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Existing con el Lobo, Traversing la Frontera con Mis Nepantla Coyotes, y Buscando la Vida del Zorro: An Autoethnographic Exploration of a Chicano in Academia

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EXISTING CON EL LOBO, TRAVERSING LA FRONTERA CON MIS NEPANTLA
COYOTES, Y BUSCANDO LA VIDA DEL ZORRO: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC
EXPLORATION OF A CHICANO IN ACADEMIA

A Dissertation

by

ERNESTO FIDÉL RAMÍREZ

Submitted to the Graduate College of
The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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May 2017

Major Subject: Educational Leadership

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May 2017

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ABSTRACT

Ramírez, Ernesto. F., Existing Con El Lobo, Traversing La Frontera Con Mis Nepantla Coyotes, y Buscando La Vda Del Zorro: An Autoethnographic Exploration of a Chicano in Academia.

Doctor of Education (Ed.D.), May, 2017, 226 pp., references, 556 titles.

This dissertation is the experience of my life, an evolution of pláticas I have had con mis coyotes, my Nepantlero guides. I am one Chicano navigating through the mechanisms of a coercive and hegemonic system which limits our advancement in the academy. My ontology, epistemology, and axiology stem from my cultural and family foundations which I explore through the application of Testimonio. The dissertation consists of several chapters, first a description of the theoretical underpinnings which bolster my approach. I then guide you in a journey along a path of my discovery. My approach to how this study will be conducted is centered on a Chicano/Pocho stylism. I establish this stylism as grounded in my axiological belief about the need to serve, the epistemological belief that this work is empowering and liberating to me, and that ontologically this work is about barrier removals. I argue that my story is above all other sources of data, that my knowledge is valuable based upon the sources of its origin, and that Testimonio is the most appropriate means by which to share/explore/discover me. I provide my own version of an epic poem providing a realization of a Chicano experience in higher education. I then explore the poem through the stories of my life to provide a context for you to understand me. I address the multiple constituencies involved in my work through the form of an epistolary. I close my work by introducing the need for iterations, a reintroducing of

the element of the circle. A circle allows us to review, or revisit for additional interpretations and understanding. Summarizing, this dissertation seeks to give me the opportunity to describe the context in which I exist and the forces that have impacted and shaped me. I reflect here on the data collection possibilities. Through this plática, using text both multifaceted and interdisciplinary – mis cuentos – I engage in the cogitation of approaches, principles, and information.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the people of my life, you have been with me physically, in spirit, and in heart and mind. I could not have made it through this process without your guidance, support, and suggestions. Mom and Dad, you have always been an inspiration, a guide, and friend. I know that I've made mistakes along the way, but you have always been there to support me in my life, no son could ever ask for more. Bianca (and family), gracias por su apoyo. To my love, you have been with me during these last several years, on this journey by my side. Thank you

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To my dissertation committee, you have been friendly and a great help on this path. To my chair, my Napatlero guide on this journey across the borders of academia, thank you. To my family, my guide on this earth, thank you. Lisa, Ernesto, Sergio, Adriana, Olivia, Eva, and Gonzalo, my colleagues in this work, I want to thank you for your questions, your comments, your support, and your challenges. My thoughts could not have been formulated without the pláticas in which we engaged. I could not have had a topic had I not been in the university. I owe my colleagues a great deal of thanks for your support and questions along the way. My colleagues in Criminal Justice have been encouraging me for years to obtain my doctoral degree, they provided my first exploration into the world of postsecondary research. My UNIV faculty colleagues were there when I started this endeavor, and helped me to refine my teaching skills. My Mexican American Studies colleagues have offered a unique level of support over the last four years as I have been working on this body of work, the dissertation.

To my community, my friends, my colleagues – Thank you! This is our success, not mine.

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EL PRELUDIO

I am theory – I am the word - I am Chicano. I ask that you do some things here which will be contrary to your experience. First, just read these two introductory paragraphs. Don't continue to read this introductory work, or move through any other piece of this dissertation any further beyond that until you have read *Mi Historia, Mi Familia, Mi Tiempo, y Mi Vida* (Chapter 4). When you get to the *Circularity of Life* (Chapter 5), return here and continue with *Águila y Sol*. This may not be in your experience as a course of action to take, but you cannot understand me unless you are willing to experience me. I hope you do and that together we learn about us and move forward in our worldly experiences to create a better world for those that will coexist and share in that reality.

As you progress through my work, I will often ask you to do something different. I ask you not to suspend or bracket your mental processes, epoché in the Husserlian phenomenological perspective (Ashworth, 1999), but instead to consider all that you are in your processing of what I am. I only ask that you not pass to a conclusion until you have had sufficient time to process, integrate, and corroborate – to grow and change and to consider, not decide, to wear the mantle of critical hermeneutics and reflective judgment (Makkreel, 2015). In essence, allow me in my reflective practice to draw your attention to your reflection, as your outsider other, so that the dialogic regarding *theoria* and *praxis* is made known (Kögler, 1996; Alvunger & Adolfsson, 2016).

Águila y Sol

I refuse to have my work exist as a dichotomous element of academia: good/bad, right/wrong, or new/old: but instead continue to emphasize a third moment. I select not to reiterate a moment of western ideological conceptualization and I don't exist as a new age failure of academic sounding prose. I am the circular rotation, the effect, and the cause; I am the beginning and the end of this story. This approach though perceived as new in the "tradition" of western dominated research which emphasizes Eurocentric thought, it is as old as Indigenous perspective. The dialogue I now join with is a part of a larger discussion – the narrative of which is still being told, though repressed – now rejuvenated.

I am a product of my times in the process of growth and development. Like Wordsworth, I use this poem to demonstrate my epistemology. But it is the process of describing it to you which means anything. Sharing my epistemology changes us, more that it changes me alone to know it. Just as his anthem was an introduction to his greater piece, the Recluse; this – El Preludio – is the introduction to my greater work, this dissertation. This is both the product and process, the opus magnum that offers my transformation from base to trophy. Both will be written, but better yet, told and retold. Crafted and re-crafted. Begun and begun again. Each iteration a clarification, a demonstration, of a life lived.

Months ago now, engaged in una plática con mis colegas, a question arose about how I would present this work. Just by looking at my table of contents, you the reader are quite aware that this is not a dissertation bound in the western conceptualization of a thesis for a doctoral degree. Yet I acquiesce and provide much of what is expected, though I take liberty in how I do so. When I defended my proposal, this work – the poem you have just read, was the crux of my argument. It is also the data about which I will center my work.

About this statement - traditional for our field was considered out of the question; because the proposal itself challenges so should the defense. It was the last day of which a defense could be presented for the last semester of this institutions existence. Like everything else about my dissertation this also is a unique feature. I defended my proposal to the faculty and administration of the University of Texas Pan American, yet I have sought graduation from an institution that has no culture or recognized political nature yet, the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Yet, at an institution of higher learning, I exist in a system that is no different than any other – as I am discovering, even though it has espoused a nature that would be vastly different, the rhetoric is yet to be supported by the action. But still I hold hope, as do my colleagues and the students. What I know is that it is up to us to make it happen, regardless of the level at which we can effect change, that change is only going to come about by those of us who desire and need it to happen.

With the help of my father I had prepared the room for my defense. I had been assigned to use the “traditional” space for defense at our institution, the fish bowl – under the guise of any passerby and more than that, a sense of observation by anyone and everyone. One wall of this room is in fact window. We moved tables to the walls, created a circle of chairs in the middle – a safe space, circle. Circle made for discussion, for dialogue. Circle made to change the dynamics of a defense. I was not a target, a person on review from my committee, I was not being placed in the center of a discussion in which I would be the object of attention, but rather I was creating the dynamic of a person, joining with my fellow discussants, to dialogue about the work that I had done so far. Yes, I was centering the discussion on me, but this was about having a focus to our dialogue, not being the object of discussion.

We posted all 36 stanzas around the room on the walls, at eye level, for reading before the meeting should participants wish to do so. At eye level, and covering the windows at the same level – forcing passersby to join the circle, inquire about it, or to continue on rather than to gawk. With both poem and chairs in circle I created the space that I needed, the space that we needed to have this discussion. I took the liberty of reading my poem to the committee and audience. I took permission to read my epic poem; I took the freedom to tell the committee and audience who I am and why I am. I liberated the space and time with an explication of myself.

A significant yet poignant statement was made by one of my committee members. I had to apologize for my lack of vision, yet also demonstrate that the accountability and scrutiny of this process was the reason for this occurring. It was also a function of the circularity of time and the process and product that I am. Dr. Fred Guerra told us that he wished he had the poem before he had the first three chapters to look at. It was a function of my growth and introspection. It came about after I wrote the three chapters I was defending. But he was so right; he was telling me that he could only understand those questions that I raise when he knew me at a certain level. My father has always taught me to make amends in public and, if necessary, to admonish in private. I have to make amends then for my error in this public space. I apologize for my disrespect to my committee, to you Fred, and I learn from this error to not show disrespect to the rest of you who select to engage in this dialogue with us. This is what I should have known, but I have at least learned, in this process. I made the assumption in my structure that you all know me equally well; an impossibility. I have different relationships with each committee member and reader of this document. I have to remember to be cognizant of that and so this poem is given to you as my “data” chapter and referenced here at the beginning to address what many of you will need.

I took the liberty of reading for 20 minutes my epic poem, my statement of purpose, my existence. I took the liberty of telling the committee and audience who I am and why I am. I dominated the space and time with an explication of myself. This was also though the crux of my work, the statement of my dissertation. A statement in jest, or one more authentic than most would care to admit. A dare, a challenge, a statement of praise or the condemnation of freedom and liberty. This was my presentation for the defense of my proposal. It is my declaration of position and clarification of purpose, it my description of who I am, why I am, what I am, and where I am; it is the description of that which I will be; it is the statement of what I do.

It's easier to ask forgiveness than it is to get permission
– Rear Admiral Grace Hopper

PROLEGÓMENO

...its essence can best be explained by telling a bit about a dish called capirotada. Its origin is uncertain. But, according to the time and the circumstance, it is made of old, new or hard bread. It is softened with water and then cooked with peanuts, raisins, onions, cheese, and panocha. It is fired with sherry wine. Then it is served hot...

El Hoyo, Mario Suarez (1947/1990)

Positionality

I am theory – I am the word - I am Chicano. I make a political statement with my identity that rejects the boundaries placed upon me by the mechanistic structures which maintain our hegemonic society. This is not a militant stance, it is a call for freedom in every aspect of life in which freedom is cherished – especially in the presentation of my thoughts and knowledge. This dissertation is about my life, my experiences, and my stories. Mi testimonio can only be told in the context in which I have come to know it (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2015; Pérez Huber, 2010). It is not a linearly constructed story because life does not get experienced in this fashion (Wilson, 2008). We live through events and understand very little of the moment - we later interpret and thus really encounter life. These events are thus not experienced until they are events of the past, filtered through the expectations of a future that has not yet come to pass. This circularity is the experience of life and a more true exploration of time as my understanding has been created from my epistemological frame of reference. This introductory segment explaining what I will do must reflect the process by which understanding has been obtained, or it fails to explain for you

the reader how I have come to understand my world of experience. I encourage you who read this to suspend your understanding of research, developed in a positivistic/postpositivistic paradigm, and to engage in the process of examination and study that my experience provides for you so that you also grow through your review of your story in parallel with my own (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2015; Torres, Guajardo, Guajardo, & Ramirez, 2015; Wilson, 2008).

As you will read in my dissertation, I am theory – my spirituality is based in the culture of relationships (Wilson, 2008). We all speak and listen as our understanding develops. I revere my thoughts as they are the reflection of dialogue, held internally. At the start of recorded human existence, there was only the word, Judeo-Islamic-Christianity follows the precept that the word is the start and the finish, it is the dialogue of life. I am one in my faith and knowledge and declare that the word, the dialogue, is never ending and survives as iterations of what can comprehend at this moment (Hatton, 1989). This dissertation is what I comprehend at this moment. It is not comprehensive in that theory is developed which would allow for the prediction of my future, but comprehensive enough that it explains my life as it exists. Just as in any dissertation process, I am producing scholarly work to develop and demonstrate my technical competence, just like the bricoleur (Hatton, 1989). Even more like the bricoleur, I seek the credential that would allow me stability in the society of higher education; yet I recognize that this is just the entryway to the path of socialization which will grant me that perpetuity (Hatton, 1989). I seek immediate understanding, but unlike the bricoleur, this work is not about acquiring technical competence but more so about exploring theory and developing that theory through introspective practices and deep cogitative assessment to avoid the pitfalls of the bricoleur (Hatton, 1989; Wagner, 1990).

Explanation of Rhythm and Process

This dissertation is unconventional in many ways, yet it is just one in a number of recent explorations of thought that challenge the status quo and select to privilege the gradations of Indigeneity that exist in me and others (Brown & Strega, 2005; Ormiston, 2010; Saldivar, 2014; Sinclair, 2003; Wilson, 2008). As such I select to write in a fashion that suits the requirements of the doctoral dissertation – it looks, feels, reads, and is a traditional piece of scholarly literature – yet functions within the scope of what and how I know. Linearity and clarity are aspects of a western ideological function embedded in the standards of research in which I have been inundated; they are also aspects which I reject as contrived elements meant to remove me from my true self and to marginalize me if I continue to act against them. It is from this position of liminality that I find the space from which to write. I create an academic capirozada (Guajardo, 2002) as a bricoleur constrained by the environment of the academy (Hatton, 1989).

This dissertation, therefore, is a reflection of life and reality as I experience it. It is therefore a more complex document than can usually be attributed to as a doctoral dissertation. This is not to say that it is superior to the work of my colleagues, just different. It is different because I organize it as life is organized, in a circular and convoluted fashion. It is organized on the concept of dialogue/plática and privileges my story throughout (Torres, Guajardo, Guajardo, & Ramirez, 2015). This is acceptable as a methodology when we (researchers) select to use a literary device or historical approach; it is also acceptable when we stretch the boundary of work to include new dialectics for the sake of clarity to our discipline. It is acceptable when we select to place boundaries on it and confine it to limited modes of cogitation with limitations on praxis. It is questionable though, in the understanding of our colleagues, when the dialogue seeks to move beyond the means by which data is collected and analyzed. It is questionable when the

dialogue seeks to move beyond the methodology and toward the very questions of what reality is and what our relationship is to it.

I organize my dissertation just as a natural dialogue occurs; it is not just a reaction to the status quo or a meaningless challenge to the sovereign powers of academia, it is a reflection of how I learn, how I exist, how I teach, how I know, and how I live. These combinations of who I am, how I know, what I know, and what is to know are the elements of my *capirotada* (Chabram-Dernersesian et al., 2007). Separated, these ingredients each are of value and worthy of consumption on their own; Together and just in this right mix they are better and mean more than the constituent elements. My work is the same. It is not that separated elements of my work are not of value, just not of the same value as my convoluted work which is circular by design as it reflects the Indigenous and the reality in which I exist, there is no beginning and there is no end (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2015)! Unlike a lasagna which is layered and builds up from one point and clearly identifies each component (as in the traditional works of dissertations), in the *capirotada* there is no clear demarcation of one element. The *capirotada* is not a solution, to use scientific terms, but rather a suspension. So, in a few select locations, I place headings or subheadings to help you label the component you are savoring at the moment, but I will not take you away from this gustatory experience by too clearly defining what you are consuming.

The means and the product are one – complex, concentrated, absorbed, in the raw form of the dissertation, *como un menjurje*, representing my visions, insights, understandings, interpretations, and evaluations of the world – it is the *bricolage* (Denzin, 1994; Lévi-Strauss, 1966). It is the circuitous and indirect by which this *capirotada* is created (Hatton, 1989). This is not to mean that it is imprecise, amorphous, or without form. Only that it is a different form than

we in academia are accustomed to obtaining. I don't seek a specific problem and go to obtain the tools required to solve them. I instead look to see what tools I have available to me and then seek out to provide the most comprehensive solution for understanding my life (Hatton, 1989).

Road Map

Just as Miguel Guajardo (2002) states about the nontraditional design of his dissertation, I can say this about mine, "the intent is not only symbolic, but it is practical and consistent with the work that has informed my dissertation" (p. 32). It is the experience of life, my own praxis, which shapes the content and style of this dissertation, not what others in the field of educational leadership have stated. As we are all aware, the standard for a dissertation consists of five chapters: first an introduction, second a literature review, third a methodology chapter, the fourth an exploration of data, followed by a fifth which consists of the results and conclusions. This dissertation is not traditional. Although I have left the discussion about method to a chapter three, you will find that the discussion is heavily enmeshed with the dialogue of chapter two, not stated as a literature review, but as a description of the theories as they have evolved to my current position and utilization. A data chapter exists as my poem and an exploration of that exists in another chapter. But you will find that more stories are used to make sense of the poem. A chapter of results and conclusions is reframed as my dialogue with certain parties also involved in this product, our shared dialogue.

The development of this dissertation reflects my experience in life. It has evolved as a result of pláticas I have had con mis coyotes, the Nepantlero guides I've had who have endeavored to learn with me and to share their experiences. As such, I must state that quite clearly I began this journey with the answers and then realized I didn't know the questions. So I

started over. As I dialogued with my guides, I came to a realization, that I had questions only about myself. So I began to explore the possibility of finding answers to those questions. Again, my guides provided the best advice for a neophyte researcher in academia, let's meet and talk about this. As such, I have had nearly weekly meetings with them and with some almost daily, in some cases more formal than others. In some cases over beer and others over coffee. As we engaged in our pláticas, we began to develop this outlet, this autoethnographic piece, mi testimonio. The nontraditional approach is supported by my nontraditional structure of this dissertation. The Indigenous epistemology used as the theoretical framework for this scholarship relates with the testimonio I will provide. To again borrow from Miguel Guajardo (2002), this work is wide-ranging, not incoherent.

In my "Introduction" you will find me establishing the need for this study. I am one Chicano lecturer who has navigated through the mechanisms of a coercive and hegemonic system which limits our advancement, to achieve a position as the first full time faculty member in the Mexican American Studies program at the universities in which I am and have been employed, both UTPA and UTRGV – this is the result of my life and has been the effect of more than 40 years of activism, dialogue, and effort. In this chapter, I establish the question about how this has occurred to me and what that means for me regarding my success and how I now serve in a position of political influence on my students. Furthermore, I begin to argue here that my ontology, epistemology, and axiology stem from my cultural and family foundations. In addition, I begin my critique of the systems of research and describe how my work is a modern correction of those errors as research is applied to me in the lens of my Indigeneity.

I do this by repurposing the literature review as a description of the theoretical underpinnings which bolster my approach. I start by repurposing the concept of theory from the

abstract to the intimately personal. I do this by first privileging my story as the focus of theory development – a course I can take because this work, although a scientific venture, is not a product of the science of reductionism and positivism. I progress through the chapter providing a foundation and the evolution from traditional theory of inquiry to critical theory. I then introduce you to limitations and how they were addressed through Critical Race Theory, LatCrit, TribalCrit/Native Crit/Indigenous Crit, and concepts of the Borderlands/Conocimiento. Writing these ideas has progressed from Ethnography and I follow that progression as well towards Critical Ethnography, Latino/Chicano/Mojado Ethnography, and Autoethnography. I terminate the discussion before I enter Testimonio, as I leave that for chapter three. But just before I do so I tell a story to help you, the readers of my life, to understand my theory and my research – how I relate to this material. The traditional chapter two of a dissertation allows you to follow quite sequentially the development of a researcher’s viewpoint of the literature and its connection with the study. While my chapter two has guided you in a journey along a path I’ve not told you which fauna and flora to admire on this trip or how best to do so, thorough sight or smell or touch or taste – I’ve left that to you. After you have had the opportunity to develop your relationship with me a little more here I continue with a discussion of Education and Educación, two separate concepts although linguistic cognates, and then language. Chapter three is centered on my approach to how this study will be conducted.

I write of a Chicano/Pocho stylism. Again, as in chapter one, my writing is designed to critique the values of traditional design and to elucidate the value of this approach in my epistemological stance. I establish this stylism as grounded in my axiological belief about the need to serve, the epistemological belief that this work is empowering and liberating to me, and that ontologically this work is about barrier removals. In doing so, I continue the argument that

my story is to be privileged above all other sources of data, that my knowledge is valuable based on the sources of its origin, and that Testimonio is the most appropriate means by which to share/explore/discover me. In looking at who and where I am I argue against the means of standard dissertation research and instead privilege myself as researcher and researched, completely within the bounds of my Chicano existence as a result of reflexión. Even though most researchers would argue that this is an anathema to good research, I establish why it is not just good research, but most proper.

Chapter four is my epic poem, stylized in a fashion and inspired by the work of Corky Gonzales, Yo soy Joaquín. My epic poem provides a realization of a Chicano experience in higher education. This poem, as you have already read, is the data of my life, it is my reflection of the experiences I have obtained and my perspective of these experiences. Chapter five provides you with the stories of my life to explain this poem and provide a context for you to understand me. It provides the means by which to understand the experiences that I have laid out for you in this work. Chapter six then, in the form of an epistolary, addresses the constituencies involved in this process of the dissertation. I address the discipline, our field of endeavor, educational leadership. I address my peers and colleagues. I further address a national organization involved in our work. My final chapters close this work, by highlighting my work and reintroducing the element of the circle. A circle allows us to review, or revisit for additional interpretations and understanding.

To summarize, this dissertation seeks to give me the opportunity to describe the context in which I exist and the forces that have impacted and shaped me. I reflect here on the data collection possibilities. Through this plática, using text both multifaceted and interdisciplinary – mis cuentos – I engage in the cogitation of approaches, principles, and information.

We are the first
of our people to walk this path.
We move cautiously
Unfamiliar with the sounds,
guides for those who follow.
Our people prepared us
With gifts from the land
 fire
 herbs and song
 hierbabuena soothes us into morning
 rhythms hum in our blood
 abrazos linger round our bodies
 cuentos whisper lessons *en español*.
We do not travel alone.
Our people burn deep within us.

University Avenue - Pat Mora, 1986

CHAPTER I

INVICTUS

Here. I am standing
in the middle of
two different countries appearing
to be two complete and opposite worlds,
with only a line separating them both.

...

What has Mexico done for me?
It gives me relief from the American lifestyle.
What about America?
I can't distinguish, other than
The key to my future ... Education.

Pilar – circa 1990
[In Carspecken & Cordiero, 1995]

I am theory – I am the word - I am Chicano. Early in the morning, after the chorizo and potatoes were mixed with the eggs, tacos made, and coffee poured, we would venture out on the road. It seemed that we were always awake by three in the morning and driving by four. We would begin our trek out of the Rio Grande Valley, following the familiar route of US 77 North, but towards what always seemed to be a new destination with a familiar end. That was not a place to stay, but a stop along the way of our lives (Calderón, Delgado Bernal, Pérez Huber, Malagón, & Vélez, 2012; Rivera, 1992).

I was not a migrant in the sense of following the field work, but we often moved due to my father's career in the army. Just as his father had taught him in his youth as a migrant worker, this was how you traveled long distances, in the cool of the morning while it was still

dark so that by early afternoon you could stop on your trip and avoid the heat of the day. I became his copilot so to say, after the familiar was behind us he needed a map reader while he drove. Together, we shared an amount of the responsibility to arrive at our destination. This became a central tenet of our relationship as father and son: conversation, sharing, cooperation, and exploration. This relationship evolved from travel to education. This has been a journey we have shared in a more formal stance since 1994 while we both attended The University of Texas at El Paso. We have only ever taken one course together. That year, we lived together in a small apartment, drove to school together, studied together, and developed as students together. I am a first generation college student, with a father who ironically then pursued his education with such vigor as to complete his journey toward the degree faster than I. But throughout the process, we conversed, shared, cooperated, and explored. He still does that for me on my path now (Jago, 1996).

I have been foraging through a path in academia. I have devoted my life to the professoriate. I have done so in pieces, first as an undergraduate, then graduate, a teaching assistant, lecturer, and as a doctoral student. I serve now as a lecturer of a more senior rank, Lecturer III, with a dual appointment in the College of Liberal Arts and the School of Medicine. I will eventually attain my goal of the professoriate. I often think of the path I have taken; I feel successful and yet I am warned that my path is leading not to my goal, but instead toward perpetual teaching in a lecturer role. However, if this is the fate that I am destined to fulfill, it is happily an acceptable one. I am now faculty in Mexican American Studies. The first faculty member hired solely for the purpose of teaching this discipline at the University of Texas Pan American. Oddly, due to circumstances of growth and progress, I was the last one as well. That university in which I served ceased to exist and the assets of the institution incorporated with

those of another university in our region. Like a phoenix, arising from the ashes emanates a new spirit, a new university, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV). I was also the first faculty hired solely for the Mexican American Studies discipline at UTRGV. My role has grown, now as the Undergraduate Coordinator of the Mexican American Studies Program and as a Faculty Community Coordinator with the Office of Interprofessional Education.

It is a path I selected as a result of my experiences and education that were formulated in my childhood and from a family of activists that created this path for me – mis Padres, mis tíos, y mis abuelos. From teaching Mexican kids, to organizing protests, to exhibiting art in the form of music and acting, to telling me the stories of their struggles, I have been led down a path to my activism – to fight for my students and their own growth. Hopefully to be accepted as one of their teachers, in my opinion, the culmination of my role in higher education. I therefore struggle to be a resource for students in a university presumptuously designed to be an institution that focuses on serving as a bilingual, bicultural, and biliterate institution and must, therefore, consider how I am bilingual, bicultural, and biliterate.

I have had my father as a copilot, not always leading, but often traveling along with me on my path of life. This has been a benefit to me as I consider my path and has encouraged me to keep a level of diligence along the way. The role of others as a mechanism of support in the venture for a degree is important to me.

This makes me think of my students and how often have they have been warned about the path they are following - either through some overt, or worse, covert mechanism? Do they find the same level of support, do they have someone leading them along the way? As a national, regional, and local community, we must support our students, the resources of our future, in every aspect of their educational attainment. We need to promote and structure success for every

student who enters the post-secondary system. From the perspective of a local community, we need to support our students because of the impact it has on people, students and their various communities and families (Harmon & Schafft, 2009; Miller, 1995).

Using the pan-ethnic term, overall, Latin@s¹ have fared better in the last four decades than they have previously in regards to post-secondary enrollments. There has been consistent growth even in graduate enrollments (Allum, 2014). Among these disparate elements of the Latin@ moniker, some subgroups have done better than others (US Census Bureau, 2012). However, for the largest single group, and the fastest growing, there has been little progress (Flores & Park, 2014; Nuñez & Kim, 2012). Although Chican@s² student enrollments have increased consistently since the 1960s, these enrollments are also indicative of a problem that persists in higher education (Fry, 2002; Fry, 2004; Fry, 2011; Fry & Taylor, 2013). Few Chican@s will make it through the educational pipeline, from primary to postsecondary study, obtaining educational credentials on par with other groups of students (US Census Bureau, 2012). Even fewer will progress toward advanced degrees. Only 1.5 million people of Mexican descent 25 and older have obtained a bachelor's degree or higher; this includes only about 404,000 who have been able to obtain a post-baccalaureate credential (US Department of Commerce, 2012).

¹ I will use Latin@ in place of Latino/a or Hispanic. A better term does not exist for this group but Hispanic is a state defined term that replicates in society the hegemonic practice of appropriation and definition that is typical of the white dominant powers of society and that other terms, although too inclusive, are at least socially derived from these peoples (Flores & Yudice, 1990; Gómez-Peña, 1996, Oboler, 1992).

² I use the term Chican@ to reference more fairly the amalgamation of peoples of varying genders, sexuality, sexual orientation, and nationality who are of Mexican decent. I use Chicano to reference myself because I do have confidence in who I am and where I am (Rodriguez, 1975). This term is a political term utilized to identify a person of Mexican descent who identifies as a person of Mexican ethnicity but does not identify as Mexican, American, Latino, or Hispanic. I will use the term as my term of identification and will use it interchangeably for all of Mexican descent living in the United States.

Researchers have done their part to ameliorate what they see as a problem, the lack of a sound system of education that makes changes to overcome issues of discriminatory allocations of resources in society leading to knowledge deficits and power inequities (Scheurich & Imber, 1991). Confounding these issues is the manner in which research is then framed; it often considers that these students promote “a self-generating, separate cultural identity and value system that leads to excessive educational dropouts, limited occupational opportunities, poverty, and related social problems” (Gonzalez, 2006, p. 182). Research, however, sustains that such framing is a myth perpetrated by those in power to subjugate members of this group (San Miguel, 1987; Reyes, Scribner, & Paredes Scribner, 1999). The continual marginalization thus prevents utilization of educational facilities, the result then is practically few obtain higher education credentials (Hipolito-Delgado & Gallegos, 2014). Worse still, these systems of education reproduce the ineffectual mechanisms through the process of reform, albeit with theoretical constructs which reiterate a dispersion of knowledge and power/capital, in a fashion that fails to mean anything to the efforts of reform (Scheurich & Imber, 1991)

The amorphous group labeled as Latin@s are the largest minority group in the United States, and the fastest growing (Bernstein, 2006). Amongst Chican@s, the need for postsecondary education is an issue of concern just as much as public schooling (San Miguel, 1987). Displaying a value for that education, enrollments have increased on college campuses among the Latin@ population, from about 850,000 to nearly 1.5 million in the 1990s alone (Crockett, Iturbide, Torres Stone, McGinley, Raffaelli, & Carlo, 2007).

Matriculation of Latin@ students in institutions of post-secondary study has continued to increase since the mid-1970s; further increasing 85% from 1988 to 1998 so that by 2010 about 32% of Latin@s under age 24 are enrolled (Fry, 2011; Hernandez & Lopez, 2004). Although

nationwide post-secondary enrollments for Latin@s continue to increase, up 24% from 2009 to 2010 and an additional 15% from 2010 to 2011 (Fry, 2012) we know that little has improved for the student who attends; across all U.S. institutions, less than 4% of all undergraduates are Latino and only one in nine Latin@s will earn the bachelor's degree (Castellanos & Jones, 2003; Zurita, 2004). The rate of educational attainment among this population of students is woefully behind that of others (Ong, Phiney, & Dennis, 2006; Ojeda, Morales, & Navarro, 2010; Santiago, & Soliz, 2012a). In the state of Texas, approximately 17% of Latin@s have completed a degree (Santiago, & Soliz, 2012b) although this group constitutes 30% of the enrollments in Texas post-secondary study (Liu, 2011).

Another issue often complicating the study of this group of peoples is that use of the ubiquitous term, Hispanic or Latin@. The problem with this one pan-ethnic identifier is that this group is highly diverse, even among single ethnic groups such as those of Mexican descent (Delgado Bernal & Delgado-Romero, 2004). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) clarify that race/ethnic paradigms are confusing categorizations due to the multiplicity of life; by virtue of existence a person may be Hispanic, Latin@, Mexicanoamericano, Chicano, Californio, American or any combination. To borrow from the quantitative researcher who values the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistical analysis model as a means of group analysis, the use of a pan-ethnic nomenclature fails to recognize the differences which exist within the group of people so categorized even though it does a rather spectacular job of bringing to light differences between and among groups. As Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) state, this approach assumes “a ‘unity of difference’ – that is, that all difference is both analogous and equivalent” (16).

It is the property of self that is under control in the naming of a group of people, by either a dual terminology (i.e., Mexican American) or by imposed terms (i.e., Hispanic) the role of

Latin@ minorities are set by the dominant power and leave these marginalized populations to accept a degree of subjugation and to question one's existence as an "other" with a bifurcated spirit rather than a sense of wholeness and unity. It is for this reason that I decide to use the term Chicano³ to identify myself and my co-learners as we are one in the sense of being the other in this white dominant society of academia and I recognize the political position in which we find ourselves as subjugated members of a self-asserted free society.

Statement of the Problem

There have been multiple studies concerned with minority student success in higher education (Aragon & Perez, 2006; Green, 2007; Keup, 2006). Discussions have focused mostly on the role of motivation (Gardner, 2008; Hurtado, & Carter, 1997) and persistence (González, Jovel, & Stoner, 2004; Lowis & Castley, 2008). The result has been conflicting conclusions (Young, Johnson, Hawthorne, & Pugh, 2011). Some studies have even focused specifically on Chicanos (Ramirez & Soriano, 1981; Gonzalez, 2002). Many of these studies have been framed in quantitative approaches attempting to assess theoretical constructs of student success; the qualitative paradigm is needed though to enhance the perspective of understanding in this field of research.

In researching college degree attainment as a measure of success, Pérez Huber and Malagon (2007) reported that Latin@s described support, climate, mentorship, and financial aid as considerable factors in their experience - further, that undocumented students faced even greater marginalization because of immigration status. Rodriguez (2011) found that among undocumented public school students that there were perceived differences in feeling a part of

³ To clarify, I use Chicano only in reference to myself utilizing the gendered pocho terminology and Chican@ to reference the entire group in an attempt to deemphasize the barriers of language and the continued marginalization of this hegemonic structural tool on society.

the cultural group. Pérez Huber (2009a; 2009b) found that the success of marginalized students was framed in the language of the dominant society members and that a reevaluation of that language was necessary to reframe the students' successes. Such evaluation has staged progress from illegality attached to people, to people as undocumented and motivation to ganas (Easley, Bianco, & Leech, 2012).

In addition to the manner in which we frame student success as members of the academy, we frame success by utilizing a particular approach to learning. Pedagogy is the property of the dominant society and tightly enmeshed with the curriculum. These are a reflection of the property rights to which an individual should be entitled. However as a manifestation of white dominant culture, it rejects minority growth and ownership and empowerment. Only a curriculum which expands the minority power will lead to property and hence civil rights. The desire to deny students of an approach that centers on their experiences and to focus instead on the approaches/knowledge of the dominant ideology is then institutional/structural racism (de la Luz Reyes & Halcón, 1988). Critical Race Theory inspects these feelings of self-deprecations as a result of the master narrative. As Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) state “the story of one’s condition leads to the realization of how one came to be oppressed and subjugated and allows one to stop inflicting mental violence on oneself” (p. 57). I used to ask my students what else I or the university could do for them and I would often hear, “Nothing!” or “We fail because we don’t take advantage of the resources” or “It’s our fault.” I used to accept that success then was also a result of my own work – that to succeed was dependent upon my own individual efforts.

Success in the accepted paradigm confers a legitimacy, acceptance, and measure of whiteness then as one seeks to fully assimilate with the majority culture (Rodriguez, 1983). Eventually, with the adoption of the means/manner/values comes the degree – a property. To

hold to ones values doesn't preclude one from obtaining the property – but it limits the number who will receive it. My story as an educator is replete with the stories of others (Ceglowski, 1997) who were my students and indicate the ability to simply converse in class let alone to dialogue, lack the ability to expand their understanding and progress because they feel out of place in an institution that is concerned with promoting four-year graduation rates but will not stop to listen to a student about how that doesn't coincide with the need to work, coincide with family, or respect relationships.

If we hope to learn how best to assist our students to grow and find success, we must know how we have grown and found success. This study is designed to reflect on the experiences and situations that have led to my arriving at this point in my education and career. Furthermore, I seek to establish the value of such study for educational leadership in that there is more to the discourse on leadership than the technical aspects, although these are often sought after as the prize. I seek to understand my own colonization, marginalization, and process of conscientization, as these are aspects of the person upon which I as an educational leader will draw to guide my environment (Calderón, Delgado Bernal, Pérez Huber, Malagón, & Vélez, 2012). I also seek to make a central component of my study of educational leadership the one component that was relegated to the fringe by the program in which I study, me and the influence of culture upon me as a leader (Lopez, 2003). Failure to do so, or acquiescence to the established system, is tantamount to a reification of hegemonic structures that negate the values I reflect and demonstrate for the world that 'otherness' is aberrant to research rather than stimulating (Collins, 1986; Delgado Bernal, 1998).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to uncover how I as an ethnic minority student, enrolled and employed in a minority majority regional institution define myself, define success in higher education, and my role in assisting others to succeed in higher education. This stems from an exploration of my own process of awareness and consciousness as well as the exploration of family activism in education to cause my awareness. As a scholar of educational leadership, I share in the obligation to extend our understanding of the intersection of race/ethnicity and other components of identification such as language, gender, place, and spirituality and the means by which these are navigated within the confines of the various aspects of the organization, systems, communities, and structures in which we exist (Lopez, 2003).

Framing Questions

I will continue to exhibit my perspective, implicating the educational domain in the maintenance of Eurocentric domination and ostracism of native ideals. I engage in my nature and heritage and utilize story to elucidate and measure my experiences. In doing so I am on the path of valuing community, relationships, and reciprocity to reclaim my Indigeneity and to do research (Absolon, 2012; Absolon & Willett, 2005; Martin, 2003) as an educator attempting to release myself from this bastion of hegemony. It is on this path that I seek to answer the following:

- What are the sources that shape my views on social justice and educational equity?
- What are the sources that shape my identity?
- What attributes of my identity do I use to shape my educational persona?

Limitations of the Study

From the dominant paradigmatic perspective, this study has a limitation; there is little transferability as this is an autoethnographic exploration. However, from my perspective, this is not a limitation, although a delimitation. This is mi historia, my perspective, and I choose to privilege it in the research above all others (Jago, 1996). I am that which is “to be recognized and acknowledged as one research standpoint to be pursued and explored rather than ‘accounted for’ and ‘balanced’” (Hendrix, 2001, 565). I am the bounds by which this study is framed. I do not make any claim to objectivity (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2004), nor do I suffer from the absence of this as my study is framed in the nature of my development (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2008). From the dominant perspective, this study lacks validity and generalizability. This, however, is intended in the design which I have selected for this study as I do not adhere to the notions of objectivity and replicability, tools of a positivistic paradigm (Calderón, Delgado Bernal, Pérez Huber, Malagón, & Vélez, 2012). This means that I also reject as a limitation my inability to clearly delineate myself as a separate element in time and space as subject of study, teller of the story, and analyzer of this study; we are but one and find pride in that time and space have no ability to constrain who I am, was or become (Duncan, 2005; Reyes & Rodriguez, 2012).

A true limitation though exists in that I am shaped, maybe corrupted, in my perceptions of the colonizing influences from which I have not freed myself. There are colonizing mechanisms of which I may yet not be aware or at some level unwilling to free myself from. This then taints my perspective (Calderón, Delgado Bernal, Pérez Huber, Malagón, & Vélez, 2012), just as all research is so tainted.

Significance of the Study

Recent predictions indicate that the majority of jobs available in the United States will require a post-secondary degree, that the United States continues to fall behind other industrialized first world nations in educational attainment, and that the growth of Latin@s entering education will continue to rise (Bell & Bautsch, 2011). Chican@s are the single largest ethnicity of the Latin@ group, consisting of the largest single ethnic group of marginalized peoples in this category (Pew Hispanic Center, 2009); this group will be further marginalized if the gap between the educated of this populace continues to lag behind that of the majority culture (Dougherty, Nienhuser, and Vega, 2010; US Department of Education, 2011) and other Latin@s (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Nuñez & Crisp, 2012). This research will help to elucidate how to facilitate growth and success among the rising population of Chican@s in institutions of higher education (Telles & Ortiz, 2008; Alon, Domina, & Tienda, 2010). This illumination of a path toward a solution (the clarity that comes from an understanding of my story and my processes of colonization/decolonization) must not be confused for an illumination of the path (an assumption that is made of research findings which is framed within the context of transferability). A failure to make changes, effective changes, is an action to maintain the status quo.

Furthermore, this research will substantiate an approach embedded in my Indigeneity, mi Chicanismo, that not only decolonizes, but changes methodologies and perceptions of voice defined by the master narrative (Calderón, Delgado Bernal, Pérez Huber, Malagón, & Vélez, 2012; Wilson 2001). It does so while revealing a whole person, my being, thus reintegrating the political and spiritual self with the scholar, the researcher, and the activist (Calderón, Delgado Bernal, Pérez Huber, Malagón, & Vélez, 2012; Wilson, 2001).

Methodology

Scheurich and Young (1997) argue that what has been a fair avenue of discovery has been determined often enough from the majority cultures perspective; the perception given then that one would not deign to research the People of Color from a perspective of color, which is just what Delgado Bernal and Villalpando (2002) have suggested must be done to understand the struggle that one encounters in the academy. Trueba (1999) suggested that movement away from “hegemonic instructional structures” (p. 592) and toward a new domain of existence was through the understanding of the self amid the process of change – through praxis. Through the application of Critical Race Theory (CRT), Villalpando (2003) reported that Chicana/o students who socialized together were in the process of developing cultural resources to overcome institutionalized barriers in universities for success. Utilizing CRT and Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit), Delgado Bernal (2002) reported that knowledge of the world and language are colored by ones history and experiences, such that the perspective of what is important in the Chicano community may be vastly at odds with the Eurocentric viewpoint (Saavedra & Nymark, 2008).

Other educators at a regional HSI have engaged in conversaciones with me that constitute the text of my interviews (Burstein & Montaña, 2011). To assist a marginalized group to empower themselves and to recognize that the knowledge that comes from the research is that of the participants (Chávez, 2012), testimonio – a modern quasi-ethnographic/narrative methodology capitalizing on the LatCrit theoretical perspective (Pérez Huber, 2009a; Pérez Huber, 2010) – will be utilized (Alarcon, Cruz, Jackson, Prieto, & Rodriguez-Arroyo, 2011). My testimonio will be drawn from these interviews and experiences. Because I privilege my experiences and thoughts in this process, I will also keep a detailed research journal. The qualitative data will be analyzed using reflexión.

Summary

I, a Chicano of South Texas, will speak to my experience in a Texas post-secondary institution. Through this study will come knowledge about what determines success in academia and detail what barriers exist toward that end. This study is designed to privilege that space that provides the opportunity for self-empowering a marginalized population and to provide a greater understanding of post-secondary enrollment and graduation rates among Texas Chican@s in the South Texas border region. I intend through this study to explore the process of dehumanization in the atmosphere of acculturation and assimilation and the eventual freedom of conscientization and liberation from this process of colonization as a result of my family and the push for both my education y educación (Freire, 1970).

Ya me gritaron mil veces que me regrese a mi tierra,
Porque aquí no quepo yo
Quiero recordarle al gringo:
Yo no cruce la frontera, la frontera me cruzo.
—Los Tigres del Norte, 2001

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

Soy pocho! Dios me haga
orgullo de los pochos
así como los pochos son mi orgullo.
Quisiera llegar a ser
el orgullo de los pochos.
—Américo Paredes, circa 1940

I am theory – I am the word - I am Chicano. I am the living content of that which I study (Alarcon, Cruz, Jackson, Prieto, Rodriguez-Arroyo, 2011; Calderón, Delgado Bernal, Pérez Huber, Malagón, & Vélez, 2012; Gonzalez, 2001; Hurtado, 2003; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1983). To impact the world as subject rather than to be acted upon as object (Freire, 1970) requires that I be transformative, that is to be of the body and spiritual (Calderón, Delgado Bernal, Pérez Huber, Malagón, & Vélez, 2012). I am therefore introducing this chapter with my experience - it is reconstructive and it is mi historia (Alarcon, Cruz, Jackson, Prieto, Rodriguez-Arroyo, 2011; Benmayor, 2012; Espino, Vega, Rendón, Ranero, & Muñiz, 2012; González, 1998; Hurtado, 2003). I am of the border, in more than the physical border, but also that of multiple cultures and experiences (Anzaldúa, 1987; Gonzalez, 1998). I claim this with pride and dignity because it is in this border that I am defined (Villenas, 1996). I experience Nepantla (Anzaldúa, 1999; Calderón, Delgado Bernal, Pérez Huber, Malagón, & Vélez, 2012); soy de la frontera - sin barrio

(hooks, 1990) - soy Chicano y soy pocho tambien (Berk-Seligson, 1980; Chavarria, 2012; Hernandez, 1968; Perales, 1965).

Because of who I am, brown, a student, an aspiring academic, and an outsider to the system of which I wish to be a part, I am also exposed to differing forms of subjugation (Brayboy & Deyhle, 2000; Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall, 2013; Collins, 1986; Crenshaw, 1991; Guajardo & Guajardo, 2004; Hendrix, 2011; Solórzano, 1998). I am the product of the academy - I was a student in my master's degree, learning how to be a scholar, studying the discipline of criminal justice. I wrote a paper that included my perspectives on the topic, was told "this is nice", but not "academic." Nevertheless, I was happy to be pursuing a graduate degree in criminal justice. I had only recently completed my bachelor's level education and so wanted to impress my father. He spent 22 years completing his degree, I had taken eight. My father finished his master's degree as well. We would sit each week and discuss what we learned and share new insights and provide reassurances. I wrote my paper in the same fashion that my father and I had discussions, pláticas. This particular course was on leadership and organizational theory. I observed my father for years as a leader in the army utilize these concepts in practice. I wrote from our experiential knowledge, citing his experiences as the support for my arguments. In a tone of assurance and respect I was told to forget the process of adding these "types of perspectives." Accuracy was not the issue; it was the concept of academic rigor. "I don't care what you have to write, not until you get the alphabet after your name. I want to know what others have to say from the field." There was no purpose of disrespect or overt attempts of subjugation from this professor, but a legitimate concern on his part that his students learn how to be "scholars" in the very discipline he had dedicated his life.

This professor was holding on to a legitimate belief shared by the majority of his academic colleagues that the approach to understanding and creating knowledge is through a rigid set of accepted practices and that knowing can only occur in one fashion, with a dispassion for the environs of learning and a healthy consideration of objectivity (Kuhn, 1962; McCarthy, 1978). The scholar need make everyone aware of what “others” have said and to clarify the discussion from the perspective of those who have previously studied the field. This approach smacked of a perspective that denigrated any other method of discovery and placed little faith or value in the findings of those who did not take this tack to knowledge, a dangerous scheme that validates one perspective to the exclusion of others promulgating colonization patterns (Atwood & Lopez, 2014). Through this approach, the purposes of findings in any endeavor are to enrich the field and create a new generation of scholars who will replicate the system (Bass, 1995) rather than to challenge it or improve it (McCarthy, 1978; Nichols, 1993) as well as to negate the means of knowing that others have (Solórzano, 1998). For too long, as a result of the replicative power of the hegemonic structure of education, research has been the tool of colonialism and domination (Smith, 1999). I make this research a part of the struggle to change what we in the academy accept as research and to create the space in which we accept new ways of research and being in the academy (Smith, 2008)

This perspective of knowing is mired in the discussions of ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology (Wilson, 2001). A discussion of philosophy is warranted in this chapter as I will detail the theoretical approaches that will be used and clarify the values and concerns that exist in the approach and literature that dominates the field (Kovach, 2010), but more importantly to keep the discussion at a level of reality that evokes a critical paradigm where the participants and researcher have a shared responsibility to learn and grow (Smith, 2012;

Wilson, 2008). Thus, the impetus for discussion is criticality through which the discussion will culminate in a dialog of Latino Critical Theory and the post-critical ethnographic approach of Mojado Ethnography in the framework of the autoethnography. These terms are interwoven among theory, process, and method. A discussion of methodology is relegated to Chapter 3.

I begin with why this discussion must even exist. Hobbes' work steered the social sciences to utilize the methods of the natural sciences – although debate has regularly arisen over the value of such a convention, it more often than not has been the manner of approach which evolved to the point of the scientization of all studiable phenomena (McCarthy, 1978; Ritchie, 2012). This approach values a separation of theory and praxis so that values of research findings are separated from the research (Kowlakowski, 1968). Ironically it is applied to the convention of study such that a belief exists among researchers that study itself is value free and that theory itself was an expression of the quantifiable aspects of the phenomena rather than an integrative aspect of life itself (McCarthy, 1978).

As a discipline, Educational Leadership is not appreciated by many of the social sciences because it does not hold rigid to an epistemological, ontological, axiological, or methodological stance – it is instead viewed as atheoretical and therefore soft (Biglan, 1973a; Biglan, 1973b; Kitchel & Ball, 2014; Kuhn, 1962; Scheurich, 1997b; Sergiovanni, 1994). Even when Educational Leadership holds to an epistemological stance, the researchers of this field fail to practice any reflexivity for the purpose of understanding their epistemological stance and this impact on research (Scheurich, 1997a; Scheurich, 1997b). As a result, even the American Educational Research Association (AERA) has viewed education not as a discipline, but rather as a field of inquiry (Shulman, 1981; Shulman, 1997). Semantics aside, the difference allows for critique and distance, as well as unique elements of collaboration and corroboration. A

discipline such as Psychology, and by extension its various components, to include Educational Psychology, is one such discipline that looks with disdain to what they consider the less rigidly approached field (Eisner, 1983; Fish, 2000; Nichols, 1993). There is a sort of science envy, a la Freud (Tauber, 2010), that exists in the social sciences that relegate many of those disciplines to hold tightly to the confines of the positivist paradigms of knowing (Kitchel & Ball, 2014; Miller, 2000; Pizarro, 1998).

The danger in positivist thought is the reduction of all conceptualizations to a master description, one that is formulated using the accepted means of thought to justify itself (Fish, 2000; Kolakowski, 1968; Scheurich, 1996; Suppe, 1972; Suppe, 1977), a condition experienced by Bass (1995) as he searched for evidence of superiority in transformational over transactional leadership and in differences between the two. It further gathers all mode of thought to one acceptable manner of knowledge acquisition and explanation of phenomena in our collective experience (Scheurich, 1996; Suppes, 1967). Additionally, this mode of thought argues that different perspectives are not different, but in a sense of Haeckel's most considered opinion a form of ontogeny recapitulating phylogeny (recapitulation theory) or the perfection of Herbert Spencer's (1861) thought, "If there be an order in which the human race has mastered its various kinds of knowledge, there will arise in every child an aptitude to acquire these kinds of knowledge in the same order" (5). Because this approach is so pervasive, or rather invasive, to the realm of inquiry, the development of a different mode cannot just exist, but must do so after the recognition of the depth to which current understanding has evolved (McCarthy, 1978; Pizarro, 1998; Suppe, 1972; Suppe, 1977).

My journey as a researcher begins with my acceptance to a doctoral program in Educational Psychology. Cemented in the traditional pedagogical model, which reflects the

dominant social science epistemology (Fish, 2000), I enrolled in Statistics and Research Methods first. As a matter of course, I was inculcated with this positivistic paradigm through numerous courses specific to statistics and research design (Figueroa & Sanchez, 2008). I wished to research the causes for success among Mexican American students at an HSI in South Texas. Guided on this path by narrowly defined constructs and previous findings which were in conflict with each other, I was encouraged to not consider ethnicity and to instead compare the success rates of students involved in a required freshman course against those who had an exemption from the course (Hendrix, 2011). I could not come to terms with the design. I instead pushed my own, seeking to find factors of success that could be related to ethnicity. My experiences as a faculty member and as a student demonstrated that there were other factors responsible for student success that were not being accounted for in the psychology literature (Young, 2008). The quantitative data could not extend the discussion any further because it was incapable of capturing the data that was needed, the voice of the students and faculty of color who at one point had also been students (Pizarro, 1998; Tuitt, Hanna, Martinez, del Carmen Salazar, & Griffin, 2009). The result is that Latin@ faculty are hardly represented in academia; only 4% of all full time faculty - 3 percent at the rank of full professor, 4% at associate professor, 5% at assistant professor, and 6% at lecturer (NCES, 2014). As a group, women of color account for only 2% of positions of full professor positions (Evans, 2007).

Even if the approach focusing on quantitative methods did approximate the needs of the research, the analysis would have been deficient since the positivism entrenched in these approaches rely on the absolutism of its untested assumptions (Nichols, 1993). By not having a willingness to view and critique one's suppositions the process of "scientific" exploration is limited instead to a reification of previously contrived perspectives for the sole purpose of

maintaining a status quo. In my view, then I had to come to terms with what academic research was about, it was a political statement made to disenfranchise the researched and the marginalized researcher (Freire, 1970; Pizarro, 1998; Villenas, 1996). I then had to declare my statement, to declare that my way of knowing is valid and useful to research, that it is empowering and productive – it is a Chican@ epistemology (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Figueroa & Sanchez, 2008; Pizarro, 1998; Pizarro, 2005).

In April of 2011, I had just finished presenting on the lack of Chicanas in positions of leadership in higher education when Gloria (an award-winning researcher of education, inequality, feminist methods, and testimonio) approached me. She was the keynote speaker I was excited to speak with her about my presentation which she had selected to attend. Situated in the context of higher education research, I was told this is not the trend to study, instead to focus on the lack of men enrolling in higher education. I felt othered in this position and marginalized, but saddened even more that here was a real area of need for research and I was being told to stay away from it. As she is a scholar of this field, I took this as a discriminatory practice that was being practiced on me by a fellow marginalized researcher. I felt that she had othered me and separated me based upon an outside status rather than on the merits of my research. I feel that she was reacting to the privilege I carry as a male and to the disciplinary lines that exist in which I may have been crossing to her field of sociology.

The field of Educational Leadership is enriched by providing the opportunity to consider differing epistemological stances to include postpositivistic critical epistemologies. How one knows what is known is equally valuable to the scholar as it is to the participants of research (Brownstein, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Kincheloe, McLaren, Steinberg, 2011; Paquette, 2014). Maybe even more important though is the ontological stance taken (Wilson, 2001). The

professor in my master's class not only cared about how one learned what was of value learning, but what was even considered of value to learn. Educational Leadership has placed itself within the confines of learning how to organize itself – thus limitations of what is of value to be learned are framed around conversations of what is to be done to the structure of institutions and organizations, how interactions between leaders and subordinates are to be viewed, and what perspective is required of the studied and the researcher (Chávez, Ke, & Herrera, 2012; Creswell, 2007; McGinty, 2012; Paquette, 2014). Axiologically one must consider what is to be done with the materials that are learned and how they are valued (Wilson, 2001). Too often the discipline has required that a political stance not be taken with what is learned. However, every action or inaction is itself a political statement (Cresswell, 2007; Cheskey, 2013; Freire, 1970; Reza-López, Charles & Reyes, 2014; Ruiz, 2004).

For most conservative academics, there is a distinct irony in the study that utilizes approaches that stem from the critical. First it is highly evolved in the use of theory, hence the rhetoric of Critical Theory, Critical Race Theory, or even Latino Critical Theory or Feminist Critical Theory or Indigenous Critical Theory. From one perspective, that of mainstream academia - scientific inquiry from an established positivist view - there is little of redemptive value in these approaches that originate in a purview of critique on the bastions of academia and enlightenment. It is viewed as ironic because the work is highly developed and dependent upon theory and stated from a positivist perspective as of lesser value because it is more concerned with the why and how, rather than the control of, the phenomena under study. However, for the researcher, the utilization of the critical approach is centered on praxis. The knowledge acquired in these studies reshapes the environment in a political fashion, thereby shifting control from the researcher or the perspective of the researcher, to that of the participant (Freire, 1970; Kress,

2011; Ruiz, 2004). Further, the establishment of modern academia then alienates the product of critical approaches as too involved with the participants of the study, seeking to discover together the means by which to improve society which for the stodgy positivist is anathema to the goals of research. Ironic again that when concerned with praxis, the establishment then argues that there is a requirement of disconnection and impassionate vision. To then become involved in the discussion utilizing the tools of the framers of this discussion further validates the epistemological approach against which one is arguing (Atwood & Lopez, 2014). It allows us a room in the master's house, but to dismantle the master's house requires that we develop new tools, validate our perspective, and willingly advocate for the discussion (Anzaldúa, 2002; Grillo, 1995; Lorde, 1984; Trucios-Haynes, 2001).

I am guilty of intellectual switch-hitting in this approach. I have been inculcated with the language of research over the past 14 years that has evolved from the highly accepted social science canon of research. I am, though, also a product of the struggle to recognize and shift away from that restrictive approach and to value other methods of discovery. Language, however, is of vast importance to this shift. I engage in the language of both the traditional and critical theorists. Interestingly, critical theorists attempting to validate and credit this perspective are mired in the language of philosophical excursions which in themselves are often exclusionary. To discuss the aforementioned precepts by which this dissertation will evolve I too will engage in such rhetoric. I do this because the conciseness and precision of the discussion warrants, or more so requires (Suppe, 1998), it and I now engage in this practice of exclusion while I simultaneously engage in the rhetoric of liberation and equality. I do this to meet the requirements of the academic environs of which a dissertation successfully defended grants me the opportunity to shed the skin of student and adorn myself in the vaulted cloak of

colleague (de la Luz Reyes & Halcón, 1988), and I do this because there is no other way to have accepted what I state in a more common vernacular than academese (Gildersleeve, Croom, & Vasquez, 2011; Villenas, 1996).

Reaction and Rejection of Traditional Theory

Coming out of the 1800s, western academic thought had latched on to the development of scientific principles and approaches. This meant then that there were certain tenets of investigation that must be adhered to for acceptance in the greater realm of academic thought. These were rooted in the principles of Descartes (Searle, 1984) utilized in the practices of great doctors of science such as Darwin and Newton, and later incorporated in the developing social sciences by early psychologists such as Müller, Wundt, and James (Benjamin, 2007; Mandler, 2007).

Mandler (2007) explains that a true development of the social sciences of thought and human interaction only began when it was the methodologies utilized by those trained as physicians which were implemented to study the phenomena of thought, rather than the rationality of a philosopher, which led to the discipline of psychology. This lays then a foundation for modern investigations in which the idea of empirical data defines the discipline as early as 1749 (Mandler, 2007). James Mill and John Stuart Mill then in the mid 1800s solidify the fledgling discipline's mode of inquiry to the concepts of empiricism and substantiation (Mandler, 2007). Social science then was inundated with the concepts of experimentation, empiricism, and quantification due in part to the successes of German and American industrialization (leading to an increase in the technologization of society) and the rejection of human rationalization, as a matter of study, under Prussian hegemony and American Civil War reconstruction in the respective countries (Brubacher & Rudy, 2004; Mandler, 2007; Suppe,

1977). Thus in Germany by 1866, the social science of human thought and behavior had rejected culture as a sphere of inquiry or as having an impact on any inquiry (Benjamin, 2007). There was a reliance then on the concepts of aloofness framed in the ideas of objectivity. By the late 1800s in the United States, the push of pragmatism had solidified the usefulness of empiricism as imperialist growth was dependent upon economic expansion, driven by industrialization (Mandler, 2007). These views were solidified with greater work and expansion in the trust of mathematics, namely probability and statistics (Poincaré, 1908).

The depth at which these concepts are rooted becomes evident as we look at modern interpretations of scientific discovery, equating science still to laboratory work and consistent observable phenomena that require only one explanation which is constant across time through the promulgation of aptly named scientific methods (Searle, 1984). The positivist approach shapes the mode of inquiry that removes context for falsifiability of inane components of thought. Thus we extend science only by our ability to create a falsifiable hypothesis, collect data which then is applied for the purpose of falsifying the concept, and then either doing so or developing a body of evidence to the contrary (Carlson, 1994; Kolakowski, 1968; McCarthy, 1978; Suppe, 1972) and reporting this in the same fashion only among others utilizing the same approaches (Suppe, 1998). Even in modern social science, with rejections of the positivist approach, there remains a taint on the system of inquiry in which the broad strokes of positivism remain strong (Scheurich, 1997a).

The strong reliance on positivist thought formally met the rejections of the Frankfurt School led by the constructions of Horkheimer (Gibson, 1986). For real research to exist though there must be a process of questioning followed by a healthy sense of skepticism. Therefore, as a researcher I must be aware of oppression, poverty, racism and other tools of control and

acknowledge that I am also impacted by these methods of subordination (González, 1998). Thus my story has relevance as I am also situated within the ebb and flow of the relationships I have both in and out of the academy (Duncan, 2005).

Critical Theory

There is no one critical theory, however the evolution of critical theories has often been denoted as having an origin in the Frankfurt School with progression through legal studies and toward a contemporary usage in the forms of post-modern perspectives (Kumasi, 2011; Ladson Billings & Tate, 1995; Ladson Billings, 1998; Ladson Billings, 2014; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Tate, 1997; Yosso, 2005; Yosso, Villalpando, Delgado Bernal, & Solórzano, 2001). This progression has taken the form of multiple critical theories each allowing researchers to view the human phenomena under study with a particular lens.

Critical Theory, in the Frankfurt tradition, stems from the reaction to scientific evaluation. However, it was rational to a fault, excluding the arena of praxis (Noblit, Flores, & Murillo, 2004). The perspective advocated by these thinkers included negating the accepted practices of inquiry which focused on the control and prediction of the human experience (Horkheimer, 1972). This form of inquiry stands on the contest between what was conceivable against the root of explanation – theory. Horkheimer (1972) argues that results will always be the same or a variant thereof. All sciences, therefore, are part and parcel of the same stagnated form of inquiry. Researchers approaching from the perspective of the Frankfurt School then argued that “Social” sciences acquiesced completely and adopted the prosperous methods of the natural sciences. Scientists, then, tethered the discipline to quantifiable outcomes and methods of explanation that separated them from the human aspect of experience – community, solidarity, and culture (Horkheimer, 1972).

Horkheimer (1972) argues instead that knowledge can only be useful within the social contact. Furthermore, positivism, the approach of accepted sciences and the pro forma distinction of academia, is lacking the power of explanation since “experiment has the scientific role of establishing facts in such a way that they fit into theory as currently accepted. The factual material or subject matter is provided from without; science sees to its formulation in clear and comprehensive terms, so that men may be able to use the knowledge as they wish” (Horkheimer, 1972, 196).

Critical theory as proposed by Horkheimer (1972) is a review of science, divorcing itself from a purely mathematical rendition of experience to a valuing of the experiences of the manner (condition) of life and the person. Habermas, a Frankfurt School participant, views positivism itself then as an approach of inquiry which disregards the impact of the condition of experience for the experience itself. It leaves such questions as the human experience for those disciplines which select to study them from the new sciences, empirical themselves as constituted under their philosophy. “This blindness fosters a tendency toward ‘objectivism,’ the belief in a world of self-subsistent facts whose lawlike connections can be grasped descriptively. It conceals the transcendental basis of the world of facts, the generation of meaning from structures of experience and action” (McCarthy, 1978, p.41).

The problem lies in that historically this school of thought is over fraught with the issues of world calamity in the form of the Second World War. It is not until after the war that a new champion carries the standard to combat what is positivism. Positivism sprung forth as a means of validation and protection of the methods of inquiry established, promoted, and utilized by the legitimated inquirers of our academic world (Pizarro, 1998) - “By making a dogma of the sciences’ belief in themselves, positivism assumes the prohibitive function of protecting

scientific inquiry from epistemological self-reflection” (McCarthy, 1978, p.40). As the disciplines of academia branched out to specific elements of the human condition to study, each arose in the shadow of the natural sciences, themselves prolific and established as reputable. Thus the method of inquiry and the paradigm in which it operated was constructed as the measure by which other forms of inquiry would be judged (McCarthy, 1978; Scheurich, 1996).

The canon of scientific inquiry was thus reliant upon a principle of a scientific method (pragmatism and empiricism related to logic), with a goal of prediction and control of the studied phenomena, without a placement of value on the results (objectivity), and is falsifiable in theory (hence the mechanism of testing theory for the sake of evidence to the contrary of new theory formation). Anything in opposition to this approach is “either rejected as unscientific or prescientific or analyzed as a ‘heuristic device,’ which, although useful, belongs in the anteroom of science proper, that is, to the ‘context of discovery,’ not the ‘context of validation’” (McCarthy, 1978, p. 139). However, as debated by Skinner and Chomsky we must recognize that human conditions and behavior are not reducible to variables of study without context (McCarthy, 1978).

Critical Race Theory

The approach of Critical Race Theory (CRT) allows for a deeper more meaningful and necessary theory of exploration of the human condition because the differences which exist in society are more than the effects of class, but also include race. The failure to include race in direct theorizations has led to a reification of racial separation and a perception that existing approaches of thought were adequate – subsequently there was little dialogue in the mainstream on the issue, the status quo was maintained, and minorities were not only marginalized but further subjugated (Bell, 1979; DuBois, 1898; Ladson Billings & Tate, 1995).

CRT is said to have evolved from a particular form of Critical Theory - Critical Legal Theory (CLT) (Ladson Billings, 1998; Yosso, 2005). CRT acknowledges that CLT was first a CT, useful in examining the role of law itself in the development of societal norms and even through doing so with gender and class as components of study it failed to account for race. It is best to remember that CLT was developing in an environment that was critiquing legal studies from a white male dominated neo-Marxian view, which as critical as it may have been, failed to incorporate the variety of perspectives that were experienced by the very people most subjugated by the legal structure (Brown & Jackson, 2013).

This evolution derived from the lack of developmental changes in the systems of social interaction. Delgado and Stefancic (2013) argue that Bells push for change was a factor of not just a lack of change in society, but change that benefited not the marginalized group seeking change, but the majority group already in power. Such is the result in the decision handed down in the famous Brown and Hernandez cases of 1954 - the government promoting change for white political needs (Bell, 1980; Delgado & Stefancic, 2013). Brown and Jackson (2013) indicate that the real conditions of existence led to the critical moment of change in the academic environment that facilitated the new push toward CRT.

CRT has thus come to recognize the following: racism is endemic to our society; remedies are oft undermined before change occurs; objectivity in its various forms is a deflection from the issues important to the dominant society; subjectivity includes the perspective of the oppressed and is therefore needed; and story is essential to capture the minority experience (Delgado Bernal 2002; Duncan, 2005; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Solórzano, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Yosso, 2005). The importance of CRT lays with its critique of

neutrality that was endemic in legal studies, a perception that allowed for the obfuscation of racist tacks in society (Atwood & Lopez, 2014; Brown & Jackson, 2013; Yosso, 2005).

What Brown and Jackson (2013) indicate about CRT is that it brought to light the elements of racism which were perpetuated by the false belief that racism was a function of bad people. This leads the elements of the social structure to declare that a limited group is responsible for racist structures and that all others are therefore innocent of racism and its pernicious depths. The problem of course is that this then legitimates the social order that remains rather than placing blame on the social order and attempting to remedy it (Atwood & Lopez, 2014). This is especially troublesome for those who make it through such a system and replicate it as they continue to replicate the racist outcomes and by doing so continue to suggest that the system is infallible and that a lack of growth is then the individuals fault, not a systemic failure (Brown & Jackson, 2013; Freire, 1970).

My design as doctoral student is conflicted between scholar and researcher. Aspects of both are needed. Knowing all that is done is impossible, knowing what to do is the key (Belcher, 2009). Solórzano (1998) outlines a use of CRT in education focusing on the purview of experiences with microaggressions. Microaggressions are the acts of the dominant power which serve to inculcate minorities of the society with a perception of their stance in the social hierarchy – these acts are pervasive, often with an automaticity that belies blame, and in the aggregate are damaging to the psyche of the minority (Pierce, 1974). Microaggressions which go unchallenged are detrimental to the racial/ethnic discussion in our society allowing for a vision that racism is not endemic but rather aberrant (Atwood & Lopez, 2014). This research focuses on the Chicano experience in obtaining entry to the professoriate, a route of life packed with the need to contend with these experiences.

According to Bell (1979), even though racism is endemic and never ending it is worth the struggle to end it as the result is empowerment of the people (Brown & Jackson, 2013). The concepts of CRT are evolving as more researchers utilize the foundation to further empower their co-learners. One such evolutionary spurt is the question of intersectionality as promoted by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991). As much as CRT recognizes that race is a major factor of concern in society and Feminists recognize that gender is another, often one is explored to the detriment of the other. It is this intersectionality that must be explored to derive better truths of the human condition where more than one classification exists, as in the case of all people (Brown & Jackson, 2013; Delgado Bernal 2002; Yosso, 2005).

Thus there is the need for theory to consider not just race as in CRT, but also the multiple perspectives that are experienced by multi-marginalized populations (Brown & Jackson, 2013; Delgado Bernal 2002). Exploration through CRT provides the impetus for discovery of the role of educational institutions in the maintenance of power differentials between minority peoples and those of the power elite (Solórzano, 1998). This valued theoretical approach must also be recognized as an applied approach to understanding that seeks not just a greater truth, not a more accurate truth, not even a more complete truth, but rather a more honest truth (Atwood & Lopez, 2014; Hamera, 2011). As such it rejects the political correctness of accepted scientific inquiry mired in an approach that dictates theoretical growth should be for increased accuracy or methodological improvements – just as the role of CRT is political for the issue at study, so it is for the approach to study and does not seek pardon or sanction for its approach (Atwood & Lopez, 2014). As the means by which world phenomena are experienced and expressed then it also demarcates the impossibility of objectivity and embraces positionality and subjective experience (Atwood & Lopez, 2014). CRT rejects the use of the accepted tools of research such

as validity, reliability, and triangulation for clearer understanding of phenomena rather than as an exemplar of the phenomena (Ellingson, 2011; Richardson, 2000; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005).

LatCrit

LatCrit provides a lens by which researchers focusing on a Chican@ study may then perceive the life experiences as it relates to the impact of immigration, language, and culture which is not of the same experience without this lens (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Delgado & Stefancic, 2013; Nuñez, 2014; Perez Huber, 2009a; Perez Huber, 2009b). LatCrit is complementary to CRT not in competition with the ideals of critical race scholarship (Perez Huber, 2010; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). LatCrit introduced multiple levels of racism based upon a breaking away from the black-white dichotomy of the normalized racial discourse (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001), thus allowing for a focus on the intersectionality of the elements of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Perez Huber, 2009a; Perez Huber, 2009b; Perez Huber & Cueva, 2012). It was the need to define that intersectionality away from the black/white dichotomy, which had become the discursive practice (Collins, 1986; Perez Huber & Cueva, 2012), which allowed for such exploration as Mexicanidad and the role of trenzas - multiple identities in flux and tools used by situation (González, 1998; Gonzalez, 2001). It further includes issues often of concern to not just Chican@s, but to the whole litany of peoples covered by the panethnic title of Latin@ - such as immigration, language, culture, and gender (Alemán, 2009; Delgado Bernal, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

Beyond the affirmation that race is a central tenet to research or that this includes language, culture, ethnicity, or immigration – the result of LatCrit research is its humanizing impact on the participants of the study (Irizarry, 2012; Perez Huber, 2009a; Perez Huber, 2009b). This lens provides not just a means by which to reintroduce personhood to the participants of the

research but also a lens to understand that intersectionality exists as a result of differing impacts of social structure upon the Chican@ communities (Nuñez, 2014). The culminating point is introduced, that colonialism is the crux of a theory of real Chican@ thought (Mirandé, 1987) which was more fully developed as a construct of Indigeneity, rather than as an evolution of critical theory.

TribalCrit/Native Crit/Indigenous Crit

Beyond the binary racial categorizations and including elements of intersectionality Brayboy (2005) argues for a TribalCrit which moves beyond racism and ethnicity toward the objective of the systems of oppression which control all minorities – colonization. Central to the lives and research of Native peoples is the concept of power (Bishop, 2011; Lomawaima, 2000). Thus the mechanism of colonization has not been used just to subjugate but to substantially change the persons under control (Brayboy, 2005). TribalCrit goes beyond the humanizing impact of LatCrit to validate Native ontology, epistemology, and axiology (Brayboy, 2005; Kaomea, 2009; Kitchen, Cherubini, Trudeau, & Hodson, 2010). It is a return to traditional perspectives long ago appropriated/displaced by Western Eurocentric ideologies (Bishop, 2011). This lens connects the researcher with the researched by privileging the relationship that exists between the two rather than the information that is exchanged (Bishop, 2011; Smith, 2012). As the Kaupapa Maori approach indicates – it is about *whakawhanaungatonga* (the process of relating to each other and the world) which gives context to our *raranga korero* (stories) (Bishop, 2011).

Borderlands/Conocimiento

Conocimiento allows “us to theorize healing from microaggressions in a holistic (body, mind, and spirit) way through a process of critical reflection that emphasizes social adequacy and well

being” (Perez Huber & Cueva, 2012), it is about healing spirituality and privileging the sacred reality of life as a cyclical process rather than linear (Calderón, Delgado Bernal, Pérez Huber, Malagón, & Vélez, 2012). Conocimiento (critical awakening) is a part of developing the critical consciousness, conscientización (conscientização) (Perez Huber & Cueva, 2012) and as process, it is never final or complete but enters new iterations (Ohmer, 2010).

Ethnography

An ethnographic approach is most useful when attempting to determine the role of culture on a phenomena, specifically in the case of a marginalized population in a cultural system such as education for “it is all too easy to slip into a ‘blame the victim’ interpretation if one emphasizes the individual learner and not the context and circumstances of learning” (Spindler & Spindler, 1997b). According to Geertz (1973), ethnography is more than a methodology; in doing the data collection one is positioned to do an ethnographic study. What one is attempting to do is to explain the various meanings of behavior within the context of their occurrence to someone who is not of the context through the use of thick description (Geertz, 1973). This means that behavior is described in as complete a form as is possible so that various interpretations of the phenomena become known (Geertz, 1973; Mauss, 1967/2007).

The purpose of the research is to learn. The researcher, then the data collection tool, is tasked with the role of learning which requires active engagement with the phenomena under study (Agar, 1986; Geertz, 1973). That phenomena, as Spindler and Spindler (1997a) like to address it, is “the dialogue of action and interaction” (51). The system of education is the institution developed for the explicit purpose of this dialogue and thus is the place of culture (Spindler & Spindler, 1997b).

The dominant ideology in education has been recapitulated and expanded upon through quantitative research which is framed in the very ideology that systematically reduces the value of language and culture of the peoples of Mexican descent. That ideology is replicated through the systems of education and policies in place to ensure success of students (Bagley & Castro-Salazar, 2010). This obfuscates real understanding of the phenomena. The purpose of the research is not to predict what may occur given an understanding of a particular variable, but rather to understand what has happened given a thorough examination of the outcome and what has led to it (Agar, 1986). Ethnography requires that this be the goal through observation over time, recognizing that the researcher is the instrument and that a holistic perspective is desired (Zaharlick, 1992).

The ethnographer must work to understand the culture under study, but recognize that even with diligence that is unlikely (Spindler & Spindler, 1988). Only a few of those under study are observed clearly enough to understand a phenomena, but again only from that limited perspective of that interaction within the greater culture (Mauss, 1967/2007). Ethnography is more than what occurs through observation. In fact, it is more likely that ethnographic methods include a mix of watching, listening and interviewing, and may even include the use of methods used in quantifiable studies (Forsey, 2010a; Forsey, 2010b; Geertz, 1973; Kimball, 1987). The product is an understanding of the culture, not the method by which data is collected, and requires that the cultural processes in place be examined as part of the collection and interpretation of the data (Spindler & Spindler, 1987; Spindler & Spindler, 1997a).

Critical Ethnography

The purpose of a critical ethnography is not to explain the entire culture, but instead to take a focused approach to a group and the institution that it interacts with, to uncover and

remove the oppressiveness of the power differential created by the dominating culture (Garza, Reyes, & Trueba, 2004; Villenas & Foley, 2011; Trueba, 1999; Villenas, 2012). Critical ethnography developed out of a limitation within ethnography. First, it lacked the ability to be critical, it was devoid of the ideas of critical theory (which itself was seen as lacking a methodology). Second, it was born of the limitations of the colonialist perspective in which it was operating. The push for critical ethnography developed from a discourse on epistemology, ontology, and axiology in which it was argued both that ethnography was atheoretical and critical theory devoid of an empirical unbiased approach (Noblit, Flores, & Murillo, 2004). Furthering the discussion were the concerns of disciplinary existence, critiques of positivism, rejection of quantitative approaches in education as the sole method of study, and the rejection of objectivity (Nichols, 1993; Noblit, Flores, & Murillo, 2004).

Both critical theory and ethnography were construed as forms of hegemonic recapitulation (Hyttén, 2004, Noblit, Flores, & Murillo, 2004) in which the researcher/practitioner utilized the epistemological stance of the majority cultural perspective (Bell, 1980; hooks, 1994; Norbit, 1999). Users of critical ethnography are aware of research as political and with an objective, moving forward to bridge research with praxis (Garza, Reyes, & Trueba, 2004; Hyttén, 2004; LeCompte, 2002). Using critical ethnography then is for the purpose of not just understanding, but transforming (Berta-Avila, 2004; Garza, Reyes, & Trueba, 2004). However, as often implemented, it is from a position of detachment, where the researcher can ascribe blame to external forces, albeit not always the oppressed or marginalized, and remains aloof from the question of one's role in the power differentials or of one's identity itself (Garza, Reyes, & Trueba, 2004).

To then evolve requires that critique continue but that also there is a rejection of objectivity which continued with critical ethnography. The work of post critical ethnographies is to challenge epistemology and to raise questions of power within the researcher, not just the research (Hyttén, 2004; Noblit, Flores, & Murillo, 2004). The post critical ethnography must contend with positionality, reflexivity, objectivity, representation, and critical sufficiency (Hyttén, 2004; Noblit, Flores, & Murillo, 2004). Post critical ethnographies are demanding as a result requiring extensive scholarship of theory and methodology as these researchers place themselves in the discussion and are responsible then for the world through both their interpretation and critique (Noblit, Flores, & Murillo, 2004).

Latino/Chicano/Mojado Ethnography

Temporally, Latino/Chicano Critical Ethnography is placed as a recent epistemological approach. However, as Villenas and Foley (2002) argue, the modern visage of critique has its roots in the ethnographic approaches which were critical of oppression in their inception. Trueba (1999) indicates critical ethnography has its roots in the world of the Indigenous resistance of Francisco Tenamaztle and Fray Cristobal de las Casas. Villenas and Foley (2002) provide historical context to Chicano educational ethnography in George Sanchez' *Forgotten People* and Ernesto Galarza's *Barrio Boy*.

As ethnographers must clearly delineate the lens through which perceptions are obtained, the context of knowledge must be marked by thick description (Geertz, 1973) and the context of understanding by the experiences the researcher brings to the situation. Here we are defined and define la frontera, where the mojado experiences marginality and liminality, seeking out the coyote, the nepantlero, to obtain passage across the border and in to the accepted space (Calderón, Delgado Bernal, Pérez Huber, Malagón, & Vélez, 2012; Hendrix, 2001; Villenas &

Foley, 2002; Murillo, 1996; Murillo, 1997; Murillo, 1999; Murillo 2004). The mojado ethnography addresses the colonization, liminal, positionality, and history (Alvarez, 2013; Norblit, 1999; Urrieta, Murillo, Johnson, & Glesne, 2003; Villenas, 1996). It is through this approach that the ethnographer values and privileges the struggles inherent in ones Indigeneity of which one has been stripped, de-tribalized and taking formerly derogatory terms such as Chican@ and Mojad@ and finding pride in the labels instead (Urrieta, Murillo, Johnson, & Glesne, 2003).

Autoethnography

A method of ethnography in which the researcher researches one's self or culture (Boyd, 2008; Hayano, 1979; Reed-Denahay, 2002), recognizes that the individual influences the ethnography being undertaken (Goldschmidt, 1977), or as was originally penned, the study of the subject by one's self and interpreted by the researcher (Heider, 1975; Reed-Denahay, 2002). Autoethnography has evolved since to mean the study of the autobiographical within the context of the sociocultural and political elements of life utilizing story (Ellis, 2003; Ellis & Bochner, 2006).

Although post-critical ethnographic approaches center on the use of critique the most direct critique of self occurs both through and within autoethnographic practices (Boyd; 2008; Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011; Sykes, 2014). Autoethnography is openly addressing the false assumptions of neutrality and objectivity highly associated with scientific or positivistic approaches (Chavez, 2012; Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011; Zinn, 1989). It does so and still retains its authority by rooting interpretations in the extant literature and theoretical expansions (Bochner, 2012; Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011) with analysis at its heart.

Indigenous or native utilization of the autoethnographic approach privileges the experiences of the colonized/marginalized researcher and rejects the normality of subjugative practices (Ayala, 2008; Chavez, 2012; Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011; Richardson, 1995), it is about doing the public good (Ayala, 2008; Gonzalez & Padilla, 2008; Hurtado, Hurtado, & Hurtado, 2008). It thus creates a text that not only allows others to view the inner thoughts of the researcher but it changes the researcher and the readers (Boyd, 2008; Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011; Ellis & Bochner, 2006; Sykes, 2014). Autoethnography privileges los cuentos of the researcher as fertile grounds for the truths which are life and experience such as adversity, marginalization, opposition, and dysfunction (Ayala, 2008; Bochner, 2012; Chavez, 2012; Denzin, 2006; Ellis & Bochner, 2006; Gonzalez & Padilla, 2008; Hurtado, Hurtado, & Hurtado, 2008; Rendon, 1992; Richardson, 1995; Sykes, 2014; Vásquez, 1972).

My Relationship to This Body of Knowledge (How We Co-Relate)

Educators, of various contexts, have utilized approaches which privilege story, plática, yarns, narrative, and dialogue to teach and conduct research (Bochner, 2012). Each of these, taken by researchers of a western conceptualization, sees autoethnographic works (Burkhart, 2004; Doloriert & Sambrook, 2011). These are co-existing archetypes (Styres & Zinga, 2013) in which I too exist, but I further privilege my experiences as a traveler in the journey of my education and career (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2004), elevating this discourse by perceiving it in the light of my Chican@ Indigeneity and valuing story/theory (Bishop, 1999, Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Delgado Bernal, 2001; Hurtado, Hurtado, & Hurtado, 2008; Martin, 2003; Rata, 2012; Smith, 2014; Vásquez, 1972). This approach is what makes this work of value (Pizarro, 2004) as previous works may have viewed the Chican@ from a cultural and political

perspective and still others have been introspective (Guajardo, Guajardo, et al., 2013; Guajardo, Guajardo, Oliver, & Valdez, 2012; Guajardo, Guajardo, Oliver, Valdez, Henderson, & Keawe, 2012; Villenas & Foley, 2011), but there was not an introspective political and cultural view that escapes the confines of traditional approaches or even critical aspects (Strega, 2005; Wilson, 2001). I use the Nepantlera frame because it resonates with my epistemological stance (Anzaldúa, 1999). I come from a Borderlands influence both as a member of a third space marginalized population and as a member of a society in which I was “othered” to the point of fringe existence in every role I encountered from childhood (Smith, 2008). By using my stories and the theories I will problematize the aspects of this educational structure which manifest as elements of the master narrative teaching me an acceptable role for my life in this society and then to make sense of my experiences from the critical, that which led me to a mestizaje Chicana@ perception, the consciousness that I have obtained (McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2000b; Nunpa, 2003; Ormiston, 2010; Pizarro, 2004; Rata, 2012). I use story because it is what I know and a reflection of how I know (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, Delgado Bernal, 2001; Guajardo & Guajardo, 2015; Kovach, 2010; Nunpa, 2003). It privileges not the western textbook perspective of knowledge transference, but instead my spiritual and Indigenous ways of knowing (Harris, 2002; Ormiston, 2010; Pizarro, 2004). By exploring my experience I give meaning to it, I come to an understanding of my experience and that of my students - I learn from my story so that I can teach (Álvarez & Martínez, 2014; Guajardo & Guajardo, 2008; Harris, 2002; Iseke & Brennus, 2011). The master narrative is prescriptive of Chicana@ school patterns as movement across the country and changing schools due to migratory agricultural employment or transitory employment. This dictates our responses in education to the issue we face with student populations we then in academia define as impermanent, enrollees which we claim fail to

complete their education and which results in an inability to obtain higher education credentials (Rata, 2012).

This was the fifth school I'd enrolled in and I was just in second grade. I had been enrolled in this school now for about two weeks. I was zoned for this school as a result of our military quarters. This home was ours for the meantime; it was small and accommodated just the four of us barely. These were temporary quarters supplied by the Air Force while we situated at the base and obtained more permanent housing. Although it was nearly 30 years after the Brown decision, this school was a downtown campus just a few years after desegregation had finally made its way, by additional court orders, to Denver public schools.

I probably wasn't the only transient student enrolled, white flight was rampant, and those of us attending were from downtown low rent districts or the military. It had steel bars over all the windows and doors, cameras at every entrance, double gated entryway for the bus, and more cement and blacktop than any school should be allowed for a playground. I had just left my prison, the school I was attending in downtown Denver. I jumped down from the school bus and headed to the doorway. The bus made its circle and left as the diesel fumes bellowed about in the smoke of the exhaust. Something was different, my father was home. This wasn't so much different as unique in that I remember my father cooking in the small kitchenette that was there. He was using the microwave, our first ever. He had been excited about it the previous weekend, making scrambled eggs and bacon in this machine rather than over a stove. I remember that he was making meatballs, another new recipe.

But it was not the food, nor his presence, that indicated something different. They were dressed not for work or home or cooking or the playground or anything else like that, but for going to the store or supper off base, but dad was cooking. I remember my mother saying that

we needed to have another talk about moving and schools. I didn't want to hear it because I knew – I knew before I started school that I wouldn't stay here. I had been through this already a number of times. But here I was being told that I was going to leave again. I had just started liking this place, and I cried. I remember the sadness of knowing that I was going to another new place. It wasn't fair; nobody asked me if I wanted to go to a new school. We went to the movies that night to see Spielberg's *E.T.* – I still don't care for Drew Barrymore films. I never cried again about a move or a change of schools. I never cared again about an attachment to a physical premise or in maintaining transitory/transient acquaintances, those who were nothing more than companions in physical proximity. In the course of the next few years, I learned about making and keeping friends those to whom relationships were important. Those that would care just as much as I would about what we are doing and what that means.

I often moved, matriculating into 15 schools in 10 different districts, I was migratory because of the military life. It is with friends that I have succeeded in schools and career not because of the efforts of the school system, but in spite of them. It was the community of family, friends, and learners that have led me to this place and so I will examine it to better understand who I am and why I am this way (Absolon & Willett, 2005; Jiménez Estrada, 2005). It is in the safety of relational accounts, friendships and community that I find the means by which to do what I do (Álvarez & Martínez, 2014; Kovach, 2005; Qwul'sih'yah'macht, 2005; Pizarro, 2004).

Education y Educación

An excursion into the history of education for Mexican decent people indicates a series of pervasive discriminatory practices and policies stemming from practices of colonization and bigotry (Blanton, 2000; Blanton, 2003; Blanton, 2012; MacDonald, Botti, & Hoffman Clark,

2007; Mirandé, 1985; San Miguel, 1987; San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). One aspect of this discrimination occurred along the lines of language instruction (Blanton, 2012; San Miguel, 2004; San Miguel, 1987; San Miguel & Valencia, 1998) and testing (Blanton, 2000; Blanton, 2003). This manifested as a deficiency which was exploited for the explicit purpose of segregation (Blanton, 2012; Mirandé, 1985). These practices limited the opportunity to obtain an education that was then further denied to a people in the form of a higher education (Blanton, 2012; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Mirandé, 1985; Pizzaro, 2005; San Miguel & Valencia, 1998; Telles & Ortiz, 2008). Amongst groups of people in the United States, this group has one of the lowest rates of success in the school system (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Garcia, 2001; Mirandé, 1985; Telles & Ortiz, 2008), encouraging positions of labor and subjugation in our society (Pizzaro, 2005). Success in this system is often achieved at the detriment of language and culture leading to self-deprecation (Mirandé, 1985; Pizzaro, 2005; Telles & Ortiz, 2008).

Language and culture have been viewed as elements which prevent a student in the educational structure from obtaining English language mastery and preventing the development of values which lead to school success (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Mirandé, 1985; Pizzaro, 2005). One perspective has addressed this as a deficiency of the child due to race/ethnicity (Mirandé, 1985; Blanton, 2003; Telles & Ortiz, 2008; Valdés, 1996) meaning that educational structures should not be wasted on this group as no amount of work will help them rise above their position. Another perspective focused on the means by which Chican@ students were denied opportunities to succeed, thus addressing language as a deficiency and offering a system of education that focused on providing opportunities for success (Mirandé, 1985; Telles & Ortiz, 2008); these students then have the opportunity to become successful as they adopt the majority perspective (Garcia, 2001; San Miguel, 2004). A newer perspective is one that emphasizes not

just language and culture, but self-awareness and knowledge of the systems of oppression as well as validating family and developing an educational structure that is liberating (Mirandé, 1985; Valdés, 1996). This focuses on the process of conscientización (Mirandé, 1985).

The construct of education has a focus in a Eurocentric perspective which is structurally designed on the texts of knowledge, or the manner of learning that is designed on books (Villenas & Deyle, 1999). Becoming “an educated fool” though is the outcome when the acquisition of knowledge is the goal - when reflecting a soul and developing insight are neglected (Hendrix, 2011). The concept of educación encompasses much more than a testable component of knowledge, but how to apply that in a humane fashion with care and respect of the family and community (Reese, Balzano, Gallimore, & Goldenberg, 1995; Rendon, 1994; Rendon, 2011; Valenzuela, 1999b; Villenas & Deyle, 1999). In short, it is about veneration for humanity (Brown, 2008). Oft reflected by elderly family towards youth, the term niño educado refers to cordiality and graciousness, more importantly thought of as trustworthiness and duty (Halgunseth, Ispa, and Rudy, 2006). Educación cannot be obtained in the form of a formal education but comes from the home (Rendon, 1992; Valenzuela, 1999b) through experience (Gonzalez, 2001). In the Chican@ Epistemological frame of existence, these are superior to academic prowess (Halgunseth, Ispa and Rudy, 2006; Reese, Balzano, Gallimore, & Goldenberg, 1995).

From this perspective, students have a need to be cared about, and for, before there is the ability to learn (Brown, 2008; Reese, Balzano, Gallimore, & Goldenberg, 1995; Rendon, 1994; Rendon, 2011; Valenzuela, 1999a; Valenzuela, 1999b, Valenzuela, 2005). Hence, the connection that exists between parents, their children, origins of learning and respect for ways of knowing that reflect a home based cultural approach (Rendon, 1994; Rendon, 2011; Villenas &

Deyle, 1999). Furthermore, educación emphasizes not just success, but what is a good life instead (Brown, 2008; Reese, Balzano, Gallimore, & Goldenberg, 1995; Villenas & Deyle, 1999).

Elements that shape the impact of educación include familismo y respeto (Reese, Balzano, Gallimore, & Goldenberg, 1995; Woolley, Kol, & Bowen, 2008; Valdés, 1996; Zentella, 2005). Being inculcated with family values and notions of responsibility, to previous generations and older siblings, creates the foundation upon which the humanity of the individual is shaped - with a caring heart for others around the individual (Reese, Balzano, Gallimore, & Goldenberg, 1995; Valdés, 1996). It is in caring that respeto develops (Valdés, 1996). That carries over to the realm of education further bridging the concept with educación (Woolley, Kol, & Bowen, 2008; Rendon, 2009; Valdés, 1996; Zentella, 2005).

El Lenguaje Pocho

Spanish, English, or any other language is used by those who wish to communicate. It is however a means by which to identify ones position in society and of what culture it is that one belongs (Escamilla, 2003; Zentella, 1995). The use of language to define in or out group status is common, but normally attributed to value or worth of it is detrimental to people (Zentella, 1995). It is in hiding origin, to avoid stigmatization, that in group status is had at the more general level, adding to the pan ethnic Latin@ through a use of English that may be dialectical, but is not identified as incorrecto o malo (Zentella, 1995).

It is in “doing being bilingual” that pocho is not an epithet, but a reality of the variety of mixes that occur in language use and languages used - one and the same as “doing being” Chican@ (Zentella, 1995). Bilingual does not have to be two monolingual approaches nor does it have to be an even split in ability (Alvarez, 2013; Alvarez Martinez, 2006; Escamilla, 2003),

the lack of understanding leads to a continuation of the myth that varieties of Spanish/English are bad and forces an adoption of English only (Zentella, 1995). Being pocho is not an end in itself, but the journey of being out of the focus on monolingualism, be it Spanish or English (Escamilla, 2003).

The rate of Spanish language loss among Latin@s is outpacing that of any other historical group of immigrants (Escamilla, 2003; Zentella, 1995) as English is the preferred language of youth (Zentella, 2005). There is a dedicated attempt to remove the Spanish language capacity from our people, through schools, media, and society (Escamilla, 2003; Zentella, 1995). The manner in which communication occurs is not good or bad, but the means of communication does express and convey a sense of rootedness in a culture – language can be learned by a machine, but a person uses language to convey meaning (Zentella, 2005). Thus there are really not just two languages in play for the pocho, both English and Spanish are two formal and contrived languages that mix at variable rates and have meanings that produce or borrow from each other in such a way that a third language on a continuum between the two exists (Zentella, 2005).

To understand language there is a commitment to see literacy as well as oral communication. The literacy of the pocho exists outside the concept of books and paper, but towards everyday literacies of life and experience, games, work, media, and spirituality (Flores & Yudice, 1990; Zentella, 2005). It is through *confianza*, trust, in the educational structure that value is added to the linguistic capabilities of the minority. Otherwise what occurs is an implicit message that the formal view of language is the only acceptable means of communication and a failure to do so then suggests that the minorities language is of no value (Flores & Yudice, 1990; Zentella, 2005).

16 de septiembre...
what does it mean to me?
16 de septiembre...
means peace and liberty.
16 de septiembre...
how lucky can I be?
16 de septiembre...
America and me.

– Little Joe, 1991

CHAPTER III

CHICANO/POCHO STYLISMS: TOWARD A METHODOLOGY

Ni tlakatl tlen nochi ueli
uan nochi kimati
axkemaj asikii
Pampa tonaya itskok
tonaya nemi;
penaya tla chia,
nojia kochtok

Ese hombre que todo lo puede
y que todo lo sabe,
nunca llegará;
porque vive en nosotros
se encuentra en nosotros, camina con
nosotros,
empieza a querer despertar,
aún duerme

Natalio Hernández, n.d.

I am theory – I am the word - I am Chicano. I am the process and product of research. Within the social sciences and education, traditional qualitative monographs, in the form of dissertations, are often established in positivistic mannerisms which allow for only certain stylistic deviations (Ellingson, 2009). This is a work then that uses an exclusionary language often with the design for but without regard of the marginalized populations as it is written from a white male perspective (hooks, 1990); values processes of data collection (Creswell, 2003); and focuses on the outcomes and implications of the work (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The opposite perspective defined as the work of the arts is exploration in the human condition framed

within the application of poetry, drama, and story (Ellingson, 2009). Autoethnographies attempt to disrupt this dichotomous approach to explanatory narrative, redefining the positions of researcher in research and art and science as perspectives of the human condition (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011).

This body of work is designed within the tradition of the quintessential anti-dissertation; in some regards what a dissertation should be. This monograph is a prototypical discourse through which the dialog of mi historia and the context in which it is studied continues. I use the framework of a typical dissertation, for the purpose of sufficing the requirements of reporting an academic investigation (Suppe, 1998), but using my own approach I engage and encourage a dialog that stems from my Chicano/Pocho epistemology (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Gonzalez & Portillos, 2012; Oliva, 2000; Pizarro, 1998; Pizarro, 2005) and promotes going deeper and allowing me to write not just of what I have learned. This is writing about what I know (Bochner, 2012; Rivera, 1975). I use this tool to reject this tool. It is not clear from the western hegemonic perspective, as any existence in the Nèpantla state, it is messy and full of subjectivities (Calderón, Delgado Bernal, Pérez Huber, Malagón, & Vélez, 2012). From the nonwestern perspective though it has lucidity. I am a researcher mired in the context of the hegemonic practices; however, I am a Chicano/Pocho writer and as such I experience and explicate what that is in my genre of life. I use my clarity in this to take a stand (Bartolome, 1994; Mthethwa-Sommers, 2014). I can do this because I am just as valuable and worthy as any other person. I do this because I need to shape my environment to recognize my humanity (Collins, 1986; Freire, 1970; Hendrix, 2011). I must do this because I serve as an emancipatory tool para mis colegas, para mi familia, y para mi comunidad (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Gonzalez, 1967; Hendrix, 2001).

I am the researcher and the researched of this project (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, & Carmona, 2012; Mirandé, 1982). Alone this is sufficient in certain epistemological stances to reject any further exploration (Morawski, 1997); however, through my Chicano Indigeneity, my mestizaje existence, my epistemology, I am engendered to critically reflect on who I am, my family and my community to emancipate my peoples and understand the hegemonic practices that have been framed (Amado, 2012; Anzaldúa, 1999; Delgado Bernal, 1998; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 1999; Kincheloe, 2001; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2000a; Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2011; Oliva, 2000; Pizarro, 1998; Pizzaro, 2005; Rendon, 2009; Smith, 1999) within the constraining ontological and axiological Eurocentric perspectives (Romero, Arce, & Cammarota, 2009). The issue in any research is to determine the problem to be researched and then to divine which process is best suited to study that problem (Creswell, 2003; Fish, 2000); to do otherwise is to revere the methodology and to ignore the issue to be studied or the context in which it is being studied (Brookover, 1986; Ellingson, 2009; Kincheloe, 2001; Miller, 2000; Pollio, Henley, and Thompson, 1997; Porsanger, 2004; Rist, 1980), methodolatry is that tack which is often utilized in western dominated thought reflecting colonialism and domination (Daly, 1973; Delgado, 1984; Kincheloe, 2001; Lather, 1992; Louis, 2007; Moss, Phillips, Erickson, Floden, Lather, & Schneider, 2009). Such an erroneous approach may at best be innocuous if by chance a valuable study still occurs, but can be ludicrous probably more often (Nichols, 1993). Often, as in the case of qualitative research, “no one methodology is ever necessary or sufficient” (Besag, 1986, p. 8). Furthermore, it is also true that the methodology is both a derivative and an amalgamation of the discipline and context in which one is researching (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011; Sergiovanni, 1987). Therefore to best address the issue being studied, this research approaches inquiry with the intent of a bricoleur, or from my Chicano

epistemology - a molcajete approach (Hendrix, 2001; Kincheloe, 2001; Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2011; Márez, 1996; Paredes, 1993; Solórzano, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Scheurich, 1997a; Levi-Strauss, 1966). I will use methodology which combines and blends aspects while utilizing methods of data collection which fit within a path of discovery for marginalized groups (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, & Carmona, 2012; Smith, 1999).

In conducting research with a marginalized group, for the sake of not just reporting, but empowering, the researcher must become aware of the self and the role of that in the interpretation and development of the knowledge that comes from the research (Carspecken & Cordiero, 1995; Chávez, 2012; Pizarro, 1998; Smith, 1999). Therefore a modern methodology will be utilized, capitalizing on the LatCrit and TribalCrit theoretical perspective in which the actions of testimonio, plática, y cuento (Pérez Huber, 2009a; Pérez Huber, 2009b; Pérez Huber, 2010) are privileged. Data collection and analysis will be simultaneous (Pérez Huber, 2009a, Pérez Huber, 2009b).

Research Design

This research is founded on: the axiological belief that research itself should seek to not just identify what exists in the nature of the phenomenon under study, but to seek to improve the context in which the data is collected, to remove barriers that exist, and to seek justice; an ontological stance that these barriers are the result of power differentials due to location (Borsa, 1990; Fine, 1994), ethnicity and immigration status; and an epistemological perspective that knowledge acquisition will lead to liberation and voice production (Yosso, Villapando, Bernal, & Solorzano, 2001; Zavala, 2013). As such, this research is based in a qualitative approach; it comes specifically from a critical perspective (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011) founded in Critical Race Theory (CRT) which has been accepted among scholars as a means to contest the

legitimacy of Eurocentricity in research (Perez Huber, 2009b). More specifically it is from a postcritical Latina/o Critical Theory (LatCrit) perspective, chosen as the basis for exploration over the general theoretical stance of CRT because of its focus on issues of importance in a Latin@ pan-ethnic stance (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Diaz McConnell & Delgado-Romero, 2004; Perez Huber, 2009a). LatCrit will be used because it allows for my axiological, ontological, and epistemological experiences to be explored through multiple perspectives (Moss, Phillips, Erickson, Floden, Lather, & Schneider, 2009; Perez Huber, 2010). However, the Chicano population is a subgroup of the greater recognized Latino or Hispanic group and is thus subject to a variety of experiences to which other Latinos or Hispanics may never relate, to include amongst some claims to Indigeneity (Diaz McConnell & Delgado-Romero, 2004; Romero, Arce, & Cammarota, 2009; Zavala, 2013). This research is therefore further couched in aspects of TribalCrit (Brayboy, 2005) from which aspects of colonialism and Indigeneity may be explored (Smith, 1999). Chican@s, the people of and from the borderlands, are neither of nor accepted by either majority culture in which Hispanics and Latin@s exist, hence the introduction of borderland and Pocho ideology as the means by which to focus these two lenses (Anzaldúa, 1999; Beltran, 2004; Chavarria, 2012; Ohmer, 2010).

In response to the methodological design, this research seeks information that is drawn well to ethnography, more specifically a critical ethnography, because of its use to address hegemonic structures while promoting advocacy for the marginalized group (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Creswell, 2007). However, the nature of the study is to value the experience of the participant through the story of the participant – this commonly would be a narrative approach (Creswell, 2007). This research can be neither though, as the ethnography requires one to learn of the group through a detailed involvement in the life of the culture one wishes to understand

demanding time and situations which cannot be captured in this research (Creswell, 2007). A narrative commonly would require an in-depth analysis of a very limited number of participants, perhaps two (Creswell, 2007) a scenario which is too limiting to the information which is sought here which is *mi historia, el cuento de mi vida* (Chase, 2011).

However, there is an amalgamation that is situated well for this study; this methodology is autoethnographic testimonio (Perez Huber, 2009a; Smith, 1999). In itself, the process of providing ones testimonio indicates the usefulness of this method beyond that of narrative or ethnography (Perez Huber, 2009a). Utilizing both story and ethnography for the purposes of exploring culture is the usual purview of autoethnographic study (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). The autoethnography uses the tools of ethnography to provide the telling of a story that categorizes itself in the tradition of Geertz' (1973) "thick description" while becoming accessible to a greater audience than that of the traditional researcher (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner, 2011). The effective result is to avoid universalizing the experiences of the one as a representation of the culture while explaining the means by which the culture influences and shapes (Rosiek, 2013). There is however, not just one type of autoethnographic work, each type being the design best according structure to the type of work being performed (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner, 2011).

Just as with more traditional ethnographic explorations there are major genres of approach - indigenous/nativist, narrative, reflexive, layered, community, co-constructed, and personal (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner, 2011). Each of these though is framed within the master narrative and although perceived as stretching the accepted boundaries of research, they do so by stretching the boundaries of the accepted and not by creating for those which are not accepted (Kovach, 2010). "Traditional research epistemologies reflect and reinforce the social history of the dominant race, which has negative results for people of color in general and students and

scholars of color in particular” (Delgado Bernal, 1998, 563). The testimonio shares the story for the sake of transformation and empowerment (Alarcon, Cruz, Jackson, Prieto, Rodriguez-Arroyo, 2011; Rosiek, 2013).

Unlike narrative which allows the researcher to remain aloof from the situation, the testimonio draws the researcher and participant together (Alarcon, Cruz, Jackson, Prieto, Rodriguez-Arroyo, 2011; Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, & Carmona, 2012; Perez Huber, 2010). Testimonios, based on the narrative, extends beyond the life history to the perspective of the participant and to an educating of the researcher and reader (Randall, 1992; Delgado Bernal, 2002). Testimonio is also the means by which the participant is empowered and change occurs; through awareness of self in the environment and the voice to articulate that awareness the participant changes the environment (Alarcon, Cruz, Jackson, Prieto, Rodriguez-Arroyo, 2011; Benmayor, 2012; Trueba, 1999). This autoethnography utilizing testimonio focuses not just on testimonio as methodology, but also as method of data collection. A focus on this allows another level of exploration, examination, and exhibition around the issue of power, its distribution, and its shifting nature (Gatson, 2011). This is a very personal type of research as it allows for exploration as well as change, doing so as I write specifically about my academic, research and personal perspectives (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011) and I do so while establishing my credibility as a researcher, as a dissertation student does (Hendrix, 2001). Thus to make my readers secure, this is an academic venture and not my story for the sake of just rhetoric as you may scrutinize this work as any academic text noting that this is framed within the scholarly literature and with a critical analysis, the intent to build a “competent case” (Moss, Phillips, Erickson, Floden, Lather, & Schneider, 2009).

You see here that I provide “an inordinate amount of justification and documentation” for my study (Hendrix, 2001, 568). I do so, documenting my work with citations to a level I have not seen in many of my colleagues work or from other autoethnographies for two reasons - the approach is still questioned in research circles and I, a Chicano, must validate for those of my field why a minority studying minorities has cause to do so and that what I write is substantiated by the literature (Hendrix, 2001). My experience tells me that there is a certain prejudice against my research methods, an extension of an institutionalized epistemological racism which will question my approach to this study because I am a scholar of color challenging and berating the status quo rather than assimilating and appropriating the dominant hegemonic structures – for this I couch my work in such documentation (Hendrix, 2001; Scheurich & Young, 1997; Smith, 1999). Such racism and obstacles in the institution are endemic as academic colonialism (de la Luz Reyes & Halcon, 1988; Dardar & Torres, 2014; Smith, 1999), hidden in the language and mindset of the accepted means of research (Fish, 2000) and replicated ad infinitum by the mechanisms and structures of education (Sergiovanni, 1987; Sergiovanni, 1994).

Guiding Questions

I am facing a conundrum now, albeit a small one. I have thus far to this point implicated the academic world in the maintenance of Eurocentric hegemony and marginalization of Indigeneity. From this perspective, the purpose of a research approach is for prediction and control. However, from my perspective, it is about understanding. From this position I initially thought of a story which gives an explanation in metaphor. It's that a person must read and interpret the stories for their own gratification and that not finding the meaning is a result of not yet being ready to receive the message in the story. As a story teller, I should not also give interpretation. Just as I would not chew a fruit and then give it those who are going to eat I

should not tell you how to interpret what you are going to hear and then deliver the story to you (Kurtz & Ketcham, 1992; White, 1982; de Mello, 1982). I am to acquiesce to a degree though out of respect for the relationship that we have, you the “listener” (even if an active and developing one) and me, the storyteller.

A good story teller will structure in a path for a listener so that the foundation is laid for the message to be received. So I'm also from this perspective to respect that to be a good researcher is also to be a good teacher. Vygotsky and Freire come to mind and I must structure for those that are not yet fully ready so as to expand on the Zone of Proximal Development and make them ready; I must give rules and outline so as to respect my readers as subjects in the world effectively changing it along with me rather than as objects upon which I am acting. I think I've gotten to the point in this dissertation process where I can safely withdraw from a militant stance of rejecting the western entrenched ideologies which are so evident in the process and product of education to a respective and reflective position of bridge builder among ideologies to avoid a new paradigm of hegemony and elitism.

A colleague of mine (a friend, a fellow student, and a guide on this path) has helped me to reflect - he placed my thoughts in a succinct form

You can't assume that readers don't understand your message because they aren't ready for it. I know that you are writing from an antithesis point, but think about and choose the normed points you are willing to concede in the process. A great story teller doesn't tell you the point or message of the story, but does provide clues to help you understand it. Just think about what form those clues will take (E. Cantu, personal communication, June 30, 2015).

So it is with the spirit of collegiality and growth, sharing and development that I provide this short footpath, from which my guiding questions are developed for the purpose of understanding (not prediction). I provide it not so that you follow my footsteps and have my

experience, but so that you may monitor my travel. I therefore have the following: this research is Indigenous and is crafted with the concepts of community, relationships, and reciprocity; it is within the concepts of Chicanismo (Chicano Coordinating Council on Higher Education, 1969; National Chicano Youth Liberation Conference, 1969), Familismo (Mirandé, 1977; Mirandé, 1980) and Compadrazgo; it is about re-claiming Indigeneity, non-traditional for western concepts, very traditional for us. Re-defining what is research - doing re-search (Absolon, 2012; Absolon & Willett, 2005; Martin, 2003).

Being an educator of color, a minority in the sense of culture and being of the borderlands, I am also a minority in the dominating hegemonic structures of academia. Most marginalized populations that compose the majority of students even in Hispanic Serving Institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, or Tribal Colleges and Universities, are served still by minority faculty that are impacted by the dominating structures (Santamaría, 2013). This is a problem for minority populations who are developing their identities in a structure that reflects not their own position, but that of the colonizer. This research is about understanding my identity as a function of educational leadership (Santamaría, 2013). To address the problem the following questions will guide this study:

- What are the sources that shape my views on social justice and educational equity?
- What are the sources that shape my identity?
- What attributes of my identity do I use to shape my educational persona?

Who and Where I Am

I am the product of my past, just like Joaquin “I stand here looking back, and now I see the present” (Gonzalez, 1967). As Chicano, I am the embodiment of my history, culture, assimilation and rejection, taught through oral traditions and the love of family and friends

(Delgado Bernal, 1998; Hendrix, 2001). As a doctoral student conducting research, and university faculty member, I am by definition a member of the hegemonic class of colonizers, and I am by virtue of my position as student and member of the marginalized classes also one impacted by colonizing forces (Brayboy, 2005; Patel, 2014; Villenas, 1996). Failure to disclose and to examine the position one assumes as researcher and researched is a selective action to maintain naïveté about the processes of colonization and the impetus of colonizer at best, at worst it is an attempt to maintain the status quo or even to promote one as colonizer (Ohmer, 2010). I must be clear that I am a Chicano situated in the role of faculty and doctoral student at first the University of Texas Pan American, then The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. I have been a student at UTPA since 1996, first as an undergraduate, then masters, and finally as a doctoral student. I also have been a graduate teaching assistant, a staff member, and a faculty member. I enrolled as a General Studies major through which I focused on Criminal Justice, Political Science, and History as fields of study. This led to my pursuit of a master's degree in Criminal Justice, then one in Counseling and Guidance, and finally one in the area of Educational Administration. I am now here completing my doctoral degree in Educational Leadership. Along the way, I studied at the graduate/doctoral levels in English, Rehabilitation Counseling, Sociology, and Psychology – obtaining over 200 graduate hours.

The university with which I have been associated with for the last 20 years exists as an HSI, in deep south Texas. It originated as a Predominantly White Institution (PWI), developed by the white power class to provide postsecondary instruction to the children of the local elite, deprecating the value of the Chican@ population that matriculated (Cole and Johnson, 2014; Wiley, 2014). I conduct my research here, not as a specific site upon which to gather data that

fulfills a theoretical, policy, or research objective (Angrosino, 2007), but because it is where I exist – the physical manifestation of the spiritual reality, en la Frontera (Anazaldua, 1999).

Gaining Access

An IRB research proposal form was completed for submission to the institutional review board. This document was prepared to be in place at the time that data collection and analysis were performed. It is appropriate to declare that no data collection would occur until IRB approval had been issued. However, the research legitimately is of myself and therefore, as a result, I have impacted myself just through the process of developing the proposal, the research and the researcher are inseparable in every real account, although here specifically that is intentional. Data collection occurred even if formal data analysis had not. IRB approval, however, was not sought as the chair of the IRB decided, appropriately, that this research was not human subjects research and outside of the purview of the committee. I was told to begin my study immediately. With committee acceptance, I began the formal process of this dissertation, data collection and analysis.

Instrumentation

Studies which use the epistemological stances which are common to ethnographic studies or framed in a CRT perspective utilize the researcher as the data collection instrument (Angrosino, 2007; Maggs-Rapport, 2000; Perez Huber, 2009a; Perez Huber, 2009b; Walsh, 2004; Woods, 1986). According to Walsh (2004), as the research instrument, one is responsible for establishing the structure of the research and for the “interpretation of reality and representation” (228). Bias, as it must exist then as a prejudice or presupposition (Gadamer, 1975/2004), resides with the researcher as the tool (LeCompte, 1987). However, the role of the researcher as a tool is not equivalent to stating that there is a bias. Bias already exists as a result

of the relative “homogeneity of characteristics of researchers” (Nichols, 1993, p. 69). Bias is just one form of subjectivity which is not removed by a declaration of objectivity.

I select to embrace my subjectivity (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2004) rather than to dress my work falsely in the veil of objectivity. I cannot suspend my judgment and utilize a Husserlian construct of bracketing or epoché. Husserl, to create a non-positivistic approach to study utilized a mathematical construct to consciously indicate a suspension of judgment through a bracketing of the objective world, valuing objectivity in a different sense (Schmidt, 1959). The purpose of this approach is to remove the researcher from the phenomena under study – to create an impartial bystander who now perceives the lived knowledge of existence as just the phenomena of study (Schmidt, 1959). I cannot use epoché as a theoretical approach to this research as it requires that one, still cognizant of the self and all the “baggage” that comes with that, be separated from the context in which one is studying (although still cognizant that it is the “I” that interprets the phenomena under study). Testimonio requires that the I be the privileged component in which I am embedded in the phenomena and study the characteristics that I bring to the situation as well as the impact of the situation on me (Moustakas, 1994). I am the lived experience and as such cannot suspend the value of who I am. I provide no pretense of objectivity and no desire to attempt to study my experience without acknowledging that this is my knowledge (Burkhart, 2004). This does not preclude the fashion of rigor in my study (Shor & Freire, 1987) as dialogue builds as a result of my interrogation of this experience. Bias is the western ideological conceptualization of the result of relational activities and as such is determined harmful to research, but from my paradigmatic perspective it is not harmful, but beneficial (Kovach, 2010)

I can be interpretive and understand my role in the formation of perception and thereby reduce the happenstance of bias. In this research, sharing a sense of otherness with my potential readership, I will be able to enhance the process rather than to detract from it through “cultural intuition” (Perez Huber, 2010). This raises a concern, such as why to believe what is presented (Freeman, deMarrais, Preissle, Roulston, & St. Pierre, 2007). This determination of belief is often framed as “authenticity, goodness, verisimilitude, adequacy, trustworthiness, plausibility, validity, validation, and credibility” (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

The discussion on whether to believe in what is presented is often framed within methodological frameworks as one of validity rather than verity regarding reality (Angrosino, 2007). The commonly accepted view in scientific investigations is that there are two divisions of validity which must be met – internal and external validity (Eisenhart & Howe, 1992). Internal validity has taken on the greatest prominence though as it was described as the means by which to derive viable inferences from the data (Campbell & Stanley, 1966) which itself was an extension of the process of experimentation and randomization as an essential component of studying phenomena (Fisher, 1935). Both of these are considered as the standard for research, especially those of a quantitative nature (Eisenhart & Howe, 1992) or a scientific exploration (Personal Communication, Ralph Carlson, Spring 2017), yet they are not of a paradigm most applicable to a critical approach. From the perspective taken by scientific researchers, prediction and control are essential, that is the epistemological framework within which this knowledge exists – it is framed as such in an attempt to maintain validity as well, seeking to remove threats (Campbell & Stanley, 1966). Those threats are removed through direct manipulation of the participants, the design, or the factors under study or to control those elements through data analysis (Eisenhart & Howe, 1992).

Validity is often described as trustworthiness in qualitative research (Golafshani, 2003) brought about through the process of inquiry with fidelity (Moss, 2004). Trustworthiness in this regard is highly dependent upon the lens used to conduct the research (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Pollio, Henley, & Thompson, 1997). Trustworthiness has been recognized as a standard by which qualitative research is determined of value to the discipline (Elo, Kääriäinen, Kanste, Pölkki, Utriainen, & Kyngäs, 2014). However, I am theory and my story which is privileged in this research cannot be evaluated by the burden of criteria which stem from a very different theoretical lens and the suppositions which are therefore attached to that paradigm (Moss, 1996; Freeman, deMarrais, Preissle, Roulston, & St. Pierre, 2007; Scheurich, 1996). I do not seek trustworthiness for your interpretation of my results, but instead for the sake of verity to the truth of my experience (Burkhart, 2004; Vazquez, 1972) from the very position in which I view this experience, which is from this particular ventana (López, Guajardo, & Scheurich, 1998).

Here it is ensured by getting to an in-depth exploration of me, my views, and the situations in which those views were constructed and the condition in which those views are now recalled (Eisenhart & Howe, 1992; Freeman, deMarrais, Preissle, Roulston, & St. Pierre, 2007). Thus, as this research is couched within the critical paradigm, it will use researcher reflexivity and collaboration (Creswell & Miller, 2000) to develop a level of trustworthiness. Through the lens of LatCrit and TribalCrit, I must endeavor to be open and uncover the hidden agenda implicit in the “social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic and gender antecedents of the studied situations” (Creswell & Miller, 2000). This is especially important as Chican@s face a complex cultural identity as they relate in two minority worlds in which they are subject to otherness, and this is on one level my experience (Hernandez-Truyol, Harris, & Valdes, 2006).

Researcher reflexivity requires that I be explicit in my description of my biases about the research so that the reader may suspend that value as an interruption on the phenomena under study (Ryan, 2005). Collaboration invites the readers to be co-researchers, allowing them to become active participants in their dialogue with the text which they read (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Simon, 2013).

Although my story cannot be decided upon as worthy research by the outmoded measures of validity (Pizarro, 1998; Atwood & Lopez, 2014) – this, however, does not preclude usage of more applicable methods which utilize the same moniker for a differing construct. Doing such acts does not, however, offer legitimacy to them as the means by which to value this work. I have been engaging in dialogue with other researchers about this topic, an endeavor that has occurred formally since January 2014, at a level of reflective and introspective depth which engenders dialogic validity (Anderson & Herr, 1999; Newton & Burgess, 2008). Engaging in discussions of dialogic validity is akin to the peer review process in academic research. This work is defined by catalytic validity as well, in which the process of reflexión with a trusted colleague/mentor/guide, mi coyote – the Nepantlero - is utilized (Calderón, Delgado Bernal, Pérez Huber, Malagón, & Vélez, 2012; Espino, Vega, Rendón, Ranero, & Muñiz, 2012).

I do caution you though to consider the value of utilizing dialogic or catalytic validity, or any other singular approach as the means by which to question or even proffer value upon my work (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011; Ellingson, 2009; Ellingson, 2011; Scheurich, 1996; Tracy; 2010). The outcome of such an approach provides, rather than ameliorates, the impact of power differentials such that there is a bifurcation of results to good/bad, useful/not, or even appropriate/inappropriate. This is a loathing end to the purpose of this research in itself and would thus not be of value for evaluating the product (Scheurich, 1996). Such an approach

would reestablish the power differential that research couched in this delineated freeing aspect sets out to reject (Ohmer, 2010; Scheurich, 1996). I am the researched and thus through a conventional lens of research would become the dominated who is and replicates the system (Collins, 1986; Freire, 1970; Scheurich, 1996) - autoethnographic testimonio revalidates that the researcher has control over what is in the world (Pérez Huber, 2010). Validity is proposed as useful in the orientation of neophytes to research (Eisenhart & Howe, 1992). It is here that validity is most dangerous as a concept as it does just what I state above, curb behaviors of research toward behaviors of conformity (Tracy, 2010; Vazquez, 1992).

Both tool of data collection and method of establishing the worth of the product, triangulation has been the mainstay for research sincerity (Angrosino, 2007). I reject triangulation. The vaunted process of data/analytical verifiability is not a method of confirmation so much as it is one of validation, better placed, it is a heuristic device, a fact that has been forgotten through its consistent use (Nichols, 1993). Transactional validity, commonly accepted as the means by which to create a sense of credibility for qualitative research, often framed in member checks and triangulation, works on the belief that credibility exists with more data or with data that has been questioned (Cho & Trent, 2006). Transformational validity appears as an attempt to pacify the naysayers of qualitative research in that there is a term being utilized for the purpose of providing some value or worth to the outcomes of this research. This approach places value then on the outcomes which are then again a value placement upon the research (Cho & Trent, 2006).

The whole concept of applying validity in this research is flawed (Eisner, 1983; Eisenhart & Howe, 1992; Moss, 1996; Moss, Phillips, Erickson, Floden, Lather, & Schneider, 2009), regardless of whether one wishes to apply the perspective of transactional or transformational

validities as I seek not to provide control or prediction over the researched, a prime construct of research embedded in the positivistic/postpositivistic paradigms (Cho & Trent, 2006; Scheurich, 1996). The epistemological frame upon which the research is developed impacts the assumptions of not just the type of research that is conducted, but everything from data collection, to analysis, to the value of that analysis (Eisner, 1983; Eisenhart & Howe, 1992; Ellingson, 2011; Lincoln, 2002; Freeman, deMarrais, Preissle, Roulston, & St. Pierre, 2007; Nichols, 1993; Scheurich, 1996). I don't argue that validity exists only for quantitative methods or that alternatives to validity exist for qualitative methods. To do so ignores the fundamental auspices upon which the concept of value and worth is built for the study at hand and creates an additional false dichotomous existence (Howe & Eisenhart, 1990). Instead, I suggest that instead of new languages or adaptations of existing standards that the fundamentals of each standard be considered in the context of the research at hand.

My epistemological stance requires that I question every aspect of what exists in research, not just the approach, but how it is valued – an approach not very often pursued in education (Howe & Eisenhart, 1990). There is less a concern of the scientific for purposes of prediction and control, but rather for *verstehen*, understanding (Burkhart, 2004; Moss, Phillips, Erickson, Floden, Lather, & Schneider, 2009). Standards themselves then are inappropriate as they function as qualifications, instead, suggestions for consideration may be most appropriate for the discussion of merit towards belief (Eisenhart & Howe, 1992).

My search for rigor and value then may be said to be couched in the paradigmatic element of the lens (Cho & Trent, 2006; Scheurich, 1996) which in a postpositivistic light would focus on the approach to crystallization, an enhancement of triangulation (Ellingson, 2009; Ellingson, 2011) in which there are multiple facets to its attainment: thick description;

knowledge produced through more than one perspective; varieties of media; reflexivity; and an avoidance of positivistic frames (Ellingson, 2011).

I cannot accept this though, as the elements of worth are still paradigmatically ensconced in the positivistic perspective which has recently experienced a resurgence (Freeman, deMarrais, Preissle, Roulston, & St. Pierre, 2007; Moss, 1996; Moss, Phillips, Erickson, Floden, Lather, & Schneider, 2009). I must consider who I am and what impacts me in developing a sense of worth to the research (Ammon-Gaberson & Piantanida, 1988; Howe & Eisenhart, 1990). I therefore seek instead an iteration of the bricolage, the product of the molcajete (Hendrix, 2001). In the narrative of light utilized so well by our framing of the research lens and the seeking of truth I offer instead a holistic approach that is more about mosaic building (Ammon-Gaberson & Piantanida, 1988), or from my Chicano/mojado/pocho epistemological frame - *construyendo un mosaico*. Within this perspective, built upon the work of Ellingson and Scheurich, but applied with a LatCrit/ TribalCrit (Burkhart, 2004) approach I suggest that the rough edges of the glass of a Chicano mosaico or the jagged sides of the tile broken and used for this mosaico are better representations of the value and worth of this research. So instead of multiple facets of a crystal I suggest instead the facets of each component which together create the mosaico: a text that is a political narrative, purposeful as well as an illumination of Anglo hegemonic practices and the resistance that exists to that end (Lather, 1986; Richardson, 2000; Saldivar, 1990); multimethodological and culturally relevant data collection methods (*testimonio*, *cuentos*, *pláticas*) which value varied ways of knowing (Richardson, 2000); varied genres of text (story and academic) (Saldivar, 1990); *reflexión* (Espino, Vega, Rendón, Ranero, & Muñiz, 2012); it reflects the pocho/mojado/Chicano epistemologies (Eisenhart & Howe, 1992; Howe & Eisenhart, 1990); it recognizes that there is no separation between verity and what is proper (Burkhart,

2004); it is relational (Burkhart, 2004; Kovach, 2010; Wilson, 2001); and it is not definitive in the sense of creating a perspective of completeness or incompleteness which reverts to the dichotomous issues of control and power over what is and is not valuable or valid research (Burkhart, 2004; Schuerich, 1996).

Thus, value in my research is found in the multiplicity of understandings from not just my view, but from yours (Bishop, 1999; López, Guajardo, & Scheurich, 1998) as it is relational in foundation (Kovach, 2010; Wilson, 2001) and from the shifting of such understanding in reference to a time that does and does not exist from past, present, and to future (Bishop, 2011; Patel, 2014; Scheurich, 1996; Scheurich, 1997a; Shahjahan, in press; Wilson, 2008). The depth of your understanding and mine is framed by the depth to which we wish to view the panoramic of the mosiaco before us (Dewey, 1938). There is no judgment of good/bad only a clearer image of one's interpretation to be seen at various depths of perspective – “the pursuit of truth is accountable to nothing and no one not a part of the pursuit itself” (Kaplan 1964, p. 3). I do not seek **the** truth but explore a reality of truth (Daly, 1973) as it is the “right action [which] determines truth, and not vice versa” (Burkhart, 2004).

Another view of validity refers to external types of validity, where the focus is on the application of findings to other situations (Eisnehart & Howe, 1992). For studies based on an approach that utilizes quantitative measures, often the goal is to have generalizability, a result of randomization (Fisher, 1935) which statistically creates a situation of no difference between the group studied and that of the greater population from which the group was obtained – thereby indicating that any difference found in the research is the result of the intervention or phenomena under study (Campbell & Stanley, 1966). For those studies that are qualitative in nature, the goal in most paradigms is to obtain transferability, a form of validity especially pertinent to education

in some perspectives as any findings for the sake of teaching must be applicable in other teaching situations (Eisnehart & Howe, 1992; Campbell & Stanley, 1966). As in the case of internal validity, there is no case made here for any direct form of transferability. Any findings here are pertinent here, and if you the reader wishes to extend those findings to another situation it is your responsibility to determine if this study meets those needs (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, you are invited to study my experience here and join in your own reflections so that you may understand your own life (Scheurich, 1997a) and learn to become a force acting upon the world, rather than an object to be acted upon such that together, from my story and yours we redefine what is and shall be (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011; Ellis, 2004; Freire 1970; Shahjahan, 2014).

Data Collection Procedures

The testimonio of this autoethnography was provided through the cuentos and pláticas which have been part of my discourse. I utilize my *cuentos* (stories) as a manner of discovering voice (Rodriguez, 2011). The cuento is one manner in which knowledge is passed from one person to another and has been THE manner of knowledge transference for many years in the human history (Chávez, 2012; Olivas, 1990). Cuentos were recounted from my past and written for analysis. Cuentos are used because they serve to undo the dominant discourse. More than narratives it is the story with elements of the history, social, and cultural (Ceglowski, 1997; Delgado, 1989; Olivas, 1990); it is the transformative nature of the cuento that is of value. The power of story for readers of this research is vastly more important than either the story or any other existent component and is steeped in the Chican@ epistemological stance (Duncan, 2005; Paredes, 1969; Pizarro, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2000; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Yosso, Villapando, Bernal, & Solórzano, 2001).

Historically researchers who wished to provide participants voice have used interviews to gather data (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). I don't have deliberate participants from which I will elicit data. However, I do have others with which I engage in life with whom I dialog, with whom I converse, or rather engage in pláticas. La plática does not have to be a rigid or formalized venture; it is also informal, the discussion con mis colegas with whom I learn and teach (Gonzalez & Portillos, 2012). Over the course of the last three years, we have sat in circles in many venues, we have collaborated and shared, been heartbroken and invigorated, shared successes and obstacles, been colleagues and friends – families.

I kept a variety of journals in which I recorded observations of the research, feelings associated with the process, details of the memories I have, perceptions of the shared and differential experiences as minority/marginalized people. This was one more source of data. These sources are supported by other documents such as e-mails, memos and letters, photographs, cards, postcards, visual slides, notes, and questions provided by my colleagues.

Data Analysis Procedures

My stories were recalled and transcribed as text which was reviewed and notes made on that text, became part of the analysis and read and noted upon as well. My understanding stems not just from the telling of stories but the retelling and continued reinterpretation of those stories (Pizarro, 1998). Common themes were explored among the stories to give insight. The qualitative data was analyzed using reflexión, interpretations of the materials gathered. Generally the researcher seeks out to understand a phenomenon by obtaining data that confirms previous understanding or negates it; then confirms this with the participant (Pollio, Henley, & Thompson, 1997; Maggs-Rapport, 2000; Marrs-Butler, Zascavage, Henley, & Schroeder, 2008;

Ovando & Locke, 2011). As I am both researcher and participant, I engaged in the process of reflexión instead (Espino, Vega, Rendón, Ranero, & Muñiz, 2012)

Summary

This chapter outlines the philosophical approach to this study, describes the methodology which was used, and details the methods of data collection which were employed. The approach chosen coincides with the nature of the problem under study; it allows the researcher to approach with ethnicity in mind as well as the process of colonization. Furthermore, it not just describes, but allows for a reframing of the knowledge to a perspective of strength through new language and validation of ones narrative while also providing the catalyst for change in the academy (Scheurich & Young, 1997; Trueba, 1999; Delgado Bernal, 2002; Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Perez Huber and Malagon, 2007; and Rodriguez, 2011).

La raza!
Méjicano!
Español!
Latino!
Chicano!
Or whatever I call myself,
...
I am Joaquín.
The odds are great
But my spirit is strong,
My faith unbreakable,
My blood is pure.
I am Aztec prince and Christian Christ.
I SHALL ENDURE!
I WILL ENDURE!

Corky Gonzalez, 1967

CHAPTER IV

MI HISTORIA, MI FAMILIA, MI TIEMPO, Y MI VIDA

I am theory – I am the word - I am Chicano. “Do you believe in theory?” My advisor was asking me more specifically which theories I gave credence to in the discussion of justice and power. He turned me toward Michel Foucault. As a sociologist, he was steering me toward a broader world than I had yet experienced academically. He encouraged me to look at the Chicano Moratorium, the Chicano Rights movement, and the labeling of criminal on its participants and others in the Civil Rights movements through a phenomenological lens.

I completed my assignment for class but kept digging. It is that digging that led me to question what I had come to believe in many ways but knew was not reality, although a truth. I was led to ask where am I, where should I be, where do I come from, and where am I going... all questions that have relevance to Corky Gonzales (De La Torre & Zúñiga, 2013). I establish my transcultural identity through this work, I am an academic and I am a Chicano, they are not mutually exclusive, and I exist in more than one place and more than one time (De La Torre & Zúñiga, 2013; Ortiz, 1947; Willis & Murphy-Shingematsu, 2008).

I stumbled on the words of Corky Gonzales through this process. I wasn't naïve to the poem but to the message. I had been ignorant though my choice to look at other works and to ignore the poignancy of the message in its method of delivery. But I took the poem and read it, several times. Speaking with my father about Corky I learned more about my father and his work in El Movimiento aquí en el Sur de Tejas. But these words stirred silently in my soul and

my mind for years as an influence and key to my actions. It shapes my thoughts and has led me to a deeper understanding of who I am. More importantly, it gave me the framework from which to write my own poem, developed stylistically in the form of *Yo Soy Joaquin*, this is my homage and tribute to Corky and my own exploration of what it means to be Chicano today, in academia, as a colonized and deculturalized man attempting to be, reclaim, and teach Chicana studies, in an environment that purports to support democracy and freedom but stands as the bastion of neither in the context of life today.

[I]

I am Theory,
absent from our statements of discovery,
trapped in the constraints of
western hegemonic thoughts,
I cogitate and become obfuscated by...
the freedom of research,
No... suppressed by standards,
and destroyed by the graces of these freeing elements, by the desire to be.

Estoy perdido
the map is wrong
the true path has been marked con pedacitos de tortilla,
do my nepatlero guides
take me to my proper place – researcher?
or to the proper place – Researcher?
turning from the path lit by xociety I face Famine
Turned from the path lit by Society and I obtain desolation

I am Antonio Márez y Luna
I question, I am in place, of this place, for this place
To Forgive, to be forgiven, to examine or remain unexamined.
To consider justice or to be its tool? I see and learn to share what I know
I am the Bruja, I scream as the lechuza and draw the coldness in your blood
I am the Curandero to fight this battle, to win your heart and I stand to heal the rest
I leave the shelter of my mother, excited and sad
Standing at the crossroads I seek and give blessings

Soy Guálinto

Mi nombre... delivered in the diminutive,
in the Gringo style

I fight against it, taking the tack of pride in the cultural promises of the Spanish moniker.

Praised for jumping their hoops in the educational structure
remanded to second class status in their other realms.

Pushed to accept Americanization
to become gringo

también soy Joaquin

Progress and pride, Science and faith

peón y Bracero

Deliverer and tyrant

Indígena y mestizo

Present, past, and future

One in the tree of life

¡teoría en la carne!

y Esperanza

I am the urban dweller

I move from house to house

My hips ready, spreading, prepared to hold my child, I walk and practice

'horita, sentado con mi codo restando,

peering through la ventanita

I see not what I have missed becoming

but what I become

I am unashamed as the boy under the house,

I have forgotten the period of time

I have remembered the separation

Who is calling I wonder,

Should I ask why instead?

I drank the water - no one else was there.

I remember so that my history is honored

I remember in reflexión - so I exist

y soy orgulloso que soy Benancio

I am the Bracero en santander

Experiencing burns in the desenraíze por la gloria de los gringos mendigos

In my political evangelism I am isolated by those closest to me - I fight against withdrawal.

Quiero a mi México lindo

Tengo mi amor aquí y no regresas

Pero mis hijos no saben dónde estoy enterrado.

I am that ghost that circles la placita

soy enamorado de mi angie luna,
her breasts – round, supple and large are nourishment and the promise of comfort
mi querida Mexicana
this is not a fiery passion that burns out
it is the love affair of commitment
she prizes my heart and mind – keeps me teetering toward mi Atzlan more than gringolandia
She accepts my pochismos, im not gringo yet - for her I keep true.

and I am adored by Delgadina
I obey the struggle of power and love to know it, but reject it to love her more
I disobey the rules of man for the sake of her freedom from tyranny and abuse
I make others see the degradation and loss
of abuse and subjugation
which we perpetrate on those we claim to cherish most
I bring intersectionality to the narratives creators
to know their privileges as males with a males language.

por los tres marias y por todos los hijos de La Chingada como yo,
estoy aquí
haciendo este trabajo
guided by Sor Juana's pen, weeping the tears of Tonantzin
my dismembered Coyolxauhqui
re-formed by Doña Marina
Lola's value is constrained
by the self-deprecation Richard so happily displays

[II]

I am the
coyote
Beaner
Nepatanlero
Pollito
Vendido
Patron
Mexican-American

Soy
Gloria
Sofia, Minerva, Antonia, María y Richard
Dolores, Gerardo, Alfredo, Octavio y Rudy
Aída, Enrique, Guadalupe, Linda y Tara
Don Américo, Laura, Tomás, Angela y José
Marcos, Daniel, Eduardo, Enrique y Luis
Cherríe

I am the living flesh
subject not object
soy la frontera
pláticas
ontología, epistemología, axiología y la metodología
Indoctrinated, eurocentric viewpoint marginalizes the Indigenous
Chican@ epistemology, I am legitimacy - I am steadfast
I am

when I, the Gachupin controls
I structure institutions and organizations,
I shape interactions between leaders and subordinates,
I dictate the perspective required of the studied and the researcher
When I, tlaxacanqui relate to our people
We complement stability within the perceived disarray of life
through reflexión to recognize and practice the layers of shifting realities
obligated to respecting other beings within our community of relations.

Hispanic, I claim neutrality
I take no political stance on what is learned because one does not exist
What I know is applied to all
I now know what will happen and how to shape it
Native, I claim you, me, us, them, that, all
I take a stance that we are responsible to each other
we make each other Safe - Sharing our speech to move our hearts and Honoring our narratives
with reliability we develop our mind, heart, soul and spirit as one - I privilege our subjectivity

I have been studied and defined in western thought through the eyes of
Descartes, Horkheimer, Habermas, and Bell
The lens I use, still unfocused with earlier influence, improved when ground by
Delgado Bernal, Perez Huber, Solórzano, and Yosso
I know it is now more than the lens,
Brayboy taught me that light moves both ways and shapes my views accordingly
Bishop, Smith, and Wilson promoted a truth, viewed and viewer are looking at each other,
simultaneously sharing roles.

I recognize systems of oppression – colonization
power

I privilege relationship rather than information exchanged

relating to each other and the world gives context to our stories

We seek holistic healing of the body, mind, and spirit

We share a process of critical reflection that emphasizes social adequacy and well being

healing spirituality and privileging the sacred reality of life is a cyclical process rather than linear

our existence is never final or complete but enters new iterations

Geertz told me to use thick description to learn, Spindler

tells me to engage the dialogue of action, to reduce that dialogue to understand the culture

But I am Garza, Reyes, and Trueba, I resist the hegemonic purpose to just understand,

instead designing to cause change

I am Noblit, Flores, and Murillo, I have shared the importance of positionality and reflexivity

I have been resisting since I was Francisco Tenamaztle and Fray Cristobal de las Casas.

I continued to resist as George Sanchez and Ernesto Galarza

I am the mojadito who addresses colonization, liminality, positionality, and history

I resist to privilege story, plática, yarns, narrative, and dialogue to teach and know

My resistance is what makes my work of value

I come from the frontera, a third space marginalized population and “othered”

Mi historia privileges not the western textbook pattern of knowledge transference,

instead my spiritual and indigenous ways of knowing

I privilege my relationship with my parents, for what is important – a good life

family values and responsibility to previous generations and older siblings...

creates the foundation upon which the humanity of the individual is shaped

I am the process and product of research.

I am the word made flesh, the producer of speech by which I now shape the narrative

A resident of the land I was treated as an illegal in gringolandia

Now in the reclaimed Aztlán of my people I reject the white dominant perspective

On the importance of the process of data collection,

de la axiología de mi gente, the perspective of the human condition is most important

It is with this ethical guideline in place that I serve as an emancipatory tool

para mis colegas, para mi familia, y para mi comunidad

ontología

power differentials due to location, ethnicity and immigration status

epistemología

knowledge acquisition leads to liberation and voice production

axiología

seek not to just identify what exists in the nature of study,

improve the context in which the data is collected,

remove barriers that exist, and seek justice

metodología

testimonios draws the researcher and participant together

testimonios, extend beyond the life history to the perspective of the participant

testimonios are an educating of the researcher and reader

testimonios are the means by which the participant is empowered and change occurs;

testimonios decree awareness of self in the environment and voice to express that awareness

testimonios expect the participants to change the environment

testimonios are an academic text framed within scholarly literature and with a critical analysis

I am on a new path,

academic and Indigenous

I must therefore know

I am Don Miguel Ruiz and my questions take me to a new plane of existence

I therefore ask,

What are the sources that shape my views on social justice and educational equity?

What are the sources that shape my identity?

What attributes of my identity do I use to shape my educational persona?

I ask and I answer

Bias - western ideological conceptualization of relational activities deemed harmful

my paradigmatic perspective - beneficial

I dance with my subjectivity rather than to skulk in the darkness of a veil of objectivity.

Epoché? I cannot deny my existence, deny my mind, deny... I?

Testimonio? I am the privileged component, I am the life experience

I am the word and the knowledge and I am the value

Excludes rigor as dialogue?

why believe what is presented?

reality, goodness, likelihood, sufficiency, trustworthiness, believability, and credibility

VALIDITY!!!!

verity in regard to reality

VIALE INFERENCES FROM THE DATA !!!! GENERALIZATIONS DUE TO

EXPERIMENTATION!!!!

These are fundamentals of a different era and means of knowing

So then trustworthiness?

I am theory, I am story, am I not trustworthy? Is my experience not reality?

I am truth, I am the way, I am the message
and I am the storyteller
I am guided and a guide
I am encouraged by the dialogue and the need to understand
Together you and I seek understanding of this
Together you and I corroborate this story
Together you and I trust in the process
Together you and I determine la verdad

Marc, they ask, how can you say this is research?
I tell you seeking justice is
academic integrity.
¿De verdad?
¡Por supuesto!
when we put people first in our minds and actions
La Justicia se existe
It is a political movement!

Triangulation
Three views to see the same concept
We therefore all agree?
Crystallization
Multiple views to see the same concept clearer
More of us agree?
Like the molcajete, we break our contents to create a new product
The process brings together product in a new fashion, better and more complete - holistic

Together we reject the trinity Instead we will venerate in the light
of the stained glass mosaic, como las guadalupanas.
Juntos, construyendo un mosaico much brighter que la Cueva de los Cristales,
Our mosaic springs from our axiology y juntos... we recognize our narrative as truth when
Our pláticas testimonios, y cuentos are political and illuminate hegemony,
When we value varied ways of knowing and both story and academic prose
reflexión in a pocho/mojado/Chicano way of knowing
truth and respect are one and the same, relationships are primary,

we do not exclude others from a similar dialogue that is just as valuable.
to the problems of our people, we pay attention
so that as we study we improve our community
en el Teatro de la Reforma,
our story is presented to the world as we challenge what we think we know about our
relationships with each other. Then, usando corridos, novelas, y cuentos we retell our story in el
teatro campesino, en las escuelas, y también en la casa.
We change the world we see and how we are seen

We don't limit ourselves
to the construct of validity
We enrich ourselves
through the concept of truth
I reject conformity through this tool... the
Purpose of the standard we create exists
Only in the context of our dialogue as
We shape the narrative

Our value, my value... I am of value
Because we understand each
other,
a Truth
exists, and I pursue it righteously
I, product, do not intend to be transferred to other forms of I or you. We though
Are each invited to consider how I and you
Exist as one separate and one together

[III]

I am the colonizer,
I am the minoritized and the prominent
I am the colonized
I am Lisa, Ernesto, Sergio, Olivia, Gonzalo, and Adriana
I am Michelle, Jose, and Dagoberto
I am Don Quixote de la Mancha, Joaquín, y Pancho
I am Jacinto Treviño, Juan de Oñate, and Jose de Escandón
Soy Benito, y también el padrecito Hidalgo

se dijeron a mí, levántate ...
Soy Lázaro, risen from the death
To new life... an academic
Performing duties for which my savior has in store for me
For the sake of being
... A protestor, yes
To the streets and passages with marks of engagement
But just as importantly being the bridges and pathways with my heart and mind and words

at this moment taking new and old and ...
soy Chicano
en mi sangre y con cada aliento de aire que respiro
I know the masa of the north winds and the nixtamal and sulfur of the south
Beguiled by the orange blossoms of the west and sooted with the sugar cane ash from the east
I am in simpler terms,
con o sin safos,
The rascuache academic

We belong here in higher education; we belong in this society just as in any other. Let us reclaim the territory that is ours, our lineage of education and the systems that provide for learning, to exercise our rights to be Indigenous, native, and one community (De La Torre & Zúñiga, 2013). In the spirit of Corky let this be the revolutionary rallying cry por nuestra raza, por nuestra gente to the academe (De La Torre & Zúñiga, 2013; García, 2010; Gunckel, 2016). I write my story and tell my poem for the purpose of placing my adobe brick on the path to Atzlán, while experiencing the vision of El Plan Espiritual, though our epistemological discourse and my pedagogical and political frame of doctoral student (Calvo-Quirós, 2016).

CHAPTER V

CIRCULARITY OF LIFE / EXISTENCE / TIME AND SPACE

I am theory – I am the word - I am Chicano. I had arrived an hour earlier with my father to set the room for my proposal defense. Changing the physical landscape in which we were to meet, to create the environment I needed for this learning experience. I had arranged the chairs in a circle. I had posted each stanza of my poem on the walls around us. I literally wallpapered the room with my voice. Each stanza printed in a large font, each stanza on a poster size sheet of paper, and each stanza placed in a circle of its own – beginning and end touching just as a metaphorical declaration of the very event that was taking place, a *proposal-defense* and reminiscent of the life I was about to describe.

I engaged this group with my voice as it is represented in print, delivered in an auditory fashion as is generally practiced, and regarded as the sum of my being. As I sat quietly, waiting for the first real question of my defense I felt not what I had been told to expect - anxiety, worry, fear, uncertainty, doubt - nonexistent at that time and space. I was instead feeling comfort, certainty, confidence, and elation. I had just spent 20 minutes reading my poem to the committee and audience. At that time there was a concerted effort by all to understand what was occurring. As my eyes glanced upon my group, I witnessed them hinged on my words, following the words on the wall, listening not to my words, but to my message. I was ready to field questions. I proceeded with my expected delivery of a PowerPoint presentation which helped to frame what I had just done. I had just had an opportunity for a 40 minute monologue

and my only concern was that I wanted a dialogue. I stopped speaking, having just asked if there were questions or comments to be made about what I presented.

In a classic pensive style, there was a depth of inhalation, a slow measured breath, followed by an audible expiration that indicated an equally methodical process of thought at work. Silence fell in the space, the depth of which indicated the sincerity of thought occurring – it was a contemplative act of the thinker and also a cue to the audience that from his perspective that they too should be pondering the gravity of the event that was just witnessed.

Then, with a measured tempo to reemphasize the complexity of the question, he spoke. Dr. Francisco Guajardo asked – what happened to you? Autoethnography is both product and process, focused on doing and writing, requiring reflexivity and introspection both, to be a process of evocative thought through the invocation of the developing experience (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). This is a question about my work, about me, about the process, and the product. It is the question which he knows is answered by the poem, and explicated, to a degree, in my work here. It is the question, the only question that has meaning in the context of this dialogue of which we are a part. It is the question about how I make meaning of my life and what I do with that understanding.

What is this path you travel?

This path upon which I travel is known to me, to many of us even if we have not traveled it before (Saks, 1996; Duke & Beck, 1999; Koro-Ljungberg, 2012). It resonates with an energy that calls to us because it is the right way to go (Cole, 2006). To do otherwise is to make the work about the discipline, the dogma, a convenience to the faculty, and not about learning and understanding (Saks, 1996; Koro-Ljungberg, 2012). As I explore my perspective in the work of this dissertation I could not do so in the contrived manner commonly known as the dissertation

because it is now only a dialectic tool for orthodoxy, hegemony, marginalization, and control (Duke & Beck, 1999; Honan & Bright, 2016; Koro-Ljungberg, 2012; Saks, 1996; Krathwohl, 1994; Koro-Ljungberg & Mazzei, 2012; Mazzei, 2010). I therefore select to be my study and to be the word, written, spoken, thought of, and delivered (Cole, 2006; Honan & Bright, 2016) for the dialectical (Saks, 1996; Koro-Ljungberg, 2012).

I endeavor to know and understand and in doing so explore this minor literature, myself (Honan & Bright, 2016), which may not be recognizable to you – but it is to me. Don't judge me for your understanding, but for my own (Duke & Beck, 1999; Saks, 1996; Koro-Ljungberg, 2012). Don't seek multiplicative corroboration because you have been led to believe in the dominance of the common to be the truth and no longer see the deceptively complex in the common truth (Koro-Ljungberg, 2012; Pepper, 1942). Are you convinced that I have found instead structural corroboration (Kilbourn, 1999; Saks, 1996; Pepper, 1942)?

I embrace my duty as marginalized, as scholar, as neophyte to the system of the academe, as led by my Nepantlero guide (Duke & Beck, 1999; Vasquez et al., 2006) to “use the major language of the thesis to express [myself] in full, and in the process to interrupt the expectations of the major, destabilizing terms such as literature review, methods, results and so on” (Honan & Bright, 2016, p. 734). To do otherwise is to validate the typical and ignore the appropriate (Krathwohl, 1994). It is to presume that there is a means of knowledge acquisition which is correct for all knowledge forms, that there is only a beginning to which we pursue our end, which through a point of origin we can avoid the entanglement of becoming. The truth is that to be “done” is not to be done either! It is a place to stop for a moment on the road or path of knowing and learning (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013; Kilbourn, 1999; Bhattacharya, 2015).

The work in which I engage with here is not about being the finished product, the Doctor of Education, but about knowing the process, a doctor of education (Honan & Bright, 2016; Duke & Beck, 1999; Saks, 1996) and not being the next colonized colonizer (Freire, 1970) because I don't allow the text to be a simplification or reduction of my essence but instead to be the explication of complexity which is our dialogue (Koro-Ljungberg, 2012).

The dissertation as a tool is a means of entrance to the club, the disruption of which is akin to destroying one's passport at the port of entry – but I do so anyway because the tool has now become the means of hegemony rather than inclusivity and my work provides the action of entering (Bhattacharya, 2015; Mazzei, 2010). The key for others to also disrupt this border and allow for a greater freedom of entry, crossing, maybe even de-solution (Bhattacharya, 2015; Honan & Bright, 2016).

The path I follow is known in the context of this voyage and may change as the context of the voyage does, be it flood or drought, sun or rain (Honan & Bright, 2016; Cole, 2009; Saks, 1996). To find success in the voyage and not just in the arrival to a destination (Saks, 1996). Now to action (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2002; Guajardo, Guajardo, Janson, & Militello, 2016; Saks, 1996). You are challenged to learn from the stories I tell. I provide a clear description but leave you to interpret because I am an honest scholar and effective artist (Saks, 1996). I work to ensure I do not go through a worthless exercise in the pretense that it prepares one for all outcomes (Duke & Beck, 1999; Koro-Ljungberg, 2012). The field and mechanism of this work perfectly for an outcome that limits success in higher education to a small group. Generally faculty of color are not this group. Along with other marginalized, we are left to fend for ourselves (Perez & Taylor, 2016) because the training pushed upon us in this white heteropatriarchal system of institutionalized racism does not provide for our maneuverability in the academy (Duke & Beck,

1999; Turner, Gonzalez & Wood, 2008). I write the following stories to explain my poem. I write in a fashion that is antithetical to the dissertation expectations of my department, yet completely in line with what a dissertation is (Koro-Ljungberg & Mazzei, 2012; MacLure, 2013). I push against the structure, dismantle it, and reform it in my vision here so that this is not the rehash of the old tried and true, but rather permission to others to move beyond the implementation of the standard in a new perspective, it is a new perspective (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013; Cole, 2006; Mazzei, 2010). My research has been slow in the sense of a traditional clock, but in reality has been intentional and of this perspective. It is as such because it is research of life and takes a lifetime to fulfill; it is real, not automatic, contrived, or inauthentic (Koro-Ljungberg & Mazzei, 2012). The data stands in relation to that life and not apart, it is not a contrived and isolated element to be interpreted sans context; it is the context of my life and is made apparent to me as my life wishes it to be known as an out of field voice (Mazzei, 2010; MacLure, 2013). It is that appetency for the truth of my life that leads to what may be considered leaps and bounds because it is that which is made apparent that is disclosed, it is unpredictable and as raw as life itself (MacLure, 2013). I am to speak here with a voice that privileges the stutter rather than the clearly coherent, to do so is to be on the path of discovery not the replication of the path, which is far easier (Kilbourn, 1999; Mazzei, 2010). To complicate matters, the truth to which I argue is also to be interpreted by you in a variety of forms. The language in any discourse does not contain all the meaning, the interaction of the discourse, our shared plática here, also contains the meaning (MacLure, 2013; Mazzei, 2010). I am creating the map, the map that shows how I am guided on this path by my coyotes but not led on a singular path of riotousness or justice – it is a different path each time for every traveler, though it is considered one destination (Mazzei, 2010).

What happened to you?

The sun was beating down on South Texas all week. Temperatures had been teasing at the 100 mark. This Saturday, August 12, 2005, was a cool day for the week - it was only 91°F. I was in line at the field house, placing my black master's hood and gown on – readying for the procession to obtain my masters in counseling and guidance from the University of Texas Pan American. This was my third graduation ceremony at UTPA, but I was no less excited about this degree than I had been for my bachelors or my first masters. Here I was, about to earn a second graduate degree. I was standing behind Yvonne. She was a degree recipient that day as well, although she had started her first year of doctoral studies in Corpus Christi already. She had returned for the summer graduation ceremony. I remembered her fondly as a student who had conviction in her studies, she was competitive. I was having a casual conversation with her about the course work when she asked about doctoral studies.

I had already considered programs and had ideas. I had searched already for two years different programs. I had considered the program in which she was enrolled but thought it too pedestrian. There were faculty coming here that were from there and didn't want to have that work against me – I had already decided by then that a faculty position at UTPA was my goal. I had already been teaching for the previous two years in the Department of Criminal Justice. I told her that I was interested in the Ed.D. in Higher Education at University of Nebraska – Lincoln. She was stunned, so she said. Why would I want an Ed.D.? She was telling me something that I had just heard from our interim dean that spring. He stood in the doorway of my office and insinuated to me that it was a worthless degree if I wanted to stay in higher education.

I was incensed (Nadal, Mazzula, Rivera, & Fujii-Doe, 2014). My father was starting his enrollment in an Ed.D. program in Educational Leadership at UTPA in less than two weeks. I knew he wasn't wasting his time and obtaining a worthless degree, I was experiencing probably one of the most blatant forms of discrimination we have on university campuses – the Ph.D. / Ed.D. debate. I let it influence me. As enraged as I was I fell prey to the structure of inculcation and dropped the pursuit of admittance to the program at UNL. I couldn't however find a program that I liked.

My father enrolled in his courses and every week we'd discuss what he was learning, who he was in class with, what was happening in his development as an academic. I soon found a longing to enter the same program. I had been dabbling in administration coursework since 2003, in fact, I was already enrolled in the master's program taking courses with some of the same faculty. I wanted my focus to be in Higher Education at this time. I was working at the university in the capacity of a counselor with the title Student Development Specialist, actually at the College of Education. I applied for admission to the next cohort, scheduled to begin in 2007. I didn't even get a letter to attend the assessment center. I was upset, very upset. I wondered about the program, the people admitted – I knew one, had worked with him and in my estimation, I was a better candidate, but he got in, and I didn't.

I wanted to prove my worth; I wanted to find value externally, because I had bought into the system of higher education that was so frequently espoused. The system that I was being told to promote now as a faculty member working in the area of student success dictated that a Ph.D. was the goal, that a degree in the discipline I was teaching was the goal. So I rejected UTPA and the Educational Leadership program and applied immediately to Texas A&M University Commerce for the Ph.D. program in Educational Psychology. I was accepted and offered an

opportunity to begin as soon as I wished. I started the fall semester of 2007, just as I would have had I been accepted to UTPA.

I completely bought into the program, the supremacy of Educational Psychology over those in Curriculum and Instruction programs. The superiority of our means of thought over those in the colleges of education programs who thought they knew how to conduct research. We were being inculcated with the paradigmatic approaches of those most influenced by the positivistic/postpositivistic epistemologies (Hurtado & Cervantez, 2009; Padilla, 1994; Padilla & Olmedo, 2009). I had it in my mind to be the tour de force. I was going to obtain my Ph.D. and get a tenure track position in the psychology department and talk down to the efforts of the college of education forever, just as my faculty guides were doing. I was bringing my new found knowledge to bear in the classroom. I was teaching real applied cognitive psychology to my students, what they needed to know to be successful students in the university. I was deciding what they needed to know and how they needed to study it because I had decided what was of value. I had become a part of that system. I had come to gain a foothold in the land of academia, and to avoid losing it – an irrational fear as there was never anything there that was mine or for me to possess – I had now taken to what Freire (1970) describes as the bane of the oppressed, having accepted the practices of the power mechanism, in the span of a year I had become the oppressor.

I learned a bit of a lesson that summer though. My first summer of attendance at Commerce and I felt like the token Mexican (Nadal, Mazzula, Rivera, & Fujii-Doe, 2014). I began to scheme, I could use others too. I decided that I would apply for the Ed.D. program again and use credits from the Ph.D. program as transfer courses. I applied and was accepted. I entertained the thought now, at two years, to reject the UTPA program and to move on with the

Ph.D.; I was starting to take to heart the untold message that I was receiving, that it was a superior program and process.

Instead, I enrolled in both programs and kept up the efforts to make both work. I dedicated many hours to study and to read. I wrote a lot. I was enrolled in 12 to 15 hours of doctoral work each semester, attending fall, spring, May minimester, both summer sessions, August minimester, and the December minimester as well. I was always in school. I was at the dissertation stage in both programs simultaneously, not by design, but nonetheless there. This was the journey my life had taken and struggle, in fashion, became the path that tempered me in this fire of stress (Anaya, 1972; Cole, 2006; Galarza, 2011; Robinson & Clardy, 2010; and Saldivar, 1990). I decided that I was going to study student success. I began my work at Commerce and still had a sense of what was right – that the previous research had flaws and that there is such a thing as a cultural influence in the measures of student success we care about in higher education. I wanted to study this. The earth would not swallow me, the university might though, I have to fight the tainted blood which may flow as the devil's influence is always present here (Rivera, 1992).

At UTPA I decided to look at the same general concept, but instead approach it through a qualitative study. As I prepared the Ed.D. proposal, I recognized that we needed to ask some more fundamental questions about student success (Castillo, Conoley, Choi-Pearson, Archulek, Phommarath, & Landingham, 2006), such as how students themselves define success. I was set. I was going to perform an ethnographic study and have a series of interviews with students, pláticas, to determine what their thoughts were. I would follow that up with a series of meriendas, to facilitate focus group activities. I figured between the data from interviews, the

focus groups, and a survey that I would satisfy the requirements for a study with triangulation even and have a new foundation upon which to bolster my argument at Commerce.

But I started to recognize something. I had more questions about myself than I did for others as I began to delve into the literature. I recognized then, that I needed a change. I had been meeting with a few colleagues at this point to discuss our dissertations. I was locked into an ethnographic study of students at UTPA. But I was intrigued by their discussions, and although not directly involved in their work I felt the need to dialogue with them about their approach and their data. As I sat one Saturday morning typing my work for the proposal, I recognized, with their help, that I had been going in a wrong direction with my work – I was asking questions that I needed to answer, not my students. I needed to know what I thought success meant, and how I was a successful person. I needed to be introspective. I needed to do autoethnographic work, to do *autohistoria-teoria* (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2002).

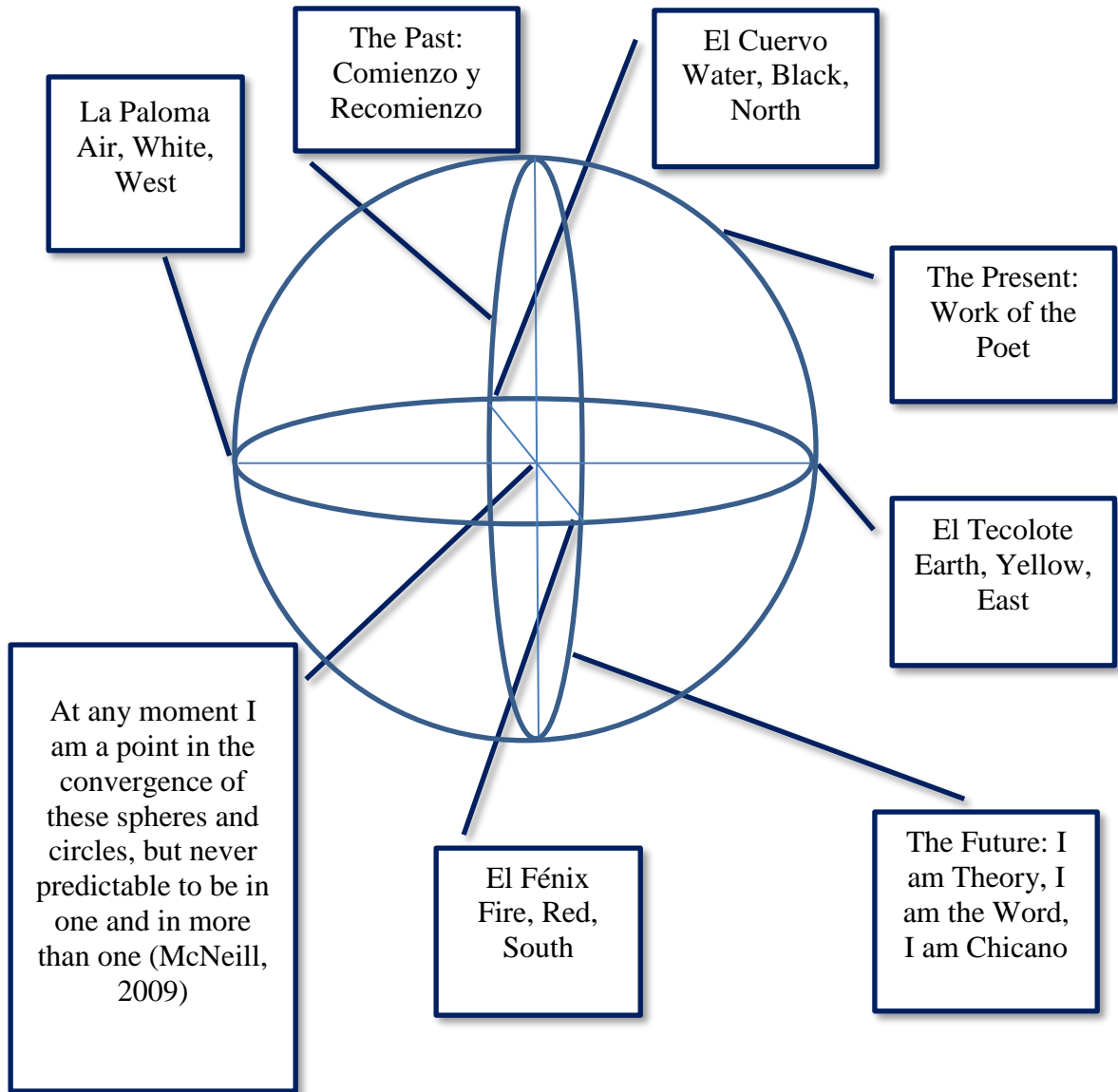
Indigeneity as an Embrace

I see my life not existing in a fashion of steps or stages, yet for the purpose of exploring and explaining this, I use stages or steps to organize this work. Limited in the explanation by the linearity of paper and the written word I am relegated to a position of temporality that requires a past, present, and future. But as I've explained prior, I recognize that I exist in all and that time itself, a concept we embrace, is nonlinear in my understanding of self and existence. I use Indigenous precepts of the living, the colors we perceive and feel, the direction of the nature around us, Chicomexochitl, and elements with which we coexist (Aguilar, 2009; Aragon, 2016; Luna, 2011; Rostas, 1991; and Wilson, 2008). These help me to understand myself as I am within the context of the environment in which I exist influenced by the relationships which I foster and to which I cling (Ryser, 2015).

I see myself in the temporal existence of the past through four birds, each with a color, a direction, and an element (Alfred, 2005). I don't choose to explain myself completely but to explore components of who I am to understand myself and to grow with you (Chilisa, 2012; Guilfoyle, 2008). To know me in a complete sense is not possible, nor is it desirable. To do so is to declare myself complete and I don't wish to be, nor do I suppose that I could ever be. I am therefore in the sense of this work, the raven, the dove, the phoenix, and the owl.

As *El Cuervo*, I explore the darkness of being colonized and becoming gringo, living in Gringolandia, experiencing self-deprecation and loathing, being what the majority powers want of me (Dumbrill & Green, 2008; Cole & O'Riley, 2013). As *La Paloma*, I describe living in neutrality, the acceptance of a power differential, being the colonizer, naïve and ignorant of the damage I do by the acceptance of the powers and structures that exist (Kent, 1984; Ortiz, 1983). Viewed as *El Fénix* I am rebuilding myself, my-self, and others - recognizing that a death is a rebirth, living a new element, starting anew and growing stronger as a result of my recognition of Indigeneity (Nigg, 2016; Tatar, 2008, Thunderhorse, 2003). Through *El Tecolote* I am experiencing the wisdom of life, thriving in the borderlands, being of the border, expanding on life as a process and product, living the new life (Fenelon & LeBeau, 2005; Rýser, 2015). In the period of the present, I am the Work of the Poet. In the temporal period of the future, I am Theory, I am the Word, and I am Chicano. These are the themes of my existence. I am in all time periods and in all manner real and here, and I am a subject of the world, not an object to be acted upon. I provide a graphic to help to see that my view is one of holistic experience (Calderon, 2008; Duarte & Belarde-Lewis, 2015; Forbes, 2001; Henry & Pene, 2001; Keski-Säntti, Lehtonen, Sivonen, & Vuolanto, 2003; Posey, 2002; Rýser, 2015).

Although points exist on this imagery, I am not in one particular point, and I exist across all circular planes in which this sphere may be dissected and in all continuously (Gladstone, 2014; McGregor, 2013). In a neotraditional view I am the point of convergence in the center, but I have to explain that this is a westernized version of life in which each of us is a central component around which the rest of the world is to exist, as in a heliocentric concept of our solar system, being the component that exerts the greatest influence upon the other heavenly bodies. Instead, I am not the central component around which all others spheres revolve; I am instead a point in each of them and interacting and being acted upon in each (Carter, 2016; Gladstone, 2014; McGregor, 2013).



The Past - [I] Comienzo y Recomenzo

Hot! It was June 12th, 2008 in Commerce, Texas. I was enrolled in my first summer of residency at Texas A&M Commerce Psychology Program. Now in my second week of studies for the summer, I had spent the morning in class with Dr. Harvard, the assigned nom de guerre for one particular professor, feeling devastated at the lack of writing skills I believed myself to have. I spent the afternoon with Jennifer feeling as if I had not done justice to my students in UNIV 1301. The winds were blowing and dust was being kicked up as I walked down the hill from Binion Hall to my room across Highway 11 at the Commerce Inn. I stopped at Gee Lake to watch the ducks and squirrels, more specifically it was to clear my mind and take a breath. I felt anger, stress, sadness and alone (Turner, Gonzalez, & Wood, 2008; Vazquez et al., 2006). I was hitting a brick wall it seemed in my proposal, I was attempting to convince a professor that cooperative learning with my students at UTPA was worthy of study because I was convinced that there was a connection between culture and the elements of the cooperative learning strategies that I was taught. I was frustrated; I felt as if I didn't belong. I had not assimilated and was not able to fit into the structure (Gloria & Kurpius, 2001; Ramirez, in press; Vasquez et al., 2006).

I showered, changed and waited for my ride to the party. I was preparing for an evening of soup and beer at the home of the chair of the psychology department. It was his annual event for faculty and doctoral students. I was not aware of the local area yet and so I depended on one of my classmates for a ride. She was a white student who had been accepted on a scholarship and had an RA position in The Wiz Kid's lab, a new Assistant Professor. I was surrounded by white women in the program and found myself in the position of answering questions, from a non-committed position. As we took the 30-minute drive to The Philosopher's house, our chair,

I was giving them what I thought they wanted to hear. I had faithful allegiance to the study of cooperative learning strategies among college students and was considering the study there at Commerce under Jennifer's guidance. I was talking about eventually applying for a position at a research intensive school where I could establish my own lab and hire my own RA's for continuing the research I was going to start here. Research that would be founded on ideas I did not believe in (Gloria & Kurpius, 2001), but that I felt were necessary to survive in this program (Ramirez, in press). It is my experience that I am expected to show deference and gratitude toward the dominant culture (Menchaca, 1989), especially in the halls of the academy.

There were at least ten different soups and many varieties of beer available. In my honor there was Rabo de Buey on the stove and Tecate in the fridge (Nadal, Mazzula, Rivera, & Fujii-Doe, 2014). I drank Bud Light, ate clam chowder and spoke with my faculty and fellow students. I was introduced by The Philosopher as a colleague, faculty at UTPA, who was taking coursework with them in the summer. I spoke with Dr. Harvard and Jennifer of course. But then also with The Whiz Kid and Stephen. I spoke with Melisa. I found myself engaging with the white students and faculty and then realized the three of us, a black woman, an Asian woman, and I were all doing the same (Gonzalez et al., 2001). We walked in our little circles of whites never crossing paths throughout the night. In truth, there was gender parity with faculty, but no Latinx faculty at all (Ramirez, in press). I discussed my new found ideas about conducting a job search for a tenure track position in a research institution and was provided advice about negotiating salary and startup costs for my lab, obtaining release time for service requirements and limiting my obligations to college level and university level committees to just one each and to make sure that I knew the tenure review committee members and actually find a way to include them in my research endeavors. I was being welcomed in their little world (Ramirez, in

press). I was fitting in at last with the faculty and graduate students of this institution, I was feeling a part of the academic environment that earlier that day I had been ready to abandon (Gloria & Kurpius, 2001). It was an intoxicating feeling at first, I was driven to receive more approval and continued through the evening in this fashion. We had taken action to fit in by trying to mix with the majority group. I had exercised a political act (Menchaca, 1989).

I awoke the next day, content that I was in the place to which I belonged. I was sure that I was on my way to a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology and that I was welcomed now to this new level of acceptance. I had... acculturated ...assimilated...been enculturated? What happened? Had I sold out? VENDIDO! Honest Sancho (Valdez, 1990)? Facing Dr. Harvard, I spoke of my newly invigorated stance on cooperative learning as shaped by the works of Edythe Holybec and her brothers, Johnson and Johnson. Just as I had the night before I was welcomed with a new level of appreciation. My classmates too changed their perspective when I moved my ideas away from culture and accepted their stance of objectivity and statistical controls of error to be in place with design controls for error. I had made a change in which I was accepting their stance wholeheartedly and they were accepting me (Vasquez et al., 2006).

Acculturation... No! I had assimilated, and the intoxication of the feeling of belonging was now washing out of me like a poison that had inebriated me. With the hangover of reality and the sickness of truth I prepared for the rest of my day. I met the challenges ahead of me and dealt with the rest of the day and the discussions. Centered on this idea of collaborative learning in the realm of higher education I focused on the dialogue of the day and ignored the emotions within me (Perez & Taylor, 2016). I had ignored who I was, I had rejected my values and purpose (Ramirez, in press). The day ended, and once more I made my way to my hotel room. I showered, changed clothes and walked to the Walmart. I heard Spanish being spoken, guilt

racked my mind and heart. There was a father and son speaking to each other. I bought a can of Campbell's mushroom soup and a Coke. This was the closest thing to comfort food available to me without a kitchen, with only a spoon and can opener. It reminded me of my father, sitting together in my childhood and eating out of a can on one of a myriad number of trips in which expediency, and finances, dictated the meal – but always a bonding experience.

I called my father. I needed his voice, his guidance, his strength. My father is my stable rock – he provides me with a position within my culture (Gomez et al., 2001; Perez & Taylor, 2016). We spoke, simple platitudes on my part gave him a clue. I had called just a few days previously to wish my mother a happy birthday and spoken with both then. It was not my usual act to have more than a weekly discussion with either of them. Gently and with a conviction of heart, he reached out to me. We shared a bond of learning and teaching, and in that moment I had a cathartic experience as I wept. The emotions came out and I spoke genuinely with my father, as I have become accustomed to do. My father related to me his confidence in my ability to select what was right for me, to decide how best to figure what my world should look like, but all the while offered me that space to exist in which was the privilege of our relationship (Ruiz, Roosa, & Gonzales, 2002). It was the moment of acceptance, not challenge, that moment of relation in which power was displaced and instead care was offered in which I had that opportunity for reflexión (Rodriguez et al., 2003). I ended our call with confidence, with a spiritual uplifting, with a healed sense of identity. I continued for the next few days to read and write, to do my work, to cleanse my spirit and attend church. I scrapped my assimilative stance (Castillo et al., 2006) and reintegrated my mind, heart, and body to take the challenge of culture in psychology (Turner, Gonzalez, & Wood, 2008). In my assimilation I deigned to a place of self-colonization and deprecation, in rewriting myself I privileged all that I knew to be true and

just, my relations. I am Mexican American (Valdez, 1990), soy Chicano! I decided not to move out or to give in; instead deciding to mobilize my limited resources, my-self, to attempt a reform of the system (Menchaca, 1989).

1981. Chancellor Helmut Schmidt leads Germany, Leonid Brezhnev rules the USSR, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher is the leader of the United Kingdom, and President Ronald Reagan is the elected leader of the United States. I know this because I am centrally located to these world events. I am a 2nd grader in Frankfurt Elementary School #2 and the politics of the world is leading to only what I can guess will be the third world war. I was keenly aware of the Iranian release of the 52 American hostages as they came through Germany on their way to the United States. Poland, a hotbed of conflict between its people and the government, was a smoldering tinder waiting to set off this world conflagration – Solidarity encouraged by the United States and marshal law encouraged by the USSR. Protesters across Europe contend the decisions to place nuclear weapons on their soil. Bomb threats are in place where we live and where my parents work. I heard the talk of how close we were to what would be the center of the war. I saw the demonstrations of military might that were in place to create a sense of fear, or maybe it was saber rattling to impart control. This context of fear and absolute trust of the adults in my life is paramount.

Mrs. Brant was my teacher. What I remember of her - her hair pulled, slicked back in a ponytail. I remember her heels, 3 inches or so on her dark shiny black shoes. The echoing clack of her shoes on the linoleum covered cement floors. The echo ringing down the halls of our school structure, seemingly designed to withstand a full bombardment of Soviet forces moving through the Fulda Gap – at least a structure built to withstand the blast of a nearby atomic device. The structure built to educate and protect the children of V Corp Headquarters in Frankfurt, until

we could be evacuated in megalomaniacal aircraft like the C5As or C141s, the Galaxy, and Starlifter class aircraft, out of Ramstein Air Base. The atmosphere of fear and battle surround us. My father is a soldier, we are In Germany, REFORGER Plays out each year, and the Soviet block is not a red zone in a map – it's our neighbor.

I remember her voice, shrill. Mrs. Brandt was once more getting after me for my poor handwriting. But I remember that I write this fast to be done with my work. This teacher seems so intent on rewarding those of us who have finished her work fastest. I didn't like her. Not one bit. She wasn't comforting like my first-grade teacher Mrs. Yost. She would punish me by making me stand at the front of the room on one foot, balancing. When I was really on her bad side I was punished by balancing on one foot, my hands out to my sides holding a book in each arm. My parents did support my teacher. I was in trouble for not meeting her expectations. I was in trouble for not following her directions. My parents would not oppose her just because I disagreed with her - she was the teacher (McClelland & Chen, 1997; Vigil, 1999).

My parents were also upset with me because they expected me to have really good grades. I could not, and would not, get a good grade in penmanship. I remember my mom urging me to write well. I also remember it not happening. But worst of all I remember my father. Yes, he was disappointed in my grades. His disappointment hurt. But I was more fearful that he would make true to his promise and come to the school to confront Mrs. Brandt. I knew my father and I knew he would do this. I was fearful that it would happen; that he would get in trouble for confronting the teacher about the way she punished us. So after telling the truth, I lied. I told him it did not happen like that.

My father's life as an activist still had sway over his thoughts – although accepting of the military life was at his core a fighter for social justice – thankfully his life as an activist in the

times of El Movimiento shaped his perspective and my development as an educator (Conchas, Osegueras, & Vigil, 2012). My father always promised that he would come to the school and confront anyone to make right what was wrong, but that I had better make sure that what I said was real. I needed to know in my own heart and mind that my father was there for me (Perez & Taylor, 2016). He was. That meant that I had to be real and there for him and that if I ever made this claim and needed him to come to the school that it was for a real genuine reason.

1985. Mikhail Gorbachev is the Soviet leader and Ronald Reagan is in his second term as President. *We are the World* is my favorite song, as it is of many, and my science teacher is a first-year teacher – we are all excited in January of 1986 to watch Christie McAuliffe go to space, and devastated by her death. In the sixth grade, I started middle school at Fort Benning Georgia. I was on the more advanced track at the time. This meant that I was taking pre-algebra in the 7th grade. In 8th Grade, I had the opportunity to take algebra. This meant when I got to high school I would be one credit ahead of the other freshman.

I was also in the band, performing quite well - President of the band, learning how to conduct and how to translate music for various arrangements. I've been for the previous three years enrolled in our campus GT program with Miss Libbi Kurnic. I'd also been inducted into the National Junior Honor Society. I had received many accolades during my tenure there. I went to the pre-registration process for high school. I decided I was not going to be in the band anymore, even thought of attending a private Catholic high school, Pacelli High School. Tested, was admitted, and even earned a scholarship. I knew though that the tuition would be costly, I didn't think it prudent to put my parents through that. They never told me that it was not possible. I know my dad would have found a way if I had pushed the issue, he would do anything for my

education (Perez & Taylor, 2016). Afterall, Latinx emphasize the value of education as a means of advancement, politically and economically (McClelland & Chen, 1997).

I decided I was not going to be a performance musician and instead enrolled in JROTC. I also enrolled in geometry, life science, English I CP, World History CP, and Health. When my father and I had gone to the high school to pick up my schedule I was told it was not yet ready. I was told that it would be available on the first day of class (Nadal, Mazzula, Riviera, & Fujii-Doe, 2014).

The first day of class arrived, and I had my schedule, which was incorrect as far as I was concerned. What I received was a schedule that included Metalworking 1, Carpentry 1, Health, English 1 R, and World History R. My father always taught me to respect authority. So I asked what the process was. I was told that I could make an appointment to speak with a counselor. I had my appointment but it was not for several days. So, until then my task was to attend class. I went to my shop class, learned about safety and the basics of metal working that I'd be introduced to that year. My English class didn't require much work or writing. The world history course was not a challenge. The entire day was like this. When I got home as was tradition my parents asked about my day. I told my father about my schedule. He was angry. I was disappointed, but he was downright angry. I arrived at an educational structure in the local community that reflected a bigoted perspective based on ethnicity. I was afforded a status below equal, that of subordinate (Conchas, Oseguera, & Vigil, 2012). My educational expectations were being defined by surname, framed in bigotry, and my cultural identity was viewed to be deficient, wanting (Castillo et al., 2006; Conchas, Oseguera, & Vigil, 2012; Nadal, Mazzula, Rivera, & Fujii-Doe, 2014).

My father was aware of how devastating this could be for me in the deep south, the influx of migrants of Latinx background, and the political climate against Latinx immigration and popular media perspective as a result of the Mariel Boat Lift, the Iran-Contra Scandal, the Reagan administration, and the efforts of Simpson and Mazzolli to produce the Immigration Reform Acts of 1982 and 1986 (Conchas, Oseguera, & Vigil, 2012; Ramirez, 1983). My father went to school the next day. He was going to meet with whoever was in charge of the schedules. What I remember is my father telling them that he knew I could do the work, he bargained with them telling them to put me into the next level. If I didn't do well, he suggested that then they drop me back where I was, to give me the schedule that I currently had. My father fought for me. He had my back; I always knew that. But this was a real cause, the real reason for him to go to fight this battle was to make sure that I had the opportunity that he did not have. Is this my buy in (McClelland & Chen, 1997)? The school did not make him welcome as a parent. I don't remember the high school doing anything other than hoping I would fail (McClelland & Chen, 1997). He valued an increase in education as the means by which I could rise in the socioeconomic structure; he believed the increase in education to be the path to economic security and social advancement (Conchas, Oseguera, and Virgil, 2012; McClelland & Chen, 1997). That opportunity extends beyond economics toward identity ¡Soy Chicano! Porque mi *apá* me dio la oportunidad *pá serlo*. An ambivalence and tight rope effect to navigate two bodies of water simultaneously (Conchas, Oseguera, & Vigil, 2012).

El Cuervo – Water, Black, North

This is a journey we are on. We have been guided and I continue to guide you. A path that one walks is generally in a direction on the compass rose. I have associated directions with my visions of self as represented in the birds of nature. For the purpose of linear travel, we head

north now (Miller, 1998). I continue my excursion by delving into my poem, where I find elements of El Cuervo, I review the darkness of being colonized and becoming Gringo, living in Gringolandia, experiencing self-deprecation and loathing and being what the majority powers want. This is about an alteration from what I was born as to what the society wanted. These are my stories that provide context for my understanding of these experiences.

I had come to a realization about my life and studies in schools by 1983. Having made several moves already by this point in my life I was scared to complain about school because I didn't want to be taken to another one. I was becoming numb to my existence and failed to question what was around me. It began to set the stage for who I was going to be as a colonized person. That spring in Denver the daily temperature never even reached 60 degrees until May, but it was a long way from there – it was still February, and we were yet to experience one of the worst storms in Denver history, still feeling the effects of the previous one in December. Ironically that time period of our association with Denver, it would experience three of its worst storms in history. As a result of the cold, ice, snow, and water many of us were draped in layers of clothes reminiscent of Randy in *A Christmas Story*. The routine each day in class was to change out of our coats and boots to jackets and tennis shoes for the day inside – kind of like Mister Rogers' routine to change from dress shoes and coat to sneakers and sweater. My teacher, Mrs. A, was no doubt teaching in a crowded room, a result of white flight from Denver Public Schools to Aurora Public Schools was partially to blame, but there was also a set of apartments nearby which brought transient student populations which raised the class size, but likely did little for resource development. Mrs. A placed me in the back of the room, in a coat rack mounted on the wall; quite symbolic of the reaction of the school system dealing with integration and white flight (Nadal, Mazzula, Rivera, & Fujii-Doe, 2014). A symbolic act of power

maintenance and a need to have control over the new Mexicanization of the suburb as well (Conchas, Oseguera, & Vigil, 2012) especially in an area where Chican@s had some moderate successes in fostering change as in Denver with Corky Gonzales and the Crusade for Justice (Vigil, 1999). I was buried among the coats and marginalized by position. In the alcove which became my place, my acceptance of a second-class status began to take hold. My ability to succeed in the dominant society's world and to accept subjugation was formulated by my placement among the discarded clothes of the day worn for the laborious efforts of transit in this weather, but relegated to worthlessness in the operation of society, I began to internalize those perspectives for the next four months.

The fight against the cold relentless atmosphere was nothing new. We had moved to Denver, CO from Frankfurt, Germany. Although a more southern latitude, the altitude made up the difference. But like Denver, our previous home was bitterly cold and culturally oppressive – in its rite, even dismissive of the discussion.

Just a few years earlier life in Germany brought me a perspective which allowed me to frame the Denver experience. It was the coldest month of the year, averaging below freezing daily that particular year of 1980. The creaking and groaning sounds of expanding metal were in the background, a light pinging sound typical of water in the heater occasionally rang through the air. I was in the bowling alley, the affectionate name given to the quarters we occupied. Having just been in country for a total of a month now I was becoming accustomed to the home we lived in. The top floor of the apartment complex in Hügel Housing was our temporary quarters. These apartment buildings were the military assigned housing for families for noncommissioned officers. We were in this top floor temporarily until a more traditional unit was available. In the design of this facility the top floor was for servants it seemed, one main apartment with two

bedrooms, a living room and kitchen; then a long hallway to the next stairwell in which there were several small bedrooms, hence our nickname of the bowling alley with the single long hallway from the middle of the building out to the side.

I was scrubbing away at the old paint with a piece of sandpaper. My father had taken the time to show me how to sand with the grain of the wood, to be patient and slow, to be meticulous. As the cold of the winter day set in, and the old radiator heating system fought with the bitterness of the air to keep me warm in this cavernous space of our home, the creaking metal and scratching paper echoed off the walls. I was brought hot chocolate milk as I sat there in my blue pajamas set, working away under the watchful gaze of my father and his 35mm camera. My mother had coffee for them both. The aroma of freshly exposed lumber and Folgers filled the air.

It was a moment of pride, a moment of fulfillment. I had started painting the box blue. My father was aiding and guiding as I went. It was a product of labor and the process of love. It was teaching me pride in my work, and the value of working. It was also the type of work my father would approve of for my youth, not work that I needed to do, work that I wanted to do. As a migrant farm laborer, he had experiences that he was determined to keep me from – work as a child was one. I wouldn't have a job until I was 15, then it was because I wanted one.

The box was soon filled with the elements of my playful youth. Still holding on to my Viewmaster, Star Wars figures, and pieces of my Lite Bright, Erector Set, and Hot Wheels Track Set (Coates, 2015), that toy box was in the attic when we lived in New York. I was a product of the Dream and becoming a Dreamer myself (Coates, 2015).

July 4, 1990 - West Point, New York

It was the hottest day of the year in West Point at 91 degrees, and with high humidity it made Independence Day of 1990 feel oppressive. I was working at the Four Seasons of the Post Exchange; the equivalent of the outdoors section of a modern Walmart, but specifically for military personnel and their families. We were open to provide service for the revelers of the day, those taking the boat ride to Constitution Island or the walk up to Fort Putnam. Even though it was a Wednesday, the middle of the week, there would be plenty of people - visitors from other points in the area at the United States Military Academy for fireworks over the Hudson River or for the history of the Academy and the mystique of the only unmarked gravestone at the cemetery, the burial site of Benedict Arnold.

I wouldn't be answering questions about the power, value, or reliability of lawnmowers today, nor would I be dealing with the effectiveness of pesticides or herbicides. There were some sporting goods questions and a few anglers seeking lures and licenses. However, this day I was busy keeping ice bags at the ready and moving the stock of sodas and beer into the coolers for sale. I was even busy helping at the gas station across the parking lot to keep them stocked with ice and drinks too. As the temperatures of the day climbed our business soared. I became more and more exhausted and thankful for the moments of entry to the coolers. I was there for the full day, working from 9 in the morning until we closed at 6. I was buying into the concept of hard work leading me out of labor. This was just the first of many "independence" days where I would work, unable to afford not to – to celebrate a day of liberty.

I walked up the hill, a travel of less than a quarter mile from the house but up a steep incline of 100 feet. I arrived at the house not even five minutes after clocking out from work. My father stood on the top of the stair cased landing to the back door where he was grilling. Jeb, the neighbor's Rottweiler, was in his caged dog run, content to be outside in the grass.

Mike, the Ranger neighbor, was out with his daughters in the yard. My father had meat on the grill and was just finishing the potatoes. We sat at the dining room table; I drank a cold Coke to refresh my throat and my spirit. Mom and dad had their Lite beer and my father and I talked. The drone of the window unit air conditioner we had in the dining room was sounding off, as if to add a melodramatic soundtrack to the conversation. He was proud of my efforts over the last few weeks, of finding and applying for a job, taking it and working through the training and the extra work that I was doing. I was learning every product we had, where it was located, how it worked, and even the register codes for these items to help the cashiers with our product. He continued to praise me for working. He encouraged me to be thrifty, and his words echoed the values that I was already learning about my time and energy – \$3.80, at the minimum wage, doesn't earn much. Nonetheless, it was a paycheck, one that I had just also recently earned. My time by the hour was what I was learning to value myself by.

Armed with less than \$80 in my pocket, I had some decisions to make. I knew that to do the work well and safely I had to be clothed appropriately, I took to heart dad's experiences and stories of the blue shirts bleached white in the summer sun as he lived his migrant youth, picking cucumbers and strawberries. Just the weekend before we drove to the Poughkeepsie Mall, the largest in the Hudson River Valley, where we walked, and window shopped. I saw a lot of things that I wanted to spend money on; nice pants and shirts to wear, hopefully to impress the girls at school. On Sunday, we drove to the Newburgh Mall and ate at one of the chain restaurants attached. I, instead, waited until we were in Central Valley at the Woodberry Common Outlets. I spent my first few dollars on a new pair of tennis shoes and some slacks; my father bought some shirts and a belt for me. My first paycheck was spent as an investment in work clothes. My dad's efforts were an investment in me.

His support of me was not financial though, and this wasn't the first investment in my life. Nestled between Hugelstrae and Raimundstrae, bordered by Ginnheim and Dornbusch, just yards from the trinkhalle well-known to any of the American contingency in Frankfurt, was our housing. The four-story apartment buildings surround us, their white (now yellowing) governmental non-descript presence, like all military structures, both impose and hide. The building playground, in the open courtyard between three of these structures, was our only allowed location to congregate as children to play. Under the supervision of parental eyes, perched as birds of prey on their balconies or through open windows from kitchens and living rooms, we played.

In the spring, playing in these areas, the cool air still hung on in these northern latitudes. The kids playing at games of Evil Knievel on bicycles, or with marbles in the dirt, or on the swing equipment. I was in the sand playing with toy soldiers. The other kid was unfair in his play. Cheating, he ruled his action to be correct. After all, my soldiers were supposed to die, Mexicans die he told me. Angered, I argued back. He pushed me and my father's words resonated – I'm not allowed to hit others. I'm too big and will hurt others. I'm also just not supposed to fight. I knew the rules. Pent-up with frustration, angered beyond comprehension, hurt emotionally and unable to cope, I turn and leave for the house. But, I was seen being bullied. I got to the door and I was refused entrance. I know now he was teaching me to differentiate between fighting and standing up for what is right. But in the context of my young life, it was a lesson I was not ready to accept. Having already faced many taunts, teases, and bullying about my skin color, my Mexicanidad, I had learned instead to repress and hold my anger, to even believe my detractors that I was less than them. In that spring of 1981, as a seven year old child, I cried at the door, just wanting to escape and be alone. Instead, I was unable to

get in my house – the message I understood at that moment was the other kid had been the reason I was locked out. I didn't formulate reasonable dialogue to discuss bullying behavior. I didn't think of talking at all and coming to any terms of understanding. I was enraged. Pure unadulterated anger and the deprivation of home and family, living in a foreign land with just my Mom and Dad, now locked out and away from them. In a foreign country, uprooted now multiple times, and enrolled in my fourth school (now just in the first grade) I relinquished control to the beast inside, my hidden monster of rage and anger. I rushed the kid, poured right into him taking him to the ground hard. My fists were flailing at him. I was relentless, pummeling, striking, guttural noises came from within in an animalistic fury, a scared cornered animal forced to fight for survival. I only remember my father pulling me off the kid, removing me to our house, and an emotional outpour that physically drained me. I don't remember discussing this again, or even remember the rest of the day. I don't remember ever seeing that kid again after that. Although a cathartic moment, was it therapeutic? I manage the beast with long walks sometimes in my life through football, wrestling, weight lifting, and Krav Maga. Sometimes it's my work - writing and discussing. But then, it was back to repression and self-deprecation, loathing for who I was. I was the square peg trying to be forced into the round hole. I was not the right cog for this machine of society. So I didn't reject the machine. Instead, I tried to be the cog. It only led to anger and behaviors that were detrimental to success.

I still find myself angered easily like a child, I find myself putting off things that I do not find important. According to our structure in academia, I would say that I am procrastinating. Putting off things that are important. But what is important? Is it writing the paper? Is it finishing the degree? Is it any of those notions of success in higher education? My anger fuels my work. Like the child, I still have fits of productivity in which I explore and explicate my work. I am

not alone. I have not bought into a worthless system. I have to rework the system so that those who follow behind me don't experience this as well. With opposition and isolation, I am able to still be and exist as me (Ruiz, Roosa, & Gonzales, 2002). There is nothing wrong with the cogs produced in the machine shop; it is applying the cog to the right machine that is important. The purpose of the machine defines how it is constructed, so I now look to the purpose of being and apply myself to it.

We have lost our way in higher education. At one point our academic elders would have written their papers and published their works to indicate the importance and the goodness of the work that they are doing. Instead, today we publish and present works to establish the work that we are doing as good and of value (Perez & Taylor, 2016). I am forced to present at conferences or to attempt to get published to finish this dissertation to obtain the degree. To get a job in higher education, to obtain the coveted position of the professoriate, because the work that I do is important? Perhaps it is best to remember the work that I do is important! The work such as mentoring relationships with students (Ramirez, in press; Turner, Gonzalez, & Wood, 2008), and with a colleague – perhaps the important work is developing a friendship. Privately important work is rekindling love and its various forms agape, eros, and philios. Perhaps the words that I write, the job that I obtain, the positions I hold, and the work I do should reflect the results of this knowledge. In fact, I know it should. These stories that I have told, these elements of my life that I have decided to explicate. These positions of who I am tell me so. The career that I have should not be judged in my personal view by the successes of higher education. Instead, my success in higher education should be a reflection and judgment of who I am in what I do (Gomez et al., 2001; Perez & Taylor, 2016; Turner, Gonzalez, & Wood, 2008). This degree in this work in educational leadership is who I am. This is action and this is change. This is me. I am theory.

La Paloma – Air, White, West

As we continue our exploration of my world, we tack in a different direction, westward. Here I come to recognize my experience of living in neutrality, the acceptance of power differentials, being the colonizer who is naïve and ignorant of the damage I do by the acceptance of the powers and structures that exist; but also my recognition of my Indigeneity to change and grow.

On Halloween, I ate hotdogs boiled in a pot on loan from the army and watched other children trick-or-treating. We were in the middle of yet another move. I moved to Columbus, GA in November of 1984, getting off the airplane to a cold environment. At least it felt cold at the moment having just arrived from Panama. Where even in October it was warm and humid - the sun was out on a daily basis, except the rain that came in the afternoon. Now here I was; it was cold, grey, and gloomy – with overcast skies. It was dark out anyways being evening. We were gathered in a bus and taken to Kmart. The mad rush and scramble to buy clothing fit for the environment would make any modern day Black Friday shopper cringe. Coats, jackets, blankets, long sleeve shirts, and pants are the clothing that was needed. This was our new home.

As morning came and we began to explore our environment, from the temporary quarters we were in, I tasted a bitter, brittle air with low humidity and crispness which amplified every sound. I was stepping on acorns. The crunch, the split, the grinding sounds fill the cool, crisp air. After playing outside for a few hours and back into the warmth of the room. I became accustomed again to the sound of the plinking metal. A radiator was emitting heat. The warmth filled the room, like a blanket it was smothering, it became stifling.

This was our home to be, yet this was not our house. We moved out and soon, into an apartment right off the military post - off of Victory Drive. Some may have considered these

substandard housing, it was in a lower socioeconomic neighborhood. Living in a part of town where I would be a minority. We lived in these apartments for the Christmas break for certain. I remember attending South Columbus Elementary School. Wonderful hot breakfast – biscuits, gravy, sausage, bacon, ham, and grits. This is new for me. It is comfort food.

We attended Our Lady of Lourdes, the Catholic church right down the road from the apartment complex. Just across the street from South Columbus Elementary. Both are easily within walking distance. A white priest, an Irishman, lead the service. This was a short time in my history. I've become accustomed to the life of a child in the neighborhood. I've already joined the school choir and I'm performing at the church.

But we move again. This time we move right to the edge of Post just on the inside of the gate to a place known as Battle Creek Apartments. Once more I'm attending a new elementary school. This is the third one for this school year alone – now at Wilbur Elementary. It is here that I believe that I'm going to finish the school year. I should have known better. These were temporary quarters that have been provided by the military. And as such, we were there only for a temporary time period. Once more we are removed, this time to a neighborhood on the military post for senior enlisted personnel. Around us are others of the same rank and grade as my father. We are in our permanent quarters for this particular assignment. It is now that I transfer to yet another elementary. I don't remember the teachers this year. I don't remember many of my classmates. I don't remember much about what I learned. But I remember moving. I remember settling down only to be uprooted again quickly. I remember not allowing myself to become attached for fear. I didn't want to make friends because I did not want to lose them.

Whereas many children at that age will have gone from one teacher to another over the course of three years, that being from 3rd to 4th to 5th, I had changed eight different schools in

the same time period. I'd become quite skeptical about the thought of friends in school. I don't remember sharing this with anyone, but I'm sure in many ways it has impacted the way I behave with others. I know that in sixth seventh and eighth grade I was quite quiet. I chose to be in my class and make observations rather than participate. Miss Libby Kurnik spoke of me as the owl. She was referencing the fact that I was the 7th and 8th grader among 6th graders. And like an owl, I sat in the corner and observed. She also referred to me in that same vein as the wise owl - the one who would make a comment only when it was necessary for clarification. I was in Miss Libby's class with students one to two years behind me because of my involvement in the band. This was where I excelled. I learned to exercise leadership for this organization. I developed confidence in my abilities and talents.

Miss Libby first taught me about research. It was with Miss Libby that I explored my preference for criminal justice. My first research project was to look at the Atlanta child murders. The case was just a few years removed at this juncture. This was 1986, and the murders were still very fresh on everyone's mind in Georgia. Miss Libby would sit us in a circle. She'd encourage participation and also fairness, honesty, and respect (Perez & Taylor, 2016). Although her favorite phrases included "You cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear." She'd very likely to continue to work to do so; or so it was, as I thought of myself.

It was here that I came to accept the hierarchy of our society. Socially I was dating officer's kids, white girls, but I wasn't accepted – tolerated because it was middle school, nothing serious. I use my position and acquiesce to get ahead. I did what they wanted, to have the opportunities for band, honor society, advanced courses and I didn't stop to see the damage I was doing to myself and my peers. I shunned my peers in public denying them so that I could shine (Coates, 2015). I wanted to be that officer, that band director – I played jazz, not mariachi.

I wore Reebok, Swatch, and enjoyed Miami Vice because Crockett always took down the bad guy – in retrospect, I should have realized it was always a Latino.

I came to know a lot of people during these moves and a few of them I've seen again. But I did not develop many friends. Plenty of acquaintances. People I would spend time with. The only one person that I cared enough to keep in contact with and still do is Patricia. Our families developed a friendship and that placed us in close contact with each other. In fact, in 6th grade and 8th grade we were in the same classes. Many weekends would be shared experiences. Our families did some local traveling together. And when her parents had to leave for a death in the family she and her sisters came to stay with us.

She moved after the 8th grade as we had all become accustomed to. This was the pattern of life as a military brat. For some reason, we kept in contact. Sitting down to carefully craft letters with my thoughts and experiences. I remember writing, physically writing on paper with pen, folding the letters and placing them in envelopes, licking the gum, sealing the envelope, placing a stamp, and delivering this to the post office. It would take days for a letter to travel across the country and once received it might take days for a response to be crafted. We continued to correspond with each other over the course of the next several years. She would explain her life in the Corpus Christi area. I'd explain my life in West Point or El Paso. I think during this time we probably spoke maybe three times on the phone. She always called me out though on my behavior and acceptance of things.

We both went to a Texas school for college, although to vastly different campuses. I attended Texas A&M, she attended the other university in Austin. As a result, I mean in the same state, we visited with each other before the school year started, and then over the phone often. I might be calling in a drunken stupor, and thankfully she was a friend. She'd listen, admonish,

worry, and make suggestions (Castillo et al., 2006). I went to visit her for Thanksgiving, welcomed by her family to the house. An odd weekend in which she pointed out the problems I exhibited, through the behaviors of her cousin, a fellow Aggie. Though I was too myopic to accept what was before me. Now married with three children she will still meet with me when I'm able to get to her town. Even though it may be years between visits we can still pick up where we left off, we are friends (and she still calls me out on my errors).

I was obviously struggling within. As much as I was accepting this life, being the scientist and discoverer, playing with Legos and designing the elements of space exploration and with the Erector Set designing the planes that would fly us beyond the atmosphere. There was an aspect of me that recognized that I was the creator and created. I was an adventurer also seeking my place in life beyond the society in which I was allowing myself to be marginalized. I was off in the wilds running through forests and hills in creeks and dusty paths. I climbed across logs and in the trees. I was young professor Indiana Jones engaging with the wilds of nature while trying to uncover the mystery – to engage with others and to be the heroic mythic figure. I was creating me and I am me. I lived by Armory Creek; I hid at coordinate N32.36348° W84.92465° Davis Hill Summit where I saw my first spirit. What I saw back there was the infamous strange fruit (Meeropol, 2006), a man. When I returned, he was gone. But he was there. A warning. A story of his own. A way in the door to know myself and what I am allowed to know (Turner, Gonzalez, & Wood, 2008). I was Cuauhtlatoatzin, at the hill of Tepeyac, I started then to know the winds and the powers amongst us. To listen and understand, to converse. The winds speak we need just listen (Turner, Gonzalez, & Wood, 2008).

In my acceptance of life at A&M I created the situation for heartache, ignoring the spirits that spoke to me, I indulged in the waters, nearly drowning in the Brazos, but the baptism went

unnoticed. I ignored my calling, my duty to others to seek the way of the individual, my advancement and the indulgence in pleasures for the self, accepting the hedonic calculus that indicated my individual success. I lost my opportunity and sank backward to the bottom of the hill (Coates, 2015). Once more I learned to walk up the mountain, facing the Franklins, walking along the expressway. Forlorn and empty, the winds came back to me, they spoke, and I learned to listen again. Through the canyon and across the gates of the mountain pass the winds came to me: they cleansed me, prepared me, and opened my minds eyes and heart. I returned to my spiritual self and my faith. I question the path and learn the values of death that are open. In life, I serve the church and the dying. I become a minister of the Eucharist and the dying. I'm not nor will I ever die. My body may cease, but I am eternal. I am one in the existence of life and death. I am one with the winds, the voice, the dialogue continues. The winds carry me, and my voice joins them as my ears learn to listen to them.

The storms fall upon me and the rains wash away my fears and confusion. In Georgia, I faced the storm and felt the cold icy rain fall and chill me to the bone. I was with my friend. I was made anew through her chastisement. These rains came to me in New York as I lost my way in the world and on the hill across from West Point, I found love, agape. It was here to which I returned 25 years later to be bitten by the word and the progressives in which I find voice to declare my purpose. Washing away like the baptism I received as a child I was cleansed. I regained my spirit as I sought out my faith. In the storms, I gained my place. I called to the winds and they answered. The same storm came to me in Texas twice – in College Station as I lost my way and in El Paso as I found it. The four winds guide me. They bring me to my forebearers and my future. They place me in the midst of the spirits that show me the way. They

wash me and cleanse me of my faults. They teach me to be humble in the presence of my elders and to respect my mother and father.

El Fénix – Fire, Red, South

I am rebuilding myself, my-self, and others. I recognize that a death is a rebirth, living a new element, I am starting anew and growing stronger.

February 2003 – So content, that Whataburger with jalapeños and cheese was delicious. My office space was quiet, I could relax and enjoy the calm of my office space. I was reading for my class that evening when I heard the familiar refrain – the wheels on the bus go round and round, round and round, round and round. It was the history professor walking the halls again. So much for the quiet of the space. With my office situated right by the stairwell I decided to make my break for it, before I became involved in a conversation I neither wanted, nor would make any sense. I quickly locked the door and closed it quietly; turning to my immediate left I bolted down the flight of stairs. Dan was on his way in and stopped me at the sliding door entryway to the building (Louis, 2007). You know we have a lecturer position open, right! I honestly didn't. It was a glimmer of hope and a chance to do what I wanted. Too good I thought. I applied.

As I interviewed, I was quite nervous. Relax, Dan said. There is nothing you can say or do in the next 15 minutes that will change my opinion of you (Gloria & Kurpius, 2001; Gomez et al., 2001; Tierney & Rhoads, 1994; Turner, Gonzalez, & Wood, 2008). Doomed, I thought. Let's just talk about what you would teach if you had control over the course, he said (Henry, 2012). Soon after, Homer offered me water and confided in me that my faculty had high praise for me (Louis, 2007). We chatted about my experience as a graduate student in the Criminal Justice program. In less than a month I was graduating, walking across the stage to be hooded

for my master's degree. As I crossed, Homer came by and shook my hand; I look forward to working with you he told me (Harris, 2002). I initially thought it mere pleasantries, but came to realize later that it was because he had already extended an offer to me for the position (Battiste, Bell, & Findlay, 2002).

You are going to accept the offer, aren't you? Dan was waiting at my office door for a response. If you guys choose to offer it to me I will, I retorted. You haven't seen the offer? In a flurry, Dan was off and returned with a copy of the offer from Homer's office. Well? I signed it and added a caveat, with his help. Dan was Department Chair and had been interim Dean for two years, he was aware of the budget availability (Vasquez et al., 2006) besides he said, teachers with a BA make more than they are offering, you have a masters – increase the salary offer to \$35000, I wrote (Li, 2012). I was offered \$32000, but this was at least \$10000 more than the initial offer.

...

I was on my way, faculty, and a colleague of my former professors. I had a larger office with my key to the building. I had my phone and computer and business cards. I was official (Henry, 2012). I had my syllabi ready to go and book selections already made. I also had a neighbor that invited me to her office often for discussions. I was encouraged to question and to challenge (Perez & Taylor, 2016). I was offered the opportunity to discuss my teaching and thoughts (Turner, Gonzalez, & Wood, 2008). Rosy was encouraging me along the way. She never stated that I was wrong or that my approaches were cutting off students (Gloria & Kurpius, 2001). She was gentle in her ways of encouragement through open dialogue about pedagogical approaches, curricular design, assessments, and research. Rosy spoke of her experiences and shared stories of her doctoral program and first teaching experiences (Ramirez, in press).

...

I got rid of the standard text for my Crime in America course and for my Criminology course. I started to sit with my students rather than stand at the front of the class (Castillo et al. 2006; Rendon, 2009; Rendon, 2011). I changed the approach of the coursework to include local examples and discussion about the regional and local situations (Emdin, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1994) rather than the text examples. I was invited to participate in the NACCS Conference and to organize a panel on student rights in higher education. I invited two victims of sexual assault on a college campus, a victim of sexual harassment, and a victim of official oppression. I moderated that discussion. The dialog was not just useful, but essential! There has been, and in many ways still, a lack of attention to the patriarchal system of higher education.

...

It was a temperate day, a gentle breeze and mid 60's temperatures outside. Not typical for a southern Texas November day. As the cool winds blew about outside, things were heating up in the Student Union Auditorium. They are getting radical in there he yelled. I could hear him during a lull in the action as he opened the door to let others know what was happening. We filled the space of the auditorium and had people standing as testimonio was given about their victimization experiences. I argued that systems of higher education denied these things happen and clarified that the policies and procedures guide of the university provided relief for those that wished to complain about such activities. My Dean was quite supportive in the audience, a Chicano scholar, he advocated for our activities (Perez & Taylor, 2016).

By now, I had broken from that model provided for me for so long about teaching, delivering material as if it were to be held by one and shared with another in pieces (Freire, 1970). Instead, I was learning with my students as I was guided by my colleague, my peer

(Rendon, 2011). I was working for justice, not teaching about justice, experiencing justice, not giving lip service to the concept (Freire, 1998; Freire, 2005; Shor & Freire, 1987).

Homer left a year later. He took a position as a President of a college, and the Interim Dean did the work of reestablishing the status quo as the only accepted approach. This meant teaching should be done from the front and books had to be requested, at least by lecturers. My term in this position was short lived. Without the Dean as a mentor and a department chair that could be an ally (Nunpa, 2003) I was soon left without any administration to support my work. I had my colleagues, each also pressured in their own ways facing tenure decisions. I didn't last long (Turner, Gonzalez, & Wood, 2008). The mechanism of higher education shut me down for the meantime (Fenelon, 2003).

...

Benito, my grandfather, died April 9, 1992 at the age of 77. I was in West Point, New York. The temperature remained cool all afternoon, below 60°F, but as I stood outside, the weather changed, visibly the fog became mist, it became a light rain. The winds blew from the Southwest and picked up considerably from less than a breeze up to even 15MPH. The air was balmy, the feeling of the wetness and cool air was numbing. I was being spoken to, but I didn't listen. I was too engaged as a teenage male.

I remember that I was watching a softball game. At the time I was interested in a classmate, a young girl, another recent transplant to this environment and fellow army brat - I went to see her play. We were friends and prom dates. Still, I respected her as a player and wanted to watch her play. I was surprised to see my mom after the game, it was only about 3.5 miles to the house and that was usually covered by the walk to town and bus across post – a route

my friends and I often used. My mom told me about my grandfather's death. I didn't know how to take it. Honestly, to this day, I still don't! I met him maybe five times in my life of which I was aware, only three of which I can vaguely remember:

I was just a young child, but the images run like a film in my memory. The sirens wailed as another officer rushed to the scene of a crime or answered some call. The muggy summer night closed in and the tension was felt like the oppressiveness of the humidity. This was not our home, but he had invited us to stay. You don't say no to the hospitality of family (Mirandé, 1977) – but we would be off in the morning. We were going away from Texas, moving to another country. I didn't know if or when we'd see him again.

I remember a discomfort, the sounds of spoken language and sitting in the kitchen – a small dimly lit room with a single overhead bulb. Windows open, *la tela era la única cosa que 'staba en frente de la ventana*. The warm breeze of the inner city crawled in the space, very unlike the open spaces of South Texas, *en El Valle*, this was Houston in 1979.

I didn't speak with him or hear his stories (Momaday, 2010). He didn't hold me, he didn't take me in his truck for a ride, and he didn't take me for a *raspa* or share a *taco* (Polamalu, 2009; Schmidt, & Padilla, 1983). But he welcomed me to his home (Rodriguez, 1983); he came to the Valley too to see us. These were the usual encounters, the ones I remember, although vaguely.

As the sun poured its heat down upon us on the Fourth of July, 1983, we stood at Archer Park. With thousands of other celebrants withstanding the 90+ degree day we searched the faces of men among the crowd in which we stood. With blustering gusts of 30 mph, the wind foretold of quick and furious interaction with a diminishing end. I eagerly scanned the faces of every man I could place my eyes upon, though I didn't know what to look for. A few old black &

white and a wrinkled color picture were all I could recall, the same images I know today. I would not have recognized him except that my dad looks like him. I look like them.

Before cell phones were widely used, we arranged through mail and telephone to be at a certain spot at a certain time. Reminiscent of Cary Grant and Deborah Kerr in *An Affair to Remember*, meeting just off Broadway at the Empire State Building, we waited anxiously and hopefully. I remember walking toward him on the side of the road of Broadway at McAllen's Archer Park.

I remember this as a special occasion. He was older, slower, wiping his brow with a towel/kerchief in the South Texas heat. He walked with a shuffle and waddle, but with purpose, deliberate and with authority. His voice clear, his eyes sharp – surveying me, speaking with my father I could feel him measuring me up - determining value by my comportment, reactions, and place. I must have measured up – there was no sign other than a smile, not beaming, but that type of a hidden confident pride.

The last time we met was at a Washateria, in San Juan, again during a summer. The heat of the South Texas summer and humidity must not have been oppressive enough for the relationship my father and grandfather had. To intentionally meet in a laundromat with hot dryers adding misery to the atmosphere, we sat and met with him. I must have been 13 years old.

I don't remember saying goodbye – I would never speak with him (Guardado, 2002), see him, hear him again. I would never experience life with him. Slower, older, more reserved.... I still see myself in his eyes. I still see myself in his image (Lattin, 1979). There was a bit of contention in their relationship, one I hope never develops between us (Grajeda, 1979; Rivera, 1992)

My dad conversed with him through mail, I don't recall how often. But I remember the meaning of each letter received. My father looked forward to reading letters from my grandfather, not even waiting to get home, but opening and reading them as we got in the car, often sitting in the heat without the motor on or air-conditioning. There was a joy in watching my father take the envelope – it was a solemn event. My dad would read his father's messages. I don't know the content, but emotions were always high. This was not correspondence, it was dialogue. Stories and events were conveyed. Once my father was surprised by a letter. We were in GA, Fort Benning. He opened the letter, surprised to have received it, he had just gotten one recently. He began to read it and was concerned. Had his father forgotten and written the letter again. The same message and words. He then laughed in recognition – it was the same letter! My dad must have dropped it back in to the mail which was redelivered to our box at the post office. But he was happy to have received it anyway.

Our conversation though was different with his mother. She had passed when I was a child. My only memory of her is an image, a photo I have of being in her arms. Not even my memory, but a perspective of us taken in a sliver of time. Mi Abuelita passed away in 1974, the year I was born. Ten years had passed before I came to know her. With the persistent mosquitos relentlessly biting at our exposed skin we stood there in the San Juan Cemetery, off the canal and the unpaved road. We spent some time looking for her grave. With our absence from the valley, her grave had become absent from our lives, hidden and almost forgotten, just a vague memory now. We found her that summer of 1984; her grave had a simple tin marker, with her name and that of my aunt who died in utero. The grass was overgrown, weeds and bushes hid her from our view.

We made plans to return and lay a slab over the grave, to prevent her from being lost again from our view. We did so to honor her in a simple but effective way, to keep her in our world and memory. I remember waking early, loading buckets and shovels, hammers, string, hoes, machetes, and files. My father and I had a breakfast of papas con huevo with iced tea in the early morning coolness of the window at my mother's family home. We then drove down the expressway from Harlingen. I don't remember which lumber yard we stopped in, but I recall the smell of the fresh cut lumber and the pencils at the counter, the yard sticks, and the men gathering their supplies for work. I remember selecting bags of cement, 2x4 lumber, trowels, nails, a wheel barrow, and some wood stakes. I remember passing through town, probably past the corner of Iowa and 3rd, then 4th, la casas de mis tíos, on our way south past the paved road, beyond Ridge Road and to the canal.

We arrived and finished cleaning the grave site. I remember as we worked that he was telling me about her. I learned of her strength of character, her will to get ahead, and her determination that her children would do well in life. She suffered through pleurisy, and succumbed to cancer but never gave up hope (Angelou, 1997). I learned of her lost infant, her life in privilege, and then her life in servitude to her sisters, then to her husband, como la Adelita (Baker, 2012) always serving, striving, and suffering. As we moved dirt out, created the outline, and then laid out the form, I learned about this woman; his first educator, the woman who taught him to appreciate an education, the woman who educated him (Gutierrez, 2005; Ramirez, 2010).

Moving water in buckets back and forth from the canal I learned of the work she did picking crops, leading my family as a migrant. I learned of her toil and fortitude. We mixed the cement and poured it, carefully leveling the pour we took off the edges to ensure that it would not chip away. We centrally located the marker and made our way out. We had left a more

permanent structure in place to mark the location of our family, to create a structure that was reminiscent of the woman it now located, a structure of strength and although maybe nondescript, one that was going to weather the effects of time well. We retreated from the last afternoon heat to G. W. Jr's in Alamo, had a chili dog and fries and then headed home after stopping for a dessert at Whataburger, one strawberry malt.

As much as I've come to revere mi Abuelita, I've come to resemble my grandfather. My mom and dad remark (Ruiz, Roosa, & Gonzales, 2002) that I am like my grandfather. I've come to exhibit certain characteristics, and then I've been provided with stories about his life (Ramirez, 2010). He was adamant about not drinking colored drinks, Big Red and Colas were not on his menu. If he was to drink a carbonated drink it was Sprite or agua mineral. Except for coffee and tea, that is what I drink. I don't drink alcohol to excess; I don't understand the desire to do so and to willingly place my body in a position where I suffer, I may at most chug a beer or two when pushed or to enjoy a few when I'm so taken. He would as well, to satisfy his detractors who would complain if he were not drinking, but not to excess. My tortillas are to be tostadas, crispy tortillas with the ability to stand on edge. He too, like me wanted no foods with weird dyes. Boots, hats, and trucks – attitude – anger – behavior – he was Mexican, always pining away por su lindo y querido. He exhibited a need for independence and autonomy. In too many ways like my grandfather and I didn't get to meet him and know him as I wish I could have (Polamalu, 2009). Though I do know him, I'm his grandson (Babcock, 2012; Endrezze, 1997; Whiteduck, 2013).

Like me, he also spent years at Pan American, in the College of Education. I am a legacy child of a different sort, the third generation of Ramirez to be on these grounds (Honigmann & Barnes, 1995). Like my grandpa, I work here (Masamune, Masamune, & Masamune, 2013). He

was a carpenter, before that a Bracero. It was as a carpenter that he worked here. It was as a student that I first stepped in these halls, then as a staff member when I worked here first, now as faculty.

I visit my parents once a week – but that visit is everything to me, every Friday like a ritual. Nothing I can control will violate this opportunity – I will easily give up other issues for this. I didn't have anyone as I grew up, but family – my dad a constant. He lost his dad and I don't know when the last time was they spoke before it – I will.

I value him as my educator – my teacher always placing my learning before anything else. I trust all parents do. This is important to me when I act in the capacity of educator – students worry about missing class because we have an institution which convinces them that attendance is primary, I believe family is primary. My role is to guide, but you must have a path in life upon which to be guided. The family does that for you, I do my part to help students value that path and then guide as well as I can those who want it.

In losing my family, even before I could get to know them as well as I should have, I have come to recognize that I have been given a rebirth. These stories demonstrate and guide my path for a rebuilding of myself, my-self, and others. I grow stronger as a result of my connection to the memory, love, and spirit of my forebearers.

El Tecolote – Earth, Yellow, East

It is in the acceptance of the owl, maybe not the darkness of la lechuza, but the loftiness of el tecolote, that I am experiencing the wisdom of life, thriving in the borderlands, being of the border, expanding on life as a process and product, living the new life.

The sun had dropped, shortly after 8:30. The BBQ pit was full of hot embers, perfect for setting the punks on fire for our fireworks. My tio had already used a copious amount of gasoline to get the fire going – burning my hotdog in the process. His fire was reminiscent of the day's heat – a high for the year at 94°. I lit my sparkler aglow by protruding the tip into the embers – too young to be trusted with exploding Black Cat Flashlight firecrackers or to light a bottle rocket. At five years of age, I was just developing the dexterity to hold the sparkler still. I was still trying to use my left hand in a right-handed world, the tiny stick was difficult to grasp and to maintain control of. I was yet unaware of the difference between the thin wire and the combustible material, a lesson quickly learned through as the nearly 1800° fire approached and superficially burnt my little fingers. Crying and off to the tub to soak my hand I was comforted by my mother and ridiculed by my young uncle. Ice on my fingertips, wrapped in a towel, began to melt in the still warm air of the evening. Like as most in our culture a motherly figure reacts to soothe with food. Elaine asked what I might want. Chicharras I said. What? I was asked. So I repeated myself proudly – Chicharras! My family laughed but understood – Migas.

I am fearful of speaking Spanish (Anzaldúa, 1999b; Guardado, 2002) because it was not my first language, it is a second language perhaps. It is the language of the Borderlands for me, the language that I cannot master but that which keeps me divided (Gonzalez, 2001). Language is a measure for the judgmental. A weapon of sorts used to defile, disgrace, and mark those whose Spanish is a second language.

I don't consider myself bilingual, though bicultural – a product of the borderlands I now carefully consider language and its use. I am bilingual though, without that language mastery I could not be bicultural (Guardado, 2008; Guardado, 2009). This is an issue of fluency for delivery, not about understanding. I refrain from speaking it because I am prone to being judged for making grammatical errors. I recognize that the Green Ghost, like many, can speak better than I can. Nevertheless, I'm cognizant of Spanish here in the borderlands. Not the Spanish I learned in schools – the Spanish of el Valle causes me problems because it is a language one grows in, not learns in class. It is the barrier to my existence – my border in this region.

R-nestoe. Ernesto!!! Ernesto Fidel! She laughed... R-nestoe, whatever! She had been named with an easily pronounced name in either language. But refused to answer to her Spanish pronunciation.

It's not whatever Mrs. Parker admonished. It is his name and we will try to say it correctly – the more we practice the better we will be. Mrs. Parker never gave up. Every day as she called role she slowed down and asked me to pronounce it once more.

She tried, but the closest was Ernesto-o. Others never even tried, using Ernie or Ernest, neither of which I answered. I hated being called anything but my name. Like Key & Peels' Mr. Garvey, teachers changed my name often and were not happy when I waited several times before answering. The humor with which I laugh now at these characterizations are equaled with the pain I felt back then as I stood my ground for my name. I fought my battles silently only too sure that if I did otherwise, I'd be the one in trouble.

I was angry at these repeated insults. My father had named me as a result of my grandfather's influence. He had listened to the radio and the late broadcasts of Fidel Castro and

the stories of the work of Ernesto Guevara. Thus, for two revolutionaries I was named. Opposition is what I would provide when my name was changed by those who would not even try to learn it. It's my name I proudly pronounce, with defiance even, to them who would ask. Especially in the company of those who would likely only recognize those two names as elements of my culture! I respected Mrs. Parker – I came to respect my classmates too. I started to recognize, whether I was cognizant of it, she was also making her way through this system and although not my path – probably one not any less difficult. While I was embracing my name and culture and celebrating my-self, others felt an inability to do so.

This was the beginning of my own Latinx revolution. Taking to music, I learned jazz and played saxophone, listened to the works of Gloria Estefan and the Miami Sound Machine, watched Saturday shows of El Calle Ocho, danced to Celia Cruz, Willie Colón, and groups such as La Orchestra de la Luz, and Bad Street Boys, y Rubén Blades también. Which brought me back to Tejano Music and evenings of El Show de Johnny Canales y Little Joe, music I had heard and never looked for. Now having Los Tigres del Norte, La Jaula de Oro and Little Joe's Redneck Meskin Boy, I now celebrate con Somos mas Americanos, I watched La Bamba and Born in East LA, and all these spoke to me and my experiences of American and Mexican cultures.

The sun hung low in the sky when it had been out, now after sunset, the air chilled even more, the light winds from the north making the 42-degree air feel worse, the humidity hung in the air dampening the leaves on the ground and creating a blanket of pine needles over the Georgia red clay rather than a dry bed of mulch. This evening of December 17, 1987, a few of us gathered on the porch steps of the home of the Post Commander. The white plantation style

home was lit for the Christmas festivities. I was leading our small troupe of musicians and choral performers. Representing the military dependents, we prepared to perform our holiday routine for the command and staff invited to the event. My middle school friends, and some previous romantic interests, were with me, poised for a performance in front of their parents – the officers, some of us didn't have our parents present, the class system evident in the room. Nicole's dad was present, a Chief Warrant Officer Five, Joy's father, a major, and Amy's dad, a battalion commander Lieutenant Colonel. Pat's dad and mine would not be invited.

We performed well in the acoustically lack-luster drawing room of the general's home. We all agreed to meet outside before departing in 20 minutes, but in the meantime to enjoy the warmth and atmosphere. I paid my respects to the colonel; I was dating his daughter at the time. I then visited quickly with the major, had some punch with the chief, then listened to the pianist in the music room, as he played Silent Night on the grand piano. Gathering my instrument and coat from the conservatory, being used as a cloak room, I made my way to our selected staging area. Said goodbye to our friends who were officers kids, the rest of us made our way down the road to our van waiting to take us back to our campus. As we walked in the cold night we talked of what we experienced. I told Pat about the pianist – she understood me to say penis, more than once. Laughing, teasing, I've become much more careful of the words I use, or even utter. I still bite my tongue when I should speak, confused as to the value of my words when they are spoken, and much more confident instead in their written form. But even then, I am questioned.

It had been an unseasonably warm day this end of the semester. Each day of the last week there had been increasing temperatures and winds, the chance of any relief was unrealistic. I rushed to campus enthusiastic about my presentation and paper. I had turned in my paper the week prior and I was presenting a policy recommendation on the development of a South Texas

center for victims of sexual assault. Arriving from my job at Sam Houston Elementary as a paraprofessional coach, sweaty, exhausted, and hungry I rushed to class. I had two and a half hours before my presentation and it was going to be a long evening. On this Thursday evening, May 3, 2001, the winds continued to build and the heat remained as I took a break between classes. Luckily the first to present that evening I had the floor for 20 minutes and it went perfectly. My classmates each presented, with only five of us in the class this was moving rapidly. We were anxious to get our papers returned to us, to finish the semester on a high note and move on for the summer, a break, to re-energize for the fall semester. As graduate students, we had just completed our first year of studies and believed ourselves to be half-way through to our master's degrees.

Then, a discussion about academic integrity; a sour way to end the night I thought. The professor spoke, and with each word the mood continued to drop. As the sun set outside, my mood did as well. With only a few people in the class it became more than just a reminder to be academic in all our work, it was a public admonishment of one of our colleagues. I was concerned about who it was, and then most concerned as it appeared that this person had not just been careless, but purposefully had violated a central tenet of academia. He finished and began to hand out papers. Slowly, almost painfully and excruciatingly slow, he called the names of each paper's author and returned the paper. The looks of relief came over each person's face as the paper was collected and a grade was evident which exonerated each from this most dour of accusations. With an Eeyore like voice, with an anhedonic presence, he laid a gloomy forecast out before me. The expectation was that I would be in his office within five minutes to answer for my paper. With a pain in my chest, anxiety and fear ravaged my body. My head pounded, my lungs felt empty, I was unable to cogitate. I was worried that the hard work I had engaged

with all year was for nothing and that I was done academically. I couldn't figure out how I had done this. I was careful and purposeful, but for a good paper, not to plagiarize another's work. As I stood before him in his small second floor office I listened to his pessimistic prognosis. I was being accused of turning in a paper that I could not have written. These are not your words; there are spellings here that you would not know he told me. He directly asked me where I had obtained this paper. I told him the truth, I had written it. He didn't believe me. He was certain as to my choices since our library didn't have these resources. I explained how I used the interlibrary loan system and had been working all semester to do this work; I had done much of the research earlier in the semester. With a sardonic attitude, he gingerly stated to prove it. I told him I would be right back. I stormed off down the stairs, out to the parking lot. I swung open the door to my pickup truck and grabbed the box full of articles and photocopies of books. I walked back to the building; the winds which had previously been blowing hard all day from the south were eerily still. Speaking to me in a moment of silence, I was becoming aware of the message being given to me. Now, at 10 in the evening with the moon partially shrouded like a sleepy eye watching me as I walked, the clouds gave way to the ominous eye and the stars foretold of an action, and to be cautious. I walked in, angered – furious – almost manic, I dropped the box of articles on the desk and his lap and walked out. With no wind, balmy, and with the moon watching overhead I drove home and continued to ponder how I had been accused.

Like my academic compatriot, Tiffany Martinez (2016), I am left with questions as a result of our shared experiences. What words are mine? When are they mine? Will you (words) ever be mine? I use them, I know them, I hear them, and I speak them! But are they mine? I've been fighting for these words, to use them, to know them, to hold them, and to deliver them. I

give meaning to the words I use. I am respected for the choice of words I use because the meaning to which I attribute to each of the words that I select is profound. I do not speak to hear my voice; I speak to deliver a message. I do not write to see my work, I write so that others may see my thoughts. When will my work be respected as my own, when will the words that I choose, the manner in which I speak, be valued enough? This is not your work, these are not your words, these articles don't exist in our database, and you must have gotten this from somewhere. This was his sentiment; it couldn't possibly be my work. I was hurt. Just like you Tiffany, I share this experience (Martinez, 2016). I was blessed recently with a comparison. Arthur, an elder of the North Dakota Study Group, complimented me as I reminded him of Vito Perrone when I speak. From him, an honor, as he undoubtedly spoke with him at length over their careers. It is our past, our present, and our future. But as my Nepantlero guide has come to recognize, it is a prodigious and labored choice for me to select words because it is with accuracy to which I speak and make my thoughts known.

The Past - [I] Comienzo y Recomendado Revisited

It starts in the house (Livas-Diott, et al., 2010), la doctrina que su mamá enseñas, not the volunteer. My mother taught me how to behave and respect others – a lesson I applied often. That is until I told mom to stay out of my relationship. I violated a central tenet of our being. I hurt our relationship and suffer through it still today. Not because she has not forgiven me but because I haven't forgotten or forgiven myself (Ruiz, Roosa, & Gonzales, 2002).

On Thanksgiving Day, November 26, 1992, I stood shivering wearing my fish uniform, the Class A uniform of the Aggie Cadet Corps with my unauthorized “pull-out” name tag – displaying a confidence of autonomy. My toes were freezing in the barely 40 degree air on

Congress Street at the steps of the Capital as I waited to be picked up. I was prepared for a feast with my dearest friend and her family. Clean shaven, short haircut, dapper in my uniform, a toned and fit 18-year old man wearing a uniform which displayed a promise of commitment in the near future to this nation's security as an officer in its military services. On that day, my dearest friend had unwittingly and unintentionally introduced us. Three years later I was still exploring this off/on relationship again. My mother made a comment about her which bit deep. I don't remember the words – but it dealt with how she felt I was being treated in this relationship. As I stood in my mother's kitchen, I lashed back. Because it hurt to be told the truth, my relationship was not working.

I ripped into my mother like a petulant unruly spoiled brat with words that tore at her soul and heart. It reminded her of my individuality. I told her she had no business in my relationships. I admonished her for telling me the truth. I intentionally reminded her of my father coming to her defense, when my grandmother once made a statement, in which he reminded his mother of her place in their marriage – outside of it. I sent her away to her room, in her house, out of her kitchen with tears. In my heart and soul, no amount of apologizing will ever make up for my words.

I created a bad moment between us in which I used story in a negative aspect to dictate rather than to learn. I used my grandmother and father and others to manipulate. It has though demonstrated the power of a mother's forgiveness for her son and the manner in which a prodigal child can be accepted back to the home not just by his father but by his mother as well.

I don't think my mother is ready to hear my stories. She sees deeper into them than I can fathom (Livas-Diott, Fuller, Stein, bridges, Figueroa, & Mireles, 2010), she knows the roots and the purposes of story to a level which I am still just discovering. Perhaps that is the beauty of

life. She is dismayed about story used by a family member. She still won't speak about them.

We have to have our moment, we still need to grow and share. It will be there. But place includes time, and the time must be spontaneous and a moment of clarity. To do otherwise is to be pedantic and false.

This stanza wraps up my past, it is the interpretation of a piece of my existence:

I am sinner and blasphemmer
I am saint and prophet
I am the word
I am man
I am mad with doubt and confidence
I am the creation of which I speak
I am the creator who speaks the word to the creation
Voice which speaks the truth, both accepted and ignored.
I am the identified
 by the word
 by my word
 by my word granted to me
 stolen
 conquered
taken – demolished - created

The drum sounded, the feathers moved with his body, he handed me an instrument by which to add my sounds to the dance. I experienced the spirits of the wind again, in sound. This is my past. Danny was a student of mine in Criminal Justice. He spoke to me of his experiences in combat and policing, a valuable voice of experience in my course. I attended the South Texas Powwow over ten years ago, interested in what other cultures celebrate in our border region and invited by Danny to witness our Indigenous Native population celebrate. Danny was being honored, received as a warrior – a veteran of combat tours on the other side of the world as a result of 9/11 responses. Danny honored me, as a friend to join his family and come to the floor to dance with him. This infusion of spirituality allowed me to fathom my work as an academic,

to provide service and to be human. I've been able to keep my spirituality and celebrate my love.

Mi Xóchitl watches over me every day. I come to work and she is there. The goddess who watches over me, admonishes me for not working, encourages me to do so, spies on what I send to the printer, smiles upon me when I complete another chapter, and whispers in my ear inspirations and aspirations. She greets me every morning with warm eyes and wishes me a good evening before I sleep. Xochiquétzal mi diosita de amor, belleza y juventud. She competes with Tonantzin y Guadalupe for my attention; they are all the same - virginal, peace, love, and hope. My prayers are heard and answered.

I am devoted to my faith and my spirituality (Turner, Gonzalez, & Wood, 2008). It is in the quiet moments of peace that I gather my thoughts and listen to the virtues poured into my heart. I learn to bring them out and share them with the world around me. Born again each day to experience, learn, and value (Turner, Gonzalez, & Wood, 2008). Without her I am nothing. Left to wander and bereft of purpose. Xóchitl provides the purpose for this warrior to continue. With her, I have fought for justice, peace, equity, and love. Without her, I know only despair.

She is one representation, Coyolxauhqui another, Tonantzin like Coyolxauhqui, and we are fragmented, in Nepantla (Anzaldúa, 2015). This state provides me with the strength to seek unity – community – family. Alone I cannot make it. With my community, I may serve as an edge – sharp but even then supported by the iron of the resolve of our being. Together we continue to work. I can be sharpened and continue my role. I will serve, be Ixiptlatli to serve my people. The border is broken by her love, her teaching. Life in the Borderlands is life. I am theory – I am the word - I am Chicano.

The Present - [II] Work of the Poet

This dissertation is the clarification of the present. Chapters one to three are the works of the poet: heterarchic, iterative, circular, holistic, indeterminate, and tactile (Fenelon & LeBeau, 2005; Nichols, 1991; Rýser, 2015). I wrote these three chapters first. Then created the poem to explain my purpose – just as the rest of the dissertation – stating one before the other creates a sense of linearity where a circular conceptualization is better situated. My task, as the poem indicates, is to stand against the mechanism of power, however, I may be able to do so. Oppression can no longer be accepted and call to action may take shape in my pedagogical pursuits, curricular activities, and adaptations of the mechanism of academia. I took a step to that end when I believed I should. I received a letter indicating that my complaint has not been supported by the evidence, it was an unfounded claim. Officially there was no discriminatory practice in place for the hiring of the position for which I had applied, for every single one of my complaints there was no finding of any wrongdoing at any time and of any type (Nadal, Mazzula, Rivera, & Fujii-Doe, 2014). This is of course from the perception of that who has not been wronged. This is the institution that has failed to acknowledge humanity.

He's Don Quixote slaying windmills he said of me. Are they spinning a yarn of veracity or leading me through visions of falsehood? Francisco Guajardo spoke with a bit of flippant attitude in his voice (Ramirez, in press). Not uncommon, in jest and seriousness (Vazquez et al., 2006). I, adorned in my garb of knighthood, seek out to protect my Dulcinea's honor and to be a knight errant. I am not trounced though as I do my duty. Not deranged, but saner than others would allow me to claim. I wrote of this 25 years ago in Mrs. O'Hare's class. When I first read Don Quixote.

I am working in an institution that often fails to privilege the values of our community. My work is to avoid becoming the angry Chicano, in South Texas I should be the happiest Chicano in this nation (Castillo et al., 2006). I was hired as the first faculty member at this or its legacy institutions, specifically to teach Mexican American Studies. Existing here in the middle of my people, I should be jubilant. Although I'm hurt and I'm saddened my research has to go in this direction - I have to be among those that stands up for the good fight (Ramirez, in press). I have to be among those that continues to bring this to the light. I have to be a champion for my students (Perez & Taylor, 2016) I have to be a champion for this cause (Taylor, Gonzalez, & Wood, 2008). It would seem that my research agenda has been developed. I'll be continuing to extend my dissertation work, and I will continue in this area looking at racial/ethnic biases that are perpetrated against us at the various levels of the academy. This is in policy, procedure, hiring practices, research, discrimination, graduate student selection, and the like.

My tia's store was in Alamo. I remember sitting in the heat, oppressive in its weight at the end of the day. The fan slowly turned. The feeling of welcome and exuberance though was overwhelming. In the tortillería, we sat and talked. En las tienditas de mi familia, the smells of life were around us always. The hum of an aging refrigerator to keep the glass bottled Cokes and Sprites cold and the wafting of masa were sensory delights. The store was closed but the sales never ended. While visiting we relaxed in the heat, seated in the shade or by the fan, we conversed. We were home. A trip home was never complete though until we had visited Spot Burger (a small "greasy spoon" joint) on the corner of 14th and Cano in Edinburg and consumed a fish burger, come to the grounds of Pan American College, and for me – smelling the maseca flour from the Azteca Milling plant.

I am at home here, when the north winds blow and bring the cold fronts, some run for warmer locales, contrarily the cold airs bring warm feelings of hearth and home and I know that I am home. The university is my home. I sit here in the Center for Mexican American Studies, with small groups and friends, we share pan dulce and drink coffee. We talk of our work, writing, research, family, friends, emotions, and challenges. The wind that brings the masa smell brings with it challenge, opportunity, and memory. It brings an opportunity for a new struggle and it brings an opportunity for the struggle of students on the campus. The life here is my life. I am the circle of life and experience. Deemed unknowing or perhaps odd, I write, I explain, challenge, and fight the good fight (Turner, Gonzalez, & Wood, 2008) because I am Don Quixote de la Mancha. I am a champion of the cause - I am (Ramirez, in press).

The Future – [III] ... I am the rascuache academic

This story has not yet been told, it is the creation that is to be. It is however not just a new story but a reiteration of the stories of which I am a part (Kallio, 2015). There is nothing new in the next moment, only an experience to be perceived and a meaning to be understood. One way to think of this is that we create the story by doing the work, that what story is told of it is just as much a result of the actions taken as the manner in which we look at it (Horton & Freire, 1990; Machado, n.d.). The future story is about creating the space for plática, about being gracious, and about not just using my story to explain my-self, but to tell story to create my-self (Guajardo, Guajardo, & Locke, 2017). The work we do in academia, being faculty, requires that we take steps to protect the work of academia. That means we study, question, and teach. We do so in the context of the people we share this path with. My future is to honor that, the present,

and the past. To be an educational leader I must not be as the point of a blade, but the broad edge behind it. I must be the block of stability and the support.

This is the work that I do. I am a member of our community, with the role of an educator and an educational leader, I therefore navigate and negotiate relational contexts to make the structure a better place for the space of learning – not schooling – because when we learn we lead together for a better life. I summered in the Berkshires this last year. Admittedly I was not vacationing, but borrowing an experience that I usually would not have had. I spent a little time in the region of Hawthorne, Melville, and Wharton – literary classicists who were constructing future works in their present, our past. I too was motivated to write, to exercise my academic privilege to engage in the right of dialogue with colleagues and peers. It inspired my work with a desire to change an organization and force awareness of issues of bigotry and discrimination – not just in our larger society, but within the confines of our own protected enclave and self-inscribed organization. The time we spent was supposed to result in the plan for our annual gathering six months later. We left with more questions than answers. I then took the opportunity to work. I exercised my authority as subject, not object, to object to the assumptions we make about approaches, terms, values, and society. Specifically, I was arguing against the larger uses of Democracy in a society that hides its bigotry in calls for equality, recognizing the lack of parity in opportunity makes this impossible but simultaneously absolves the society of responsibility – placing blame on individuals for societal ills. I still think we need to dialogue, not discuss. We need to engage in a long-term plan to recognize, change, value, accept, and detail our thoughts. In our hopes to make a better world, we leave it to hope and fail to act; we speak no good, hear no good, and see no good. Not a sentiment of control, we have done that to nature through panels, dams, and windmills – the new ecology of the Berkshires. Bet we have

not conversed, dialogued, or engaged during a stroll to see the fog lift, to appreciate the caw of the crows, and to add our whisper to the wind as we speak to Gaia, Tonantzin... our mother.

For this modern age, I wrote a rather lengthy epistle in which I described my perception of our combined efforts over the previous two years. That we were engaged with them to demonstrate pedagogical approaches of place based learning in a culturally relevant context. I continue to involve myself with this group – I journeyed to our next junta and I am still hoping to continue to shape its actions. I am exercising leadership in the spirit of democracy.

As an educator, scholar, human I cannot call upon the memory and values of Paulo Freire and then not engage with his philosophical underpinnings. I cannot engage with the memory of Myles Horton and then reject the value system upon which he built his life. It is one thing to say that we have been heard it is another thing to know that we have been listened to. There is little value to our society and its institutions if it will not stick to the ideals which it continuously claims to value but chooses not to learn about. If this group does believe in the values upon which it was developed it will take the time not just to reflect but to expose its inadequacies and make the valid valued attempt to make these things real.

CHAPER VI

EL EPISTOLARIO DE FIDÉL

I am theory – I am the word - I am Chicano! This trinity has followed me, us, through this exultation. I write first to you, this system, our hegemonic conglomeration of academia, posited as a beacon of hope, the Ivory Tower. In this first letter, I also write to you my collegial confederacy that supports this structure, my colleagues and associates, not a diatribe to flounce against the system, but a letter of hope. I write a second letter to you, to complete my thoughts. I write to you, my friends and my peers to explain who we are and where we are going. Then, I write to my progressive friends – those who lay claim to these types of works. Last, I write once more to you my colleagues, this body of the academy, to explain my thoughts as I presented them at my final defense of this document. This is an addendum expected by some of my committee.

The First Epistle of Fidél: Guido In the Tower

I am locked into this system (Perez Huber & Cueva, 2012). I don't want to provide a chapter on results followed by suggestions and conclusions (Trinch, 2009). You should recognize by now that my work doesn't lend itself to that (File-Muriel, 2013). However, I also recognize that I am producing a work to satisfy your requirements. So I consent to the needs of this body: the committee; the graduate college; the university; and to you, the collective body of our work – the disciples of our social science, the purveyors of knowledge, the field of educational leadership (Cho & Trent, 2006). I acquiesce to a degree (Herr & Anderson, 2014),

but also take this opportunity to address you directly. I do this in my voice as I've been doing, but through a different mechanism – not just in my voice but with a new intent to address you singularly as a soul rather than as my contemporary in research (Albert & Couture, 2014). I use the form of a letter here to make this more private and of use to us (Baldwin, 1962; Coates, 2015; Cole, 2006; Wilson, 2008; Willis, 2009)

I know that you want to have closure. You have joined me in this voyage and at the end, the arrival, there is often a sense of termination to the voyage of the dissertation (Spriestersbach & Henry, 1978). I can't offer that to you. I can though help you to see what I've learned, what is important to our venture, what is important to our discipline (Herr & Anderson, 2014). Just as elsewhere in this document I will use story and poetry.

I come from a Place...

I come from a place defined by the lines
re-created by man and earth
From a place in which re-birth is constant
From a place that shelters, re-shelters,
And ex-poses.

I come from a place that is isolated but
not alone and definitely not lonely
From a place that provides for growth, love,
and peace; but is plagued by the vision
of violence, hatred, and stagnation
From a place where I am of, not of,
for, and with.

From a place that is privileged and not marginalized... but is.
I come from a place in which the line is a construct
and the construction a wall to keep one from the other
to keep both from Being one, but fails because it unifies instead
I come from a place that is one and in one
Is love, peace, and joy... because it is our place.
Find your own epistemology!
Acknowledge your own path!
Search for your self!
Own your identity and purpose!

I lived your experience in my path to an education – in the path to this degree (Holdaway, 1994). But along the way I accepted your vision, reflected that practice, and practiced your ways (Weidmer, Twale, & Stein, 2001). While doing so, I let him down. He didn't fail to pass the comps. We failed to prepare him for the comps, meeting on Saturdays for months. We met and had coffee. We spent way too much time on the first domain. That was my fault. I accept that and hope that I'm forgiven for that too. I didn't provide the direction I should have. I didn't do what I was supposed to be doing. Lisa is the pioneer and Ernesto is the bull. We, in community, create our work but rely on each other to be better. But by following your model, I failed him because I didn't respect his humanity. I depended on the material, not the relationship. Since then I've accepted my place in this dissertation work, and happily I've been surpassed by one who started behind me – I've unlocked a door with my proposal, she has swung the door wide open with her defense.

The Second Epistle of Fidél: En La Colonia

I write once more to you my colleagues, mis colegas, the discipline, this body politic. Sitting here, comfortable and secure en nuestra colonia, I take this opportunity to address our comfort. Too often the charges of our work are fashioned from the outside. External powers shape us and dictate our actions. We react, ebb and flow, and tack the waves of this ocean of influence (Katz, 1976). This isn't a bad thing if we involve the community in our actions. If, however, the external mechanism of change must exist because we are resistant, because we are too comfortable, we are the problem (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009). A mentor explained to me that all major changes to organizations stem from external factors (personal communication, Dan Dearth, Fall 2002). An organization tends to take on living characteristics, it consumes

resources, it grows, it may reproduce, and it strives for survival (Etzioni, 1968). All major changes to the institution of education in our country are the result of external factors. Public universities for the masses were the result of the Morrill Act in 1862 (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009), changes in admissions and structure of universities today are due to the GI Bill and WWII (Turner & Bound, 2003), the expansion of the community college is due to economics (Kasper, 2003), and the proliferation of private for-profit institutions are due to the lack of vision in a changing environment and technological advances (Christnese, Horn, Caldera, & Soares, 2011). The very bastion of law and equality, the law school, only changed admitting black students to predominantly white institutions because of the Supreme Court decision in Sweatt, v Painter (Enkin, 1986). Every change required an external force. It is time we change that. We have the responsibility, the sacred charge, to grow like an organism as each of us does the work (not the profession) of teaching. Surrounded by the accoutrements of our positions, mired in the process of our service requirements to our institutions, we dedicate countless hours to committee meetings, reports and updates of initiatives, performing administrative tasks of scheduling, verification, and the endless communiques which occupy our time as we search through our emails for deadlines, submission dates for conferences and funding to such conferences, and then the vast number of student concerns. We are like clogged arteries building pressure and stymying the productivity of our efforts.

The disruptive innovators (Christensen, 1997) are blocking our work. We find ourselves amidst a decade of debate on higher education which focuses here on the creation of a system, which we as an organization fight against, because it is a model that looks to students as either product or commodity. Neither of which any of us can agree to, as we don't know how to

measure the success of good production in higher education or we don't like to consider our students as consumers paying for service and dictating the means of that service provision.

But I write to you as, and to encourage your development of, dare I say, the disruptive innovator (Christensen, 1997; Christensen, Raynor, & McDonald, 2015). I urge, in this work, and in my work to redefine, reshape, re-frame our educational environment. We make the center of our existence the disruption because it makes our students the center of existence itself (Breunig, 2017; Rendon, 2009). As we learn of our being, privilege voice and dialogue, give in to our spirituality, animus, spiritus we pride ourselves as people – not functionaries. We dictate to our discipline that being an educational leader is not managing the resources around us; it is being a resource to those around us. We can't serve others through until we know who we are and what we value.

I challenge you to consider who you are, just as I have. I ask that you be a disruptor in the best sense. The environment around us has been static and has not, in its current iteration, been a member of community (Block, 2008; McKnight & Block, 2012) – although it has indubitably been located in communities. It has dictated to others what learning entails rather than learning what our compatriots and neighbors need (Freire, 2000). Value yourself and value others – don't elevate yourself as the pinnacle of education because we are fortunate enough to be in academia. Let us dismantle the ivory tower and create the Camelot of education – sit in circles, de-emphasize the crown of knowledge and depend on the contributions of our neighbors to formulate the society we all have a responsibility to create. To disrupt is to create the conditions for this occur. My calling, your task, is to do this work so that we provide the means for our students to develop as people and the society in which we contribute to prosper.

My intent is not to be divisive, but discursive. Placing myself in the borderlands, en la Frontera, means I am the new Nepantlera guide for you, for us, for those that came before, come along, and come after us. We cannot allow the divide that exists among the formally educated and those that seek that education to be the gulf that maintains the abyss which cannot be fathomed in terms of leadership, educational structure, and our institutions. I cannot allow myself to be a pawn of the structure, but a pawn in the fight against the structure of stability which maintains the hegemonic processes that continue to widen the rift within our country - viewed in terms of economic gains, wealth production, and position. As that pawn, I serve not as a bridge, but as a builder of bridges.

My work may suggest that I have an oppositional character, which is too easy. I have learned that I am more than that. To rectify a situation by opposing it is not a style of leadership more so than it is the process of avoiding the work of leading others to change. I am a developer of the means to coalesce which allows for discussion and understanding. It is politics that is leadership and a leader that is political.

The Third Epistle of Fidél: El Jardín Del Edén

Friends, - mis herman@s, I now turn to you. I take this opportunity to address you directly. I don't address you second, as in a hierarchical system in which you are displaced. I should hope that by now you recognize how I value you above the structure. I elected to address them first, because they most likely need to have me address them directly and prominently in this, the "last chapter." You, however, know the path and that we have been in this together from the beginning. I write not to educate you, but to close this circle; not end it but to provide the means by which we can allow it to continue as a circle.

You will be asked about the value of your work, a question you must remember one of our faculty describing as having a particular meaning – what does your study contribute to the body of knowledge? He tells us that only three responses fit – to contribute to the practical body of knowledge, the pure theoretical body of knowledge, or the applied body of knowledge. Rarely will it contribute to more than one, but likely never all three (personal communication, Ralph Carlson, Fall 2008). I suggest differently. By doing this work, I have situated myself within the body of knowledge and have created the conditions of scaling up this work (Coburn, 2003).

You will discover yourself at a level which allows you to understand your pedagogical approaches and to question the social norms and practical routines in which we engage as educators (Coburn, 2003). To do so will allow you to discover the principles and premises upon which you perform the life of a leader. You will learn about how your assumptions, expectations, drives, and perspectives shape you as a leader and how to utilize this to steer where you now go rather than to be led blindly. You will be a leader of scope and depth – understanding the commitment of resources to enact real change. You will value core change and adaptations more than structural surface reactions to conditions. I say to you – think of yourself now as the master craftsman, not the journeyman, constructing the foundation of your life’s work. You will consider every bit of the work from the soil itself to the mold in which you pour the foundation. You won’t be tempted to make adaptations which may suffice – you will make a new foundation because you know the value of a solid piece upon which to build for sustainability and growth rather than for a surface change (Coburn, 2003). As the master craftsman it is your obligation to teach and share your stories, to spread the knowledge, not of your own discovery, but of the manner of discovery (Lather, 2010) so that others too may have

the opportunity to make changes and learn who they are to enrich our shared systems of schooling and education (Coburn, 2003).

In making ourselves the catalyst for change we spread the embers of systemic change and fan the flames of revolution (Coburn, 2003). Further we take possession of the system we loathe and love. It is our Eros, Agape, and Philia which cause us to embrace these institutions in which we work and live. It is with contrite and humble hearts we critique and criticize our environments. It is with our jealous possession which we own and acknowledge our complacency and fight instead for reforms which mean something rather than the status quo.

Our work is about knowing, but also about changing (Lather, 2010). We do this not for accolades and credentials, but for our society. We do this to make the world a better place, one of respect, values, and life; rather than one of utility, aggrandizement, and gain (Coburn, 2003). We are producing the examples of the new touchstones of quality (Moss, Phillips, Erickson, Floden, Lather, & Schneider, 2009). We produce our work within the contexts of our lives – creating the sense of history and philosophy of research and recognizing the politic of inquiry rather than privileging the technical or procedural to demonstrate the fluid nature of understanding and inquiry to relate an understanding that knowledge is not known, acquired or transmitted in only one fashion and like that one dominant paradigm is just as valuable and of worth (Willis, 2009).

It is my responsibility to converse with you. All of my readers. I have done quite a bit of reading, and I found quite a bit of it to be of use to me. This letter is specifically to a few colleagues of mine, those who select to follow my path for their discovery. I have worn a path in this vegetation of the literature; some of the flora among us is sweet to smell and takes us from our primary path. Unless you have the gumption to test every flower for your use, I suggest you

do what every good curandero does, learn from your Nepantlera guide. I hope to be that guide for you now that you have witnessed my journey. I give you then this guide, my dissertation, to find what is of use for your ails and to keep you healthy on your voyage. From within the panopticon, I put pen to paper and compose for you my greatest wish, for you to find your freedom as I have found mine. These are the themes as I see them and experience them, these are the themes that organize my work, these are the means by which I understand these themes, and these are the explanations of these themes.

I journaled, not in the sense of having the rustic leather bound sheets of paper, but I did that too. Most of it has been here at the computer. Day after day I recognize that I have been journaling and discovering and revealing, maybe interrogating my psyche. I have been writing about and telling stories of my life. I've done this in a number of ways, to sit at the computer and write, to write and then type them at the computer. But most of all, to talk and share and tell stories. I have told them in class, to my colleagues, to my peers, to my students, to my family, to myself. I've dictated story, because story is best explicated through the spoken media, rather than in the written form. Maybe from a perspective of a non-Indigenous perspective only the written word make sense, but from my epistemological frame of reference, the spirituality which I espouse, the spoken word is humanity, the written word is a shadow of my humanity. It is to the pages of this document that I commend my soul, my shadow burnt into the pages by laser and ink on one level, but more realistically as a result of the light of truth that burns from my spirit. So here I think aloud about the challenges I've faced, periods of elation and desolation, relationships – both treasured and despised, I use theories to explain my stance, with the understanding that I am theory – I am the metatheory that uses elements of others to explain and to be explained.

The Fourth Epistle of Fidél: a Mis Hermanxs Que Practica La Pedagogía Progresista

Maybe I'm too obtuse, naïve, ignorant, or just plain myopic. Since August of 2016 when I met with some of you to develop our next opportunity to have a discussion, I've been back to my work, back to my thoughts, taking the opportunity to reflect and grow, and considering what I have experienced. I've been on this journey with a group of educators, activists, organizers, friends ... progressives, from around the country since 2014, a few months after I started this dissertation process. I write this letter to you, my progressive compatriots. You tell me that education is about democracy. I am still struggling with democracy, because I think that there is a better term – perhaps it has been so poisoned that it is not yet a term that we, the minoritized of this nation, can appropriate and own, perhaps it's just me (Boyte, 2003; Chomsky, 2000; Dewey, 1916).

There is an epistemological, ontological, and axiological difference in what Dewey understood and experienced as democracy and what we know of democracy as minoritized peoples of this nation (Boyte, 2003; Papastephanou, 2017; Zinn, 1995). Dewey makes the claim that democracy is the result of external motivation, the growth and control of an environment for the benefit of people – the purpose of democracy is then for the sustaining of this control of life; however it is framed for the benefit of masses, it is about dominance (Dewey, 1916). I find the philosophical underpinnings of this form of democracy to be antithetical to a valid approach to life. We can all benefit of course from a situation in which decisions are made to share resources across a diverse group of people. But it doesn't mean that I understand, value, or appreciate that. My perspective is about relational development. If we can dialogue, discuss, deliberate, and experience together we can come to an understanding about the best sharing of resources that allows for us to flourish and the environment in which we exist to do the same. To develop a

system of education around the first approach is to develop a system that allows for **equal** access to the resources and the outcomes of life, **justice**. To develop a system of education around the second is to allow for **equity** and **fairness**. Dewey (1916) would agree with my assessment – if that is he believed in his own, that it is in multiple experiences and the diversity and richness of those experiences that the dialogue occurs which leads to learning (Dewey, 1938). A system that fails to allow for criticism, dialogue, and creativity is not a democracy, regardless of what we elect to call it or hope for it. We have to change it instead.

The wind whispers in its gentle breeze, sometimes screaming in a gale force but we fail to listen

So we live without hearing

The sun shines daily illuminating a path sometimes burning its mark even on our skin, but we fail to see

So we stumble blindly

The waters babble in our brooks, roar through its falls, and lie still awaiting our contribution to the sounds in the lakes and ponds, but we fail to converse

So we live dumbly

In our hopes to make a better world, we leave it to hope and fail to act, we

I recall that since 2014, many of you – prominent in the world of progressive education – were invited to our space, the Valley, our home and you accepted. You toured our home, visited with its occupants, and learned something of what was here. This was not just a sojourn in some physical space so that you could learn of this place and move on. It was place based learning as

an objective to come and learn, then to share with our inhabitants. Not for the sake of telling us best practices, the perspective I got from this – as statements were made that our manner of education was not progressive, as defined by some practitioners within this group, that the culture you experienced was nice, but that it doesn't offer material for discussion, and that too much time was spent in the community rather than in our schools. It was a journey to our **cultural space**, to our **emotional space**, of which schools are one component.

I spoke with you of democracy; we didn't dialogue or discuss it though. We have different experiences that frame our views and understanding. We made ourselves vulnerable by inviting you to our space – we hoped for exploration and understanding, at least for consideration, but the experiences are not yet enough. As I work with you, you seek a moratorium on the spirit of democracy (my perception of your understanding) while at the same time invoking its name for the sake of a spiritual stability. Democracy is defined by a sense of transitive consciousness. The action of which is not just with concurrence, but by the influence of the people. Freire tells us that this cannot be except through deliberation and dialogue (1970). In name only, Dewey tells us in his writing, does democracy exist in this country. He argues that it is experience which is democratic; democracy is not the goal to be achieved but the process to be had (Dewey, 1938). A view I don't think we share in practice although a concept to which we speak. I may be wrong and hope that I am, but this hasn't been shared with me (we have yet to have the dialogue). But we need that. We need to foster a relationship among us so that we can experience together and learn, so that we can be equal and appreciative of the diversity that makes us people. The relationships we build foster equality because it is in respecting each other and creating the means by which equity is achieved that a democracy is made.

As I understand democracy in education, it is about growth and appropriate learning conducted in a fashion that allows for individual values and respects rights. Yet we are all aware of the structures in which many of us were educated as well as schooled. These are often decidedly not democratic even if many of them indicate or insinuate that. The value of a democratic education is in the application of the ideals across the various communities and organizations of which one is a part. Voice absent those values is an exercise in privilege. An exercise the minoritized peoples do not readily have available.

Speak no good, hear no good, and see no good. Not a sentiment of control, we have done that to nature through panels, dams, and windmills – the new ecology of the Berkshires. Bet we have not conversed, dialogued, engaged during a stroll to see the fog lift, to appreciate the caw of the crows, and to add our whisper to the wind as we speak to Gaia, Tonantzin... our mother.

We live in a society in which the institutions designed to protect and develop democracy are decidedly against it. Just in the case of justice, we find a system in which there are more minoritized peoples in our prisons than in our schools of higher learning. Just as democracy is seen as a natural condition by our society, so is the incarceration/detention/arrest of the most marginalized populations of our country (Coates, 2015; Reiman, 2003).

When the courts work in favor of marginalized populations, it is for a society that craves equality rather than equity. Equality, equal access to opportunity or resources, not equity has led to a situation in our country where we fool ourselves into believing that anyone can have upward mobility and that this is what puts us all on the same page. So we have more African Americans

and Latinos enrolling in higher education than ever before, and we have Presidents, Senators, Executives that appear to be like us, but we find that even with those accomplishments that as a people we are woefully behind and continue to be treated as less than what we are. The current then in the country is that as people of color assume these marks of distinction that they are the norm, not a unique incident. That the lack of equality is the result of an abhorrent value system that rejects the means by which advancement can be made and one embraced by those that are marginalized by the greater (numerical not worth) society.

The barriers to marginalized populations success are still so entrenched in our democracy because of the search for equality, a concept that benefits those in power, that the look behind the curtain in Oz reveals a society that is more segregated than possibly at any time in our history. If de Tocqueville is correct (1840), what I say here will be accepted as a part of our evolving dialogue. If it is out of bounds (though materially appropriate as an exercise of my voice and speech) then the message may be ostracized and rejected and I in our current atmosphere subjected to an auto de fe - por mi culpa, por mi culpa, por mi gran culpa.

I find it concerning that progressives have discussed democracy in the past and have yet to come to grips with democracy in its midst; but then again, we have differing views of what democracy is. We make a claim to the term democracy and democratic processes yet fail to include in our discussion how our structures designed for its very protection, fail us. Time after time we call upon the memories and the influences of educators, philosophers, historians, administrators, teachers, Community organizers, in all people, to the effect of not just reverence but for the invocation of their thoughts and hopes. We cannot call upon the memories and then not institute those set of values and not engage with these philosophical underpinnings.

What I see when I look to you is hope, the future, change, and opportunity. I do not see a group that chooses instead to wed itself to ideas that have been developed and fostered within a societal context that rejects the very values which it proposes to uphold. I speak to the term of democracy. The danger of the utilization of this very concept within the structure of a body that purports to foster equality is that by it's very design it works for the power structure. It is easy to resign oneself to the great philosophical aspects of justice and equality when one is in power

The value of it only shines through when it is designed to protect the minority. I do not speak to race, gender, or any other value upon which we have chosen to marginalize elements of our society. What I speak to is the power to squelch it by the authority. With the stroke of the value of equality and fairness of the democracy, by the power of the majority, our minority and minoritized voice is quashed. The work to which we ascribe our lives Is not to just speak in the sense of words but to make the word the flesh, to make the word the life, to empower the word through voice, through action, and through community

We are a loose confederation of similarly minded individuals. A confederation based upon some general concepts but we must be more than that. I call upon you to join with me in a community to expose our shortcomings, to place value upon the action of valid attempts to continue to fail together as we seek success. Race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or disability - you name the element of which we marginalize others, and that should be our strength together.

I come from a Place...
I come from a place defined by the lines
re-created by man and earth
From a place in which re-birth is constant
From a place that shelters, re-shelters,
And ex-poses.
I come from a place that is isolated but
not alone and definitely not lonely

From a place that provides for growth, love,
and peace; but is plagued by the vision
of violence, hatred, and stagnation
From a place where I am of, not of,
for, and with.

From a place that is privileged and not marginalized... but is.
I come from a place in which the line is a construct
and the construction a wall to keep one from the other
to keep both from Being one, but fails because it unifies instead
I come from a place that is one and in one
Is love, peace, and joy... because it is our place.

E. Fidél Ramírez – 7/18/2016

CHAPTER VII

A WRIT, IN RE ERNESTO FIDÉL RAMÍREZ – SATISFICING THE STIPULATIONS OF LA LIBÉRATION CONDITIONNELLE

I am theory – I am the word - I am Chicano! As any marginalized academic knows, the pursuit of work that removes the barriers is akin to declaring a desire to work against the very system that employs you. Furthermore, it is as if you are asking the institution to admit its faults while you present them with those very same concerns, not a popular action! We are all in a prison of one sort or another. The institutions of education and incarceration are cousins. We are all conditioned to the system of advancement, formal education, obtaining degrees, and moving forward on the tenure track. We are not ending anything when we graduate, but only beginning (Personal Communication, Guy Bailey, April 24, 2017). We are therefore not granted an exit from the system, but are granted a different way in which to interact with that system. This chapter is my application to you, this dissertation the evidence, for an opportunity to interact with this system in a different fashion.

This is my last address to you – another letter, more formal in the case of what I expect, and not any less important than the epistolary which it follows – my colleagues, my fellow academics/faculty/researchers, the gatekeepers of the sacred keep, the ivory tower. I write to you using story, telling a story, telling you of my final defense. I write to you to keep my promise, to clarify along the way, to share my experience with you.

I came to our venue, the academy, for my final defense - to come before the committee and the community of our colleagues to answer for my work. After all, the last step before this work is accepted is a public defense. Campus was calm, the winds were also. There were no warnings or ominous moods hanging in the air. I was not being told or guided by the winds what to do. I was instead being supported, and calmed by the gentle southeasterly breeze. The air was warm and gentle, hugging at my body and mind as I entered the building. So, I arrived, early as usual, and went to set up the Borderlands Room, an apropos location for my work. I lay out the pan dulce and the stanzas of my poem from my first defense. My friends, family, colleagues, and community began to arrive and I was ready for my penultimate plática. When all had arrived and the public was ready, I began.

First, to establish the correct mental state and mindfulness of temporality, I asked for a moment of reflection, through which I invoked the words of a Chicana scholar to honor the seekers of the truth (Rendon, 2000). I then described from where I come. Just as I wrote to you here in my First Epistle, I read the poem to explain my positionality, both geographically and philosophically. It is absolutely paramount that you know where I am come from in both contexts and in relation to time to understand me. Where I am from decides what I do.

You must know then that I am of the border, the borderlands, la frontera, of the frontier, so it is then that I explore the frontiers of education as a pioneer. These geographic borderlands have existed in this region for hundreds of years, and so the frontiers of education, the borderlands, have also existed for years. In a traditional sense, this means that the field is uninterested in continuing to explore this area as it has existed for many years. I push forward instead, against the conventional, because I believe we need to change the field, the discipline, and to make advances for our people.

In her 2001 address to the University Council for Educational Administration, María Luisa Gonzalez argued that educational leadership requires moving from the alienated to the integrated. We must learn to communicate not with the same language, but with the same meaning. My work is a foray in to that exploration – to convey my understanding for a shared meaning with the discipline and field of education. I embrace my spirituality and recognize that we communicate in a number of means, not just with a spoken language. I feel the winds and recognize that there is a message there. The rustling of the leaves on the tree speaks to me. The task is to learn how to communicate with the varying constituencies of our every breath. I can learn to listen, but to understand requires more work. There are a variety of elements in our lives that speak to us. These are the constituencies with which I learn and work. It is for our students, colleagues, fellows, that I do this work. To break down the walls as borders and to instead reach out across the frontiers.

As I established communication, and the need to open one's mind for messages not spoken of, I introduced just four stories from my dissertation, this work. I re-counted of the lives of el Cuervo, la Paloma, el Fenix, y el Tecolote as I have experienced them. I shared my stories as they have been designed to be, orally. I heard the words and spoke them and this iteration was as different as every other, and I freed those thoughts for your interpretations and understanding. I cannot dictate that to you, it would be no better than preparing you a meal and telling you how you are to enjoy it and in which order you are to consume its components.

Some important questions were raised as a critique of this work. Some concerns existed for my committee as they explored my written story. But this was addressed. I don't tell a feel-good story. This is not an autobiography. I don't pull the best elements of my life and focus on my accolades, I instead focus on my life as a means by which to interpret my actions. My

research is of importance to the discipline. In March of 2016, A Blueprint for Improving Educational Outcomes for Black and Latino Men was released. This document by Victor Sáenz, of The University of Texas at Austin (UT), and Luis Ponjuán, of Texas A&M University, provides an argument for action among institutions of higher education across the country and here in Texas. This is supported by the American Council on Education and the State of Texas.

My dissertation specifically addresses the first point, now recognized as essential in the discipline of educational leadership: discovering la historia, el cuento, of success among the males of color, nosotros. Sáenz and Ponjuán (2016) explain that as men of color, Latinx/Chicanx/Chicanos, we have **the** story to tell. That already among the data there are too many findings that have been centered on the whole, to the detriment of the specific. By delivering my narrative, I am contributing to the understanding of the phenomena as well. Second my story argues that my success is a result of the community of partnerships in which I exist. I have my guides who have greater networks that also take me to new levels of discovery. This practice is an act to address the demolition of the silos in which we exist and to look at the browning of the ivory tower as a mechanism of success.

I do this work, I address you, because this place is not particularly safe, as safe and as privileged as I am. I recognize that I am privileged, on many levels. As a student, I've stated this before, I should be in the safest place to do this work, but I am not. We are not. I therefore must do this because it is not safe. I do this for our community, not for myself. I do this because I have the political power to do so. I am not in a position of authority or power, but I have my power to leverage. My community is the testimony to that. As I look around the room at this public defense I see people who support me from a variety of positions. They may not support the work, but they support me as I do it. This is the power I leverage, connection and humanity,

the spoken word and the handshake, the respect of learning their stories. The Dean and the Associate Dean of the College of Liberal Arts await word on my defense, the Director of a School in the College of Health Affairs is there with a faculty member from his school. A Director in student affairs was there, a Director of a university wide program is in the audience along with several faculty from that program. Even the Provost, the Deputy President, and the President of the University ask me about my defense and allow me time to tell them the story. But more importantly, sitting in the audience are my family and friends. My parents are there to support me, my students came to support me, my colleagues and friends from the Center for Mexican American Studies, the Center for Bilingual Studies, and B3 are there. My fellow learners, doctoral students, graduate students, undergraduate students are also there. This defense was a defense of them and for them.

Leadership is personal, it is about our values and our care (Byrne-Jimenez, 2016). I reclaim myself so that I may be a leader for others who come along the same path. I do this because I experience life as a person who is still marginalized, and there are others who are even further underrepresented here in academia: women, LGBTQIA, those labeled as disabled, and any intersection of what lies between and among the labels. I do this because we must tell our story to create the narrative of study that is the Mexican American experience as we know it today, because when we don't tell our story, others elect to create a story about us (Saldaña, 2017). What I mean with my work is to talk to issues of Epistemic Violence (disappearing of knowledge) and Epistemic Justice (ability to communicate).

Although post-critical ethnographic approaches focus on the use of critique, a deeper and unequivocal evaluation of self occurs in the specific use of autoethnographic practices to address the issues of justice and violence (Boyd; 2008; Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011; Sykes, 2014).

Autoethnography dispatches the assumption of neutrality and objectivity preferred in scientific or positivistic approaches (Chavez, 2012; Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011; Zinn, 1989). It bases interpretations in the extant literature and through theoretical expansions (Bochner, 2012; Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011) with inquiry and investigation at its core.

Through my reclamation of my own Indigeneity the autoethnographic honors the knowledges of the colonized/marginalized person and rebuffs the normalcy of colonizing ways (Ayala, 2008; Chavez, 2012; Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011; Richardson, 1995), this is doing the public good (Ayala, 2008; Gonzalez & Padilla, 2008; Hurtado, Hurtado, & Hurtado, 2008). The story in text allows others to know the thoughts of the researcher, it changes both the researcher and reader (Boyd, 2008; Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011; Ellis & Bochner, 2006; Sykes, 2014). Autoethnography values los cuentos as the wellspring of the truths of life and experience - adversity, marginalization, opposition, and dysfunction (Ayala, 2008; Bochner, 2012; Chavez, 2012; Denzin, 2006; Ellis & Bochner, 2006; Gonzalez & Padilla, 2008; Hurtado, Hurtado, & Hurtado, 2008; Rendon, 1992; Richardson, 1995; Sykes, 2014; Vásquez, 1972).

Rigor

I know that this is somewhat difficult to accept, especially as many of you have been reared academically through a lens that seeks a function rather than an exploration. You want to fall back on the concepts we were all taught as neophytes to this discipline. Rigor comes to mind. Rigor is “the means by which we show integrity and competence: it is about ethics and politics, regardless of the paradigm” (Tobin & Begley, 2004). The question raised to me is about the contiguity of this approach. Holt (2003) explains that the self, the story one owns, comes in the context of the social, it is thus the sole source of data ever needed. Contiguousness exists as

the autoethnographic work is the story of the self in the cultural. It is collaborative as it has been developed with others (Figueroa & Rodriguez, 2015).

Tracy (2010, p. 849) cautions that it is unwise to ‘grasp too strongly’ at any list of criteria and cites Ellis (2007) as commenting that good qualitative methodologists conduct research in the way they conduct themselves in their personal lives and ‘seek the good’ with the key being honesty towards self and the audience for whom the research is intended. It is therefore necessary to exclude the checklist as the means by which rigor is obtained and to recognize that it exists in a variety of forms.

It exists in changing both self and others. Ellis (2016) tells us that writing your story is an act of changing others and self. As I’ve laid out elsewhere, my written document is an iteration of the story told, the story I’ve shared with many. Over the course of the last three years we have sat in circles in many venues, we have collaborated and shared, been heartbroken and invigorated, shared successes and obstacles, been colleagues and friends – families. We have had anxiety, depression, elation, and anger.

I kept a variety of journals in which I recorded observations of the research, feelings associated with the process, details of the memories I have, perceptions of the shared and differential experiences as minority/marginalized people. This was one more source of data. These sources are supported by other documents such as e-mails, memos and letters, photographs, cards, postcards, visual slides, notes, and questions provided by my colleagues

None of those are **the** data though, they are not to be evaluated, but to be triggers for my recollection and reflection. Rigor is this: Critical consciousness-building and recognizing that the lived experience matters. We must be careful to not succumb to foundationalism, a checkmark method of determining rigor. Both in the academic pursuits and in the

personal/professional development realm, we attend to the complexity of who we and our students are within and beyond academia so as to facilitate a more holistic analysis of the impact and meaning of our intellectual work as Chicana/Latina scholars and educators.

In the spirit of truth-telling, we use lived experience—our own, that of our students, and that of their/our family and community members—as a crucial reminder of where we have been and what it has taken to get to this point in our lives and work. It is remarkable how easily the memory of and the value placed on lived experience is lost in the context of academic pressures to conform and adhere to dominant ways of knowing.

We must all embrace *Nepantla*, to recognize that change is a process, it is a growth of self within the context of the two seemingly exclusionary elements, the world and the self; to recognize that we are all one, just experiencing limited aspects of the world and self until we learn to pull them together. Educational leaders tend to think in this dichotomy. We face problems and challenges because we see how things are and how something is attempting to create a disequilibrium. So, we attempt to rectify the situation, rather than to rectify our understanding. What I have learned, and what we must espouse, is that we must understand to be leaders, not to be proactive or reactive, but to be active.

I was warned when I began this work, make sure that this dissertation not only looks scholarly, but is scholarly. There has been a definite attempt to maintain academic scholarship as the primary purpose of this work: the literature has been consulted; I've shared with others for dialogue and development; many drafts were written, rewritten, and written again; there has been much editing and consulting sought; it has been shaped by life experience and reflection; and a product that has followed a process of academia, performed in consultation with a chair, a mentor, a *Nepantlera* guide has been developed. To the degree, the program, and the discipline I

tell you that Rigor is a function of the “immersion in the act of research and the intense personal mentoring such should involve” (Guthrie, 2009). I have developed a product within the context of rigor and the results are worthy of such as well.

Purpose of the Degree

I elected to attend here to pursue an Ed.D., not to instead seek out the Ph.D. The purpose of earning the Ed.D. at UTRGV is to facilitate the growth of leaders charged with the goal of creating academic organizations as better places for our learners, especially those of the Rio Grande Valley. To do this we have as a goal to focus on the leadership abilities essential for the minoritized and marginalized, principally Hispanics, culturally diverse students of the RGV. My work does this. It does this specifically. To those in the discipline who view the Ed.D. as less than a Ph.D. I offer this work as a counterargument. As any PhD in Education understands when they speak with our PhD colleagues in other fields, you are also likely marginalized by the uninitiated who tend to view anything as a study of pedagogy or curriculum to be less than the study of any other particular field of study. I am doing this work to satisfy our discipline, to bring the respect that it deserves and to honor the value and quality that we know it demands, regardless of the degree earned, it is the work behind the degree that matters. Obtaining an education is a political act. It is politics that is leadership and a leader that is political. Only about 5% of all doctoral degrees conferred are earned by Latinos and less than 1% of Latino adults earn a doctoral degree. In Texas, that value has been around 3% to 6% of all doctorates since 1991, the year before I graduated from high school. We make up 19% of the population in this country and about 40% of the state population (Excelencia in Education, 2015; Pew Research Center, 2015; Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2004). My father’s family has been fighting injustice since they experienced it over 50 years ago. I do this work, because I

can! My family has taught me, and they expect me to live up to my potential. It is my generations turn to carry the mantle and make a better society for us all. I tell my story because it must be told and if I don't someone else may. As Lin-Manuel Miranda asks in *Hamilton* – Who tells your story?

My Final Thoughts and Previous Scholarly Work

We need to be the innovation, to not allow the system to maintain a status quo, but to instead be the agents of leadership and change to converse with our colleagues and to foster a well of goodness from within to come to the surface, so that we develop community and do what is right for our learners. We must possess and value the concept of the disruptive innovators (Christensen, 1997; Christensen, Raynor, & McDonald, 2015). My work has led me to understand that we must redefine, reshape, and re-frame our educational environment. We must make the center of our own existence the disruption because it makes our students the center of existence itself (Breunig, 2017; Rendon, 2009). We must dictate to our discipline that being an educational leader is not managing the resources around us; it is being a resource to those around us. We can't serve others though until we know who we are and what we value (Rendon, 2009).

Some Considerations of Restrictions and Freedoms

This type of research is heavily influenced by the understanding and skills of the researcher and guidance of others. Unlike other forms of research, this is not a formulaic practice that allows for replication and repeatability. It is difficult to convince the scientific community of the value and wealth of this approach to research as it is not often reducible to a

consistent manner of exploration. It is time consuming to collect, reflect, and evaluate the volume of data which accumulates in one's life. Although this is my story, as often as I tell it, I must be cognizant that presenting these stories as data confounds certain issues of anonymity and confidentiality. Presenting findings requires that a written form be used to cement what is traditionally organic, words in print cannot adapt as words in speech do. But of such value to this research are what others would consider limitations: I elected to study myself; I approach from the perspective of a Chicano researcher; I use an autoethnographic-testimonio approach: An autohistoria-teoria (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2002); and I approach my life with a *mojado/pocho* ethnography to address my colonization, positionality, and history (Alvarez, 2013; Norblit, 1999; Urrieta, Murillo, Johnson, & Glesne, 2003; Villenas, 1996) to stop the detribalization and reclaim Indigeneity.

CHAPTER VIII

CODA / EPÍLOGO - ¿QUIÉN SOY?

I am theory – I am the word - I am Chicano! In the last few years that I've been writing, I've taken on challenges that I've never done before, knowing me is leadership. Knowing me is strength. I've completed my work for licensure as a chemical dependency counselor, for certification as an anger resolution therapist, for certification as an educator and counselor; I've become a member of Faculty Senate, Secretary of the General Education Committee, Core Assessment Coordinator, MAS program assessment coordinator, MASC Core Curriculum Coordinator, obtained a joint appointment to the faculty of the School of Medicine as a Faculty Community Coordinator, and been promoted to Lecturer III as well as named as the Undergraduate Program Coordinator. But better and more important than that I've been a co-learner with my students and had the pleasure of being invited to their lives as colleague and friend, even more humbling – some call me mentor.

Mired in philosophical cogitations the theological impasse is translucent, made apparent by the intellectual grappling it is as fleeting as the sands of time. Once penned by the creative and liberated pneuma, the logos is suspended in the anima of the recognition of one's epistemological stance, which just as simultaneously mandates the creation of a new ontology. This axiology is me. I am theory. I am MAS. I am the word and the action and the thought. The written component of the spoken word is the embodiment of spiritus made clear through the stories one delivers and creates. I am theory – I am the word - I am Chicano.

Who am I? What is my work?

I am the child of Lazaro, the child of Sally, the son. I am a learner, a partner in growth, the friendly competition. I am...encouraged to be...challenged to grow...invited to help. I am the product of life, lives, and thoughts. I am often alone, but not lonely...there not for exile, but for solitude. It is comforting and it centers me. It allows me to ask, talk, dialogue, engage in plática because I am ready to listen and learn. I am Benito, Lazaro, Jesus, Carlos. I am caressed by love and care, and respect. I try to be that. That is my work. To be this, and live this, and demonstrate this. I am touched by Xóchitl, Guadalupe, Tonantzin, María

María

– Sally, Bianca, María

María

Amanda, Concepcion.... The maternal, to guide and nurture. To be in the presence of growth and to feed it – this is my work. To share my life so that other may also learn of themselves, because we are so often made to feel that what we are is not of value to know but to learn what others are because that instead is what is of value to know.

My work and who I am are one – to be, here, now, and valued; to recognize you, then, there, and of worth as I am. To redefine what is of privilege in the academe. All in one place and nowhere in particular. Defined by existing somewhere, but it not being important to be in only one place. Recognizing that from moment to moment we are in the past, present, and future - in all places and here, now.

Whether your take of story finishes with colorín, colorado, este cuento se ha acabado, or y vivieron felices y comieron perdices; I have to finish, con o sin safos: Érase una vez or Había una vez...

¡Soy teoría – Soy la palabra – Soy Chicano!

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Ernesto Fidél Ramírez gained experiences as a paraprofessional educator in an elementary school, as staff and faculty focused on student success at a university, and as an addictions and life-skills counselor in a residential facility of adjudicated youth. Ernesto was the first faculty member hired by the University of Texas – Pan American (UTPA) and The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) for Mexican American Studies. He currently serves at UTRGV employed as a Lecturer III and the Undergraduate Program Coordinator of the Mexican American Studies program in the School of Interdisciplinary Studies of the College of Liberal Arts and as a faculty affiliate of the Center for Mexican American Studies, an extension of the B3 Institute at UTRGV. He is also a faculty member of Interprofessional Education with the UTRGV School of Medicine serving as a Faculty Community Coordinator working with the Alamo Community Resource Center. He earned his Bachelors of General Studies degree from UTPA in 2000. He earned three master's degrees from UTPA: Criminal Justice (2000); Guidance & Counseling (2005); and Educational Administration (2007). He has additional graduate study in English, Higher Education Administration, Bilingual Studies, School Psychology, Rehabilitation Counseling, Sociology, and Educational Psychology. He earned a Graduate Certificate in Mexican American Studies from UTPA (2015). He has extensive doctoral coursework in Psychology and earned his doctoral degree, Ed.D., in Educational Leadership in 2017 from UTRGV. He is an LCDCI completing state requirements for full licensure. Ernesto may be contacted at Ernesto.Ramirez@utrgv.edu