durango community as a whole. Findings also show that transmission is strictly defined by group members based on knowledge passed down through the generations from Mexico. By performing and supporting Baile Folklorico dance, individuals and communities are provided a space to negotiate and perform their identities to themselves and to others. Thus, the dance serves an important role in promoting cultural knowledge and resisting cultural homogenization.