

WE CARVE THE RIVER BY PROPELLING: AN INTERGENERATIONAL
NARRATIVE ON THE INFLUENCE OF TEXAS BILINGUAL
POLICY ON THE LIVES AND PRACTICES OF THREE
MEXICAN-AMERICAN EDUCATORS

by

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DEDICATION

Mi querida Mami,

Tu eres mi inspiración en esta vida,

en este viaje.

Tu historia es mi historia

Todo lo que hago viene con pensamientos de ti

Lo que sobreviviste, lo que sigues sobreviviendo

Lo que vives hoy en día

Todo eso es mi Fortaleza

Todo eso es quien soy.

Tu historia siempre vivará en mi corazón

Te quiero Mami con todo mi corazón. Mi Mami Perfecta.

Mami, dedico este labor de amor a ti. Nos has dado las experiencias para hacernos hijos más fuertes y dedicados. Comprende que siempre estás en mi corazón y llevo todo lo que me has dado con pasión y amor. Mientras estoy sentado aquí escribiendo, un torrente de hermosos recuerdos fluye en mis pensamientos. Me has enseñado cómo las historias son una parte integral de nuestra cultura y de nuestras vidas. Te amo con todo mi corazón y alma.

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ABSTRACT

Throughout history, the disenfranchised and oppressed have rarely had a voice or their perspective validated. By utilizing the narrative as a means to make the findings more culturally relevant, it allowed the research to be creatively told using critical ethnography and autoethnography. This research delves into the lives of three bilingual education practitioners from an historiographical standpoint. The research questions are: (1) What does an ethnographic study of bilingual education policy as lived by three intergenerational practitioners tell us about the evolution of theory, practice, and politics? (2) How has my critical ontology and identity formation developed and been informed by pedagogy, practice, and activism throughout my educational journey? The data was collected from recorded interviews, reflections, biographies, personal conversations, *pláticas*, archival data, and articles. The data findings were presented within the narrative which was structured by the anatomy of story (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2010). Because story was part of the data collection, analysis and reflection of the data were embedded in relevant parts of the narrative. From the research findings, three connected themes emerged as being part of the integral discourse in the lives of the participants.

This dissertation is divided into five main chapters and concludes with an Appendix. Chapter one introduces the lives of the participants, particularly a glimpse into the life of the author prior to becoming a teacher. It also presents the two main research questions and gives the reader a map into what the journey ahead will look like as well as the purpose of the study. Chapter two discusses past language policy of Texas beginning

at the turn of the century, past and current literature on bilingual education methods and pedagogy, and the significance of culturally relevant pedagogy. Chapter three discusses the hybrid of methods utilized including critical autoethnography, critical ethnography, storytelling, and also introduces us to the main participants of the study. This chapter also includes how anatomy of story is used to inform the study and how the various parts organically embedded themselves throughout the journey presented in chapter four. Chapter four uses story as a method to discuss, analyze, and reflect upon the findings in a creatively narrative form. Chapter five further analyzes the data and determines how the findings can be put into action at various levels by applying the ecologies of knowing (Guajardo, et al.).

The findings described how segregation led to racism and in turn informed the pedagogy and practices of policy-makers, educators, and society. Through reflective dialogue, the participants go on a journey to discover truths about themselves and about history untold. They dive deep into their own ontology and critically analyze how society and policy can push them to become stagnant or move forward. The *pláticas* revealed how desegregation remains a tool used by those in power to continue the disenfranchisement of the less powerful. Related to this, racism is also brought into the conversation as experienced by each of the participants and how it remains to be the fuel that maintains or changes policy to further disempower, in this case, bilingual educators and students. Further analysis notes how pedagogy and practice are informed by these policies. More importantly, it shows how they can become critical forms of

empowerment. Utilizing the ecologies of knowing, we discuss further praxis to make changes within the self, organizations, and communities. An invitation is given to the reader to reflect and refract from this narrative and to go on their own journey of self-discovery that brings social justice and hope to those they serve.

I. INTRODUCTION

“Caminaré más abajo. Aquí el río se hace un enredijo y puede devolverme a donde no quiero regresar.” – El hombre by Juan Rulfo

“I’ll walk more downstream. Here the river gets entangled and it may return me to where I do not want to go back to.” El hombre (The Man) by Juan Rulfo

Carlos points to a small painting above his fireplace directly across from the couch he is sitting comfortably on at in his home. As he recalls the memories of what San Marcos is to him and how it has made him who he has become, the painting metaphorically implies how the university appears to many Latino children growing up in this large town. In the foreground, a small empty boat invitingly awaits departure as it rocks back and forth along the San Marcos River. The direction of the bow faces downstream away from Texas State University, which sits majestically in the background on top of a hill. Between the riverbank where the boat sits and the university rises is the upstream of the river and the forest of trees that surround and follow the river. This is the place where each child will board their own boat and begin their life’s journey. In which direction will they go? What will they need to bring with them? Are they prepared? The impact of their voyages’ stories has been deafened by the cascading waterfalls that have powerfully paved the narrative for so long.

Many Latino children will choose to go upstream towards the university. Their struggle to move upstream is increased by the strong currents of the educational system that views them as incapable of achieving in higher education, but their resilience gives them strength. The educators in their schools who fail to make authentic networks are the decaying logs they meet along the way who bruise and batter their will, but their resilience will give them fortitude. Where do they find this and how do they/we build it?

Others in the system are like the invasive hydrilla plants swaying in the depths and shallows of the river who attempt to discourage them by tangling them with deceptions and drowning them with false promises, but their resilience will give them knowledge. Where does this resilience come from? It comes from the oars of knowledge they have built for themselves that gives them power. It comes from the wind on their backs given to them by the encouragement of family and authentic teachers. It comes from their inner strength shaped by the experiences and encounters they hold in their hands and hearts that persist in guiding their vessels upstream.

“El hombre vio que el río se encajonaba entre las paredes y se detuvo. ‘Tendré que regresar,’ dijo.

El río en estos lugares es ancho y hondo y no tropieza con ninguna piedra. Se resbala en un cauce como de aceite espeso y sucio. Y de vez en cuando se traga alguna rama en sus remolinos, sorbiéndola sin que se oiga ningún quejido.”

– *El hombre* by Juan Rulfo

“The man saw how the river would box itself within the walls and he stopped. ‘I’ll have to return,’ he said.

The river in these parts is wide and deep and does not stumble over any rock. It slides in a riverbed similar to thick and dirty oil. And every once in a while it swallows a branch in its whirlpools, absorbing it without even hearing a groan.”

- *El hombre* (The Man) by Juan Rulfo

We can envision Carlos as a young boy, waiting at the banks of the San Marcos River glancing at his boat, glancing at the university atop the hill, then glancing back at his boat with a different expression, a different mindset – a look of determination. But

then one listens to his story, and wonders – wonders if Carlos even had a boat or did he have to swim and wade the treacherous waters. Well, knowing he grew up in San Marcos during the nineteen-thirties and forties, he must have had to swim against rough rapids and climb mountains. He reached that peak, that hilltop, and has built stronger networks for those who came after him. He became Dr. Carlos Rodríguez and the director of the bilingual education department at the then, Southwest Texas State University.

The Why?

Being a bilingual educator of young minds for twenty years has given me the opportunity to observe as well as participate, albeit critically, in an organic field of changing demographics and policies. Being critical has led me to the pursuit of this doctorate and this study. As a kindergarten teacher, I witnessed district policies pushing for a quick transition to English instruction for our recently arrived English Language Learners. As a first grade teacher, I heard disheartening stories from kids who were separated from their father because he was deported back to Mexico. As a second grade teacher, I spent hundreds of dollars on bilingual resources for my students because the allocation of these campus funds were spent on other school needs. As a third grade teacher, I beheld a newly arrived student from Mexico rise from a quiet girl with no knowledge of the English language into a fierce young lady with unrivaled academic accomplishments by year's end. As a fifth grade teacher, I taught against a traditional curriculum to dare students to seek knowledge critically within the current paradigm. These and other transformational moments have authentically shaped who I am as an educator and have had more impact on my students learning than expected outcomes from a curriculum.

What are the stories of those educators who have lived within these shifting standards and yet still found ways to traverse their own paths? The objective of my study is to create a narrative involving the lives of three practitioners as they venture into the realms of policy, pedagogy, and practice. The chronicle will symbolically place these individuals, as well as others, on a voyage together although they lived in three different but sequential generations. This voyage embarked with a mission to analyze language policy using critical ethnography while revealing each individual's ontology with respect to pedagogy and practice. As a fellow navigator on this voyage, I utilized the oars of critical autoethnography as a means to look within my own storied experiences with a critical lens to determine the evolution of my identity formation. My fellow shipmates include George I. Sánchez and Carlos Rodríguez, as well as Gloria Anzaldúa, who provided us with a force of resistance. Each one was a trailblazing pioneer within their own space in place, time, and context. Although all of my companions are deceased, their lives and legacies thrive within their own writings, rich biographies, and as personal mentors. At the end of this chapter, I have provided the purpose of this study and a navigational guide to this study.

As I reflect upon the time I spent in Dr. Rodríguez's classes as an undergraduate studying bilingual education at Southwest Texas State University (now Texas State University), I often wondered about his life and how he came to this place. He reminded me of my father. They had very similar appearances and were from the same generation. If one lined up each of their silhouettes, they would match almost perfectly as in a solar eclipse: The sun greater in size yet covered by the seemingly less significant moon; it gives the moon a certain power even if I will just for a brief period. But even more

importantly, during this period, they share a particular space – a powerful space that enlightens not darkens. My father is my sun. Dr. Rodríguez is the moon that has shared a space in my life as I continue to reflect a mutual devotion towards bilingual education. We become the coronas of hope in the darkness that lies within our educational system.

My Political Formation

I introduce myself here as a political being. This has been my driving force ever since I woke up to the oppressive force pulsating on our shoulders. The oppressive force being the current educational structure. I identify it as pulsating because it has systematically and incessantly found ways circumvent equity for many students including our English Language Learners (ELL's) due to politicizing policy rather than including stakeholders and sound research. This is discussed in the narrative of chapter four as well as future recommendations for conducting policy research in the final chapter.

Politics has always been part of my life. My father breathed it in words and actions. My mother breathed the same thoughts as my father almost like an echo. I can hear her attempts at repeating his thoughts but using her own words attempting to make us believe they were her original thoughts. Our father was dominating, and for us (and our mom) his word was the truth. The origins of my political self began with my father's words and actions. My younger brother's middle name is Fidel, and my brother who passed away after only two days of life was named Ernesto; his nickname would have surely been 'Che.' My father had a pride like no other, and although his family grew up with wealth, his father kept them humble by remaining in the same home next to their grocery store until his death. This, I believe, created my father's political self. When my father took over the store, married my mother, and began creating his family, he decided

to move to Oak Cliff rather than a part of Dallas where higher income families lived called Turtle Creek. At the time, Oak Cliff was in the process of becoming a diversified part of Dallas due to ‘white flight’ and the growing immigration influx from Mexico. My dad purposefully moved us here to be part of this social movement of change. He worked with the Jimmy Carter campaign and was deeply involved in Democratic campaigns during the late seventies and early eighties.

As kids, we were not highly involved in his political endeavors or contributions, but we were witnesses to his devotion in both church and community. For our Catholic school, he was the president of the school board for some years. He then became involved with Dallas Area Interfaith (DAI), which was a multi-denominational church and community group that organized for social justice using Saul Alinsky’s methods. During our teenage years he would begin taking us to rallies and organizational meetings. He would even use terms like ‘hot anger’ and ‘cold anger’ to intimidate us when we were misbehaving or wanted something done. DAI meshed his spiritual self with his political self to become a guiding force for his life and ours, but it became disentangled when he felt the Church turned its back on him. My dad gave citizenship (he still currently does) and ESL classes during different nights of the week at St. Cecilia Catholic School, where we all attended school from kindergarten through the eighth grade. One evening, the pastor notified him that he could no longer use the rooms at the school to give his evening classes due to the school and church’s growing utility bills. My dad argued with the notion that it was vastly more important to educate our community than to save a few dollars spent using a room two times a week. From this point, my dad disenfranchised



The Dallas Morning News

Hispanic group protests beating
Published: June 26, 1996

Juan Hernandez, 21, a friend of Roy Ricardo Trujillo Jr.'s, joins about 100 people in a protest of the videotaped beating of Mr. Trujillo by a Dallas police officer. The protest, organized by La Raza Alianza, was at the JFK Memorial downtown.

Figure 1. I have been strengthened, shaped, and grounded by the plight of the disenfranchised (Davison, 1996).

himself from the church, DAI, and anything political. He became a skeptic of everything and everyone. He lost his spirit. But it really was not lost, because during this exact time of his turmoil, his spirit began to flourish within us, especially in my brother and I. We were in our initial year of community college when we met some like-minded individuals who were looking to start a Chicano student group. Although we were aware of who we were and what our culture was, my father rarely spoke to us about our cultural roots and how they relate to our political selves today. Most of our initial informal meetings regarded discussions of our ancestors and predecessors and how they relate to the political and socioeconomic issues of today. We finally named ourselves *La Raza*



Jacinto Hernandez, 41, chants during a protest on Fredericksburg against Trump. Nearly 500 people, most of them opposed to Trump, held peaceful demonstrations outside the country club.

Figure 2. With more than two decades of political activism, I have been shaped by my experiences (Gresson, 2016). These two photos (*Figures 1 & Figure 2*), published in two different newspapers, were taken nearly exactly twenty years apart.

Alianza – The Alliance of Our People. As we became more organized, we took on a variety of political issues through participation in protests, as *Figures 1* and *2* show above, letters to the media, and organizing (See Appendix A).

I began to write letters to the editorial section of the Dallas Morning News, and a few of them became part of the opinion section with other readers' submissions. My writings were always related to a controversial topic or article I read in our local paper. My father enjoyed reading my submissions and would always recommend for me to read

articles to see if I would send a letter to combat the article. To this day, when I visit my family in Dallas, he hands me articles so that I could muster up another rebuttal to the Dallas Morning News' editorial version. His spirit lives vicariously through me, and it was about to fly with even more absolutism.

When I transferred to the Southwest Texas State University, now Texas State University, in the spring of 1997, I searched for a place where I could fit in. It was a new world for me - a world of unknown faces and unknown places where I felt like an outsider, a sort of foreigner. I did not grow up around Caucasians and found it difficult to relate to many of the white students I encountered. I learned of a Mexican-American organization that could seemingly be a right fit. At the very first meeting, they did a strange icebreaker and then began planning for a Valentine's Day dance. I felt like I had to participate somehow so I volunteered to be part of the decorating committee. This was not for me. I never returned. I continued to search and found a group I had never heard of – M.E.Ch.A. (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicana/Chicano de Aztlán). It was a very small group of about four or five members. I immediately became a devoted member and was almost instantly transferred into a communal leadership role. We went to a few rallies and a couple of regional events where I discovered how widespread this organization had expanded throughout the United States (see Appendix B).

Writing for political purposes had become my passion by this point, and I wanted to bring this to our organization. When the fall semester came, I became a co-spokesperson for M.E.Ch.A. where I parented a newsletter titled, *Mexica Tiahui*, which in Nahuatl translates to 'Chicanos Always Moving Forward.' The newsletter was made up of two U.S. letter sized papers printed front and back in black and white. We became

the voice for many of the Latin@/Chican@ organizations on campus. We attempted to publish biweekly and/or monthly, and included works consisting of poetry, political commentary, comics, editorials, and advertisements. We had contributors from other colleges and organizations. Although we were not sure who our audience would be, we knew this newsletter gave us the strength to use our voices (see Appendix C).

These experiences are what have created and formed my political self. I consider myself a liberal. A liberal who believes that community is important, and the government should hold the role of protecting our liberties so that we can live as freely as possible. I am a progressive in the sense that we should, as individuals and as collaborators, be searching for creative ways of making our world a better place rather than relying on cyclical methods that yield similar past results. In the realm of education, I firmly believe this can be a place where students can become critical learners who have the capability of contributing knowledge to their own learning as well as to society. In my life, my actions, writings, and voices speak to my beliefs. This political self is organic and has grown in complexity and conviction as I make new connections with others, including my students and family.

“A liberal education is at the heart of a civil society, and at the heart of a liberal education is the act of teaching.” – Angelo Bartlett Giamatti

As a product of urban Dallas during a turbulent era, I have brought a critical perspective to education and am always defining my role organically. I cannot solely define my views from the lens of an educator. It would deny the role my life has been influenced by as a high school student and as a young teenage Chicano growing up in the mean streets of Dallas. From my mistreatments and mischaracterizations at the hands of

police, to the former circle of gangsters I befriended, respected, and feared – these are the untold stories of growing up Chicano in the city, and they are what have created my critical self. It was during the transitional years of leaving my Catholic private school and making the sole decision to go into a public school, where I found my calling to become a teacher. Questioning the reasoning behind a teacher's decision to give us the answers to a final exam was just one incident that helped create deep skepticism for the educational system, even as a teenager. The decision to become a teacher has been heavily influenced by negative teachers rather than enlightenment from positive ones. Although this may seemingly be detrimental as an experience, it has been my fuel to challenge our educational system and become a catalyst for change. As an undergraduate student at Texas State University – San Marcos (then Southwest Texas State University) in the late nineties, I entered a different realm of society and experienced a cultural shock that forced me to adapt while seeking connections for survival. Joining Latino-based social organizations on campus such as the Association of Mexican American Students (AMAS) seemed to only cause further alienation. I could not socially relate and felt more comfortable with educational and political organizations such as the Bilingual Education Student Organization (BESO) and El Movimiento Estudiantil Chicana/o de Aztlán (MEChA). These organizations gave me a purpose, but I yearned for my family and for some kind of connection. A group of us with similar backgrounds found each other and formed a chapter of the international and Latino-based fraternity of Sigma Lambda Beta. This brotherhood showed me how to be a leader and a voice for future Chicanos entering the university system. During these years, I met and studied under Dr. Carlos Rodríguez

to become a bilingual teacher and received my bachelor's degree in interdisciplinary studies.

Teaching as Passion

After graduating in December of 1999, I began my teaching career in January in the rural school district of Hays CISD at the same school where I student taught. It was a unique and incredible school with a great administration, teachers, parents, and kids, and that was the reason I needed to leave. The distinctiveness of the community contributed to this model place of learning, which deserves further examination if the dynamic still exists. Although the school was set in a rural area, the majority of the student population came from a large and dense community of nearby mobile homes. Development in the past decade has more than likely transformed the demographics and communities of the area. When passing through, I cannot find the mobile home community any longer. At the time I worked there, every single child was brought by bus, including the few who lived in farmhouses and middle class homes. The vast majority of the ELL population came from the mobile home community. From the short amount of time I worked there, I observed a few factors, albeit only at the surface level from my reflections and perspective, that contributed to it being so successful. First and foremost, the administration set the positive climate for the school. The principal gave autonomy to teachers and provided a plethora of resources, especially to bilingual teachers. The students were not witness or participants to the intensity, pace, or starkness experienced by urban students. They seemed to come with a sense of indescribable purity. As an urban educator, it is something I have rarely seen in my seventeen years since that initial year of teaching. When I do see it, it usually comes in the eyes of a newcomer – a recent

immigrant from Mexico or Central America. But even newcomers sometimes come with experienced eyes, especially those who come from troubled countries. The experience I had during my first year of teaching showcased a nearly ideal environment for learning, but this was not my calling. A place whose voice echoed daily in my mind beckoned me home; it was time for my mission as a teacher to truly begin.

I returned to Dallas and my neighborhood, Oak Cliff, during the summer of 2000. I taught bilingual education in an elementary school there for six years and genuinely became a part of the neighborhood and school. Annually, I volunteered to be the treasurer, secretary, or the fundraising chair of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) at John F. Peeler Elementary. I also created an after school program with my students and parents where I would take them once or twice a week to local places of learning such as libraries, museums, and parks. Because many of my students were recent immigrants, parents would follow or ride along with us to learn about their new home in a country they knew very little about. Even after my students left my classroom at the end of the year, the following year and every year thereafter I would still send them an invitational permission slip so that they could continue going with us on our trips. This kept my relationships close with both parents and students. At the same time, I also began a scouting program for various age levels at our school. A year later, the Boy Scouts of America hired me as a program manager to assist in organizing an urban scouting outreach program called Scoutreach throughout the Oak Cliff area. Scoutreach targets low-income urban schools with high densities of minority students to join scouting. I became a scout leader for dozens of kids at five different schools during these years. Each school was different; each school had its own culture; each school was dynamic in terms

of the parents, faculty, and students. I learned something distinctive from each of the schools I worked with, but garnering mutual respect was both the most crucial and most difficult act of love to transpire.

In 2003, after a few years of teaching in Dallas ISD, I applied for a scholarship to attend Southern Methodist University (SMU) to pursue my master's degree. I was awarded the scholarship allotted specifically for their bilingual education program. The same year, I was recognized as teacher of the year for our campus. I received my master's degree in bilingual education eighteen months later in 2004. My experience as a graduate student gave me a very unique perspective of bilingual education I had not received as an undergraduate student. Some of the most memorable and powerful experiences were the opportunities to discuss with and learn from some of the pioneers, politicians, and professors involved as influential proponents of the bilingual education program of yesteryear and into the present. Dr. William Pulte, director of the bilingual education program at SMU, brought in activists who fought for Chicano civil rights such as Dr. Jose Angel Gutierrez and Attorney Adelfa Callejo as guest lecturers to give first person narratives of their experiences and expertise. These learning experiences further fueled my passion for activism, both in and out of the classroom.

In 2005, I met my wife. Six months later, I asked her to marry me. Six months after our engagement, we were married. I moved to San Antonio in the summer of 2006. It was a difficult transition, and it continues to have an impact on my life. Many of the students I connected with in Dallas were hurt by my leaving and have had negative feelings toward my departure. We were going to return to Dallas after one year in San Antonio, but my brother and a professor urged me to begin a doctoral program at Texas

State University – San Marcos. After a year of adjustment and teaching for Northside ISD at John Glenn Elementary, I began the Ph.D. program for School Improvement in 2007. I have since grown exponentially in the ability to define what my philosophy of education is and how it has related to my entire career as a teacher. This clarity has heightened my sense of awareness in my field and has allowed me to be an authentic critical thinker who can empower others, especially my students, to do the same.

Charting a Course

I identify as a critical educator who creates the spaces of innovation and imagination within my own classroom. This narrative will convey how I have traversed this space as a bilingual teacher within a policy of practice and analyze how these intersections of meaning making and identity formation became organic actions of change for both educator and those being educated – of which, at times simultaneously, are inverses of each other. This narrative did not begin with me, nor will it end with me. It is ongoing. I have invited Dr. George Sánchez and Dr. Carlos Rodríguez to accompany me as fellow integral crewmembers of this journey. Dr. Sánchez will be in charge of the hull. He will make sure we stay afloat with the firm framework found within his historical context during the early developments of bilingual education. With his ability to steer and pinpoint tributaries of hope, Dr. Rodríguez will be placed at the helm. By using his expertise and experience to guide us, he will help identify those places of pedagogy as practice. I will be climbing that mast with my telescope searching. Searching for the resilience in each child I teach and learn from. Searching for the empowering interactions as a bilingual educator, strengthened by language and culture. Searching with all crewmembers for those micro interactions that help craft unique

identity formations within all of us, especially those we create authentic relationships with.

As I continue my journey as a bilingual educator, I enter many harbors or even *heridas* containing the lives of my students and their families. We will discuss what these *heridas*, or open wounds, in upcoming chapters. This perspective is critical for this dissertation in that it gives a first-person narrative of what is currently occurring in schools. It also creates a space for reflection from the time of my young adult life to where I am today while at the same time analyzing policy and district mandates that have evolved in regards to bilingual education. This dissertation is an autoethnographic piece grounded in a socio-historical context anchored in a dialogical “*plática*” between history, practice, and identity formation (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2008, p. 61). The binding theory of culture and language was designed to invoke thought on past and current bilingual education policies in Texas while reflecting on the lives of three educators that stretch the spectrum of policies that have affected our classrooms and our students’ lives. Researcher and educator, Enrique Trueba, concisely describes the significance of such research as being “genuinely directed to assist others in becoming caring and reflective teachers” (Trueba, 2004, p. 233). Understanding and identifying how policy can affect bilingual educators is critical in determining how they can maneuver and/or disrupt the current system in their practice and their politics. Dr. Carlos Rodríguez was an essential part of my early learning in this field and his teachings and guidance have been formulated by his experiences and education. As an activist who pioneered for Mexican-Americans during the second quarter of the 20th century and beyond, Dr. George Isidoro Sánchez is a crucial component to this work. His influence on policy and education has been

unsuspectingly embedded in what we do as educators to this day. Juxtaposed within all of our lives and still evolving today are the bilingual education policies, cultural identities, and self-identities whose evolution has been formulated and transformed by societal and cultural issues.

When a biography is related just as an account of the doings of a man isolated from the conditions that aroused him and to which his activities were a response, we do not have a study of history, for we have no study of social life, which is an affair of individuals in association. (Dewey, 2007, p. 161)

Dewey solidifies the need for context in biographies and autobiographies. When researchers ignore these factors, they leave out the historiographical impact on both events and lives, which are essential.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to do an intergenerational analysis of Texas' bilingual education policy within the practices and lives of three Mexican-American educators. Employing a dynamic-critical epistemology I used an interpretive ethnographic narrative inscribed with an autoethnographic method to explore, compare and advocate for policies and practices that are responsive to children of English Language Learning families. Additionally, I utilized a critical ethnography and historiography of policy to determine how and why bilingual education laws manifested in Texas and into our practices. This merges into the research questions:

1. What does an ethnographic study of bilingual education policy as lived by three intergenerational practitioners tell us about the evolution of theory, practice, and politics?

2. How has my critical ontology and identity formation developed and been informed by pedagogy, practice, and activism throughout my educational journey?

Navigational Map

In this section, I will give the manifest of this research to assist the reader in understanding the contents and structure of this study. In chapter one, I introduced myself and gave a brief summary of my life. I also gave preliminary introductions of the other participants in this study. Finally, I presented the purpose of the study and the research questions that will guide this research. Chapter two contains a review of the literature as it pertains to this study. Within its multiple sections the reader will find a brief history of United States bilingual education policy and a historiographical look at early Texas bilingual education policy. The next sections discuss a theoretical look at critical pedagogy as it relates to this study which will be followed by past and current theory, methods, and practices of bilingual education. The review continues with a macro to micro view of district and classroom philosophy and pedagogy. Near the end of the review, I discuss the relevancy of culture in the classroom and its impact on student learning and life. At the end of this chapter, I discuss the concept of resiliency and *heridas*, which will be explained in this section. In Chapter three, I detail the methods utilized for this study including critical autoethnography and critical policy as practiced in classrooms. This section will also give a background on our participants so they can have a better understanding of who they are when they read the narrative. Because the major piece of this research is storytelling, or narrative as method, I discuss the use of ‘anatomy of story’ method as well as the rationale behind each piece of it. Within the ‘anatomy of story’ structure, I will discuss how I collected the data, the analysis of the

data, and other considerations. Chapter four will give us a presentation of the data in narrative form. It will be a dialogue among the researchers, with theory and pedagogy within policy, as the central theme. Chapter five will answer the research questions, and give recommendations for future research. My closing thoughts will complete this dissertation.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This review of the literature will focus on essential topics related to the research questions. I will begin with a brief historiography of bilingual education policy at the federal and state level. It is also crucial to explore the literature as it relates to the influence of teacher practice by policies passed and adopted by school districts. The discussion of research related to bilingual teacher pedagogy, which concurrently includes broader literature on the practices and attitudes of culturally responsive teachers and teachers of English learners, will describe what bilingual education may look like in our classrooms. I will discuss the methods and practices of bilingual teachers and delve further into their ontology and epistemology, which are organically linked within their roles as educators. This leads us into the heart of our research – the impact policy has had on our own identity formation as educators and in terms of how it influenced Dr. Sánchez’s fight for Mexican-American students, Dr. Rodríguez’s own pedagogy as my professor, and my own practice as a bilingual teacher.

Bilingual Education and Language Policy

Because this study is formulating an ethnographic view of policy and its interpretation and practice through the lives of three educators, specific aspects of language policy will be integrated into the narrative as they relate to the practitioners. In the following sections I give a brief summary of contemporary policy to get a view of the landscape where we will be delving into as fellow voyagers in chapter four.

United States Policy

Language policy in the United States has been present since the beginning of our nation’s birth. From the eighteenth and into the twentieth century “the federal

government rarely legislated language decisions,” and “for the most part, local or state officials made these language decisions” (San Miguel, 2004, p. 5). The focus of this research will be on Texas bilingual education policy, yet it is crucial to include some background information on socio-historical factors leading up to both federal and subsequently state language policies. When discussing language policy, I refer to it interchangeably with bilingual education policy unless otherwise specified.

The *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* brought forth essential changes in education, especially for students who had been disenfranchised by the previous system. Some of these pertain to students who could benefit as bilingual participants. An important statute designated funds to research and implement bilingual education programs rather than force students to remain in immersion classes. This was strengthened with Title VII of the ESEA known as the Bilingual Education Act of 1968.

Bilingual education has been a part of the United States since the seventeenth century although policy surrounding it did not occur until the late nineteen-sixties. This policy was brought upon by several factors; most significant “were bilingual research findings, the civil rights movement, federal social legislation, and the emerging Chicano and Chicana movement” (San Miguel, 2004, p. 5). Several other social policies were passed prior to the Bilingual Education Act of 1968. These policies were driven by social issues of the time and influenced proponents to take action in creating legislation for bilingual education. The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 initiated the war on poverty in the United States and put the poor at the forefront as a social issue that needed to be solved. Education, or lack thereof, is directly related to socioeconomic status of individuals, families, and communities. San Miguel (2004) states, “This type of

legislation led to a renewed consideration of poverty and educational underachievement especially among language minority groups in general and Spanish speaking minority children in particular” (p. 8). Progressive scholars in the mid-sixties were active in performing research to create effective bilingual programs. Alfred Bruce Gaarder (1965), an educator and a scholar, who worked in what is now the Department of Education during the sixties and beyond, described the lucidity that may be brought forth by such programs: “We need more creative genius in education, and I do not believe that there is any area in which such genius could more likely create miracles than in the field of the education of the bilingual child” (p. 165).

In 1968, the Bilingual Education Act was passed, and was heralded by educators, activists, and many lawmakers as an important step towards educating English Language Learners (ELLs). Although it became important policy, it was still vague in terms of how implementation would occur. Using this as a catalyst and a funding source, school districts began to interpret this new law on their own terms because of the lack of explicitness. This created various forms of local policy that varied from district to district, and in many cases, from school to school, depending on their needs and interpretations of the federal law. At the micro level, “the lack of experienced teachers and of appropriate materials in non-English languages also created additional obstacles for the effective implementation of bilingual programs” (San Miguel, 2004, p. 18). These were the interpretations being made by school districts of this newly enacted federal policy. This first adoption was minor, and so “during the next decade or so, they (proponents) took it upon themselves to change the character of this minor piece of legislation and to transform it into a major policy aimed at promoting bilingualism, cultural pluralism, and

significant school change” (San Miguel, 2004, p. 19). It also created a tension between pluralism and mainstream nationalism “along the lines of language, culture, ethnicity, and pedagogy” (San Miguel, 2004, p. 19).

Sánchez was highly involved with the political aspects and creation of the federal bill. He was the conscious voice of U.S. Senator Yarborough as he assisted him in creating “his bilingual education bill, which made its way through Congress in 1967” (Blanton, 2014, p. 231). This bill eventually passed both houses in late 1967 and was named Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which was signed into law by President Johnson in January of 1968 (Blanton, 2014, p. 231).

According to the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, once policy has been integrated into a school system, the federal government would provide “financial assistance to local school districts ‘to develop and carry out new and imaginative elementary and secondary school programs’ designed to meet the special educational needs of these children.” (San Miguel, 2004, p. 30). These programs would eventually be written into the curriculum and/or adapted by teachers in the classroom. The process is created by the law and is individually interpreted by not only the states, but by districts, administrators, and most importantly – teachers. This spark in school systems develops into a generator of implied power being surged through various conductors; some with high voltage, others as programmed resistors seemingly wired to transmit knowledge as conduits for policy-makers. Still, we must also look for resisters in schools who reject the misinterpretations of policy by state and local systems and create dynamic learning.

A young Carlos Rodríguez was in a different place at the time. He became an educator before the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 had become law. In 1953, when he

was applying to teach in his hometown of San Marcos, he learned that his own community would not hire a Mexican-American as a teacher. The politics of a “good ol’ boy” system that had been established for decades in San Marcos made opportunities for minorities, such as Carlos, almost impossible. To be able to understand how Carlos and others like him perceived this system and their role in it, we must delve into the socio-historical context of what was occurring during this period. This was, after all, the “fabulous fifties,” a time of renewal and post-war jubilation for many, but not all, people living in America.

Texas Policy

For the first time in Texas history, the number of English Language Learners (ELLs) surpassed the one million mark at 1,010,756 during the 2016-2017 school year, and Hispanics, who currently sit at 52.4%, have composed more than half of the student demographics in Texas public schools since 2011 (Texas Education Agency, 2017, ELs in Texas – PEIMS 2016-2017 section, Table 1).

In 1971, Texas passed an accommodating bilingual education bill, which “permitted local school districts to establish special educational programs or services that utilized Spanish or other non-English languages as a medium of instruction” (San Miguel, 2004, p. 38). The power stated in the policy was being given at a micro-level and, therefore, could be interpreted and implemented in a wide contrast of programs from district to district. Those who held the power at the local districts determined what program would be chosen and how the program would be implemented. Because a variety of leaders with a broad spectrum of political ideologies headed the many school districts of Texas, how could a child in the bilingual education program be ensured a

quality education? It was not until 1975 when “Texas strengthened its bilingual act...by adding certain mandatory provisions,” that school districts were required to follow more specific guidelines aimed at providing better educational opportunities (San Miguel, 2004, p. 39). These targeted additions gave proponents of the new law more ammunition to voice their cause and demand these changes within their local school districts.

Navigating Particular Paths of Policy in Texas

In this study I focused on specific facets of Texas bilingual education policies and court cases which demonstrated more of an influence on specific aspects of pedagogy and practice. Because this study focused on the impact of policy on these two factors as they relate to their practitioners, it was vital to steer and explore along these paths. I will present these policies in further detail, along with a historiography and critically reflexive ethnography as part of the experiential narrative found in chapter four. In this section, I will give a brief historiography of early Texas bilingual education policy at its various stages and how it relates to pedagogy and/or practice. I will begin at the turn of the twentieth century and continue into just before the modern era of bilingual education which will be integrated into the narrative in chapter four. As stated earlier, the focus of this study will be on the policy that more directly impacted the educators involved in this study, yet some essential background history and policy will also be included here as well as in the narrative.

The Americanization movement. During the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, a new idea emerged where the end goal was to assimilate existing and new influxes of immigrant groups into mainstream America (Blanton, 2004, p. 59). This movement encompasses various facets of American society, but it was within the

schooling establishment where it could really create impact. Throughout the United States, “schools... assumed a new social goal and became responsible for Americanizing the Mexican-origin population” (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998, p. 358). In their article, Guadalupe San Miguel and Richard Valencia (1998) set criteria for determining whether a process of the Americanization movement was being “additive” or “subtractive” in specific actions towards minorities (p. 358; Blanton, 2004, p. 59). They defined an action or idea additive if, in rare cases, it “promoted the maintenance of these so-called ‘foreign’ group” and subtractive if “its purpose was... to inculcate American ways, but also to discourage the maintenance of immigrant and minority group cultures” (Carlson, 1975; San Miguel & Valencia, 1998, p. 358). Ibram X. Kendi’s (2016) comprehensive and historiographical book on racism in America, *Stamped from the Beginning*, details direct and indirect actions by those in power to extinguish other cultures through “theological ideas” and “assimilationist idea[s]” among others since our country’s birth (pp. 6-7). Although Americanization was not the birth of assimilation or nationalism, it was the movement setting many policies promoting these ideas, especially in education.

In late nineteenth century Texas, localized laws passed showed how leaders were giving up on subtractive ideas of Americanization and determining the lack of progress to be a big problem (Blanton, 2004). This created negative ideas and views of Mexican Americans. Many students were retained in the lower grades until they could attain English fluency (Blanton, 2004, p. 61). One judge believed “Mexicans... were not assimilable due to their alleged ignorance and backwardness” (Blanton, 2004, p. 61). This led to new laws which created the “subtraction of Spanish from public education... through the enactment of English-language policies at the state and local levels, which

not only prescribed English as the medium of instruction, but also discouraged, inhibited, or prohibited the use of Spanish” (Leibowitz, 1976; San Miguel & Valencia, 1988, p. 361). Spanish was not the only language targeted for removal during the second decade of the nineteen-hundreds. Two big wars overlapped during this time. The Mexican Revolution of 1910 and a few years later, World War I sparked fear in many Texans at that time. German Americans and Mexican Americans became the indirect victims of the war. Because the United States was at war with Germany, residents of German decent, who were numerous in Texas, were labeled as sympathizers. In 1918 a “watered down” English-Only bill was passed where “foreign languages could be taught but not in the lower grades” which was similar to earlier English-Only laws although these “included criminal penalties” for those who violated the law (Blanton, 2004, p. 65). After World War I, German Americans gave way to Mexican Americans as the main targets of Americanization. While the nation as a whole was doing away with “structured Americanization” after the war, it actually “gained popularity in Texas in the 1920s” but this time it became about race (Blanton, 2004, p. 66). Leaders of Texas at the time, including the superintendent of schools, Annie Webb Blanton, used this populism to supplant laws against bilingual education for Mexicans and Mexican Americans. They were now considered “underclass” and because of “the inability of many Tejano and immigrant children from Mexico to speak English in school reinforced preexisting racist ideology” (Blanton, 2004, p. 69). Some researchers, such as Arnold Leibowitz, think “this educational policy that...acted as a symbol to demonstrate official public hostility toward Chicanos, was combined with other discriminatory actions for the purposes of suppressing their normal development” (San Miguel, 1986, p. 525-526). Oppressive

education with the intent to target a specific group of people is “the necessity for constant control. And the more the oppressors control the oppressed, the more they change them into apparently inanimate ‘things’” (Freire, 2008, p. 59). We will explore this further in the narrative.

Segregation and racialization. As the power structure in Texas became more Americanized, racism and the subjugation of Mexican culture and the Spanish language was rising. During the twenties and into the thirties, “school officials in...Texas...applied the law excluding Indians from the public schools to Chicanos, failed to recognize the value of bilingualism in the schools, or else prescribed English as the only official language for instruction” which in turn “excluded most Spanish-speaking children from attending them” (San Miguel, 1986, p. 525). This gave way to English-Only pedagogy. A pedagogy based on “assumptions about the acquisition of language that sharply diverged from traditional notions: One, it held that the act of translation hindered learning a second language; two, it maintained that children and adults learned second languages alike” (Blanton, 2004, p. 74). Before this pedagogy became the norm for teaching English to English Language Learners, the ‘grammar-translation’ method... dominated as a pedagogical theory...until the late nineteenth century” (Blanton, 2004, p. 75). This method “involved the heavy use of reading, translating, and transcribing academic languages” for learners to become bilingual (Blanton, 2004, p. 74). A new curriculum generated and targeted most Mexican Americans in Texas schools. The shift went from the ‘3Rs’ (reading, writing, arithmetic) to “the ‘3Cs,’ common cultural norms, civics instruction, and command of the English tongue” (Carter & Segura, 1979; San Miguel & Valencia, 1998, p. 366). The English-

Only laws of 1918 and 1923 created policy that made it a crime to teach in the primary and intermediate grades using methodologies not using solely the English language (Blanton, 2004, pp. 76-77). It was not until a United States Supreme Court decision when the Texas legislature “backtracked in 1927” (Blanton, 2004, p. 77). The revision:

Allowed for the Spanish language in elementary grades in the public free schools in counties bordering on the boundary line between the United States and the Republic of Mexico and having a city or cities of five thousand or more inhabitants according to the United States census for the year 1920. (Blanton, 2004, p. 77)

Throughout this era, Progressive educational reform was in full swing, and yet Texas still found a way to use John Dewey’s approaches to impose English-only curriculum into young *Tejanos*’ minds. Hand in hand with the ‘3Cs’, some educators used the “direct method” to develop a “pedagogical system” that could be widely used to teach Mexican American children (Blanton, 2004, p. 79). The direct method theorized that students can learn a new language in the same way a toddler learns its “primary language, orally and without any bilingual reference” (Blanton, 2004, p. 75). To put salt in the wounds, the state policy “allowed... bilingual education” to white high school students, while “the youngest, most vulnerable of Mexican American children had to learn in a purely direct method of instruction” (Blanton, 2004, p. 85). This widely accepted method ousted bilingualism from Texas’ primary schools, demonstrating further indication of how “state and local educators quickly became used for racist and nativist ends” through English-Only laws (Blanton, 2004, p. 78). Through all of this, our language and culture persisted.

When the establishment introduced and enforced these detrimental statutes, it led to even further alienation and an inferior education for Texas' Mexican youth. One consequential effect of these policies was the need to place students in schools where educators could indoctrinate them with the "Anglo-centric curriculum" while replacing "Mexican heritage classes" (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998, p. 363). From regional to local levels, "school officials... established separate facilities for Mexican children and then asked the state to fund these schools" (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998, p. 365). Segregation became pervasive throughout the parts of Texas where Mexicans resided, some of whom had lived there for generations. It was justified on the "basis of linguistic difference and the need for specialized curriculum" (Blanton, 2004, p. 88). Yet, "these separate schools were unequal in many respects to those provided for Anglo children" (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998, p. 365). Although these oppressive actions were targeted and efficient, many Mexicans found ways to resist. Within the narrative of chapter four, we will listen to this resistance and the dichotomy created by this segregation, especially in terms of the positive aftereffects for Mexican Americans.

Surviving and adapting while fighting. The era of English-Only policy in Texas spanned several decades. From its official implementation in 1918 until the Civil Rights Movement came in the sixties, it was the dominating law and it affected millions of Mexican Americans negatively. Because the subjugation of its own citizens was an evident goal of the lawmakers and leaders during this time with English-Only and segregated schools, Mexican Americans began to organize and find ways to combat "societal prejudice" and safeguard their culture and language (Blanton, 2004, p. 93; Garcia, 1989, p. 29). Organizations such as the Order of the Sons of America (OSA)

began to mobilize within their families and communities where they eventually created the League of United Latin American Citizens, better known as LULAC. Rooted in the Mexican American Generation who “sought to advance from their past and to see themselves as permanent citizens of the United States with all the rights and privileges of American citizenship,” Texas’ own LULAC was “founded in 1929 and the oldest Mexican-American civil rights association in the United States (Garcia, 1989, p. 25). LULAC quickly became involved in the struggles for equity. They organized and assisted in arguing a case in Del Rio, Texas, regarding the segregation of Mexican American students in 1930. They initially won the *Salvatierra vs Del Rio* case but in an appeal by the school district, it was overturned by a San Antonio judge who “dismissed the charge of race-based segregation, contending that the court had no business meddling in the administrative and pedagogical decisions of school professionals” (Blanton, 2004, p. 95; Garcia, 1989, p. 56; San Miguel, 1986, p. 532). Although they lost, a small victory foreshadowed future desegregation of schools when the court determined it was unconstitutional to discriminate solely on the basis of race (Garcia, 1989, p. 56).

Moving forward. The Mexican American movement attempted to push for equality using accommodation, yet “accommodation was never servilism, nor was it anti-Spanish” (Blanton, 2004, p. 96). Accommodation was a means to compromise and be legitimized as citizens of Texas. It was an attempt in agreeing to being ‘more’ American if certain conditions were improved for Mexican-Americans, such as ending segregation and improving schools. LULAC and other organizations utilized the ammunitions, given by Texas law to fight against segregation and inefficient language policies. In their attempts of arguing cases, their “desegregation lawsuits were based on constitutional

arguments of due process and dealt with de facto segregation” ultimately based on language (San Miguel, 2013, p. 33). These small victories and losses paved the way for future, more radical movements to drastically change the educational landscape. After World War I, the federal government issued the Good Neighbor Policy which began to put some positive attention towards México and Mexican Americans. It was an effort by the United States to strengthen ties with Central America to seek “hemispheric solidarity” (Blanton, 2014, p. 73). Mexican-American leaders used this opportunity to push their agenda for better schooling, more solidarity, and less discrimination, among other issues of the time. Good Neighborism within Texas education policy resulted in three short term accomplishments:

1. The undertaking of a massive study on the educational conditions of Mexican Americans;
2. The creation of workshops to promote better instructional techniques, especially regarding Mexican Americans;
3. The revision of statewide curriculum pertaining the teaching of Spanish to promote more tolerance, acceptance, and understanding of Mexican Americans. (Blanton, 2004, p. 98)

This is an integral piece of Texas policy for this study because of George Sánchez’s designation as “the most important participant” where he “temporarily left” his position at the University of Texas to become “an educational consultant to the federal Inter-American Affairs effort” by joining Macmillan publishing to create curriculum (Blanton, 2004, p. 98; Blanton, 2014, p. 74). This will be discussed in further detail in chapter four. Other Mexican American educators utilized this temporary “friendliness” to promote and

publish curriculum and books geared towards the education of Mexican American students. Educators such as Edmundo E. Mireles developed instructional programs focusing not only on the use of Spanish to teach English, but to have bilingual/bicultural education. With all this veering into renewed hope for Texas promoting bilingual education, it was ultimately a failure statewide. Blanton (2004) laments how “although the potential was great for doing away with English-Only during the war, it was not fully taken advantage of either by the pedagogical theorists or local educators” (p. 105). English-only remained at the forefront as a pedagogical movement from its enactment into law in 1918 until the sixties, but a newly more aggressive Chicano movement would be at the megaphone demanding change.

The modern policy for bilingual education beginning in the sixties devoured English-Only policy. In chapter four, I will discuss particular aspects of Texas bilingual education policy as it intertwines within the narrative of our journey.

Policy as Practice

Wide Rivers, Small Bridges - Gaps

Examining policy and its history allows us to see the macro-impact it can ultimately have on many children throughout the state and country. Another bearing that arises from policy is between educators and districts/schools implementing this policy. Using Freire’s (2008) *conscientização*, or critical consciousness, as the lens to analyze policy, pedagogy, and practice allows me to probe deeper into the underlying factors influencing them. *Conscientização* “refers to learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (Freire, 2008, p. 35). In a sense, it refers to reaching a conscientious freedom as a society

through reflection and action. As practitioners, Sánchez, Rodríguez, and myself have reached a level of this consciousness and have taken action within our respective roles to work with others for social justice. This critical pedagogy is a liberating and humanizing concept that is always evolving as a process within our “ontological vocation” (Freire, 2008, p. 75). Looking within current literature and research, many of our stories are not present regarding these experiences. There is a depth and expanse of knowledge waiting to be extracted and shared before it is forever forgotten. Stories of self, relationships with others, and interconnections made with the community at large may seem insignificant to policymakers, but as I will discuss in chapter five, these stories are vital in truly understanding what is happening in schools. If our leaders are more cognizant and empathetic of the current plights in education, it can then be possible to begin to have a conversation on making the policy-making process more democratic. Sánchez has been deservedly thoroughly researched as well as has written quite extensively. It is one of the reasons I invited him on this journey. He provides a socio-historical and political context that grounded many educators’ work, including Rodríguez and my own. It is also crucial to delve into the ‘process’ of his evolving *conscientização* as a creature of major pedagogical changes occurring throughout his professional career. As a witness to Rodríguez’s own critical transformations during the late nineties during a time of educational and societal shifts, I will narrate how it affected his pedagogy and practice as a *maestro* of teachers. During the course of my studies and subsequently my teaching career, I have also been able to define my critical consciousness as well as how it formed my praxis as an educator, but more importantly as a Xicano on a perpetual and passionate mission towards “authentic liberation” (Freire, 2008, p. 79).

As policy was set into place at the state and district level, a variety of theories began to umbrella the practices of bilingual educators. Some of these theories were centered around student/community needs and focused on the whole child and culture, while others were more socio-politically motivated to push students into mainstream English instruction. Methods and resources for instruction from these theories emerged from both sound and flawed data. In the following section, I will delve into these so I can differentiate and discuss the significance of each, and why adopting particular ones can be beneficial to many students who are serviced in these types of programs, while others have shown to be detrimental.

This study aims to delve into three lives that have participated within these policies and created change within their corresponding roles. By examining this within a socio-historical context, we can begin to make meaning through an analysis of the dynamics interweaving within policy and practice in the classroom.

The Whirlpools of Practice

As I shift the focus to the research supporting the need for bilingual education programs, it is imperative to define sound theories and practices as they relate to pedagogy. Jim Cummins (2011) analyzes reports on the “educational achievement of immigrant and minority language students” by focusing on three propositions showing pragmatic support for bilingual programs and policy. His study was particularly interesting due to the propositions’ relativity to my own classroom and my study (p. 1973). Cummins’ (2011) findings are as follow:

- Proposition 1: Print access and literacy engagement play a key role in promoting reading comprehension (p. 1976).

- Proposition 2: The development of bilingual students' (1st Language) L1 proficiency plays a positive role in (2nd Language) L2 academic development (p. 1979).
- Proposition 3: Societal power relations play a direct causal role in promoting school failure among students from subordinated communities (p. 1982).

The first proposition is directly connected to teacher practice. Cummins (2011) stresses the correlation between access to literature and engagement as being inseparable in achieving student success in reading comprehension. The research shows phonics in second grade and up does not lead into greater comprehension or even decoding skills. Creating more time devoted to varied and high interest text is shown to be much more effective. Cummins' (2011) conclusions are derived from various governmental studies that have a significant impact on policy such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). A powerful finding from extensive research by the NAEP "suggests the stunning conclusion that engaged reading can overcome traditional barriers to reading achievement including gender, parental education, and income" (Guthrie, 2004, p. 5). In order to correlate the significance of this for our English language learners (ELL), we must acknowledge two factors affecting many of them. The first factor is the achievement gap in reading between ELLs and their monolingual peers, which has remained constant for many years. In 2011, the achievement gaps between ELL and non-ELL students in the NAEP reading assessment were 36 points at the 4th-grade level and 44 points at the 8th-grade level (Digest of Education Statistics, 2012, Table 142). The second factor is the poverty levels of ELL students who "are more likely to live in a low-income household: in 2007, 66% of ELLs had a family income below 200% of the federal poverty level,

compared to 37% of non-ELL youths (EPE Research Center, 2009). As stated earlier, Cummins (2011) and Guthrie (2004) confirm through a meta-analysis by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) of more than 27 countries and sponsored by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) how “the level of a student’s reading engagement is a better predictor of literacy performance than his or her socioeconomic background, indicating that cultivating a student’s interest in reading can help overcome home disadvantages” (PISA, 2000, p. 9). According to the report, the United States ranked 21 out of 27 countries in student engagement when it comes to reading. If the achievement gap is any indicator of the stagnation of educational attainment by our ELLs, the international statistics give even more verification of an even wider separation between them and monolingual English language students. Current policy does not support this, but rather adheres to strengthening phonics instruction. Cummins (2011) stresses “there is considerable evidence that print access/literacy engagement should be incorporated as a major instructional focus in policies designed to promote academic development among low-income and minority group students” (p. 1979).

This leads into the second proposition regarding the use of students’ home language in order to gain strength and confidence in learning English. Cummins’ (1979) early research indicated the value of a child’s cognitive process in learning a new language. He acknowledged:

The lack of concern for the developmental interrelationships between language and thought in the bilingual child is one of the major reasons why evaluations and research have provided so little data on the dynamics of the bilingual child's

interaction with his educational environment. (Cummins, 1979, p. 227)

Krashen (1985) agrees and determined language acquisition is best supported using the student's first language. He furthers Cummins' (1979) theories of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), which notes the ability of a student to use her first and/or second language academically, to be developed for learning and abstractive expression in both languages (Krashen, 1985). A student's ability to use their new knowledge within the classroom and outside of the classroom increases their confidence and fosters a deeper respect for learning. Furthermore, CALP "and information gained through the first language can help a great deal to make English input more comprehensible" (Krashen, 1985, p. 79). Although particular programs have been successfully designed around this theory for language acquisition, including other language theorists (e.g. Thomas & Collier, 2003; Spener, 1988; Crawford, 1999), nationalism, and henceforth policy, have promoted inadequate alternatives that have consistently failed our English Language Learners.

The research consistently shows how a maintenance type of program is very effective in providing exemplary bilingual programs that help create truly bilingual students. Research indicates, "in both cognitive and affective domains, maintenance bilingual programs or two-way enrichment programs of longer durations (at least six years) would be far superior to transitional bilingual programs" (Spener, 1988, p. 151). A maintenance bilingual education (MBE) program stresses the use of the child's native language for instruction throughout the day and grade levels (Medina & Escamilla, 1994). These programs "are long term in structure and implementation and use the native language, as well as English" (Medina & Escamilla, 1994, p. 423). A main goal of MBE

programs is to be “effective in developing both English and Spanish language skills in students who begin school with diverse language backgrounds” (Medina & Escamilla, 1994, p. 423). A key aspect to this program is the length of time a student uses both English and their native language for instruction and in social situations. The commitment of schools, parents, teachers, and students is crucial in providing an environment that gives sustenance to the program. Positive concrete results based on quantifiable data may not occur for years, but the English language learners’ scores who have reached national standards equal to their monolingual English counterparts on standardized tests and in reading levels were not evident until up to the sixth grade (Collier, 1995; Crawford, 1999; Cummins, 1979; Krashen, 1982; Troike, 1978). When interpreting these widespread standardized tests, it is essential to be cognizant of students’ proficiency in English, prior formal schooling, and how long they have been in the United States (Cummins, 2000; Butler & Stevens, 2001). In a well-designed longitudinal research study, it concludes a late exit model, which translates into a maintenance type of program, where:

Students who were provided with a substantial and consistent primary language development program learned mathematics, English language, and English readings skills as fast as or faster than the norming population used in this study. As their growth in these academic skills is atypical of disadvantaged youth, it provides support for the efficacy of primary language development in facilitating the acquisition of English language skills. (Ramirez et al., 1991, p. 1405)

The study showed the greatest gains when analyzing information up to the sixth grade in all areas mentioned above in the late exit model, and a loss in gains in early exit

and immersion programs (Ramirez et al., 1991). The study also noted how an immersion English program, early exit, and late exit programs showed similar growth leading up to the third grade (Ramirez et al., 1991). It is important to observe how the information can be used in policy to support all English immersion programs as an effective means of instructing ELL students. However, it must be stated, as noted in the research, how immersion programs are only short term solutions and can be detrimental to students in gaining the necessary skills up to the average of the norming population in later years (Ramirez, et al., 1991). The study established the need for the utilization of the primary language for its essential involvement in achieving ultimate English acquisition. Most school districts have moved from the maintenance program model and have moved into the transitional or immersion models, but a relatively new concept that ironically uses immersion with the foreign language has been picking up steam in recent decades.

The dual-language, or two-way immersion model, is a more inclusive type of maintenance program. This option allows for native English speakers to interact and learn another language with students whose first language is not English. Specifically, a two-way dual-language “approach allows English learners to help native English speakers learn through a second language, while native English speakers help English learners acquire the curriculum through English” (Thomas & Collier, 2003, p. 62). Ironically, the origins for the expansion of these programs propagate from economics rather than social responsibility. The emerging trade deficit of the eighties with more linguistically diverse countries (especially the language of English) forced the U.S. Congress to create “a \$20 million dollar program, on top of the \$35 million it was already spending, to promote the teaching of foreign languages” (Crawford, 1999, p. 209). At the same time, it

“appropriated nearly \$90 million for the Title VII programs of transitional bilingual education (TBE) designed to replace other languages with English” (Crawford, 1999, p. 210). In other words, while funding programs that promote multilingualism, or at least bilingualism, the federal government continues to fund programs that attempt to dispose bilingualism. Crawford (1999) aptly states “this approach could be summed up as *additive bilingualism for English speakers and subtractive bilingualism for language minorities*” (p. 210).

Wading in the Waters of Bilingual Education

Every year I have taught, I have used a transitional method of bilingual education. Because our school and district, Northside ISD, and my previous districts - Hays CISD and Dallas ISD use this transitional model of bilingual education, a certain percentage of English is used for various subjects on a daily basis, and it increases as they transition into the next grade level. The TBE (transitional bilingual education) program in our district (NISD) typically lasts three to five years, so it is very rare for a fifth grader, who entered United States’ schools as a kindergartner, to receive any instruction in Spanish. Because this is a transitional bilingual program, Spanish is used less often as students shift into following grade levels while English is subsequently increased. Although the transitional method is not the ideal form of creating optimal bilingual learners due to its use of a mixture of immersive and maintenance approaches, it does allow students time to develop the English language rather than simply being immersed in monolingual English classrooms. David Spener (1988) defines such programs as using students’ first language “to introduce content material and to begin to develop the literacy competencies that will presumably help children learn to read and write in English” (p. 147). He further states

“the goal of federally funded TBE programs in the United States has never been the ‘production’ of bilingual, biliterate, bicultural adults capable of functioning competently in two languages and cultures” (Spener, 1988, p. 147). Transition, rather than a duality of languages, has been the objective since President Lyndon Baines Johnson appropriated over seven million dollars to support bilingual education (Crawford, 1999; Snow & Hakuta, 1992; Spener, 1988; Trueba, 2004). Although it may not be on the national agenda to create bilingual students, we should also take into account the variety of these transitional programs and how districts, schools, and ultimately teachers implement them within classrooms.

Maintenance bilingual education programs are few and far between, and I have only had the perspective, as most bilingual public school teachers, of a transitional type of program. I had a first grade student a few years ago who recently immigrated from México and was very guarded with using English in or out of the classroom. Lucero (pseudonym) began her schooling in the United States halfway through her kindergarten year at another school. In her first few weeks of first grade, she never attempted to use the English language, although she stated she knew a little from her previous school. As time passed and her confidence in using the English language grew, she began to experiment with it by applying it with peers in small conversations. How did she become confident in using this new language? It is not solely the bilingual program, the curriculum, nor the school that create this confidence in learning a new language. We, as educators, have the most direct impact of what happens inside the classroom. It is our duty to create an environment that creates critical learners while providing a support system for them that builds the developmental needs for learning a new language.

In a recent news article, the story of a middle school principal who banned the use of Spanish by students while they are in class became a controversial issue and a talking point in several news and social media forums (Karedes, 2013). Reading the comments below the article, it was obvious how many Americans maintain the notion for the exclusive use of English in schools and everyday life. We, as bilingual educators, consistently see this backlash towards a more pluralistic society and find ourselves fighting daily battles with policy, our communities, and ourselves. Articles, such as the one mentioned above, can become incendiary within a district at the micro-level, and possibly create impactful changes for stakeholders, especially students. In this case, the school board did not approve of the principal's actions and subsequently did not renew her contract, so she is currently fighting to regain her position (Planas, 2014). At a much more macro-level, "a shifting political climate around English-language-learner instruction" in California has just as recently introduced a bill that would repeal a 1998 law titled Proposition 227, which "severely restricted the availability of bilingual education for students in favor of English-only immersion programs for English-learners" (Ash, 2014). The support for multilingual programs in this state, which has the highest number of ELLs in the United States, is due in part to changing demographics, new research on bilingual education, and shifts in political dynamics (Ash, 2014).

Northside ISD's Murky Waters

The current bilingual program in our school district, which has not had many recent drastic changes, lends itself to more of an intermediate-exit program, for lack of a better term, between an early-exit and a late-exit program. Although it is clearly defined as a transitional program, it is supportive of maintaining students' cultural identity, and

the dual-language program is progressively extending throughout the district. Currently, Northside ISD has six dual-language schools, seventeen schools with a transitional bilingual program, which are fed by nearby schools, in addition to ten standalone schools with a transitional bilingual program. The bilingual programs of NISD, including the dual language programs, are located at thirty-three out of the seventy-five elementary campuses. English language learners who do not attend standalone campuses are being served at the various feeder schools throughout the district (Northside ISD, n.d.). The mission of the NISD bilingual transitional academic program somewhat correlates with current research in terms of what Cummins and other language theorists have concluded in using the first language while learning English. The first question and answer states:

What is the Bilingual Transitional Program in Northside ISD? The academic program model teaches the state required Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). The research-based program uses the child's primary language for instruction as he or she learns the second language (English) and achieves academic success. (Northside ISD, n.d.)

The wording in this statement is seemingly crafted to eschew controversial language that may cause both sides of the bilingual debate to create an argument for or against the program. If the district replaced the words "as he or she learns" with "as tools to learn" in the second sentence, it would be more aligned with current research on language acquisition. As both maintenance bilingual programs and transitional bilingual programs are defined throughout this paper and through my experiences within this current system, one can conclude that the Northside ISD bilingual program, not including the dual-language program, is a hybrid of the two platforms.

Wading Deeper Than Just Language

I discussed the type of bilingual program at Northside ISD at a macro-level. It is now important to observe the dynamics of a bilingual classroom – a microcosm of the district’s program. The current discourse acknowledges how “the influence of the societal power structure is mediated by the way educators define their roles in relation to students’ language and culture, community participation, pedagogy, and assessment” (Cummins, 2001, p. 652). Cummins (2001) further states how late-exit models of bilingual education give students the time to affirm their cultural identities as a more powerful outcome than the effects of language acquisition. While NISD does not promote this model, the defined hybrid version gives us a framework for what a bilingual classroom may look like in this district, specifically my own. As I define my perspective, I will use a critical perspective as a reflexive and reflective lens to create a dynamic portraiture of who I am as an educator. Cummins (2011) stresses “the ways in which teachers negotiate identities with students can exert a significant impact on the extent to which students will engage academically or withdraw from academic effort” (p. 1983). These approaches affirm the value of students’ home languages and cultures as relevant constituents of their social capital while at the same time challenging the broader pattern of societal power relations that devalue the social capital of students and communities (Cummins, 2011, p. 1986).

Although particular researched methods utilized within a program have shown crucial benefits in the success of a child’s acquisition of the English language and academic achievement, we cannot overlook an even more critical factor in this equation. The whole child, the whole teacher, and the whole of the community are invaluable

stakeholders in this entire process society calls education. If educators cannot give life to what they do on a daily basis, the decaying stench of stagnation will linger and grow. We must keep the water flowing upstream and it must be done with purpose, authenticity, and love.

The Depths of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Current thought puts student voice in the background or silences it altogether. Why is it necessary to focus on bilingual Latino students as a cultural/ethnic group and as a social class? McLaren (2003) “argue[s] that each group needs to be understood separately, within its own cultural, class, race and gendered frames of reference” (p. 228). Successful studies, such as Ladson-Billings’ *Dreamkeepers*, targeted teachers of African American students and their successful practices. In an ethnographic study, Ladson-Billings has highlighted how educators have become outspoken beacons for these students and have provided the space for authentic learning to occur within their classrooms. Boykin and Noguera affirm, “Race, class, and linguistic and cultural differences between students and teachers certainly do not cause the achievement gap; however, they do contribute to its persistence and often complicate efforts to reduce or eliminate disparities in student learning outcomes” (2011, p. 29). Prior to the enactment of the first bilingual education policy, as far back as 1964, education experts and researchers observed the need for bilingual and bicultural teachers in classrooms where English Language Learners (ELL’s) attended. The National Education Association (NEA) was aware of how schools had become disillusioned “to offer a more adequate program because of their inability to secure teachers who measure up to the need. And ‘measuring up’ involves not only professional preparation but the proper cultural and

linguistic background” (NEA, 1966, p. 30). In their report, they did attest to districts who drew up their own “policies” at the local level after realizing the “English Only” method was not being effective. During this time, places like Laredo, TX had a sort of dual-language approach in some classrooms where monolingual English speakers were integrated with monolingual and bilingual Spanish speakers. The report attributed success to the teachers’ knowledge of both languages and their students’ cultural background, as well as pedagogical methods (NEA, 1966, p. 14). Although the relational context of race/ethnicity between a teacher and her students does not guarantee success, the national gap can speak to a lack of cultural connectedness that can occur. According to the U.S. Department of Education, during the 2011-2012 scholastic year, Texas students labeled as limited English proficient retained the lowest levels of high school completion at only 59 percent among special groups and racial/ethnic groups (Stetser, M., & Stillwell, R., 2014, p. 10). The margins between English language learners and the aforementioned groups ranged from 18 percentage points to 35 percentage points (Stetser, M., & Stillwell, R., 2014, p. 10). It is difficult to imagine that out of my twenty students in my first grade class only twelve will graduate and eight will not complete their high school education. These numbers are based on a more accurate formula that follows groups of students within cohorts. It is imperative to seek and find those teachers who have implemented culturally valuable teaching practices within their classroom of Mexican American students (Haberman, 2005). The pockets of these teachers do exist but as Ladson-Billings (2009) laments: “I was disappointed at how little of their ‘wisdom of practice’ has found its way into teacher preparation literature” for future teachers of African American children (p. 189). While searching for this type of literature about

teachers of bilingual students, it was apparent that little research has been done in this realm, especially here in Texas. It is important to highlight and add to the literature on the interweaved cultural cohesion among bilingual teachers and their students in as it related to learning and its effect on practice.

Research on bilingual teachers is directly associated with and can be based around research on culturally responsive teachers, such as Ladson-Billings' *The Dreamkeepers*, Gay's work in *Culturally Responsive Teaching*, and Stanton-Salazar's comprehensive studies of Mexican-American students, among others discussed here. These narratives have shown the significance of how educators who share a common language and culture with their students use this experiential knowledge within their teaching. These findings are crucial, as research has demonstrated how utilizing such practices can help foster academic achievement (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006). Gay (2000) acknowledges,

The absence of shared communicative frames of reference, procedural protocols, rules of etiquette, and discourse systems makes it difficult for culturally diverse students and teachers to genuinely understand each other and for students to fully convey their intellectual abilities (p. 81).

All of these attributes listed by Gay are a way of knowing, or culture, and are necessary in the classroom if authentic relationships are being sought. Stanton-Salazar's (2001) extensive study on high school U.S.-Mexican youth revealed that albeit most students do not seek to create connections with teachers based on ethnicity, English language learners "preferred Spanish-speakers as sources of academic and institutional support" (p. 211). They have lived lives where a connectedness can be created if commonalities are discovered through the creation of authentic relationships. These

relationships can nurture students' learning with unique connections and cultural habits aimed at furthering their knowledge reciprocally.

In an expansive research review on the experiences of minority group teachers, Quirocho and Rios highlighted the unique capacity of Latina/o, African American, and Native American teachers to develop and utilize culturally relevant curricula:

Given the relationship and interaction of teachers' social and cultural lives to their professional lives, it would seem that teacher educators and school-based personnel would do well to affirm what minority group teachers bring to facilitate the development of a culturally relevant curriculum that is academically rigorous. (Quirocho & Rios, 2000, p. 519)

Throughout the analysis of their studies, minority teachers were observed asserting students' language and culture while scaffolding on students' life experiences, which nurtured positive student-teacher relationships. Ladson-Billings, in her narratives of successful teachers of African American children, detailed how teachers valued students' language in academic discussions, validated their home culture, and mutually created an atmosphere of respect and trust (2009). In choosing this asset-oriented approach, these teachers, many of whom were also African American, established genuine relationships with students.

Ladson-Billings' work and others demonstrate that teachers of color often exhibit a high degree of care for their students and work to create supportive schooling contexts where few typically exist. But, Valenzuela (1999) warns, "authentic caring...is necessary but not sufficient... to make schools truly caring institutions" (p. 109). She emphasizes how "students' cultural world and their structural position must also be fully

apprehended, with school-based adults deliberately bringing issues of race, difference, and power into central focus” (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 109). Discovering and reflecting how Dr. Carlos Rodríguez and myself have consciously or subconsciously applied this within our own practices will be crucial in defining our pedagogy. Through reflection in autobiographies, Rene Galindo and Monica Olguin (1996) paid special attention to Chicana/o educators’ ability in developing supportive relationships with both students and parents through their shared understanding of what it means to be well educated, or *ser bien educado*. All of this takes time, energy, and dedication. Whether negative or positive, relationships are created by the actions created authentically and mutually over extended periods of time.

After having taught for two decades, I have realized the implications of these actions, both negatively and positively. The bonds created with some of my former students and families during my years in Dallas are unbreakable. The acceptance and love created more than a decade ago between some of these families and myself persists to this day. It is important to note that without my ability to speak Spanish or culturally relate to our families, I would not have created these familial ties. The literature discussed in the next section promotes for the staffing and expansion of more culturally and linguistically diverse educators, as such teachers bring valued experiences, knowledge and familiarity to their work (Haberman, 2005). Researchers stress the need to differentiate the teaching profession given that a progressively growing diverse population of students is being met with a predominantly white, female, and middle-class teacher work force (Hollins, 2008). Monzo and Rueda (2003) assert one way this can be accomplished is "by drawing on the experiences of teachers who come from similar

cultures and communities as their students and who may have had similar experiences" (p. 75). Effective bilingual teachers who meet these standards must be at the forefront as an essential ally for our English Language Learners (ELL).

Common Cultural Waters

"So, if you want to really hurt me, talk bad about my language. Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity – I am my language." – Gloria Anzaldúa (2012, p. 81)

As I reflect on my experiences as a bilingual teacher, I realize the amount of learning I received both linguistically and culturally from my students alone. My Spanish has improved dramatically both in speech and in the written word. As Gloria Anzaldúa states above, it is impossible to separate language from culture. From the various dialects of Mexico to the Tex-Mex Spanish of our Lone Star State, we are identified by how we use it. It is important here to define culture because of its interwoven relationship with language, rather than simply viewing it as a way of stereotyping or overgeneralizing (Boykin & Noguera, 2011). Boykin and Noguera (2011) determined, "culture can be conceived as the prism or lens through which people interpret life events" and "what makes sense, what is appropriate, and what does or does not violate commonly held sensibilities" (p. 98). To connect with the literature on teachers who are culturally responsive, we must explore the explicit studies that focus on bilingual teachers and their determination to empower students' cultural and linguistic strengths. The research gives relevance to these teachers' positive attitudes about culture, language and educating our bilingual children. English language learners (ELL) are much more likely to succeed when their language and culture are incorporated into their learning (August & Hakuta, 1997). Teacher attitudes and perceptions regarding their students have been both

positively and negatively associated with student outcomes as Reyes, Scribner, and Scribner (1999) point out about high-performing Hispanic schools, “As communities of learners, everyone associated with the learning conditions of a school strive to do their best through growth and learning” (p. 5). This is to say that it is not enough for teachers who share a common language and culture with students to be successful in their field. They must become part of the community of learners. Stanton-Salazar (2001) warns: “When the school’s mission of English assimilation is pitted against the fragile process of building up immigrant student’s social capital, the latter process always yields” (p. 210). We must be cognizant and reflective of the effects created by our actions to create a ‘positive’ school climate, especially when it comes to how they impact our English language learners.

Revealing Our *Heridas* to Others

This portion of the review will accentuate the distinctive contributions of bilingual educators in terms of their experiences, education, and ontological formation. Research geared specifically towards the study of bilingual teachers show us their unique point of view within their practice. Studies suggest that teachers who are cultural and linguistic minorities have the capacity to use their own life experiences and "funds of knowledge" to inform instruction (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). Delving even further into these “funds,” researchers theorize these teachers to linguistically and culturally share similar experiences with their students and therefore become assets as well as co-sharers of knowledge (Rueda, Monzo, & Higareda, 2004). Defining it as sociocultural scaffolding, Rueda and colleagues (2004) claim these familiarities enable bilingual teachers the use of shared experiences and knowledge as a means of bridging

learning with their students' life experiences. Reflecting on my time at Texas State University, I recall most of my classes with Dr. Rodríguez being on location at the elementary campuses. His casual nature and mix of Spanish and English during class would put us at ease and would give us a sense of connection to what he was most probably subconsciously trying to reflect in terms of pedagogy. At a deeper level, he would relate stories of his past and connect it to his lessons. Because he was from the same generation as my father, even his seemingly simple chronicles resonated with me and created a deeper understanding of bilingual education as well as his life and even my father's life. In my own classroom, it has become part of my second nature to include my experiences with my students. It is fascinating to observe them connect to these stories and even more captivating to listen and learn how they have encountered similar incidences. It is quite common for my kids to admiringly remind me of our comparable stories later in the day, later in the year, or even years later. Many have told me I will be the only thing they remember with such detail from their time with me or with other teachers, albeit we do reminisce about many other positive experiences together, but none as vividly. These "discoveries" take root to authentic relationships with teacher and student who become infinitely intertwined as they both grow around that tree of knowledge like vines, sometimes together, sometimes separate, but always finding a shared space. To interpret this epistemological frame as a crucial part of my pedagogy, I refer to the brothers, Guajardo and Guajardo (2008), who recognize how "we nurture and transmit stories to our families, our students, and to the public at large through *pláticas*, just as our *abuelas* and our parents did with us" (p. 62). These *pláticas* become an ontological basis for teaching and learning. They are what we refer to when attempting to make sense of

our world and are based on our individual and collective experiences, stories, and relationships (Pizarro, 2001). This simply becomes a platform to engage and create authentic relationships and learning. When I began as a Chicano educator in the field of bilingual education, it was difficult to define, and more importantly, understand why I did what I did. It has been the practice of being a researcher that has created a deeper understanding of my ontology. Our classroom's figured world, as described by Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998), has become what we have created through our daily interactions, experiences, and practices. Within this world we create and organize individualized identities in an organic process (Holland, et al., 1998; Urrieta, 2007). Luis Urrieta (2007) emphasizes "that people produce identities through participation in cultural activities that allow them to engage conceptual and procedural identity production" and how "this process involves individuals' dialogic mental sense-making of who they are and who/how they want to be" (p. 119).

Oars of Resiliency

It is crucial to discuss my formation as cultural change agent. It was not until I began community college where I began to produce my identity as a Chicano activist. I became part of a small group of Chicanos, called *La Raza Alianza*, who met regularly to discuss issues related to our ethnicity and to learn more about our culture. The catalyst that created my passion to search for social justice was when a friend of mine was shot, handcuffed, and then beaten by a Dallas police officer. The personal connection to the victim, the obvious injustice prompted by the police, and the empowerment created by the collective group lit a flame within me, and it has spread to many aspects of my life, including my pedagogy. Although I had various other significant experiences that

contributed to my pursuit of becoming a bilingual teacher, this transformational experience considerably shifted my focus to social justice. Because the victim was a schoolmate during my final years of high school, I constantly reflected on and related his life's tragedies with his school experience. This, I believe, subconsciously propagated my passion for education. This became my "shift" as Urrieta (2007) states, "to Chicana/o Activist identity production, both conceptual and procedural, participants reported motivated them to formally enter careers in the field of education with the purpose of raising consciousness and to 'give back to the community'" (p. 134). Throughout my years as an undergraduate student and into my vocation as a teacher, I have learned to apply a variety of roles in navigating and/or surviving among differing cultures. Enrique T. Trueba (2004) defines this as a type of resilience:

The most resilient individuals also demonstrate an ability to use multiple identities and to understand the strategic value of playing different roles, using different languages, controlling communicative skills in sending messages to different audiences, and manipulating information from different possible frameworks of interpretations. (p. 162)

A significant part of this study is to discern and relate Dr. Carlos Rodríguez's experience with resilience to what I and other bilingual educators face in our field today. Finding similarities will assist in defining unique challenges we have faced for decades and possible pathways to finding solutions. Deciphering the differences in our experiences will shed light on where we are today versus the past, and how we move forward towards becoming more empowered as educators. Before my graduate studies, I did not have a way of defining this resilience nor how it related to my pedagogy. Once I

could acknowledge, comprehend, and critically reflect upon it, a galvanization of my epistemology emerged as a powerful force. It was applied in my classroom as a teacher, and at a more macro-level in the school community as a change agent. From challenging the curriculum at my grade level to convincing teachers in a vote against a test-based incentive program, I now have defined tools to combat oppressive practices. In my initial years as a bilingual teacher, I would stealthily create lessons and programs that “reflect the knowledge and experiences that students bring to the school” (Trueba, 2004, p. 164). As an educator, I knew it was my “ultimate responsibility for making the curriculum relevant and appropriate” (Trueba, 2004, p. 164). Although I could not define it at the time, I understood how education needed to be dialogical and not simply a “banking concept of education...” where “knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those who they consider to know nothing” (Freire, 2000, p. 72). This ontological *plática* that occurs daily in our classroom becomes a source of knowledge for both teacher and students; knowledge we can use to scaffold our learning and bridge authentic connections. As educators, we enter our classrooms and attempt to create unifying relationships by perusing how “individual life histories are in harmony with collective forms of life” (Habermas, 2005, p. 141). Pedagogical relationships can be formed only through authenticity and a commitment to caring. A crucial action for this relationship to thrive is continuity with caring being the priority. Part of this continuity involves long term connections that last several years or even decades (Noddings, 2005; Sergiovanni, 2000).

Weaving this innate and learned resilience to one’s own pedagogy and practice is part of the artistry of teaching. As bilingual educators, we must be even more intricate in

our design and be willing to seek the individual linguistic assets and needs of each of our differentiated learners to help them reach their goals. Policy has an integral part of what that may look like in our classrooms. Only those who are critically conscious of the current system will be able to navigate these rough waters. Is it possible to create policy that is critically conscious? Or do we go by populist notions of language tending to derive from nationalism seeking to silence and disempower our future. Policy has given loopholes to English only laws to become a possibility, which trickles down into our classrooms and detrimentally affects our English Language Learners. If students cannot comprehend what is being spoken or what they are reading and writing, it is meaningless.

He comes to school, not only without a word of English but without the environmental experience upon which school life is based. He cannot speak to the teacher and is unable to understand what goes on about him in the classroom. He finally submits to rote learning, parroting words and processes in self-defense. To him, school life is artificial. He submits to it during class hours, only partially digesting the information which the teacher has tried to impart. Of course he learns English and the school subjects imperfectly! – Sanchez (1940) (As cited in Crawford, 1999, p. 34)

The above quote by Sánchez is the very first quote I read in college that really drove my passion for bilingual education. I still remember reading it for the first time in my first bilingual education course as an undergraduate student of Rodríguez. I recall reading it over and over as if trying to memorize it. I would later use it during arguments with opponents of bilingual education as a way to build empathy, or at least an understanding of what a child's thinking is when entering a sink or swim system.

Coincidentally, it is the only book that I have used while pursuing all three of my degrees. I used the third edition of Crawford's book as an undergraduate and still have the fourth edition from my Master's program, which I am currently using in this dissertation. Little did I know both Sánchez and Rodríguez would be becoming my research partners throughout this journey.

III. METHODOLOGY

I have been in the trenches of bilingual education for nearly half of my life. It has become my disdain, my passion, and my lifeblood all rolled into a flour tortilla. As I write this narrative, it will “move back and forth between description, interpretation, and voice” (Denzin, 1997, p. 225). This narrative will require a methodology designed to invoke history, our authentic experiences, and to create *pláticas* among those being studied and the reader. This qualitative approach will utilize a critical interpretive ethnography designed to be “moving forward and backward in time,” where “subjects and their projects are located within the culture as a set of interpretive practices” (Denzin, 1997, p. 248).

Critical Autoethnography

A major portion of this research will use critical autoethnography to reflexively and analytically observe my own practices as an educator. Understanding and extracting the phenomenology of my cultural and identity ontology is crucial in interpreting it and owning it as constructive knowledge. This work is one of engagement by being “a stimulus for social criticism and social action – a joining of the personal, biographical, with the political, the social” (Denzin, 1997, p. 200). This “new” way of writing ethnography combines “ethnographic realists and the cultural phenomenologists” to “situate themselves in the stories told so the new writing always carries traces of autoethnography” (Denzin, 1997, p. 201). This narrative will be poetic in the sense of its use of figurative language where “texts are often records of or reflections on experience” and “instructive” (Denzin, 1997, p. 202; Ross, 1988, p. 370). This experiential text uses a variety of “literary devices” including the use of “scene setting, dialogue, multiple points

of view, composite characters and scenes, and an emphasis on showing” and “experiments with flashbacks, foreshadowing, interior monologues, and parallel plots” (Denzin, 1997, p. 208; Ellis, 1995, p. 312). This process within critical ethnography is one where “multiple roles” are heard and attributed to “*missing stories*” as “mentors, teachers, friends, and researchers... identities we embrace” (Howard, Thompson, Nash, Rodriguez, 2016, p. 323). *Missing stories* here are defined as the counter-narratives of people who have been oppressed and ignored throughout history, literature, and academia. This critical thought responds to “the call for justice” and “is a response to co-create stories that powerfully counter the status quo and oppressive systems” (Howard, et al., 2016, p. 323). This can take a researcher to a realization of “taking part in co-constructing *missing stories*, and exploring new avenues on the road to what is possible in educational practices and institutions when justice is the guiding force” (Howard, et al. 2016, p. 325). This is discussed further in this chapter within the collection of data section.

I understand within my role as a critical autoethnographer, this study “is not politically neutral,” and will explicitly convey “political, cultural, and ideological assumptions in the analysis” (Mehan, 2008, p. 83). As I explore the *political skills* and the power structures that we, as research partners, must navigate through, we will be able to decipher the dynamics and limits of utilizing them within our pedagogy and systems. I have asked the question, ‘Why are our schools with the lowest socio-economic students and high levels of English language learners lacking in resources and quality instruction?’ It is a very general question, in terms of it applying to many schools in a multitude of cities and towns, but it is one that is essential and in need of further inquiry. Our school

has the highest level of students on free or reduced lunch in the entire district. It is also one of the oldest schools in the district. Next year, we will be celebrating our sixtieth anniversary. Recently, I had a discussion with our new administrative intern for the new school year. The role of an administrative intern is a sort of apprenticeship, or a stepping



Figure 3. Panoramic photograph of my fifth grade classroom.

stone, towards becoming a vice principal or other leadership position at a campus level. Last year, she was a fifth grade teacher in a relatively new seven year old school comprised of mostly middle class families within our same school district. She was dumbfounded by the amount of outdated resources, furniture, and learning environments with which our students and teachers have had to use for many years and for some, decades. For example, I taught this past year in a portable that is at least twenty years old. Stained, dusty, decades old carpet, tape markings and sticky lines of removed tape on the carpet, and warping wood panels are what housed us this past year. An old noisy air conditioning unit that muffles almost every sound when I will cooling or heating the room was a distraction throughout the year. Small rectangular windows near the ceiling were our only view of the outside world during class (*Figure 3*). I decorated it with a variety of colors to make it inviting and as students contributed to our learning space, it became more organic and personal. The outside of the portable is weathered with peeling

paint and nailheads sticking out from various panels as it sits on cinderblocks above the ground to keep it level and protected from potential floods in the area.

Our grade level team discussed a possible day to invite kids and families to come and paint our portables with our own colors and possibly murals. The political nature of the bureaucratic process forced us to do this stealthily. After formulating a meeting with the principal with a readied proposal, she quickly noted that the portables were temporary and the district would be removing them soon. She offered us an alternative location within the school, but someone noted that most of it was already painted with pictures of mascots and wording, so we laid the plan to rest. This was an idea created and enhanced by all stakeholders and although it did not meet fruition, it sparked new ideas.

The administrative intern became even more astounded when she could not find a reason why her former, relatively new school is already getting their main office demolished and rebuilt while our school has not been part of any of the recent renovations made possible by school bonds. The dialogue among some teachers and staff has been sparked about getting families involved in an upcoming bond proposal and how we all can get involved in the process to help improve our schools. These *political skills* are active and organic as we learn to negotiate these uncharted spaces. All active participants can benefit in learning about the system, how it works, and how we can make critical changes within it, especially the mothers of our students. Trueba's (1999) ethnographical study of Mexican immigrant women living in the United States recognizes "the magnitude of their contributions to American democracy and to their children" (p. 96). In fact, he found that the "social and political currents surrounding the

educational experiences of immigrant children, their parents, and their teachers were always higher than those of mainstream America” (Trueba, 1999, p. 96).

Critical Policy as Practice with a Cultural/Lingual Context

As a bilingual teacher, most of my parent meetings and participation were attended by mothers. Whether it was a concern they had for their child or they were lambasting the entire district, their voices were unequivocally strong. But not knowing the system hindered many from using their voices towards action, although Trueba (1999) notes they know how to “organize themselves economically and politically in the United States” (p.109). As this develops, we will witness empowerment, even with the possibility of defeat. How have teachers negotiated this space? I have been involved in a few of these political moves within my role as an educator and as one gets more experienced with the process, the more they become knowledgeable about the process, although at times it can become disheartening. Levinson, Sutton, and Winstead (2009) “believe that a more thoroughgoing concept of policy as a practice of power, along with a valorization of the democratic potential of local policy appropriations” could create policy further driven by local stakeholders (pp. 785-786). The power of the policy and the intentions within its ideology deserve critical analysis. . How has this evolved since the time of George Sánchez, Carlos Rodríguez, and even since I began in this field? We will create a dialogue, a conversation, to weave the *political*, *social*, and *cultural* dimensions of each of the participants while critically analyzing policy as practice of each time period using Anzaldúa’s borderlands’ theory as a lens. One of the methods utilized within the narrative will be grounded on a hybrid theory using Levinson’s (2009) critical policy as practice paired with Anzaldúa’s (2012) borderlands’ resistance of theory of language

as a theory and an approach to analyzing the subjects as they relate to policy within their practice in the political, social, and cultural dimensions.

The borderlands theory gives us a context to look at the socio-historical changes from the turn of the century to the present as to how certain individuals navigated and resisted the mainstream ideal through these gray spaces historically, in practice, and within identity formation. As we begin to embrace this idea of the “legitimacy of our language,” we can then proceed in critically examining how policy has historically been used as a “practice of power” politically and pedagogically (Levinson, et al., 2009, p. 767). Critically approaching bilingual education policy to find how it “codifies and extends the interests of those who disproportionately wield power” will “clear the way for a possible world of social justice and nondomination” (Levinson, et al., 2009, p. 769).

How do we resurrect the voices of Rodríguez and Sánchez? We do not have to. It is flourishing in the hearts, minds, and voices of those whom they have touched. Rodríguez has left a legacy with the countless number of students, including myself, who have been continued to be advocates for our bilingual children. Through the process of *plática*, we will create meaning (Guajardo et al., 2008). David Bohm reminds us that while having dialogue, “meaning is not static; it is flowing. And if we have the meaning being shared, then it is flowing among us; it holds the group together” (1996, pg. 14). Here is where we will create that bowline or possibly even some netting that can be used by many practitioners. Rodríguez’s and Sánchez’s published (and unpublished) works will be crucial in giving voice to their pedagogies and practices.

Research Crew

Throughout this writing, I have given various details about the other crewmembers of our narrative. I have purposely chosen these research partners for several reasons. We share various common characteristics, and within an educational genealogy, have direct ties to each other. This is an intergenerational piece designed to historiographically and pedagogically detail important aspects of three educators' careers. First, we must acknowledge and agree that we all consider ourselves Mexican Americans. Specifically, George Sánchez would have referred to himself as Mexican-American, Carlos Rodríguez would have referred to himself as Chicano, and I refer to myself as a Xicano. In terms of genealogy, near Sánchez's retirement at the University of Texas and death in the seventies, Rodríguez was completing his doctorate there as well as teaching as a professor at Southwest Texas State University. During Rodríguez's final years as a professor and director of the bilingual education program at SWT, I was studying under him to become a bilingual teacher. The lineage continues with my chair, Miguel Guajardo, who had the opportunity to meet, interview, and give the eulogy for my beloved professor and mentor. The three of us also share a passion for the bilingual education of the Mexican and Mexican American child. This is where the heart of this study beats.

Dr. George Isidoro Sánchez

Sánchez was a dynamic and integral component of the Mexican American movement from the thirties into the early seventies. Born in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in 1906, he had an early yearning to teach (Garcia, 1989, p. 252; Blanton, 2014). It was during these early years that he began to see the disenfranchisement of Mexican students at

the hands of the education system. As a serious student and teacher, he quickly moved up into higher educational leadership positions at a relatively young age. By the time he was twenty-four years old and after receiving his bachelor's degree, he was assigned to be superintendent of the poor district he worked for in New Mexico (Garcia, 1989, p. 252). He did not stay long, moved to the Lone Star State, and quickly continued his master's degree at the University of Texas, graduating in 1931 (Blanton, 2014, p. 23). He returned to New Mexico, and worked "a few years as a crusading New Mexico state education bureaucrat" (Blanton, 2014, p. 24). Sánchez then pursued and completed his doctorate in 1934 at the University of California at Berkley. As a scholar of bilingual education during these early years, he recognized the need for more research in this field in terms of a specific type of training for teachers of bilingual children. He was very critical of the investigations done on Mexican American students corresponding to the IQ and questioned enrollment numbers of students in the primary grades compared to secondary school levels. These early observations and his position as a scholar, made him a pioneer on a variety of fronts, especially because it was at a time where a very small number of Mexican Americans had reached his level of education, not to mention how society viewed him and his heritage. In the 1940's, Sánchez became a professor at the University of Texas and remained there until his death in 1972 (Blanton, 2014, p. 71). In the early forties, he was named national president of LULAC where he took action in the fight against segregation and language policy. He was also involved in the Good Neighbor policy during World War II where he helped create a short-lived but well-received multicultural curriculum. As "a left leaning activist and educator," he had "ties to Latin American scholars, he "sought to more aggressively confront racial discrimination in

ways that represented a break from the past” (Blanton, 2014, pp. 100-101). As I researched Sánchez, I most admired his capacity for change, even within his own mindset. For example, he went from promoting English-Only as an effective method for teaching the Spanish speaking student, to outright speaking and writing against it. We will hear more about this in the narrative. Some of his greatest accomplishments came in his later years when he co-authored some of the modern bilingual education policies at the federal and state levels (Blanton, 2004, p. 135). Being part of the Mexican American generation, Sánchez “challenged the system but never doubted it,” yet he was still a radical considering the signs of the times (Garcia, 1989, p. 271).

George Sánchez will be our historical guide throughout this network of waterways and canyon walls. He was at the origin of modern bilingual education policy and even partook in its creation both directly and indirectly. Because Sánchez’s story begins at the turn of the 20th century, it will be difficult to locate relatives who can provide us with his voice, his dreams. I will seek out archival data from scholars who have written extensively on the professional life of Sánchez, such as Blanton (2014) who recently published a comprehensive portrait of him. I seek guidance from scholars who can lead me, or at least provide clues to Sánchez’s tumultuous dreams. The search for the self is relentless but full of resilience and tribulation.

Dr. Carlos González Rodríguez

Rodriguez was born on May 3, 1930 in San Marcos, Texas. Growing up in a town where segregation was three-fold – separate schools for Whites, Blacks, and Mexicans, at the very least, gave him a sense of how society viewed the oppressed. He finished high school in 1948 and wanted to join the military to travel, but ended up in Fort Hood, Texas

(Rodriguez Family, personal communication by M. Guajardo, February, 2006). Because he joined the army, he received the G.I. Bill which he took advantage of by attending Southwest Texas State University where he received his bachelor's in journalism in 1953 (Rodriguez Family, personal communication by M. Guajardo, February, 2006). The same year was a crucial year for Rodriguez as he married that summer as well as began teaching in his hometown at Burleson Elementary (Rodriguez Family, personal communication by M. Guajardo, February, 2006). The following year, he and his wife had their first son, Carlos and his wife would have two more children in the years to come (Rodriguez Family, personal communication by M. Guajardo, February, 2006). He received his master's degree in education at his alma mater, SWT. After receiving his master's, Rodríguez became a professor at Southwest Texas State University (now Texas State University) for several decades from the seventies into the new millennia. During the mid-seventies, he completed his doctorate at the University of Texas and was a member of the Modern Language Association and Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). While working on his doctorate, he also served as the Director of the Title VII Bilingual Project at SWT. I had the honor of being his student during the late nineties. He was the director of the bilingual education department at the university at the time, as well as a professor for many of my field-based and bilingual education courses. As a co-sponsor of the B.E.S.O., or Bilingual Education Student Organization, he created a familial cohesiveness for all the students studying to become bilingual teachers. We took trips to T.A.B.E. (Texas Association of Bilingual Education) Conferences where the bonds of all who participated grew stronger. Dr. Rodríguez thoroughly felt at ease talking in Chicano Spanish, especially in informal settings. He did

have a quiet demeanor, but let us not be fooled. It is a characterization of “mexicanos-Chicanos” defined by Anzaldúa (2012) as “*humildes* (humble) yet proud, *quietos* (calm) yet wild” (p. 86). She continues, “stubborn, persevering, impenetrable as stone, yet possessing a malleability that renders us unbreakable” (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 86). Dr. Rodríguez was not afraid to express himself, but only when necessary. If one challenged him, one better be prepared to defend themselves, especially if it held deep beliefs for him. He was definitely “*quieto* yet wild” (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 85). His ability to invoke story into his teachings helped us relate learning with our purpose. He was an educator who went beyond the classroom and exemplified how we, as educators, should be when we are in these positions. By organizing dinners and other social events, having classes at the schools we would be serving, and always having his office doors open for us, he was modeling what the whole educator looks like. This was part of his pedagogy. Dr. Rodríguez’s abilities to convey knowledge in a variety of meaningful ways will have the role of an educator of the policy and practice. It was during this time in my college years where I could load my own boat with powerful tools that I continue to use as a practitioner. I came away with a different lens and therefore a different focus on how I would be in (and out) of the classroom.

The Anatomy of Story

Before I can board our boat to begin the journey, I need to create an adaptable map that will guide, yet organic in its ability to critically create new courses if deemed crucial. Using Guajardo and Guajardo’s (2010) “The anatomy of story” as a way “to frame the concept of storytelling,” provides a systematic but fluid process for developing the story (p. 94). The story is not simply the narrative of ontology, but “counter

narratives” spoken by unheard voices striving to “support new directions for community” through praxis (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2010, p. 87).

This framework can be utilized as a scaffold to build upon a story as an interconnected human body. Each part is integral yet without as much meaning if the other parts are not present or removed. Guajardo and Guajardo use the human body as a metaphor for creating narratives with deep impact. The various vital parts of this process include the navel, heart, mind, hands, and legs. I used this structure when creating our narrative because it gave me a culturally responsive technique that connected to me, my research partners, and to our community of learners.

Navel

The navel represents the “core of human anatomy” and it is within this space where the “core message and the questions that emerge from the story” come from and “are essential for developing the core purpose of the story” (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2010, p. 94). Stories must contain value, otherwise they become unnecessarily tedious. Beginning at the navel is essential for setting the stage and laying out purpose so the reader can determine whether it is important and relatable to their own lives. In the following section, I will detail these important aspects.

From the origins of Sánchez’s push for educational equality to the boundaries crossed by Rodríguez’s resilience, leading to my continued struggle as a bilingual educator in critically interpreting policy through practice, this investigation will give a common lens intertwined through history, policy, and pedagogy. As activist school educators, the participants come into this study as research partners using qualitative research methods to conduct a narrative inquiry that delves into the evolution of policy

with relation to ontology. We will embark on a journey with a collaborative voice to chronicle our experiences as activist school leaders and practitioners.

I have worked as a bilingual educator for nearly twenty years. As a teacher, I have organically changed my pedagogy through a dynamic and critical process. My predecessors have as well. They have unique stories that span time and connect us through an interweaving thread. Through their stories and my own, I will seek to discover commonalities in pedagogy and determine how we came to this space. This work will utilize a hybrid of Gloria Anzaldúa's borderland theory as we create a critically comparative analysis while observing the socio-historical influences each generation has endured.

As educators, we share a specific viewpoint in terms of pedagogy, place, and practice. Our culture and "Chicanismo, or ethnic pride," binds us as *compadres* and *comadres* (San Miguel, 2013, p. 127). Chicanismo "promotes cooperation, familial relationships, and political unity" in a way bound only by shared experiences (San Miguel, 2013, p. 127). These are the ties that bind us. *Compadres* and *comadres* refers to friends or relatives who have a certain special bond. This bond is based on deeply shared experiences, a baptizing of one of their children, or amongst close friends and relatives. It is used as a term of endearment with every uttered exchange of the word creating a stronger bond between the *compadres* and *comadres*. Throughout my life, I have heard my parents use it with certain friends, aunts, and uncles. We knew there was an earned but special connection between them. We could feel it, see it, and have continuously strive to make these authentic relationships. Trueba (1999) acknowledges there may be differences, but as "*compadres*," and *comadres* we will be "grounded in a common

linguistic and cultural background” (p. 156). As I embark on this journey with my research partners, I look forward to calling them my *compadres* and *comadre*.

Because the communities we serve are Mexican and Chicano in terms of ethnicity, language, and culture, we are ontologically entrenched with our students and families. We have continuously and passionately worked with a consciously specific purpose – to create an authentic environment, whether at the micro or macro level, that will empower our disenfranchised communities. This study will seek out those specific practices and critically connect them to an evolving bilingual policy in Texas. We will frame our journey with the Guajardo, Guajardo, Oliver, Valadez, Keawe, Henderson, and Rocha “ecologies of knowing” model (2013). This model uses three concentric spaces to navigate among three ways of knowing: the self, the organization, and the community. Throughout these levels, a consistent but organic dialogue is cohesively being formed to design encounters, craft relationships, and determine where and when constructive entanglements should occur (Guajardo et al., 2013). Our deepest awareness must begin its excursion at the center, the self.

Casting a Net in Search of Heart – Collection of Data

This, in essence, is the lifeblood of our story. It is what drives us as it “is the source of human passion” (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2010, p. 95). Within this section, I will privilege Anzaldúa as a significant change agent who has defined our “values that guide the efforts that fuel action” (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2010, p. 95; Anzaldúa, 2012). How we speak to each other, how we tell our story, how we define our spaces are all part of our language and our culture. This gives us that “ultimate meaning” of legitimacy and value to tell our story (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2010, p. 95).

The heart of this study will be in the dialogical process conducted through *pláticas* (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2008, p. 65). As we navigate through these waters, we will encounter various obstacles. Some we will be aware of, while others will be unexpected, but we will push forward and extract meaning from these moments. At the most micro-level, we look within ourselves; we observe through our souls where dreams are purposefully assembled. This is the heart and soul of where our passion burns. In this small space we develop our personal understandings and conversations with our students and within ourselves in search of authenticity (Guajardo et al., 2013). It is here where we draw out our own blueprints for learning and educating. This comes in many forms – the arts, storytelling, plays, etc. Guajardo et al.’s model gives participants awareness towards self-direction of their learning and practice as individuals (2013). This personalization gives each of us the responsibility and power to act on our knowledge. Freire describes this consciousness as “one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach” (2000, p. 80). It is thus necessary to create a critical narrative using “interpretive epistemologies grounded in lived experiences of previously excluded groups in the global postmodern world” to act on our knowledge (Denzin, 1997, p. 53; Guajardo, et al. 2013). This “text is reflexive, not only in its use of language but also in how it positions the writer/[researcher] in the text and uses the writer’s experiences as both the topic of inquiry and a resource for uncovering problematic experience” (Denzin, 1997, p. 217). As we ride together, our conversations, or *pláticas*, will occur, not only amongst each other, but with the socio-historical aspects (canyon walls), the policy (river), the practice (boat), and the culturally linguistic conception of Anzaldúa’s (*herida*) borderlands theory. This will empower and enable us to tell our story

from our vantage point. The narrative process of telling a story gives a personal depth and strength that can reveal much more than the superficial issues found by only exploring policy. The *pláticas* that occur within these realms will weave and entangle our Chicano epistemologies as we seek our role within the spaces we organically travel. Guajardo and Guajardo note how “although this approach runs counter to the conventional positivistic paradigm, it is essential as we create space for stories from our community, as well as our own personal stories” (2004, p. 504). Although Sánchez and Rodríguez are no longer here in the physical form, they thrive in their words, oral and written, and through the communities they continue to serve. These are their visions; their dreams they once had and still have as they continuously travel simultaneously on a diversity of boats through winding streams, creeks, and brooks of the many who have benefited from both their struggles and endeavors. They never truly die. I am one who carries those dreams. I, like them, and many others use my powerful vessel of pedagogy which empowers others to be capable of enduring these treacherous waters. While holding the wheel, we carve the river by propelling forward. We carve and break down the old historical narrative and discover a new perspective from the same era. We carve new pathways through that canyon. We carve and empower others to do the same, so that those who follow will have the social justice we all deserve. But if we use the same lenses as the old narratives, we will end up back in the same waters, listening to the same echoes against the canyon walls, on a path back to where we started. This is where the wind that we breathe and live by, the wind that guides us, the wind that gives us the power to speak within our own context of language and culture is – this is our heart, our spirit, and it has been given a voice through Anzaldúa. As I progress into the various parts of Guajardo and Guajardo’s

(2010) “anatomy of story” later in this chapter including the mind, hands, and legs, it is important to note how they are all necessary to the interconnectedness and strengths and weaknesses of the entire body of the story.

The seemingly endless interpersonal links I made while reading Anzaldúa’s transformational book, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, further cemented my thoughts on the commonalities and connections cultures and languages have the potential to create. At almost every single turn, I could relate her experiences and beliefs with my own. When my chair, Dr. Guajardo, for this dissertation asked me to look into Anzaldúa’s work as part of my research, I added it to my lengthy list of resources to purchase where it was almost lost, but not forgotten. Her take on language and its connection to culture and politics is one I have grappled with since I learned to speak both languages. Anzaldúa’s book title, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, refers to a place on the Texas-United States Southwest and Mexico border, but she goes beyond the physical and into how the borderlands are a cultural state of mind for many. She peruses how “the Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle, and upper classes touch” (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 19). This lens is one many of us have had to fight with our entire lives. It has been a shield as well as a sword used against us. And it stems from language and culture.

Mind

Throughout this expedition, we must remain consistently critical in “checking each” other in our thought processes. Guajardo and Guajardo (2010) discusses this aspect of the story as the “center of all analytical thinking” where “we bring critical analysis to

its formation” (p. 95). It is also a place that “fuels the ideas, the imagination, and instructional action” where we can develop it, make sense of it, and prepare to put it into practice (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2010, p. 95). Disruption of the dominant narrative will happen here as we begin to carve our river into the canyon walls and discover other versions that critically change what has been essentially etched in stone.

In this space of the self, we will bowline our pedagogy and practice with each other and others we have sailed with. It is within these waters where relationships are created, nurtured, and ultimately thrive or become torn. This is the space where we seek to become *compadres* and *comadres*. Our process will begin with my pedagogical self as a practitioner and as a change agent. Carspecken (2005) suggests conducting critical ethnography as a “form of critical pedagogy, experimenting with fully involving one’s self within communities and discussing and debating moral and value issues with the people one studies” (p. 26). The level of reflexivity will be a key aspect of this process; it must be for it “is a part of language – an integral feature of all discourse” (Marcus, 1994, pg. 568). By integrating bilingual policy as it relates to my practice, I will critically reflect on its effects on my praxis as an educator and as a change agent. As we have our conversations, I plan to come to a point of reflexivity where we can divulge how our practice mirrors our pedagogy and how we can improve on it.

The connections we create when we allow our philosophical self to have agency are crucial in terms of voice and praxis. The direct impact we can have within our organization is where my passion authentically lies. At the organization level of the “ecologies of knowing” model, a space is created to acknowledge the acquisition of knowledge to be knitted or knotted (because it can be chaotic) amongst participants

including families, schools, organizations, and barrios (Guajardo et al., 2013). Two essential and complementary roles are mentioned here: space and connections. Within these threads are bonds created through a collaborative effort, never alone. As fluid navigators of dreams, we maneuver with other dreamers to create authentic connections. As stated earlier, these connections must be complementary to the space between them. How are spaces and connections fused? Are they even fused? No, they are organic and fluid. They change with each connection. The space is raw at first. It is infinite in terms of what can occur. As each space forms an environment for connections, it begins to define itself. This authentic space creates moments that define who we are within each unique space – a place where relationships are given birth, nurtured, and retained. At the organization level, Guajardo et al. (2013) prompt us to focus and have a *plática* on learning as a critical element, for it is in these connections and spaces where we develop our values, habits, and views of the world. Therefore, we must critically analyze the self within the organization to explore the effectiveness and development during this process (Guajardo et al., 2013). As bilingual educators, we must also explore how language, culture, and practice based on policy play a role within this realm. How does bilingual education policy affect the practice of teaching and more importantly, the relationships we build with colleagues, families, and students?

When we look at policy, a particular hierarchy frames our lens. When bilingual education policy is passed through the state legislature, it is deconstructed and interpreted by district experts and publishers, who use it to create curriculum, and eventually passed on to the educator, where we use it in our practice. It becomes our vessel as we work to create a sort of map with a compass for our students and parents. This vessel is the

infrastructure of the community level of Guajardo et al.'s ecologies of knowing (2013). Here is where policy flows beneath. Not only does it run here, it is further damned with other policies, including the economy, educational systems, housing, etc. (Guajardo et al., 2013). This is where we, at the self and organizational level, need to connect to make institutional changes. We need to seek out how this “knowing” at the community level is benefiting our stakeholders in the long term. By critically identifying the current foundations for our learning, we can move through praxis to effectively dismantle them and reestablish who we are under our own terms— our *historia* (Guajardo et al., 2013). When we can develop a “communion with the people” that “elicits cooperation,” we can then move towards changing the physical narrative (Freire, 2000, pg. 171). As partners in this research and members of our respective communities, we must learn from each other how to create and learn new skills and strategies, construct a defining consciousness, and work within our communities to actively engage towards change (Guajardo et al. 2013). What do these spaces look like? What needs to happen to create this critical consciousness with our communities? They must be involved in the process. This research will produce unique strategies for engaging our communities. We will reflect on past strategies of Sánchez and Rodríguez and superimpose them with today's relevant strategies to create a depository of ideas for community activists. The mission of our study is to create a community of engaged learners guided by an epistemology of caring where “an inclusive pedagogy that respects all youth regardless of their linguistic abilities” is maintained as the dreamed reality (Guajardo et al., 2013; Valenzuela, 1999, pg. 104). Before we can disrupt, change, and reconstruct our current framework, we need to understand the origins of our current structure – in this study, policy. Discussing policy

with a critical lens will be crucial in deconstructing its intentions as well as its utility within our bilingual education programs and school systems.

Using Our Hands to Search the Murky Waters for Archival Data

Just as we shape out our path and break down walls, our “hands massage and help mold the values, ideas, message, and rhythm of the story” (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2010, p. 95). The friction of how the delivery of this story will be handled will be inevitable because the “message is a complex and sophisticated process, and it accounts for environment and tone” (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2010, p. 95). As it is created, it will cause discomfort to the point of arthritic pain, but we must keep *amasando* (kneading) the story. It will definitely not be perfectly round like our mothers’ tortillas, but it will be ours nonetheless.

As I share this space with my research partners, conversations emerge. We each hold different socio-historical perspectives that are unique to our era, but simultaneously culturally transcend who we are. Because of this common space, we can carve out the interrelated constants and variables from partners using a particular context for each one. We, in essence, are the data sets and, together, we will organically create a dynamic critical epistemology, which helps define and becomes a part of the borderlands theory. Sánchez will give us an historical perspective and context as both a pioneer and advocate for Chican@s as political beings and bilingual education. Rodríguez’s expertise in the field of bilingual education will provide insight into the training and pedagogy of future practitioners. As a bilingual educator in the current school system, I will provide a critical autoethnographic perspective that peers into my own identity formation within a socio-political context. Anzaldúa’s resistance to current theory on language and language

development will postulate our focus within the borderlands theory. When we first meet others, our conversations are very general and tend to be guarded, but as we get to know each other, and trust each other, they grow into deeper dialogue, known as *pláticas* (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2008, p. 65). The *pláticas* will be derived from gathered data among the research partners and will be creatively organized in dialogical narrative form.

As stated earlier, with myself being the exception, all of my research partners are posthumous, yet their ontologies live in various forms. I will examine these ways of knowing using a critical epistemology that compares, explores, and advocates for social justice in the realm of bilingual education. This is my purpose. The strategies I will utilize include, but are not limited to, life histories, archival data, publications written by research partners, and critical autoethnography. As I analyze the data, it will be represented in a narrative format structured with Guajardo and Guajardo's (2010) 'anatomy of story' described in this chapter to provide both a framework and the ability to make meaning of our *pláticas*. This method will organically change as I create new meanings and essentially carve it with my research findings.

If You Build It, They Will Come

This narrative has become my "*milpa* of dreams" (corn "field of dreams"). To gain a grasp of these "creatures of their times", I needed to search and collect from multiple perspectives and resources. Collecting this archival data from various sources was crucial for this type of interpretive ethnographic research due to the participants being deceased. This collection included primary sources such as audio interviews, newspaper articles, professional and personal writings, and personal reflections. Secondary archival data from various points of view were vital in giving us a sense of

how they were perceived and how their ontology was formed. Using these methods helped me “argue for the central importance of those meaningful lived experiences that have been inscribed in a powerful cultural context,” and seek out “symbolic representations of deep cultural truths, and great wisdom resides therein” (Collins, 1991, p. 210; Denzin, 1997, p. 191). This search for a universal hope is unending, but mere glimpses give us enough light to keep looking.

We Have Dug in the Shallows and the Deep. How Do We Analyze It?

We tell a story. As we sort through all of the data and attempt to make meaning out of it, we look for specific aspects that are guided by our research questions. Let us bring these back.

1. What does an ethnographic study of bilingual education policy as lived by three intergenerational practitioners tell us about the evolution of theory, practice, and politics?
2. How has my critical ontology and identity formation developed and been informed by pedagogy, practice, and activism throughout my educational journey?

We must look at the various layers within the socio-historical contexts of the lives affected in their era. These are organic and evolutionary, as we gain more in our critical consciousness, the data evolves, and this is what we explored especially in terms of our pedagogy and practice. As stated herein, utilizing Guajardo and Guajardo’s ecologies of knowing we can move within these spaces and scaffold them within Trueba and Mehan’s leadership skills as we analyze and juxtapose our lives throughout this journey.

This meaning making process will be organized using Mehan (2008) and Trueba's (1999) skills described as the *technical*, the *political*, and the *cultural* skills or resources utilized by three professional educators whose lives span from the beginning of the twentieth century to the present. Of the three main participants in this research, two are posthumous. I will include myself as part of this research to tell my story through an autoethnographical perspective using these ascribed skills of which will include the stories of Dr. George I. Sánchez and Dr. Carlos Rodríguez. Our fourth spiritual participant is Gloria Anzaldúa who will guide our journey. The *technical*, *political*, and *cultural skills* can be detailed within a socio-historical context, especially because policy has drastically evolved during this time frame.

To critically define these three skills, one would first have to pair them with an individual who would then give them voice, which is powerful. At the same time, we can give a fundamental meaning as Trueba and Mehan describe them. In terms of the *technical skills*, Mehan (2008) describes how school leaders must provide effective strategies and resources to ensure students “meet the challenges of the rigorous curriculum required for entering four year colleges and universities” (p. 79). Trueba (1999) describes the failure of schools in using pedagogical methods as *technical skills* that are not in tune with Latino students or the communities they live. Teachers are seen “as technicians who implement predetermined and preselected skills and strategies” (Ramirez, 2013, p. 273).

As we move forward or backward, we are conscious of where we are in place, culture, and language. Being cognizant of this gives us power, but ironically it also gives us “*conocimiento*”, or knowledge, of how those in power “distinguish us from them”

(Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 540; Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 25). Gloria Anzaldúa defines how “these *conocimientos* challenge official and conventional ways of looking at the world, ways set up by those benefiting from such constructions” (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 542). This *conocimiento* is part of an “*herida*” or open wound along the U.S.-Mexican border, where language, place, and culture “bleeds” and where “the prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants” (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 25). We do not have to live on the border to experience this *herida*. It is how we are viewed by those in power based on the brownness of our skin, the hinted accent in our speech, or in the culture we celebrate. We may have not been born on the border, yet because it is an open wound, the blood within our veins are part of this *herida* and it seeps, it digs, it finds paths, it finds its own way – it creates its own way, or sometimes a collective way. Anzaldúa’s voice and theoretical perspective of language is that unpredictable *herida* that makes us feel fear in the face of fragility and uncertainty, yet I will still powerful enough to flow through us, so we become it – pumping through our hearts, giving us breath – and so it moves us like kindred spirits. We do not move like most in this system. We purposely choose not to. Having a critical consciousness and *conocimiento* allows us to free ourselves from the flow of the main current in these waters. It strengthens us to steer clear of it and create our own *heridas* of resistance and change. Experience coupled with resistance will consequently give us shared battle wounds. These are not negative, but strengthening. We search and find ourselves at a confluence with others who share and traverse these tumultuous waters while we continuously pave ours in the educational system and have hopefully given others the tools to excavate new healing tributaries of knowledge and of hope. Throughout our journey, we will search for these common themes of experience and

resistance to juxtapose them and analyze them for inherent strategies and solutions. This will contribute to the research in terms of the power of story and *conocimiento*.

So, as we examine bilingual education policy's development through a critical theory lens, we "recognize that policies are not stable, fixed, and abstract documents but instead are open, awkward, incomplete, and unstable texts that may be read in an infinite number of ways" (Brewer, 2014, p. 284). Critical policy analyses embedding "cultural history are useful in addressing this urge because they lead to a necessary attempt to write a history of the present or at least an attempt to compare our present exigencies to past commitments" (Brewer, 2014, p. 278). Utilizing narrative in a creative manner to analyze policy "can bring into question how multiple voices narrated the issues of the time and how policy was contingent on multiple historical narratives all competing for dominance (Brewer, 2014, p. 283). As I make my conclusions in chapter five, I will discuss how we can move forward with policy formation utilizing the voices of the unheard.

Legs

This will be my goal, my hope. Guajardo and Guajardo (2010) determine the usefulness of the story "if it impacts others beyond the storyteller" it then "lives and moves, could be passed down from generation to generation, and may just stand the test of time" (p. 95). Another important feature of the legs is how they help in creating "the identity of place, people, and organizations," or put us on the map, so to speak (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2010, p. 95). Stories with legs also empower those who find value in it, whether it be the storytellers or those who have listened to it. It gives them the "necessary agency to push, resist, and amalgamate the outside forces to allow for the creation of a new reality for the self, the group, and the community in which we live" (Guajardo &

Guajardo, 2010, p. 95). This in turn becomes part of the process of identity formation which is a crucial step in knowing who we are, why we are, and now that we know, what are we going to do about it. I will about becoming more ‘woke’; ‘woke’ with praxis.

Etelvina Sandoval Flores (2002) describes how:

The practice of developing familiarity with the daily happenings in schools, analyzing the meaning that subjects participating the educational process give to their actions, and investigating the impression that social history has left on existing school practices gives rise to analysis of the local culture with school environments. (p. 124)

Trustworthiness and Credibility

This study was not an easy endeavor, which is why I took multiple steps to ensure it was trustworthy and credible. By utilizing critical autoethnography, interpretive ethnography, and a critical analysis of policy as methods for this study, I was able to collect and formulate the data within the narrative. This study is unique in that the participants are deceased. In order to meet this challenge, I made sure I utilized a variety of sources to assist in bringing them back to life. A core part of these sources were writings written by the participants, recordings of family members regarding one of the members, biographies from distinct authors about the partners, and personal reflections and long term personal connections with one of the participants prior to his death. Reading, listening, and reflecting with my research partners allowed me to seek out a deeper sense of who they were and what they stood for. In regards to historical facts and events, I cross-referenced various sources to create a deeper and clearer picture of the data as part of my analysis. Several of the sources and writings occurred at the exact time

I was studying under one of my research partners, Carlos Rodríguez. Subsequently, many of my personal and academic interactions were verified after discovering these pieces. While writing the narrative, I inserted direct quotes from their writings to ensure even more trustworthiness and credibility when it came to voice.

Ethical Considerations

This study involved research partners who have passed away and I truly hope I have honored them through this dissertation. Because they were deceased, I was granted an exemption from the Institutional Review Board and the approval to continue the study. The data sources are all publically accessible and can be found in a variety of medias including books, articles, journals, audio recordings, music recordings, and online references. The ability to utilize a mix of data enables the researcher to triangulate the information and to become more critical of the findings. I have learned from doing this research how I can empower my students to become critical writers by using similar strategies while teaching writing in my own classroom. As educators, we can modify these tools to slowly reassemble our vision of what education could be.

What is the role of our education system in terms of developing students into responsible citizens with a vision? How can we revolutionize bilingual education from being just a system created by policy to a value system that creates authentic caring and learning? The tide and flow of the river can turn and significantly increase the success of its students. Change the flow of the river to become part of the solution of building capacity in all students. Build new bridges over the river that will give students new perspectives on life and schools. Create new forks throughout the river to allow students

to find their calling and forge their own paths to their future. None of this easy to achieve, but together we can quit worrying about what is on top of the hill and move mountains!

IV. THE JOURNEY

Introduction

Before I can tell this narrative, I will detail the formatting and structure of the story and how metaphors and other figurative language will create a visually styled exploration. This story will be both chronological in terms of historiography but it can also transpose to different generation when we begin to critically analyze past and present policies and their relationships with pedagogies and/or practices of our lives. A variety of metaphors will be contextualized around several landforms or objects. I need to clarify some important information regarding individual voices and notations. I will begin with George Sánchez. Because Sánchez has an extensive collection of works, I utilized his voice in the context of the narrative with quotations and proper citations, but because this is also interpretive text, I also created voice based on biographies and autoethnographies of his life. His character will be mostly held in a socio-historical context and as a policy expert. Because Sánchez has mastered the ability to academically sculpt these pathways, he will provide a historical context within our *pláticas*. Carlos Rodríguez's perspective will come from various point of view by people who knew him. An interview done by Miguel Guajardo gives us a wide context of Rodríguez's life in terms of challenges, emotions, and pedagogy. Another important context will come from my relationship and experiences I had with him during my studies at Southwest Texas State University. This narrative will detail his impact on me and a multitude of his students who knew him. His character will be exclusively related with his role as an educator of bilingual practitioners. I will be known as Xinto (my nickname) in this narrative. This will entail the autoethnographic portion of the research in that I will critically delve into my life, pedagogy and practice and its relation to past and current policy. My character will be

coming from the perspective of a critically evolving bilingual teacher. My role on our boat will speak from this perspective. My practice will inform what we do in the classroom and how it interacts, shapes, and gives voice to our students. It is where my boat carves the river by propelling. Together we will navigate towards various parts of Texas and Texas history while carving our own paths along the way.

This story will begin in Palo Duro Canyon just outside Amarillo in the Texas Panhandle. The Red River has run through here for tens of millions of years. It is on this river where I board the boat and begin the journey with an understanding that the participants will contribute to the *plática* in unique ways as defined by ontology, experiences, and roles as educators. The river waters represent the seemingly enduring and indissoluble policy that has been eroding the Texas educational landscape for decades. The historical impact is evident in every layer of this rocky canyon, and it has stories to tell within its fossilized remains. As archaeological navigators, we will use our expertise within our respective roles to give voice to these silenced layers for their stories are important to the narrative.

The Palo Duro Canyon

Sánchez: (Waving from the bank of the Red River next to a boat) Hey guys! Hurry up! I

am the old one and I am the first one here.

Rodríguez: Well, that means you had a head start getting here (laughs).

Xinto: (Arriving last) Hello Dr. Sánchez and Dr. Rodríguez! What happened to your

clothes? Especially yours, Dr. Sánchez?

Sánchez: (Looking at his torn and dirty pants and shirt and then at Rodríguez's and then smiling) First of all, do not call me Dr. Sánchez. Call me George. Secondly, that

is why we are here. To talk about where we were and how we got here. (Reaching his hand out) Come on board!

Rodríguez: Same here, Xinto. Call me Charlie (laughs). *No te creas* [just kidding], call me Carlos.

Xinto: I am just so used to using titles out of respect. In fact, I have good teacher friends who I still refer to by their last name. I will try.

Sánchez: I understand. Do you see those canyon walls? (Carlos and I both nod) I have climbed almost every single one of them. (Carlos and I look at each other with raised brows and wide eyes). Do you see the water we are floating on? (We both nod again as we look over the edge of the boat) I have sailed, paddled, swam, waded, and even almost drowned in many of the waters running throughout Texas and the Southwest. Climbing and navigating these spaces have done this to me, tattered and torn, but not broken.

Xinto: What do you mean?

George: Grab your telescope and take a closer look. (As I look and focus, I see more than just canyon walls and water) What you see in those canyon walls is history, but everyone views it differently depending on what telescope you have learned to use, nevertheless I will take you there. Now take a look at the water. Do you see the two currents? (I nod as I point my telescope into the water) One is policy and the other is our *herida*, our wounds.

As soon as he said this, he cut the rope line tied to the gnarled roots of a mesquite tree sticking out of an embankment. With a sudden pull our journey began. I fell back a bit while the two older gentleman seemed to move smoothly with the boat.

George: Carlos! You will be in charge of steering. Go ahead and take a hold of the boat's wheel. I have the map you can follow. Xinto, you stay alert with your telescope and be looking for particular places that may not be on the map. I will be down below to make sure our boat stays afloat. I know most of these waters and it will get rough in many areas.

I still wondered what he meant by *heridas*. And what places do I need to be looking for? I decided to take a closer look into the water. Suddenly, I saw a red figure flowing in the current. I leaned over the wooden railing to get a better look.

Xinto: Ouch!

I looked at my arm and saw a stream of blood flowing down towards my elbow and dripping into the water and seemingly becoming part of the flowing red silhouette. I looked back at Sánchez and Rodríguez and noticed they had scars as well – some were still open. Suddenly the figure came out of the water still connected to my trickling blood. At that instant the waters change. We are no longer on the Red River. We float on *El Río Bravo*, The Rio Grande.

Gloria:

...1,950 mile-long open wound

dividing a *pueblo*, a culture,

running down the length of my body,

staking fence rods in my flesh,

splits me splits me

me raja me raja... (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 24)

Xinto: What the...?

Carlos: You mean “who the...?” That is Gloria Anzaldúa. She has defined and created this *herida* out of sheer love for us and our people.

Gloria: I will be with you throughout your journey. I will remind you of your open wounds and how they can give your strength. We now flow along this *herida* and as you will see how this “borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary” (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 25). We are on the Rio Grande: “The U.S.-Mexican border *es una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds” (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 25).

Xinto: But what does that mean?

Damned Up Waters of Racism

Gloria: George and Carlos, let us return to the earlier days when you struggled with segregation in your own unique ways.

George: I am ready. I remember I was beginning my professorship at the University of Texas at that time.

Carlos: I do not remember much because I was just a young boy, but I do remember we had separate schools in San Marcos for Whites, Blacks, and Mexicans. The Mexican and Black schools were inferior and they made sure they kept us separate. In fact, a few years before I was born “in 1925 a new wooden facility was constructed to house the Mexican school due to an increase in the number of Latin@ students. The new school continued to lack running water a request that had been made by Latin@ citizens and continued to be ignored” (Cantu, 2016, p. 33; Davis, 2000, p. 26).

George: That was true for many parts of Texas at that time and well into the fifties. Let us look here along this canyon wall. It was outright discrimination! “Communities practicing the segregation of the Spanish-speaking children, are, in my conception, educationally backward and misguided” (Sanchez, 1951, p. 170). “The practice of segregation does not square up to good pedagogy, to the best learning of English, or to good Americanism” (Sanchez, 1951, p. 173; Blanton, 2004, p. 98, 112; Garcia, 1989, p. 264). Look here in this damned part of the river. I still remember chairing a legal fund with LULAC to fight this in court with the *Bastrop v. Delgado* case of 1948 and although the court considered segregation of Mexican students illegal, they said that it was still okay to segregate some students based on language instruction (Blanton, 2004, p. 114). So, this ruling set a sort of filtered damn where not all Mexican kids were allowed to be separated from their white schoolmates. So by the following year, some schools had to open their doors to new sets of students, yet many students were held back by the rotting waterlogged branches named language discrimination.

Carlos: I do recall that time period. I was just graduating from high school when that ruling came out. It would be almost an entire decade in the *Hernandez et al. v. Driscoll Consolidated ISD* case before those sticks would be washed away. I felt the racism a few years after I graduated from SWT. Let us dock right here and go into this dark cave so I can show you. This a deep one in San Marcos’ history. Point the light over there towards that wall. You see, I have always loved San Marcos. I grew up here and it was my dream to teach here. In 1953, I went to the San Marcos School District to fill out an application to teach. I was told by one of

the human resources administrators that they do not hire Mexican-Americans. I ended up working in San Antonio for the Edgewood Independent School District at Burleson Elementary and taught there for three years (Rodriguez Family, personal communication by M. Guajardo, February, 2006).

Xinto: That must have been heartbreaking. It reminds me of something similar. Let's climb up this wall to a newer layer of racist history here in San Marcos. It happened while I was studying under you, Dr. Rodríguez.

Carlos: What did I do?! (Eyes widen when I flash the light his way)

Xinto: (Laughing) Haha. No, it was not in your class, but in another professor's class. As you well know, in addition to bilingual education field work, as 'teaching students' we had to take general education field-based classes here in San Marcos, Hays, and all the way up to Austin. If we climb up just a bit higher, we can see a little better at how one of my professors made some bigoted remarks about me. If you look along this entire layer and layers below and above this, you can see how many lives have gone through her classes, many from Mexican descent, I am sure. On one occasion, she was individually meeting and reviewing some writings we had done for her class at one of the local field-based schools. As I sat down, she smiled and flipped my paper over to reveal a poem I had written about México. It was written in both English and Spanish. At first she asked if I could translate, which I did, she then made a comment that I remember to this day. She said, 'You know, you write very well for someone in the bilingual program. Most students coming from there have poor writing skills.' At first reaction, I took it as a compliment, which I am sure she believed she was giving. I smiled and thanked

her, but left feeling like something was not right. What did she mean by that? At the time, I was a member of two politically involved organizations, B.E.S.O., or Bilin....

Carlos: Bilingual Education Student Organization. I remember it well, I sponsored you all.

Xinto: Yes! B.E.S.O. and Movimiento Estudiantil Chicana/o de Aztlán, or M.E.Ch.A.

Because I was part of these groups and with the critical consciousness built from experiences and reflections, I was able to discern the racist intonations within her comment. She has already grouped us. Would she have said something even more detrimental had I written poorly like her other stereotyped students? She also assumed I was in the bilingual program at the time, possibly because of my name and color. Speaking of names, she used to call me José, many times in class, and I would correct her each time. Possibly out of frustration, and out of the range of my listening, she told a group of white female students, “Jose, Juan, they are all the same.” It was not until after class was over when one of the students who overheard her, came up to me and told me what was said, and I was unbelievably appalled. As a co-chairperson of M.E.Ch.A. I helped found and edit a newsletter, *¡Mexica Tiahui!* [Nahuatl - Chicana/os Always Moving Forward!]. It was a way to communicate on campus at SWT the various issues and injustices that related to us as students. I decided to use this forum as a means to tell my experience between this professor and myself. I have included a scanned copy of this particular issue in the appendix (See Appendix C).

George: Yes, racism does not seem to be so direct nowadays, but that could be more dangerous. We began our discussion about segregation and it led to the talk of racism. They are a marriage of hate. Let us get back on the boat, I want to show you another cave before we move on. I was still a young man and living in New Mexico, but in the twenties, we could readily see what this segregation and Americanization was truly about. It was not only racism, but it was a way to keep our people oppressed. Anglos were realizing “contradictions that Mexican Americans posed to Anglo notions of racial order and hierarchy. The assumption of impermanent inferiority and hence the potential for education to elevate was the very basis of Americanization” (Blanton, 2004, p. 69).

Xinto: This was just another way to keep the disenfranchised in their place. Freire (2008) critically remarks how “the oppressed are regarded as potential enemies who must be watched” by those in power, for “if the humanization of the oppressed signifies subversion, so also does their freedom; hence the necessity for constant control” (p. 59).

Carlos and George: It was fear.

Xinto: I have been teaching two decades now and have pondered whether those sticks were truly washed downstream or just caught in another type of damn. A seemingly invisible one, but hidden just below the waters of policy. Every school I have worked at is a Title 1 school meaning it has a high concentration of poverty. Even though the population of white students in public schools is double that of Hispanic students, there are more Hispanic students in Title 1 schools (NCES, 2013, Indicator 6; KCDC, 2015, Table 1). The question has to be asked

whether desegregation has genuinely been accomplished? Even at the district level, language discrimination still occurs. We have schools within our school district considered part of bilingual clusters, meaning if the area school nearest a student's home is not a bilingual campus, and that student is an English Language Learner (EL Learner), after testing her/his level of language proficiency, they would send qualifying students to the school clustered with their neighborhood school that offers the bilingual program. This is possibly done to provide additional services needed by an EL Learner such as a Language Support Teacher without having to hire an additional one for a campus near an EL Learner's home where there may be only a small percentage of EL Learners living in that specific neighborhood. Most of the bilingual cluster schools in Northside ISD are Title 1 schools (Northside ISD, n.d.). In today's Texas bilingual education policy, it states, "Bilingual education and special language programs must be located in the regular public schools of the district rather than in separate facilities" (Texas Education Agency, 2018). Legislators still find ways to gerrymander our districts and perpetuate a form of segregation. Yet we must not forget, it was the work of leaders in the Mexican-American generation, such as yourself, Dr. Sánchez, as well as organizations such as LULAC and the G.I. Forum that kept this issue at the forefront and have laid out some chiseling tools to carve through this system. Thank you.

George: ¡Gracias!

A Cesspool or Whirlpool of Language?

Gloria: (Rising high above Sánchez) ¿¡*Gracias!*? Sánchez, were you not part of the English-Only pedagogy? “Even our own people, other Spanish speakers *nos quieren poner candados en la boca* [want to put locks on our mouths]. They would hold us back with their bag of *reglas de academia* [academic rules]” (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 76).

George: (Lifting the side of his shirt to show us his cut back) I will true. I have bled from this *herida* for many years, but understand why. The mindsets of yesteryear are archaic compared to today, even to how my own critical thought changed over the course of my life.

Gloria: You condemned our own people.

George: How could you say such a thing?

Gloria: “From kids and people my own age I picked up Pachuco.” You know, “(the language of the zoot suiters) is a language of rebellion” (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 78). It is something we created as Chicanos and they attempted to beat it out of us. It is one of many languages we created and we speak, *vato*.

George: Hold on! That is not fair! I truly felt we needed to Americanize our youth because of the shame they feel while speaking imperfectly at school. “How many times have I seen a child cringe and crouch, physically and emotionally, because the language of the home was taboo at school and the language of the school was nonfunctional at home. Here is the genesis of the *pachuco*, the delinquent”, yet, I understand as a humanist, “in filling the esteem need, as well as in avoiding

psychological confusion, the home-language of the child is a highly potent educational instrument” (Sánchez, 1997, p. 125).

Gloria: I see. But I need you to see the detrimental effects it can have when you give negative connotations to words that some of us feel proud of. That is an *herida* many of us carry. Look down here in the water. Watch the flow of our blood.

Xinto: I will be traveling in two directions at the same time!

Gloria: That is true, “for a people who are neither Spanish nor live in a country in which Spanish is the first language; for a people who live in a country in which English is the reigning tongue but who are not Anglo... what recourse is left to them but to create their own language? A language which they can connect their identity to, one capable of communicating the realities and values true to themselves – a language with terms that are neither español ni inglés [Spanish nor English], but both” (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 77).

Xinto: I can see it mixing and creating something beautiful, something powerful!

George: I will admit it was very difficult for me to stitch it up. I truly felt the wrath of the sword of the English-Only pedagogy and learned to live within its confines for most of my life, yet in time, I began to embrace this *herida* as a badge of honor to move forward.

Carlos: *Muy cierto*, so true. I would use a lot of Chicano Spanish in the classroom while teaching, remember Xinto? (I nod). I would use it at home as well. Some of the discrimination was difficult while growing up in San Marcos, but I never felt any ill will towards anyone. I did worry though, especially for my wife and children. I wanted to make sure they were always safe. I remember my daughter traveling to

Austin every day for work. It worried me, so I made a few phone calls and was able to find her two jobs in San Marcos. One as a paralegal and the other as a teacher. But when it was near my time to go see our Lord, they truly cared for me. I remember them telling me, 'We're your nurses, we're your doctors. We're going to take care of you now!' I told them, 'That is what I am afraid of!' (Everyone chuckles) (Rodriguez Family, personal communication by M. Guajardo, February, 2006).

Xinto: Speaking of Chicano Spanish, I recall an *herida* of my youth that I reflected on recently after reading Anzaldúa's book. In the eighties, during my formative years of adolescence, we would make yearly road trips to México. Our first couple of weeks we would visit our older second cousins in Monterrey (See Appendix E). They were learning English at their high school and would practice what they learned with us. We would all laugh at the way they annunciated their words as if they were purposely exaggerating their English accent. My brother or I would correct them, and we would go back and forth in pronouncing the words with them until they sounded close to normal English. They would then attempt to use what they learned in a sentence and ask if it was correctly stated. There was no pressure or stress in terms of their attempts to learn and use the language. As we grew older, they would tell us bad words in English and ask us if they sounded right. We would practice those a little longer and teach them new ones. On numerous occasions, my brother, sister, and I would use words such as *troca* (correct is *camioneta* – truck), *¿pa'que?* (correct is *¿Por qué?* – Why?), or *semos* (correct is *hacemos* – we do or we make).

Gloria: Mijo, that is termed “Chicano Spanish” which is “considered by the purist and by most Latinos deficient, a mutilation of Spanish”, but as you have seen in the water, it is both beautiful and powerful (p. 77).

Xinto: Maybe it was because they were older or learning English in school, but they never once ridiculed us. When we would use these and other Chicano Spanish words, they would sometimes make a puzzled face, then pick up on the context clues and figure out what we meant. Other times, they could not decipher what we were saying and ask us to rephrase it. Most of the time we could find words that related to what we were trying to say, but other times, we would have to ask our dad how to say something in Spanish. But it was not the visits to Monterrey that made us feel as if we were in the borderlands; neither from here nor there.

The place where we felt the most isolated is a little more south. A city named Saltillo. This is my mother’s hometown and the place where most of her nine remaining brothers and sisters live, and hence my first cousins. They were brutal in the way they mocked our way of speaking Spanish. My mother’s favorite brother, Joaquin, had four kids near our age so we would spend a lot of our time at their home. He was the humblest brother of the family, but he was also an alcoholic, which made it difficult for him to have a steady job and consequently making him the poorest economically of the siblings. His two boys were near our age, so it was another likely reason for us to spend even more time at their house. Behind their home, I recall an endless white field of rocks. It was an ideal place to practice using our slingshots. Being away from adults, it was also their ideal place to take shots at our use of Spanish.

At the time, we did not know how to respond to it. We definitely felt anger, but kept it inside by laughing off their pelting. We felt diminished, yet it was difficult to vocalize this to each other. I kept it inside for years and my brother must have as well, because he never told me how much it affected him until years later. Subconsciously, or possibly even consciously, my brother and I found a way to change the subject and change the conversation to something we were somewhat experts at.

“¿Quiéren jugar roca guerra?” (“Do you all want to play rock war?”) my brother asks.

“Se dice piedra, no roca. Una roca es demasiado enorme para recoger. Y la pregunta debe ser dicha, ‘¿Quiéren jugar una guerra de piedras?’ ¡Si! ¡Vamos a jugar!” (“It’s called a pebble, not rock. A rock is too enormous to pick up. And your question should be asked ‘Do you all want to play war of pebbles?’ Sure! Let’s play!”) our older cousin, Carlos, corrects him. This experience and what happened during the rock war changed our lives significantly (see Appendix F). We continue to bear the scars of those visits, not only those given to us by our cousins, but by their parents, our *tíos*, as well. I remember attempting to practice “proper Spanish” just before summer so that I could I would be prepared and not be ridiculed. As I grew older and faced more criticism from my relatives in Mexico and experienced racism here in the United States, I realized I was living in a place that was neither *de aqui ni de allá* (from here nor there) – a borderland. As an idealist, I believed this to be advantageous in terms of being able to speak both languages in any of two places. As a realist, I understood I could never truly

be accepted in either realm. To this day, I continue to grapple with this reality, and it was not until I read your work, Gloria, that I could begin to heal.

Gloria: We must “accept as legitimate Chicano Texas Spanish, Tex-Mex and all the other languages I speak,” so we can “accept the legitimacy of myself” (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 81). If we can truly legitimize this within ourselves as a people, the individual ripple effects can create waves of change within our communities.

Xinto: My dad is a first generation self-described Chicano from Dallas. Because he grew up in a household where Spanish was the dominating language, he spoke the traditional Spanish spoken by recent immigrants, but with a sprinkle of Chicano Spanish that he picked up from Tejanos whose families have been living in Texas before it was Texas. We thought we were unique in how we learned Spanish because of my father being fully bilingual and my mother, being from Mexico, speaking only Spanish. We had very few friends with this family dynamic. We considered ourselves first-and-a-half-generation Chicanos. Most of our friends’ parents were either both born and raised in Mexico and spoke mostly Spanish or they were first generation Chicanos and fully bilingual. The fully bilingual Chicano families we knew had varying degrees of Chicano Spanish.

Gloria: This language was created with the “need to identify ourselves as a distinct people” (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 77).

Xinto: This is where I began to embrace your borderland’s theory, Gloria. As I reflected on my experiences as a child, I recall how I “internalized the belief that we speak poor Spanish. It is illegitimate, a bastard language” (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 80).

Gloria: I will all part of our heridas, Xinto. “*Deslenguadas. Somos los del español*

deficiente. We are your linguistic nightmare, your linguistic aberration, your linguistic *mestizaje*, the subject of your *burla*. Because we speak with tongues of fire we are culturally crucified. Racially, culturally and linguistically *somos huerfanos* – we speak an orphan tongue” (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 80).

George: We had much less research back then than what has steadily come as scholarly research. As mentioned earlier, I truly felt it was “socioeconomic and racial discrimination” for the failure of Mexican American in schools, so I allowed English-Only as a pedagogical tool to not be blamed. But I “supported the teaching of Spanish as a means of aiding Spanish-speaking children’s self-confidence” (Blanton, 2004, p. 105). Although I never explicitly proposed a framework for bilingual education, I did condone it as part of the learning for all students. I concurred how bilingualism was an asset and not a negative skill, but because mainstream America could not understand our culture, which had already been here for centuries, it would be in the best interest for our children learn the English language as quickly as possible, and I truly believed we could use the direct method of English-Only pedagogy as a viable option. But I made it clear that we needed teachers who were truly dedicated, had good formal training, and understood the child and where they were coming from (Blanton, 2004, pp. 104-105, 122; Garcia, 1989, p. 262; Blanton, 2014, p. 229). It was just after the second World War and the sociopolitical climate was just not ripe for some of us to move towards affirming bilingual education as a legitimate pedagogical tool for teaching a new language.

Gloria: This reminds me of *Malintzín*, who was thought to have betrayed her people, yet she waits. “The spirit of the fire spurs her to fight for her own skin and a piece of ground to stand on, a ground from which to view the world – a perspective, a homeground where she can plumb the rich ancestral roots into her own ample mestiza heart” (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 45).

George: You could say that (George gives a sly smile). Or like when “the ‘Moors’ were in Spain for almost eight hundred years, ruling virtually all of the Iberian Peninsula for a time, until they were slowly pushed southward by Christian armies. During this long period a remarkable process of acculturation took place. Although at times the conflict was bitter and bloody, there were long periods when Christians, Sephardic Jews, and Moslems lived in comparative peace and tolerance” (Sánchez, 1997, p. 118). Maybe acculturation, has been taken place inside of me, yet I can also be the giver of culture rather than solely being the adaptor? There is power in that.

Gloria: Now you sound like me! (Everyone laughs)

Xinto: Dr. Rodríguez, speaking of patience, you helped countless students during your decades of working as a teacher of teachers! I recall an instance during my first year of the bilingual program, and one of my courses from my previous college would not transfer. You made quite a few calls over several days to make sure I received credit. That is when I knew you had *corazón*, heart.

Carlos: Yes, the late nineties were quite busy. As a professor, I felt it was my duty to become a sort of father figure to many of you all. That is why I got so involved. An English-Only movement was plateauing and Texas was a possible target.

Proposition 227 had just taken bilingual education away from our little Mejjicanitos out in California and so we had to be ready. That is why I encouraged you all to join B.E.S.O., attend conferences, like the Texas Association of Bilingual Education (TABE) conference, and learn the politics behind our program. I was a member of TABE for over thirty years and was named editor-in-chief the TABE Journal back in 1998 while you were in the program, Xinto.

Xinto: I remember celebrating your well-deserved accomplishment. I made some fajitas for the party and we all met up at someone's house. You and a husband of one of the bilingual students told me they were the best fajitas you all had ever tasted.

Carlos: Oh yes, those were some mighty fine fajitas.

Xinto: So, why did you take the position?

Carlos: "In 1997 the board of directors of TABE decided to give the publication more structure and voted to select an editor to serve a three-year term. I thought I had enough knowledge and experience to apply to this activity and make it a professional publication, while meeting the goals of the organization to inform the public-at-large of bilingual education" (Rodríguez named editor, 1998).

George: Well having been at SWT for nearly thirty years by that point and working exclusively with bilingual education, they chose an honorable person.

Carlos: Gracias.

Xinto: Did you have any other goals with the journal under your leadership?

Carlos: Yes, "we hope[d] to expand our readership to beyond the 2,000-plus memberships to include school districts, higher education institutions, government entities and non-profit agencies to enlighten the public about bilingual education"

(Rodríguez named editor, 1998). It was imperative during that time to distribute the most up to date research on bilingual education to maintain and garner more support. In fact, in our very first issue, when I took the helm, we published research on the English-Only movement. “Nicole A. Ventrone and Alfredo H. Benavides research and analyze the debate over Official English and bilingual education. Their findings reveal that the English-Only movement threatens not only bilingual education but also encourages prejudices towards minorities. The opposing viewpoints result in a country divided by their mixed messages. Despite the obvious pluralism of our society, the theory of assimilation is pervasive” (Rodriguez, 1998, p. v).

George: So, the English-Only movement has been pulsating for over a century.

Carlos: Yes, it has. I stressed that to my students. It was part of their livelihood to become involved in the political as well as the educational process because there are some who would like to take it away from us and our children. This was the heart of the reasoning of attempting to reach out to more college students, school districts, parents, and other groups we believed would benefit from the research and practices included in the journal (Rodríguez named editor, 1998).

George: Very perceptive, Carlos. Look ahead, I see some clearer water, let us head that way. Hold on everyone, I will about to get really rough. A lot of jagged rocks line this part of the river. This is exciting! This was my time! As frail, as I may have been during my final years, my strength came from my undeterred search for truth and justice.

I looked at the picturesque canyon wall with my telescope and I could see cracks, wide giant cracks. Some of them had waterfalls cascading between them and as the mist rose from the crashing water, the sunlight created beautiful rainbows. I could see Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., César Chavez, Rosa Parks, Malcolm X, Dolores Huerta, Robert F. Kennedy and many others with all of their beautiful colors. They carved, dug, blasted through that canyon changing the American landscape forever. These were the sixties! A time of revolution, death, and rebirth. Sánchez was carving canyons with a chisel, and it would take years to see his progress, but nonetheless, he propelled. I could see a past version of himself on a small rocking boat in a murky system frothing with centuries of bigotry, yet he propelled.

Sánchez: (Continuing) Yes, this was a time when my health was weak but my heart grew stronger. It was a time of awakening for many of us from the Mexican American generation. The Chicano movement was in full swing, and I was not sure I could hold on. We found vulnerabilities in this canyon walls and learned where to strike. Bilingual education came to the forefront at both the federal and state level. You see, years earlier I worked to build better relations with Mexican-Americans and the United States. I assisted in creating multicultural books and curriculum that helped many Americans understand and be more empathetic towards our culture (Blanton, 2014, p. 73; Garcia, 1989, p. 268). If we could somehow humanize rather than caricaturize who we were, there was hope at being treated equally. It was simply a chisel, but it was a tool nonetheless, and you could do more with a tool than with nothing at all.

As these waters were beginning to churn in the fifties, I began to become more involved with cases with LULAC and even setting a foundation for early childhood education by holding schools more responsible for the learning of English by our Mexican-American students. Setting sets of standards helped others create programs like The Little School of 400 which was a summer program designed to prepare students with learning core English words prior to beginning the school year. Head Start helped our youngest of learners and families prepare for the American education experience. Our little *chiquitos* still had problems, and I began to place “greater responsibility on the schools and the teachers in dealing with the dual language handicap that affected Mexican-American children” (Garcia, 1989, p. 262). Many did not realize that knowing two languages was not a handicap and “I sometimes wonder if the problem of bilingualism is not as much due to the language handicap of the educator as it is to that of the child” (Sánchez, 1954, p. 14; Garcia, 1989, p. 262).

A mind shift began to happen in academia as well as in my own thinking. You have to understand that most of our EL Learners had been segregated for decades and into the sixties solely for their language, and I had the “hard-bitten activist perspective of language as a segregation trap” (Blanton, 2014, p. 130). You see, I was approached by one of the foundational researchers of bilingual education in 1961. Joshua A. Fishman asked me for expertise on how our little ones maintained our language and if and how this contributes to the conflict of Mexican Americans yielding to assimilation into Anglo American society. I wrote an extensive essay on the critiques of segregation, inadequate schooling and

resources, and the inability to teach English. Because it did not mesh with the contemporary thinking of Fishman, he rejected my ideas and published a book which became key tool in the bilingual education movement (Blanton, 2014, p. 230).

Although I was not philosophically in tune with some of the first theorists of modern bilingual teaching methods, I would soon find my niche in the movement. I recall working with Senator Yarborough from here in Texas. He was one of our biggest proponents in the creation of the first bilingual education act. This is where my activism was best utilized in the fight for bilingual education. There were few battles against the proposal, such the Commissioner of Education, Harold Howe who believed it was unnecessary and it could be implemented using previous policy. Historians such as Hugh Davis Graham made false claims of militancy and coercion by Sánchez and others in the Chicano Movement, except he failed to note how popular it actually was in Congress.

Xinto: The water seems murky here. What eventually happened with the bill proposed by Yarborough?

George: Yes, it does get a bit murky. After going through various revisions, the Title VI of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), also known as Bilingual Education Act, was signed into law by that guy who used to teach our Mexican-American children using English-Only pedagogy – President Lyndon Baines Johnson (Blanton, 2014, p. 231, Blanton, 2004, pp. 132-135, 139; Garcia, 1989, p. 231). Ironical, huh? I continued to work with Yarborough and we became good

friends over the years. The new policy was not ideal and it was severely underfunded.

Carlos: It really is, but it was time for the real work to begin. The new policy had quite a few issues, but “Texas soon legitimized bilingual education through legislative action and local initiative” (Blanton, 2004, p. 141). It took another year to become state law because English-Only laws from 1918 were still policy in Texas for a year after the BEA was signed. School districts were using waivers to bypass implementing the federal law. A couple of legislators were going to make sure bilingual education policy would become state law, so State Senator Joe Bernal from San Antonio pushed Senate Bill 46 while State Representative Carlos Truan from Kingsville moved House Bill 103. Both of which were overwhelmingly passed by the Texas legislature (Blanton, 2004, p. 148). Bilingual education was easily made law in Texas and the slow death of English-Only had finally eroded and settled into shallow waters. I was hired on the faculty of SWT in 1971, and many of us knew we had to continue with more research and training of teachers who will be needed in these new programs. Some school districts were not following the law and in a major 1971 case, *United States vs. State of Texas*, Judge William Wayne Justice determined that the San Felipe Del Rio Consolidated Independent School District had not sought out federal funds from a program created to help with desegregation and offer bilingual programs and resources. Lawsuits filed around the country after policy was passed which strengthened bilingual education, but also brought out harsher critics. When State Representative Truan “attempted to increase support for bilingual education,” in

1975, it failed and actually “watered down” policy from previous mandates (Blanton, 2004, p. 150). Other attempts were made by Truan and other leaders, but ultimately failed. Neoconservative thought became the acidic solution poured into bilingual education waters throughout the country, but Texas maintained steadfast with the relatively new law and an ally in Judge William Justice helped maintain a more progressive stance on bilingual education. Xinto, do you remember discussing this in class?

Xinto: Yes. It was constantly in our ears and for good reason. I recall you being very outspoken about the law and encouraging us to look more into it. Although I was already politically involved with various student organizations, hearing it from a historical standpoint gave me that much more of a foundation for my continuing fight for social justice. In 2003, after a few years of teaching in Dallas ISD, I applied for a scholarship to attend Southern Methodist University (SMU) to pursue my master’s degree. I was awarded the scholarship allotted specifically for their bilingual education program. I received my master’s degree in bilingual education eighteen months later in 2004. My experience as a graduate student gave me a very unique perspective of bilingual education I had not received as an undergraduate student. Some of the most memorable and powerful experiences were the opportunities to discuss with and learn from some of the pioneers, politicians, and professors involved as influential proponents of the bilingual education program of yesteryear and into the present. Dr. William Pulte, director of the bilingual education program at SMU, brought in activists who fought for Chicano civil rights such as Dr. Jose Angel Gutierrez and Attorney Adelfa Callejo

as guest lecturers to give first person narratives of their experiences and expertise. These learning experiences further fueled my passion for activism, both in and out of the classroom. I will rare to find books about our experience, especially for children, so listening to their stories, and taking them back to the classroom make the stories both enduring and impactful. If we fail to make these historical connections and discuss the deeper meaning behind them, we will be lost, standing on a plateau with a clouded telescope looking for a connection, who also seeks us. We need that bridge. We need to build these bridges together.

Engraving the Canyon with Pedagogy

Gloria: This reminds me of “*la rajadura*, the abyss that no bridge could span. Separated, they could not visit each other and each was too far away to hear what the other was saying. Silence rose like a river and could not be held back, it flooded and drowned everything” (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 67).

Carlos: That is so true. We have to keep our connections to the past and make new ones towards the future, if not, all will be lost. How do we maintain these connections and develop them into relationships? It was a critical part of my teaching methods. George, I am going to east towards that canyon near the coast. Xinto, *te acuerdas* [do you remember] when we rented a van and went to the TABE Conference in Corpus Christi?

Xinto: Yes. It was my first conference in the field of education. I felt so comfortable being with my people and learning so much about the newest research in bilingual education. Oh, and Selena!

Carlos: Yes, that is what I was going to bring up. Selena. We went a few years after her passing, but it was still fresh in Tejanos' minds. On our way to the hotel for the conference we stopped at the Days Inn where she was killed. I thought it was important to pay a small homage to her and also for us to feel a connection to a legend. Now, Tejano was not my favorite music. I especially liked music from my era, the forties! My wife and I used to like to dance to big band music like Bunny Berigan (Rodriguez Family, personal communication by M. Guajardo, February, 2006). Anyway, I took you there because she was part of your generation and you all needed to connect to what that was and what it meant. Her life is a metaphor of what bilingual education is. She knew very little Spanish growing up, but her first true language in song was Spanish! While having success with it, she learned Spanish her way. When she was attempting to cross over to English, she was creating a bridge. Not a one-way bridge, but one that allowed English speakers into our world and Spanish speakers into and English world and accepting each other for the beauty that we each bring. It is what bilingual education should be.

Xinto: I will funny how we keep bringing up the bridge metaphor. Very recently, our district has been looking into truly expanding our dual-language program, and I was just told by our bilingual language support teacher (LST) how our campus is shifting towards becoming a dual-language campus. Therefore, a shift in our practice will have to take place which consequently means a shift in our mission. During summer preparation for the upcoming 2018-2019 school year, we were discussing classroom environment. We walked around my classroom and she mentioned some non-negotiable items that must be placed around the room. Some

of them took me by surprise and I will explain why in a bit. She went on and told me that we must label items around the room in both languages (blue letters for English and red letters for Spanish) to create a bridge between them. She explained how students need to see, hear, and read the word so they can connect to it in both languages and finally use it in speech, writings, and thought. She continued to apply the use of both languages for other items such as word walls and anchor charts. The reason I was surprised by this was because this was considered a bad practice just ten years ago. I recall trainings where we were explicitly told not to label items in both languages – only in the language of instruction. We were told word walls needed to be placed in two separate areas of the room and each must be exclusive to one language. Our biggest complaints were lack of wall space to put these and other non-negotiables in our transitional bilingual classrooms. In delivery of instruction, she also stated to use both languages to bridge the explicit meanings of each. Again, we have been trained to do the opposite and dedicate instructional language to the students' needs because we do not want them to confuse the two languages and use them interchangeably.

Gloria: You mean like “Tex-Mex, or Spanglish,” where a student “...may switch back and forth from English to Spanish in the same sentence or in the same word” (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 78)?

Xinto: Yes, it reminds me of one of the district bilingual education trainers who came to our campus to do a training. She discussed this and told us we need to embrace the language that our kids come from. Not only to embrace it, but use it as a

teaching tool. More Tex-Mex words are being considered as proper in the vernacular such as *troca* [truck], *parqueando* [parking].

Gloria: That is wonderful!

George: I am not sure I agree with that? (Everyone else's eyes roll) *Orale*, I will compromise. (Everyone laughs)

Carlos: I spoke in Tex-Mex while teaching a bilingual education class! It cannot get any more proper than that! (Laughter). When I taught, it was not the explicit things I said that you all would remember but the *pláticas* we had. Stories connected us. Shared common experiences connected us. This was core to my pedagogy. I know I would always go off tangents, but it was because that tangent was to impart a deeper meaning. If you can recall Freire's (2008) conviction on how "the teacher's thinking is authenticated only by the authenticity of the students' thinking... Authentic thinking, thinking that I concerned about reality, does not take place in ivory tower isolation, but only in communication" (p. 77). After each of my so-called tangents, (I remember using that word all the time, just as I am now [Belly laugh]) I would always ask if you could relate to it and how. If you could not, then I would know not to use it again or just say, it was before your time! (Laughs again).

Xinto: That is very true. And I try to do the same with my students. I have had students come back after high school or sometimes college and tell me how they still remember and tell others some of the stories I told them. Some of the stories were not even about my life. Some were impromptu and made up then and there to

connect to an issue they were having or concerned with. I learned that from you, *compadre*.

Carlos: (Smiling) *Compadre. Gracias.*

Xinto: *De nada*. Earlier we were discussing our culture, another *herida*. I recall a student just this past year from another classroom. Throughout the year we had short conversations but did not form a deep bond, but a bond of respect, at the very least. He was well known around the school for being disrespectful to teachers and ‘running things’ with his ‘swag’, meaning he knew how to lead with attitude and sheer confidence. He used this swag to get what he needed from fellow students and teachers, and possibly to deal with his everyday life. No student dared to challenge him and he knew he could control them. Some teachers also seemingly showed fear and would rather not call him out when he was disrespecting a student or the said teacher. We, here, talk about our use of language and having conversations with our kids, our students. We have talked about Chicano Spanish and Tex-Mex, but we have not talked about slang or street talk, which is related though we will not talk too much about it now, but it is important to mention because it deals with culture and language which are very connected as Anzaldúa has mentioned. I grew up with it and used it quite a bit in and after high school. To this day, I can easily code switch into it if I am with an old school friend or meet someone who uses it as casual talk. It is an organic form of speech, and changes with trends. As a teacher in an urban setting, and having authentic relationships with students, I have been able to keep up with its changing form, though I usually stick to some of the older slang and mix it with

the new. It still works. My brother does the same. We both do it with particular students as well, and sometimes it involves using curse words, but if you have reached a certain level of trust with that student, they do not even flinch when you talk to them with slang. We accept each other as we come, but we must come with authenticity, otherwise they will read you and call you out. I have seen it with a colleague who attempted to use it with some kids and they ridiculed him. Going back to the story of the kid, I was listening to some Tejano on my phone during one of my morning duties, which was to keep watch over all of the fifth grade students until their respective teachers pick them up at a specified time. When I walked by his area of the gym (where fifth graders wait in the morning), he could hear the music playing in my pant pocket.

He tells me, “Hey Mr. H, you listen to that mojado crap?”

Without flinching, I looked back at him, and said, “Bruh [Bro], you do not like Tejano?”

“Hell naw! I ain’t no mojado!” he claims.

I come back with, “Man, you know you’re brown and proud, you’re all Mexican! You speak Spanish, don’t you?” You could tell he was just trying to impress his friends and testing to see if he could get a reaction out of me. But I was quick, and so was he. I will part of the game, and if you could outwit the other person, you have gained that much more respect from him and his peers.

“I might speak it, but I ain’t no wetback!” he tried to come back, but all he had was the synonym. He was waning.

“Does your ‘welita’ [Spanish slang for grandmother] speak Spanish?” I asked.

“What has that got to do with anything?” he asked.

“She came from México, right? MY mom came from México illegally. Are you talking smack about them? Without them, both of us would not be here,” I snapped back. He did not have anything to say.

After a few seconds, he conceded, “Alright, Mr. H., I see ya.” [‘I see ya’ means, I get what you are trying to say.] He walks away and sits down on the floor. His friends follow.

I began to tell him how he should be proud of who he is and where he came from, but kept it short because my lesson would fall on deaf ears if I kept persisting, but I think I at least had a *plática* with him to think about. He has a deep cultural *herida*, and I hope he uses it as a badge of pride.

Gloria: “So if you really want to hurt me, talk badly about my language” (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 81). Your story reminds me of “1971, when I started teaching High School English to Chicano students, I tried to supplement the required texts with works by Chicanos, only to be reprimanded and forbidden to do so by the principal... At the risk of being fired, I swore my students to secrecy and slopped Chicano short stories, poems, a play” (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 82).

Xinto: Wow. Going back to the conference, *compadre* Carlos, and relating it back to the interaction I had with our student including what *comadre* Gloria just said, I especially enjoyed noticing the growing number of Latina/o authors. I say Latina/o because many of the authors I met were not Mexican-American or

Tejano. I will discuss my concern with this in a bit, but wanted to still relate another story about the relevance of culture within our practice. It was obvious our student had been told negative stories about something that runs deep in his veins, so he had no recourse but to spew it out of his mouth like the erupting lava of Popocatepetl and it landed on anyone who had no way to protect themselves, creating more cracks, more *heridas*. We, as change agents, have the power to cool this building lava and create mountains of cultural identity and pride. If we can legitimize this throughout our society, we can not only create a tsunami of revolutionary political changes, but also steer it. This is the borderlands theory. I became 'woke' during my community college years in the mid-nineties. But being 'woke' is not stagnant, it grows as one experiences, reads, researches, and listens. I take this to the classroom to this day. And yet, it changes every year. This year, for example, I began being more outspoken in terms of integrating more of our culture into the curriculum. Instead of solely focusing on traditional Greek, Roman, and Norse mythology, I implemented the myths of Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl. When one of the administrators saw our plans and was concerned with how the students may not be able to pronounce some of the words, I interjected and asked what our focus was. It was not about phonics, but about the story and the power behind it. After the unit, the students gained a sense of power and pride (not to mention the ability to pronounce and learn some new Nahuatl language words). This led to more questions about their ancestors, so when the next unit focused on true legends, we brought in Cuahtémoc. During our writing time, I gave students time and the choice to create their own myths using the

elements of what myths tell. Some of the students chose to use indigenous names, and researched various gods of the Aztecs and Mayan. One student, told me, “Now I know why I am so good at math! It’s in my blood!” Throughout this doctoral endeavor, I have become more aware, or ‘woke’ as I observe, experience, and read more. I apply it to my organic pedagogy and navigate my boat within the river of policies in place to a point lying sometimes somewhere in the borderlands, while at many other times crossing that border to somewhere dangerous – powerfully dangerous. The borderland lies between the pedagogy based on standardized curriculum and the perilous and arduous critical pedagogy. This is my practice. It is within this practice where we begin to have identity formation within ourselves and those we serve.

Carlos: I truly believe your field based learning along with the connection we made through politically and socially active students groups were essential in understanding what it meant to become a whole bilingual teacher who looks at our students as a whole child. Policy only gives us the parameters to work with, we find ways to navigate those parameters to maximum. The waters here attempt to fill the spectrum of all the colors, but it sometimes gets drained or washed away. In Texas bilingual education policy, they give us the permission to use the cultural capital our kids come with. It states, “A program of bilingual education or of instruction in English as a second language shall be designed to consider the students’ learning experiences and shall incorporate the cultural aspects of the students’ backgrounds” (Texas Education Agency, 2018). As our *compadre*, George, stated earlier about the integral issue of teachers being adequately

prepared not just in curriculum or in the language, but in the actual authentic culture of the child. I cannot stress enough the issue of cultural competency in pedagogy and practice, yet many professors, as Xinto told us in his experience, lack it themselves. We, in the bilingual education department, developed our teaching courses with this in mind. Our “campus-based core focuses on building a knowledge base in human growth and development, learning theory, understanding special needs and diversity, and curriculum” (Rodríguez, 1998, p. 48). SWT and other “institutions involved in these new teacher preparation programs strongly believe that educational reform in the way students are trained to be effective public school teachers lies in the collaborative efforts of the field based partnerships” (Rodríguez, 1998, p. 52). Field-based work was an essential piece of this puzzle in that it focuses on curriculum, as well as an “introduction to bilingual education and psychological foundations of bilingual education,” in one semester and “focuses on humanities in the integrated reading curriculum...and teaching the bilingual content areas. All blocks emphasize curriculum development, instructional strategies, assessment, diversity, classroom management, reflective practice and technology” (Rodríguez, 1998, p. 48). It was on campus, off campus, and even going out of town where learning happened. And if someone needed help, I would work to help find scholarships for them, because I was not going to give up on them, and my actions will hopefully translate to my students paying it forward to those they teach and with whom others they encounter throughout their own lives.

Do you remember when I would do read alouds, Xinto. I would animate the voices to attempt to bring the characters to life.

Xinto: Yes, and I confess, I did not think you were very good at it, but I could tell you were trying and truly enjoyed it.

Carlos: (Laughing) Really? I thought I did pretty good. I guess I may have been a bit out of practice. You referred to bringing the cultural literature into the classroom earlier. A few years before you enrolled at SWT, the Tomás Rivera Mexican American Children's Book award was created here in 1995. It was established "to encourage authors, illustrators, and publishers to produce more books that authentically reflect the Mexican American culture of the United States" (Leavell & Rodríguez, 1998, p. 65). The university, and many of us here, understood how the "recognition of these books is particularly important since the number of children's books specifically about Mexican American culture, although increasing, is an extremely small proportion of the number of new children's books published each year" (Leavell & Rodriguez, 1998, p. 65).

Xinto: I will a dream of mine to write a children's book and win that award. To this day, I do not see much Chicana/o children's literature although it has grown significantly. One criticism I have of the current bank of Chicana/o literature for kids is how it is very culturally-focused. It does not seem to break away from speaking very concretely about our cultural characteristics or political histories, and even illustrations/artwork tend to have similar styles. Is it part of our evolutionary step into American literature, or is it a way to make sure mainstream America hears us and I will a way for them to understand us? Does it add to our

stereotypes? I am not saying we let us have more of these books. We definitely should and the niche should remain a core part of our literature. They are influential, and as we stated before, create a bridge to the past. My question is, can stories be written by Chicanas/os about everyday life and normal conversations, using our cultural nuances within the literature, without bringing a focus to it or caricaturizing it? I will a bit difficult to understand and possibly a topic for another day, but I will give a quick possibility for a plot based on my life – which is what some of this new Chicano children’s literature should be, real life. The setting takes place in our urban neighborhood of Oak Cliff. We grew up on a two-acre wooded lot, which was unheard of in the city but logical because it was at the edge of the barrio. The characters are two brothers just prior to adolescence. Their adventures would take place exploring the woods alone and with friends. Some of the events of the story would include building different types of clubhouses based on the landscaping of that section of the woods, e.g. bush-house, treehouse, thin-trees-hideout, bamboo-club, the tunnel. Another event could include rock wars with each other and other kids from the neighborhood. It could later expand to them leaving our woods to much larger and uncharted woods across the street. Throughout the storyline, there may be Chicano Spanish spoken or other cultural interactions identifiable by readers who can relate to it. I sometimes read authors from California or from rural Texas and find it hard to connect to their experiences. I have read these stories to my own students who have grown up in similar neighborhoods as my own, and they seem to show some disconnection with them as well. The only parts we connect with are ones that are

easily identifiable cultural characteristics such as foods, Spanish language usage, or Spanish names of characters. But when I tell stories of my youth, they embrace it and usually have their own anecdotal story related to mine. We have to be culturally relevant and have the intuition in order to make authentic connections with our students. Genuine learning happens here, and it can happen in a variety of ways, even with a ‘boring’ strategy such as phonics.

George: You are right, Xinto. We have to begin to tell our version of our story, but we must be authentic with it. “Other than an occasional mention of non-typical sectors of the population, the presentation of bizarre features of some of the cultural minorities, and a purely factual and academic statement of historical events, no attempt has been made to present or utilize the cultural values of other peoples” (Sánchez, 1942, p. 339). Teachers must work to empower students as Freire reminds us. “Teachers should recognize at the outset that, traditionally, textbooks in the United States have presented a biased version” (Sánchez, 1942, p. 340). “Children in Latin America and their parents do not go around in fiesta costume every day, the impression conveyed by some of our children’s books to the contrary notwithstanding” (Sánchez, 1942, p. 341).

Xinto: *Compadre* Sánchez, you were so ahead of your time.

Sánchez: I think I was just very reflexive and cognizant because of my experiences.

Being able to live in a multitude of worlds in rural New Mexico and in academia at the University of Texas in Austin allowed me to see multiple perspectives of the same issues. This is where our discussion has been lately. So, “the child must look on his fellow Americans as people of flesh and blood who are very much

like him, who live normal lives, and who have meaningful cultural values which arise out their social and geographical setting” (Sánchez, 1942, p. 341). We cannot just allow academic facts to be the basis for understanding each other. Our education system must “call for collaboration among people, for mutual tolerance, and for a truly neighborly social interaction” (Sánchez, 1942, p. 342). And as Xinto mentioned, even in simple skill teaching such as phonics.

Xinto: Yes, even in simple reading instruction. I can recall a bilingual student I had in first grade while in Dallas. Ricardo (pseudonym) struggled with reading simple words and phrases. The curriculum called for phonics instruction which seemed appropriate as Spanish is a very phonetic language. When teaching to read in Spanish we do not use individual sounds, but rather utilize syllables consisting of a consonant paired with each of the vowels such as *ma, me, mi, mo, mu*. The program utilized a scaffolded system where once a child mastered a set of syllables they could move on the next set of syllable pairings. As they learned the new consonant with vowel, prior pairings that have been learned were included in the readings. So if they have mastered the phrase (and other similar phrases using this pairing) ‘*Mi mama me ama.*’ using the /m/ consonant sound, they could move onto the /p/ consonant paired with vowels (*pa, pe, pi, po, pu*) and will have learned to read phrases such as ‘*Mi papa me mima*’ or set of words and non-sensical words such as ‘*puma, mapa, pima, pemo, mipe.*’ Ricardo had a lot of success at the beginning of the year, but as the syllable pairings became more numerous, words became longer, and phrases became more complex, he began to struggle with reading phonetically. Another concern was that the students were

beginning to take books daily which were becoming more and more complex as they progressed with their reading levels while he improved at a much slower rate. Students were practicing reading at home based on their individual levels. As their reading improved, their fluency and comprehension consequently rose as well. During a parent conference, his mother, Ana (pseudonym), worried about his progress and brought upon the concern regarding retention as being a possibility. She further shared how she struggled with reading in English and how her father had taught her and caught her up by teaching her a different way. She was born in Mexico but came into the United States at an early age. She recalled being in an English immersion second grade class and trying to figure out what the words said by looking at the pictures, but soon the teacher had begun giving the class text without illustrations. Students who came from other countries and moved into small Texas towns without bilingual programs usually had to go to school without any language support and were immersed in a monolingual English classroom. Although her conversational English had improved since beginning school in Texas as a kindergartner, she still struggled with some academic and written language. The Anglo teacher was harsh with her parents and threatened retention if she did not show improvement within the next few weeks. Her father knew he had to think and act quickly. He began reflecting on his own struggles in school (she told me he dropped out of school in the fifth grade to work) and remembered how the teacher would label everything in their classroom. He would go home and do the same (against his mother's wishes). After he practiced the word and thought that he had mastered it, he would take it

down and put in a stack in his room. At the end of the week, he would grab the stack, take it to his mom or dad, and they would flash the card to him. If he was able to read it quickly, he could keep it in his stack, but if he hesitated, he would have to put it back up where he had posted it. By the end of the year, his stack had reached over one thousand words. He decided to do the same with her, and within a few weeks, she learned over three hundred words by sight and subsequently passed to third grade. I was astonished by her story and the method her father used. First, I assured her that her son was far from being retained and how her story told me that they seemed to come from a family of visual learners. I asked her to give me a couple of days to reflect on her story and to think of how we could incorporate a similar method with her son. We already had labels all over our classroom as it was part of our *technical skills* imparted by best practices. How do we incorporate her son's visual learning style with the structures already in place within our classroom? I began looking in a variety of Spanish leveled books and created paired flash cards where each card would contain a frequently used word within the paired text. Some of the words were nouns while others were more abstract. I told him to take them home and practice both the book and the flash cards at home with his mom – possibly create a game with them. After a couple of weeks, he stopped attempting to sound out words in his leveled practice book, and was reading the entire word, although he read each word one – at – a – time without much fluency. This “chopped” reading affected his comprehension, which is a major goal in reading. He began to look at words as pictures, not sounds. This meant he was memorizing or photographing text as an image in his

head rather than viewing letters in words as individual sounds. A few weeks later, his fluency improved dramatically, and his “word photo vocabulary” had also increased. I was still concerned with his comprehension and fluency because although he would answer the questions and read well from his assigned reading book with ease during our individualized reading time, I was not sure if he could do it with a new story, or unseen text, which is a method of assessing reading. Their individualized reading time was one of the most important parts of the day for our class. During this time, each student would sit and read their leveled book to me. After listening to them, I would ask them comprehension questions, and depending on their fluency and answers, they would either stay on the same book, pass that particular book but grab another book from the same level, or move up to a slightly higher level book. Each student had a folder to keep their book in, document their progress, and be signed daily by their parent. One Friday morning, I decided it was time to check if our strategy had helped develop Ricardo’s fluency and comprehension. I pulled a book that was slightly above his level and which he never read before. When he sat down to read, he, as is our routine, immediately pulled out the book he practiced the night before along with his flash cards. I smiled and told him, “*No señor. Guardalos* (put them away). You are ready for something else.” Because he and many of my other students were nearly fully fluent in both languages, we all felt comfort in switching between English and Spanish, even within the same sentence.

Gloria: Here, we feel safe to “straddle the borderlands” and ride our Chicano language at a metaphysical level (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 84). We use our cultural language as

being a part of who we are because “deep in our hearts we believe that being Mexican... is a state of soul – not one of mind, not one of citizenship” (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 84).

Xinto: He gave me a puzzled look and asked, “¿*Pero por qué?* (But why?)” I told him I have another book for him and would like for him to read it. He smiled as he took the book from my hand and immediately read the title. He read the book beautifully. But how much of it did he understand? Could he answer both explicit and implicit questions about what he just read? Confidently, he answered everything correctly and even added some of his own thoughts and questions. I told him, “You are now a true reader.” He simply smiled. I told him to choose a book from Level K (the next level up). With a seemingly new swagger in his step and a smile stretching from ear to ear, Ricardo walked to the shelf and took his time choosing his book for the first time. We were all proud.

I will discuss this in further detail after our journey, so we can examine how powerful this can be.

The Rio Grande Delta – An Unending Journey

Xinto: This land called Texas has been home to *Tejanos* for hundreds of years. It has been occupied by many different cultures and nations. And today we are still here, yet so many of us feel like we are stuck in the middle. We have a love for two countries that have shown very little love in return, so we find ourselves in this metaphysical space called the borderlands. We draw whatever we are allowed to from both. We wave the flags, we eat the foods, we speak the language, we celebrate the culture, but only if I will safe. It is only during those times when we

are around others who accept us as we are that we can feel a sense of belonging. There is a fear of stepping out of that borderland area. Dare we climb those canyon walls? Dare we tear down those canyon walls? How many of us have developed that consciousness described by Freire? A critical consciousness that gives us freedom. A freedom to speak as Chicanos.

Gloria: “Chicanos did not know we were a people until 1965 when Cesar Chavez and the farmworkers united and *I Am Joaquin* was published and *La Raza Unida* party was formed in Texas” (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 85).

Xinto: We were not ‘woke,’ as they say nowadays. Being ‘woke’ is the modern day synonym for Freire’s *conscientização*, or having critical consciousness. Yet, some of us were. *Compadre* Sánchez, you were ‘woke.’ Your life was dedicated to consistently being critically conscious way before the civil rights movements of the sixties. Blanton (2014) summed it up best in your biography, recognizing “Sánchez’s work at the University of Texas, his tribulations, his joys, all revolved around a fundamentally academic life in which his sense of morality, ethics, ambition, and the world of ideas converged in a larger quest for social change” (p. 103). *Compadre* Rodríguez, you had consciousness that became your being. You breathed and lived what you wanted to see in others, especially your students. I will one thing to be someone who can make it part of your daily life, but to use it with purpose as a director, but more importantly, as a professor of future bilingual educators takes courage and *todo corazón* [all heart]. *Comadre* Gloria, you have taken us to a metaphysical world where our sangre bleeds pure with pride and praxis. You have defined our heridas, but have taught us how to make them our

strengths, our “war wounds”, and the consciousness that “every soldier got a story to tell” (Miller, 1998). Thank you all for accompanying me on this journey.

Here we stand,

On the Rio Grande delta.

Sands of memories sifting

Sands of lives traveling.

Thousands of miles

They find their way

Beneath our wooden planks.

Fresh and saltwater meet.

Sand and water,

Penetrating the wood

Eroding the wood

Becoming the wood.

The river and sea

Are unforgiving

Never forgetful.

They swallow our lives

Into a million pieces

Lay them to rest

Deep beneath the sea

They sleep forever.

Unless we hold our breaths

Dive deep

Search

Find

Found

Reconnect.

Grasp the sand beneath

Hold it.

Take it.

Come back up.

Breathe.

Fill your lungs with it.

Let your *heridas* bleed it.

I rock on the boat alone.

My *compadres* have left.

Our *comadre* has taken them.

She flows beautifully below.

They become part of the sand and sea.

Again.

The tide has come.

My journey continues

Never alone.

Here we stand

Balancing

On the shoulders of giants.

V. CARVING CANALS

This study evolved as conversations emerged. As the collection of data occurred and new discoveries came to light, I began to see connections, some of which are timeless. Analysis was happening as we discovered and had our *pláticas*. The shifts in these conversations made me think critically about my own ontology and how critical autoethnography gave me the space to do that.

Research Questions

As stated in chapter three, as a methodological tool, I decided to structure the analysis based on Guajardo et al.'s (2013) 'ecologies of knowing'. Couching this work within critical pedagogy allowed me to explore this as a reflexive partner and practitioner. Deriving meaning from our *pláticas*, or dialogue, occurred organically within the texts, therefore we will utilize the research question to frame our themes that emerged.

First Research Question

What does an ethnographic study of bilingual education policy as lived by three intergenerational practitioners tell us about the evolution of theory, practice, and politics?

After doing this research, I realized a few things about policy as a critical observer. It attempts to be as objective as possible in terms of verbiage and scope. It can be easily opened to interpretation if careful wording is not applied by policymakers. It is malleable and amendments are constantly making minor and/or integral changes even decades after it has been signed into law. As the reader becomes the audience, or possibly a participant, of this narrative they will have noticed a variety of emerging themes related to the research question.

Three emerging themes in regards to our first research question came out of our *pláticas*. The themes fluidly materialized over time and as we flowed forward during our journey. Segregation, racism, and development of pedagogical practice were at times separate, but still very connected with our theme of bilingual education. We will answer the question by discussing how this aspect of policy affected our participants in terms of pedagogy and practice. Much of the conversation and even analysis happened within the narrative, I will link them here as well and clarify as needed.

Compadres, George and Carlos, both lived during the first theme that emerged. Segregation by language was a central theme to the English-Only law passed in 1918 in Texas. This policy effectively allowed for the segregation of Mexican American students simply based on language. Was the policy's true objective to help students become successful in English which would consequently lead to general academic success? As we discussed, Sánchez was quick to answer that question. Pedagogically, he did not believe segregating students based on language proficiency would be beneficial in any kind of the policy's goals. He researched and believed that best practices for teaching English would involve having students who speak English mixed with Spanish speaking students. His writings directly pointed out that Texas was purposely segregating students because of racism. As he attempted to become more politically active, he joined LULAC and was involved in a variety of cases, such as the *Delgado vs Bastrop* case in a continuous battle to end the racist discriminatory practice of the segregation of Mexican American students. Rodríguez was going through the segregated school system while Sánchez was fighting it. Rodríguez had to attend the Mexican school in San Marcos where conditions were deplorable in comparison to the Anglo school. This must have

begun to shape his identity formation as a youth. It may have also triggered his passion for teaching. Although he had already felt the wrath of segregation as a young boy, he was still determined to return to his home and teach. Racism would not allow that to happen. He was denied a position and told by the school district that they did not hire Mexican Americans. He was not deterred and went to work in nearby San Antonio. He eventually became director of the bilingual education program at SWT, in the town that denied him. In an even bigger irony, Rodríguez Elementary was recently named and is currently being built in San Marcos to honor him and two family members (Blackburn, 2018).

An integral policy I investigated included English-Only and the root causes of it. Much of the analysis happened within the narrative. Using critical theory as a lens to observe policy in the first decades of the twentieth century allowed us to see the methodological implementation of a policy designed to purposely deny Mexican Americans an equitable education. In the research, this policy is shown to be based on veiled racism with an intended outcome of failure to learn English, failure to achieve academically, psychological conditioning of inferiority, and a long term result of generational poverty with nearly no pathways to be break the cycle. Has newer policy changed this? In short, no. The current structure of the education system is not designed to meet the cultural and learning needs of our disenfranchised students. Allocation of school funding and resources, curriculums and practices built around a Eurocentric hegemony, and lack of community outreach or empowerment are major factors in setting the current course for our education system. I will discuss possible remedies in a subsequent section.

My *compadres* also felt the brute force of English-Only policy in varying capacities. Sánchez, being born at the turn of the century, was actually a proponent of English-Only pedagogy, but for specific reasons. Teacher readiness was a major factor for his lack of trust in bilingual education as a method of instruction. Students were not being successful because teachers were incompetent in both their practice and their cultural readiness for Mexican American children. As we discussed in the narrative, he also believed sound pedagogy was not being practiced with fidelity, causing student failure. Rodríguez was born in 1930 and had different confrontations with English-Only. Similar experiences with segregation were guised with the policy. When he was denied a teaching position in his hometown, it was for the simple reason of being Mexican American. It was difficult to locate a physical or electronic copy of his dissertation, but the title, 'Language Dominance Testing as a Method of Selecting Spanish-Surnamed Pupils for Placement in Kindergarten Bilingual Education Programs,' shows he was interested in looking for selection criteria (Language Dominance Testing) rather than simply using surnames to determine language proficiency. This demonstrates how districts were still using antiquated methods for selecting students into bilingual education programs. Rodríguez was even more outspoken against English-Only movements late in his career. As editor of the TABE Journal, he criticized the English-Only movement occurring in the late nineties and promoted the need for pluralism and more dual language programs (Rodriguez, 1998). Although proponents of English-Only legislation today continue to be stagnant with cognitive dissonance in regards to bilingual education, many school districts are forging towards a more progressive and inclusive approach to language acquisition.

We all directly relate with the third, and possibly the most crucial of the three emerging themes. Pedagogy may not be directly linked with policy, but it certainly reacts to it. It reacts to current thought, research, and policy. So, it is always changing. Freire (2008) reminds change agents that in order to be a critical participant, they must “come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation” (p. 83). This includes pedagogy being organic, yet guided with values and principles. When one’s pedagogy is threatened with mandates by policy or campus directives, they must determine their next actions. Are these mandates negotiable? Are they flexible? If so, what do I need to compromise and navigate through this. If they are not negotiable, what next steps will one need to take? Does one stealthily implement their pedagogy as *comadre* Anzaldúa did for her students with Chicana/o Literature? Do they confront the principal or work within the system to change it? Do they get politically involved or get into policymaking?

Pedagogy and practice was at the core of our *pláticas*. Since I began this research, I have wondered how Sánchez would have been as a professor. One can understand practice and how it may be implemented, but pedagogy is that long term process that informs your practice. As an extremely sharp researcher and advocate for Mexican-American students, *compadre* Sánchez worked with that fine chisel to interpret English-Only policy and find ways to create methods of instruction where only English was used. Tirelessly, he found and created theory to determine what would be the best practices for educating *Tejanitos*. It was his life’s work, and just prior to when bilingual education was finally legitimized within policy, he was already theorizing and garnering more research in the realms of teaching English as a second language. Rodríguez practiced his pedagogy

in his everyday life. With the concept of caring on his right sleeve and his *conocimiento* on his left sleeve, he was authentically that beacon for many of his students (Noddings, 2005, Anzaldúa, 2002). He was well aware of policy, because he explicitly taught it to us. He also understood that policy is only a framework, and finding how to work your pedagogy through it and with it, was up to you to find your niche. As students of his, we were all very unique. Some of us came from the city, others were from The Valley, and we all came with our own values and principles. Some of them shared, some of them unique, but they were all valued by *nuestro compadre*, Rodríguez. I will share more of my pedagogy within the answer to the second research question.

Second Research Question

How has my critical ontology and identity formation developed and been informed by pedagogy, practice, and activism throughout my educational journey?

My wife tells me I question too many things and I should just let things be. As I have gotten more and more engaged to this work and dealing with the crises of my personal life and parental illnesses, I have moved away from social media and news in general. Because of this, I do not discuss politics or news events very much on any platform or with friends and family. I will as if my wife just grabbed my baton and began to sprint at a neck-breaking pace. She is now always reading the news and keeping up to date on who said what in politics. She is now the one questioning many things. I definitely still question almost everything and that is the core of my critical ontology.

My ontology is made up of the experiences I have every day with my family and my students. It is informed with a critical theory mindset and a practice based on critical pedagogy. The latter is much more difficult to produce or act upon due to the deficit

thinking and banking models placed in current school systems. I have to constantly ask myself, ‘Is what I am doing critically and socially just for my students?’ The answer is not always yes. Many times, I will no. While answering the first question, I put up a series of questions in relation to pedagogy. I could have a different answer for you every single day with every single subject I teach. Am I truly free to be engaged in a practice based on critical pedagogy? No. Parameters in schools are set and reset as necessary to fit the needs of campus goals and school missions.

How does a teacher with a critical ontology navigate a space like this? One has to simply compromise and push back at the same time. I have been fortunate in having principals who have trusted in my practice, and have allowed me to employ it within my classroom. Teaching is not easy work. Especially at the elementary level. Daily, we are teaching five separate subjects for five days in a row. That takes the planning of twenty-five lessons every single week. Middle school and high school teachers usually have the same subject and level the entire day. Even if they have two subjects to teach daily, that would take planning only ten lessons per week. Planning is an integral part of teaching, especially if you want to make it meaningful.

Being honest here, I have not been able to be at my full potential as a teacher since I have started the doctoral program. The toll and time it takes to go to class, complete coursework, do research, and finally complete your dissertation is a sacrifice in all facets of one’s life, especially if major issues arise throughout your educational journey. It was both a fear and a reality I knew I would be facing when entering this program. It has taken a toll on my own body, mind, and spirit, not to mention significant

others who it has affected. As I complete this dissertation, I can now begin to explore and experience what teaching used to be and is to me.

Anatomy of Story – Refraction and Reflection

Throughout this research, I have continuously been in the classroom. Because this doctoral journey has been included in more than half of my twenty years of teaching, it has directly and organically impacted my pedagogy and practice. I have imparted many of my experiences and reflections within this writing. Guajardo and Guajardo's (2010) *Anatomy of Story* structure gave me the tools to scaffold the narrative into a revealing and reflective piece. I will now refract, or bend, the light towards the reader to reflect on their own current journey. In the following table (see Table 1), I have summarized my own findings and themes throughout this process as explained within this chapter and throughout the narrative. I also offer the reader some reflection questions to ask themselves after they have read about our experiences. The reflection questions are organic and designed to invoke praxis and the development of more questions, such as how do we take our own stories into the public realm and make them powerful voices for change? With the validation of our stories and language, we can empower our communities to join us in creating lighthouses that give clarity and direction towards change. I sincerely hope you connected with our journey and can continue to join us in our constant oaring and carving towards social justice. Following the table, we delve into how our findings can be integrated as tools for making changes within ourselves, our organizations, and our communities.

Table 1

Refracting Waters: Reflecting on Our Journey

Parts of Story	Emerging Themes	Reflection Questions
Navel: Core of Message	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desegregation as a continuous tool of disenfranchisement • Racism as the fuel to maintain or change policy • Pedagogy and practice as organic and critical forms of empowerment 	<p>Using a critical lens, how has our field or role changed throughout history in terms of power and practice?</p> <p>What can we learn from our own roles in terms of societal changes?</p>
Heart: Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critically and culturally responsive teaching • Building authentic spaces and relationships • Empowering stakeholders as partnered change agents. • Identity formation of the self 	<p>What are some of the changes we believe need to happen to make our schools more equitable?</p> <p>What role do we play within our own practice as critical change agents? If we do not play a role, how will we get involved?</p>
Mind: Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being critically conscious • Employing multiple perspectives • Using narrative as a culturally relevant method • Making connections with pedagogy and real world practices 	<p>How can our own stories impact changes on our self, organization, and communities?</p> <p>What connections can we make from our own stories and those we serve? How can we respect and utilize these narratives for future generations?</p>
Hands: Molding of Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving us a space to tell our connected stories • Inviting the reader to float with us and reflect on their own practices • Critically reflecting on my own practice to continuously evolve and grow 	<p>As academics or participating readers, how can we give recognition and celebrate our stories by making them more accessible to the public?</p> <p>How will our connections to culturally relevant storytelling be deconstructed and reconstructed to become part of the narrative?</p>
Legs: Action of Story	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approaches to learning alongside stakeholders • The power of story as a transformational tool for learning and reflection • Utilizing strategies of our past leaders who worked towards social justice • Giving hope to the disenfranchised 	<p>How can we utilize the power of story to make structural and policy changes within our own relative systems?</p> <p>Where will our own boat take us? Will we be the navigators or just float along the current current?</p> <p>With whom do we weave the sails of hope?</p>

What Does This Mean and Where Do We Go from Here?

I have engaged Guajardo et al.'s (2013) Ecologies of Knowing within the self, organization, and community and scaffold it within Trueba (1999) and Mehan's (2008) leadership skills utilizing *technical*, *cultural*, and *political* strategies to organize, analyze, and juxtapose our lives to create meaning. If we can return to the story of my student who had difficulty reading. This story best exemplifies how we can engage and empower our families within our communities. We knew the prescribed content would not be sufficient to meet the needs of Ricardo. Trueba (1999) is critical of solely utilizing our *technical* strategies to teach without incorporating other characteristics that are crucial in the education of the whole child. The bringing forth of the *cultural skills* can be drawn from conversations with parents and students. Knowing and being critically conscious of your students' varied cultures and the dynamics even within each ethnicity is crucial to understanding who we are teaching. When we had the chance to have a genuine *plática* with Ricardo's mother, Ana, where we felt comfortable enough to express our thoughts and ideas, it allowed us to have a safe space where problems and solutions could be discussed. The *cultural skills* threaded themselves within the *technical skills* to create something familiar, yet new – the possibility of something better. This is the creation of new knowledge and all participants benefited. Ana felt empowered to be able to teach me a different way of learning. Ricardo steadily improved his reading and gained tremendous confidence in his abilities which would later translate into other facets of his life. I gained a new “*technical*” strategy, with a *cultural* understanding for teaching reading that I have since utilized for a number of my students. This purposefully embeds the culture into the curriculum and, subsequently, the learning. Paulo Freire (2001) asks, “why not establish

an intimate connection between knowledge considered basic to any school curriculum and knowledge that is the fruit of the lived experience of these students as individuals?” (p.36). Thus, the vision of education of the child is less objective and a “more valid one” emerges “from a historically and culturally situated standpoint” (Foley, Valenzuela, 2006; Mehan, 2008, p. 88). Trueba takes it to a more critical and macro level by challenging educators to be conscious of the powers within the dominating cultural structures that make up schools and to have a discourse with students regarding all participants’ roles in changing them, even if I will at the classroom or campus level (Freire, 2000; Trueba, 1999). This is what Freire (2000) frames as our *conscientização*, or critical consciousness, where students and teacher alike can question the current system and its oppressive state and make moves towards changing it for the betterment of our world.

“Language is never neutral” - Paulo Freire

The Self

After discovering who we are ontologically and understanding how we can share our values, we can engage in reflection to determine our next steps. Framing the self with our three lives embedded in the *technical* capacity takes us to the practice. As we discussed bridges in our narrative, we mentioned the wide gaps that can be created when we fail to find connections with the past while having foresight. I take my two *compadres*’ stories of their practice and values and allow reflexivity to determine how I can utilize what we have learned together and apply it within my own profession. Commonalities in our pedagogy in terms of the self applies to our critical ontology and how we see ourselves as educators. I must be conscious of it in every action I do in the

classroom. My *compadre* Rodriguez used to give us certain moments of contemplation. He would ask a question and simply wait. Even if he knew no one knew the answer, it was not what he was trying to achieve, he simply wanted us to contemplate and reflect. Creating that space before and after lessons is critical for my development as a teacher and as a change agent.

Integrating the self with the *cultural* aspects of teaching and leading was best demonstrated with both *technical* and *cultural* skills in the instance with Ricardo above. If you do not know where you come from, you will not know where you are going. Coming to terms with who we are, and the uniqueness we hold is our *cultural* capital that gives us strength. Both *compadres* and our *comadre* were adamant about their culture as a driving force of their teachings and writings. The nuances of culture are necessary within the *cultural* skill set. Are we being mindful of the students we are getting? How will we get to know and understand them? Building *cultural* skills also requires reflections about our own biases and being critically cognizant of how we will navigate these biases within ourselves and around others.

Building the *political* self is a place for self-negotiation. Sánchez fully understood how the dominant culture was oppressing the disenfranchised. In this space one must make decisions of how and if to combat in the name of social justice. Rodríguez worked through his students. The *political* skills of self for him consisted of how the lesson of the day will stir emotion enough to push you into action. In his later writings, he seemed to be releasing that through himself rather than his students. He found a sort of emancipation.

Our Organization

Policies, laws, bylaws, mandates, etc. All of these dictate our respective organizations. The *technical* skills provide structure, but can sometimes become too rigid. Sánchez had issues with the structure of the university and it made it difficult for him to push an agenda targeting equity for Mexican-American students. Rodríguez learned to navigate these spaces utilizing what was given to him in a leadership position to make the technical advantageous for his students. For me, Test scores are at the epitome of how success is measured in our school and most schools here in Texas. Leadership at the district and school levels determine what the best practices are with paid consultants who are predetermined to have the panacea to our low scores. Yet, they walk away with a six figure salary, lauded, and brought back the following year just for raising the scores a few points. Yet, we remain low-performing. We get marked by the school district as ‘a school in need of district intervention’, so more consultants and district experts come and watch. They sit back and take notes, give us a list of all we are doing wrong, and guise it with ‘constructive criticism’ and determine what the practice should look like. While they watch, we follow the ‘redesigned’ lesson plans. We look at our kids. They see this is not you. You cannot hide it. Kids see and know everything. The consultant looks on with a pride smirk of smugness. She thinks she knows more than you, yet she only taught a few years, was not making the money she wanted, so she used her degree to make more money telling adults who are in the trenches how to do it correctly.

This has not happened to me, but it is an all too familiar one that I have witnessed throughout my years in education. Is there a space for consulting that does the opposite of this? A school would have to be open to integrating a democratic and critically pedagogic

structure, meaning massive changes in *technical* skills targeting systems, teacher capacity, and critical consciousness. Can it be taught where it will become an act of praxis?

Cultural skills are most impactful in this domain of the organization, especially within the classroom. This capacity was a crucial part of our narrative. We each gave examples and agreed on the significance of having culturally responsive teachers with an open mindset. Cultural skills refer to the school climate and safety of an educational space. Does the teacher or leader provide a space where colleagues feel welcomed and safe to have true *pláticas* where ideas can be shared and critiqued?

Rodríguez and Sánchez both worked at the organizational level as professors of a university. The *political* skills needed here compared to an elementary school would be highly varied. They worked with students with *political* skills already developed or in the process of development. My students are at the beginning stages of the *political* skills. They are learning to negotiate and determine how to navigate through systems in place. Because a school, as an organization, has a variety of spaces where students must constantly engage in, they begin to develop a variety of all three of these skills. As an educator, I look for spaces to empower my students where a democratic approach to classroom management is employed while other aspects of formal school rules are renegotiated to give students more experience as they develop these leadership skills.

Our Community

As we move from micro to macro, the *technical* skills become more broad, but the ability to utilize these skills grants greater variety in maneuvering. It is much more difficult to take steps to develop *technical* skills in this realm. It has been a core issue to

bring parents and community members into our campus. Many administrators fail to develop these skills with other adults on the campus. Creating a place for this to happen will allow these adults to become leaders within the school while getting more community outreach with a mission to pass on these technical skills to them. Whether it be math skills or having parents who have new techniques for teaching various subject areas. This will build capacity and leadership.

Developing *cultural* skills is crucial here as well as at the organizational level. This past year, many of our school's personnel's *cultural* skills grew with various events planned. We had a Día de los muertos event and that event alone spawned three teachers to create their own cultural clubs and/or events. One is planning to bring folklórico to the school, while another wants to create a drama club. Sánchez and Rodríguez were involved at various levels of community outreach. Whether it was working with LULAC or inviting families of bilingual students to a luncheon, these *cultural* skills show where hearts truly lie.

Political skills at the community level are essential in building trust and completing tasks that may be needed within the community. Rodríguez knew people anytime we needed something. Whether it was a deal on a van to get to the TABE conference, or we need a place to host a special event, he knew someone. Having political skills with the community in mind is crucial not only to negotiate for yourself, but for those you represent. I attempted to use my political skills to get a graffiti project started at our school. I could only get so far until the project was abruptly halted. Sánchez had a way with words and utilized this political savviness to advocate for Mexican American children, but sometimes his stubbornness made enemies with colleagues who

were once allies. This is when reflection and compromise must be your guides and determine what you should do for the greater good.

Raising My Sails - Bon Voyage

America is in a constant state of change. The Texas of 1918 that passed a racist English-Only law had a very different landscape than it does today, one hundred years later. But let us not be fooled. Racism is alive and well here in Texas and it poses a threat to the future of Texas and our children. English-Only is always just below the horizon waiting for the right time to make a move. As Chicana/os and others who are in solidarity with our plights, we must understand how our *heridas* are not detrimental to who we are, but are testaments to where we have been, who we are, and where we can go. I learned I share many common thoughts and perspectives as those who came before me. There is pureness in that. An essence of unbreakable strength. As our *comadre* Gloria tells us, “Stubborn, persevering, impenetrable as stone, yet possessing a malleability that renders us unbreakable, we, the *mestizas* and *mestizos*, will remain” (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 86),

“So daddy, what do you think about me and Macario doing a doctoral program?”

“.....It’s the impossible dream!”

APPENDIX SECTION

APPENDIX A: POLITICAL ACTION WITH *LA RAZA ALIANZA* (CIRCA 1995-1997)

Our first political action would come very soon after we became an official group at the college. A friend of my brother and I was having some domestic issues with his ex-wife and the two children they had together. Well, he made the regretful decision of taking them without permission, which of course is considered kidnapping. A car pursuit ensued with police, which led them into a wooded area. As a television helicopter hovered to capture the final moments of the pursuit, it witnessed our friend, Roy, jump out of the vehicle and run into a sparsely wooded section with an officer following close behind. The video shows Roy giving up with his hands in the air and turned towards the policeman who was a few feet away. The officer was shown pointing his gun to Roy, saying something, and then shooting him. Roy falls. The officer rushes over to him, handcuffs him, kicks him in the face, and then proceeds to punch him in the face repeatedly as Roy continued to lie on his stomach handcuffed. I remember the local news running the tape repeatedly, but when it made national news the following day, only a brief description of the occurrence was stated without any video shown. Our group quickly began gathering up other Latino organizations and leaders to form a protest since Dallas had put the officer on paid administrative leave and no other groups or leaders were being outspoken about the situation in terms of police brutality. We were able to get about a hundred people from various organizations to protest in downtown. I made my first sign that day; it was an artistic representation of a handcuffed Roy being punched by a police officer with the headline, "Stop the Brutality!" The Dallas Morning News printed

a photo of me standing with only the top half of my face showing while standing behind my sign. This is when I recognized the power of a photograph and the printed word.

APPENDIX B: M.E.Ch.A. NATIONAL CONFERENCE STORY

When we attended the annual national conference at Michigan State University in 1997, the representation numbers of Chican@s from California to New York astounded me. Passion was abounding and action seemed to be at the doorstep. Was this the beginning of the new student movement? I truly hoped I would be part of the dawning of *el sexto sol*, the Sixth Sun³

I feel and see the footprints of my ancient walk in life

And I speak of them to the shadows of my mind

We have walked where earth meets sky

And have walked within all five suns that I

And my spiritual soul will walk once again as one

I am here by destiny once again, not only to witness

But to awaken myself to the long awaited Sixth Sun

- Ramsey R. Muñiz (n.d.) (See Appendix D)

Whether it was true or not, paranoia seemed to shift the focus of the conference from plans of action to ‘who can we trust?’ Several of us witnessed irregular happenings that made us question the legitimacy and true objectives of some of the attendees. Although this was a conference for MEChistAs, another organization was also in attendance – The Brown Berets de Aztlán. They stated their purpose was to make sure unwanted guests were escorted out or removed from the premises. The local chapter had never heard of this student organization or local group nor had it previously made an agreement with them about security. Several attendees, including myself, would catch them taking pictures of several of us at the conference. Paranoia begins to percolate. That

evening, several of us began to discuss having secret meetings and signals such as handshakes. There was growing concern that some members may be infiltrators sent by the government to change the vote for national proposals. These proposed directives would be part of the most progressive agenda M.E.Ch.A. had undertaken in decades. They were a call to action for all universities to commit to move on several issues including immigrant rights, affirmative action, and bilingual education, among others. On the day of the vote, while we were outside on the campus grounds doing an indigenous ritual with some elders and listening to the musical folklorist, Chuy Negrete, several of us witnessed an all-black suburban with tinted windows driving near us and circling through a parking lot and back towards us. After it circled a couple of times and come even closer to where we were, the window rolled down and a white male with a full sized DSLR camera began snapping pictures. We could just hear the faint sound of the rapid shots aimed at us. We shouted and ran towards the vehicle but it sped off. To this day, we do not know who was taking photos of us. The paranoia came to a head a little afterwards when were suddenly told the voting would be held in the basement of the same building where we had all of our other workshops rather than the reserved large lecture room. When several of us began entering the basement, we noticed The Brown Berets de Aztlán were following behind us as if playing guards. There were only two entrances/exits located in the back corners of the surprisingly large room. Natural sunlight came in from the front of the room through windows high up near the ceiling, which brightened up the room quite considerably. Two members in full militant garb and brown berets, of course, stood at each exit, acting seemingly like one way valves allowing people in, but not allowing them out. Apparently, false information was being sent to various members to

decrease the numbers of voting universities. From the best of my knowledge, someone deceptively notified some, including myself, that voting would be in the basement in an attempt to allow infiltrators to have more voting power because less leaders of the more active chapters would be present at the 'real' vote upstairs in the original location. We pushed our way through the brown valves and made our way to the vote. Although the votes went in our favor, a sense of skepticism began to permeate through various chapters and M.E.Ch.A. seemingly became less active at the national level. Inversely, at the local level, we became even more actively engaged.

APPENDIX C: MEXICA TIAHUI NEWSLETTER

The Mexica Tiahui Newsletter was an amalgamation of voices catalyzed by the silenced masses of the university and beyond. Because one of our members volunteered at a local non-profit program for kids, after hours, he had key access and we would make 500-stapled copies of each issue there at the center. We would purchase the paper – two reams for each publication. Early in the morning, not knowing whether we had to have permission to distribute around campus for fear they would not allow it if we asked, we rebelliously dropped a few dozens everywhere they had bins for the campus paper, The University Star, among other publications. In one particular issue, I described personal instances of racism, such as being the only student who was asked for student identification by the bus driver while boarding the university's SWTram. All other passengers who boarded were white. Initially, I received praise about the article from my peers who shared similar experiences while at SWT, but not long after it angered a few people who could not empathize with our experiences. We became the target of a student-controlled conservative newspaper on campus called "The Southwest File". This newspaper had approximately twenty pages per weekly issue and was a full sized paper, like "The Enquirer", but with more lies. After being personally called "Idiot of the Week" by one of their editors, we attacked back in our newsletter in the following issue with the title "*Pendejo* of the Week". The writer claimed that my experiences are common to all people, racism does not exist anymore, and I need to dress more professional if I do not want to be perceived as 'dangerous'. During these heated exchanges, an editor from "The Southwest File" wanted to interview me about our organization and my personal/political beliefs. They did not want to meet in person, nor on telephone, so they sent us the

questions via email. One of our MEChistAs and I meticulously read and wrote our responses to represent ourselves as truthful and authentic as possible. We were worried how they would skew our responses. We did not hear anything for about two months and noticed that they had not printed any weekly issues of their newspaper during this time. When we returned for the spring semester in January we finally saw a new issue of “The Southwest File” at one of their newsstands. The cover had an illustrated picture of Martin Luther King, Jr. That was our first surprise – MLK on the cover of a conservative paper? The second surprise was a full-page article regarding our interview. It was a very positive article and included everything we wanted others to know about our organization. While fundraising in the outdoor area of the quad one cold cloudy morning, a white woman about my age (early twenties) came up to me and asked if I was Juan Jacinto Hernández, or Exinto (I spell it Xinto, she mispronounced it). After I asserted that I was, she proceeded to tell me the entire fiasco that happened in the two months following the interview. In short, she stated that half the staff wanted to be as objective as possible when publishing the story, while the other half wanted to spin our interview into extreme radicals with leanings towards violence. This caused such a confliction amongst them that when the ones who wanted to create a neutral article decided to do so, the conservative spinners quit. The writers and editors who remained did not have the manpower to create the issues, nor did they know what direction they were going to take “The Southwest File” to in terms of its political leanings. Because of this, they needed to seek out contributors from all walks of life in the university. Needless to say, the newspaper became monthly rather than weekly, but more importantly, it now featured

poetry and stories from all sorts of political and artistic leanings. An important battle was won that semester, and it was won with words becoming action.

The four images on the following pages are scanned from one issue of Mexico Tiahui:



MOVIMIENTO ESTUDIANTIL CHICANA/CHICANO DE AZTLÁN
(M.E.Ch.A.)

Presenta



iMexico Tiahui!

"Chicanas and Chicanos Always Moving Forward!"

Volume III Issue 5

Southwest Texas State University

March 1, 1999

Racism Exists in Some SWT Professors

by Xinto

"You write better than most of the other bilingual education majors that have come through my class," said one of my education major professors (Names are not mentioned to protect the guilty). The professor whom I have quoted above has stated many other stereotypical comments towards other students and myself. On several occasions she would call me 'Jose' instead of my real name 'Juan', and at one time she stated, without me listening, 'Jose, Juan they're all the same', as told to me by another student who heard the comment. Another incident that has taken place is when we had to do some type of artwork and she said, 'That looks like some of the graffiti on the back of buildings.' These and other remarks surprise me, but at the same time make me wonder why they say these statements. Well, the aforementioned professor's excuse is always, 'I've only walked in white girl's shoes'. When a group of Chicanas and Chicanos asked for help from one of our professors from the Math department, she stated, 'I'm gonna let 'Ms. Garcia' (name changed) tutor ya'll with your math because of the potential language and cultural barriers that may arise when learning this material.' First of all, I speak English, so what kind of language barrier is there, and I thought math is the universal language anyway. Secondly, I did not know there was anything cultural about math. This same professor said to me, 'Did you come in your lowrider today?', just because I was wearing a bandana. These professors seriously need to take Multiculture 101, so that they can learn to be sensitive to what they say.

How can a University that boasts so much about its cultural awareness hire educators that have none? Some type of program must be implemented that assists in teaching and experiencing the different cultures that are present. Workshops and seminars can be vital elements in learning to know about backgrounds of students. Going out into the community, and meeting with people through community service instead of just going home to their suburbs - away from reality, can assist in facing the real world. Another problem with many of these professors is that they have been teaching here for twenty or thirty years, and have been away from reality. They are teaching us for the real world, a multicultural world, a world they know nothing about. As long as they remain stagnant with their world, their only possible excuse is 'I've only walked in white boy's shoes', or 'I've only walked in white girl's shoes', which is no excuse at all.

What M.E.Ch.A. Means To Me

by Pedro Ruiz

As a registered student of St. Philip's College, I know that to graduate...I must earn my Associates Degree in Art or transfer to a University by doing the 2+2 program. It will take certain long short years. As a student trying to fit into a college environment, you feel Americanized by ignoring your own Chicano culture. I am what you call a Mexican-American by our people who voted in favor to call me this. I am also called Hispanic just cause I speak Spanish fluently and fit in with all the dark brown people. Even though my ancestors came to America in search of good fortunes, they found certain tribes to conquer which were my other ancestors who were Aztec, Maya, Toltec, and Olmec. I don't look like a European-American, but my blood has the Spaniard conquest running through my veins. I am the color bronze, which walks throughout Aztlan which is the mystical birthplace of the Aztecs. As mystical as it may be, it is a reality that this state of Texas was once Mexico. We the organization known as M.E.Ch.A. stand for civil rights and beliefs of indigenous people who have not forgotten their ancestral culture. We also promote Chicanismo within a College environment, that way you don't become Americanized and fall for the bait of being Angloclized. As Chicanos, we move forward throughout Aztlan which is today's Southwest and use the word Chicano or Xicano to get people's attention that this is what we want to be called and not Hispanic, Mexican-American, or Latino. We Chicanos know about the civil rights movement and a lot of Raza died so that we can be where we are at today. Being Chicano used to be a negative word, now; it's a badge of pride because we're the ones who know what is really going on with the social issues our communities face everyday. Whether it be immigration issues which our Raza is being deported accidentally, or killings of our gente by la jorra, we take a stand as a recognized student organization and have our voices heard which the 1st Amendment lets us do these certain things. Fear itself is what you can not do. When in College, I learned that having a grade point average of 2.0 and above is a wonderful thing because this is what keeps you Active in organizations such as these and be elected for leadership positions. The organization M.E.Ch.A. does not discriminate towards other races but makes Chicanos aware of being consciously awake about the reality in what their ancestors went through. That is why other people who join and are not Chicano also benefit about the organization about being Chicano. As students reaching the 21st Century, M.E.Ch.A. will celebrate its 30th Anniversary which is a miracle because there is no other Chicano organization that has about 400 Chapters Nation wide. You will not be alone in the struggle for self-determination, and education of our Raza. Only united is when we're our strongest, and lack of communication rips us apart. As political activists, MEChAs have no political party and are opposed towards Republicans due to the fact that M.E.Ch.A. made it to the Texas Republican Platform and Republicans have something against us. Now that's a fact! We're just students who are trying to promote Chicanismo within our College environment and communities and not being militant.



MOVIMIENTO ESTUDIANTIL CHICANA/CHICANO DE AZTLÁN
(M.E.Ch.A.)
Presenta



¡Mexico Tiahui!

"Chicanas and Chicanos Always Moving Forward!"

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De Un Amor Verdadero

What more can they tell you?
I am not good nor bad - just a man.
And they will add the danger
Of my life, which you know
And which with your passion you have shared.
Well, this danger
Is danger of love - of complete love
Toward all of life,
Toward all lives.

And if this love brings
Death or prison,
I am sure that your big eyes
As when I kiss them,
Will then close with pride--
With double pride and mine.
But toward my ears they will first come
To undermine the tower
Of the sweet and harsh love that binds us.

And they will say: "That one
That you love
Is no woman for you.
Why do you love her? I think
You could find one more beautiful,
More serious, more profound,
More other, you understand, look at her
How flighty
And what a head she has.
And look at her, how she dresses
An so on and on."

And I in these lines say:
"Thus I love you, love,
Love, thus I love you.
Thus as your hair
Lifts up and as
Your mouth smiles,
Light as water
From the spring upon the pure stones,
Thus I love you, beloved."

Of bread, I do not ask that it teach me
But that it not fail me
During each day of life.
I know nothing of light, where
It comes from or where it goes.
I only want light to light.
I do not ask explanations
Of the night.
I wait for it and it envelops me.

And thus you are bread
And light and shadow.
You came into my life
With what you brought.
I waited for you,
Made of bread and light and shadow.
And thus I need you,
Thus I love you,
And all those who want to hear tomorrow
What I shall not tell them, let them
Read it here.

And let them retreat today because
It's too early
For these arguments.
Tomorrow we shall give them only
A leaf from the tree of our love - a leaf
That will fall upon the earth
As if our lips had made it,
Like a kiss that falls
From our invincible height
To show the fire and the tenderness
Of a true love.

Ramsey R. Muñoz - Tezcatlipoca

De Un Amor Verdadero

¿Qué más pueden decirte?
No soy bueno ni malo, sino hombre.
Y agregarán, entonces, el peligro
De mi vida que conoces
Y has compartido con tu pasión.
Y bien, este peligro
Es de amor - un amor completo
De la vida --
Un amor de todas vidas.

Y si este amor nos trae
La muerte o la prisión,
Estoy seguro que tus ojos grandes
Como cuando los beso,
Se cierran con orgullo,
Un orgullo doble, amor--
El tuyo y el mío.
Primero vendrán a mis oídos
A socavar la torre
De amor dulce y duro que nos liga.

Y me dirán: "Aquella
Que tu amas
No es mujer para tí.
¿Por qué la quieres? Creo
Que podrías hallar una mas bella,
Mas seria, mas profunda,
Mas otra - tú me entiendes. Mira
Que ligera.
Y que cabeza tiene.
Y mira como se viste,
Y etcetera y etcetera."

Yo, en estas líneas digo:
"Así te quiero, amor.
Amor, así te amo.
Así como te vistes
Y como se levanta
Tu cabellera y como
Sonrías tu boca,
Ligera como el agua
Del manantial, sobre las piedras puras.
Así te quiero, amada."

No pido que el pan me enseñe,
Sino que no me falle
Durante la vida.
No sé nada de la luz -- de donde
Viene, ni a donde va.
No pido explicaciones de la noche.
La espero, y me envuelve.

Y así tú eres -- pan y luz
Y sombra.
Veniste a mi vida
Con lo que trajiste.

A tí te esperaba, hecha de pan y luz
Y sombra,
Y así te necesito.
Así te amo.
Y todos los que quieran escuchar mañana
Lo que no les diré, que lo lean aquí.

Y que retrocedan hoy,
Porque es demasiado temprano
Para estos argumentos.
Mañana les daremos solo
Una hoja del árbol de nuestro amor -
Una hoja que caerá sobre la tierra
Como si la hubieran hecho nuestros labios,
Como un beso que cae
Desde las alturas invencibles
Para mostrar el fuego y la ternura
De un amor verdadero.

Ramsey R. Muñoz - Tezcatlipoca



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Ramsey Muniz Political Prisoner

Ramsey Muniz is remembered for his leadership role during the Chicano Civil Rights Movement in the 70s. Using his position as an attorney, Ramsey defended the rights of Mexicanos whose constitutional rights were constantly violated.

In 1972 and 1974 Muniz was a Texas gubernatorial candidate for the Raza Unida Party -- a political party established and developed solely by Mexicanos. He garnered 6% of the vote and in the process, awakened people to their political power and potential. His efforts also forced the system to recognize Mexicanos as a powerful voice in government.

At the heart of his political career in 1976, Ramsey Muniz was indicted on drug conspiracy charges. Knowing well that the Establishment was out to get him, he left for Mexico only to be caught, tortured, and returned to the USA for prosecution. Houston attorney Dick DeGuerin stated, "The evidence was either non-existent or from a very unreliable source. There were a couple of people who were given immunity in order to testify, and it was just an effort to get Ramsey!" Muniz pleaded guilty to federal drug charges saving other members of the Raza Unida Party who were also targets of the government. He was convicted twice for the same crime -- in Corpus Christi and in San Antonio!

Muniz's sentence was obviously longer than sentences normally given. He served his time and was released to face continuing stalking and persecution by the DEA. In Houston he was again accused of drug charges that later had to be dropped due to an illegal search and seizure by the DEA. Instead, a parole violation was given.

Ever since his involvement in politics, Muniz has been a target of the government. The DEA has continuously persecuted him through drug-related indictments. Those convictions have involved questionable practices by the government, including withholding information, ignoring the law, and using false testimony to make Muniz the culprit.

In March of 1994, the DEA was in pursuit of Donaclo Medina of Durango, Mexico, because he made an illegal drug deal. In the process, they learned that Medina had spoken to Ramsey Muniz, a Legal Assistant. The DEA wanted Muniz instead, so without explanation they allowed Medina to go. He helped to entrap Muniz by asking him to move his car. Ramsey moved and parked Medina's car, only to be surrounded by government agents, and searched twice without his consent. The search ended when the DEA opened the trunk and found what they already knew would be there.

Ramsey Muniz was entraped by the DEA and as a result, he is serving a term of life without parole. He remains imprisoned in Leavenworth, Kansas.

The truth of the matter is that the criminal complaint used to justify the arrest contained false statements made by DEA Agent Kimberly Elliott. Her statements were proven false by the testimony of witnesses who did not even know Muniz.

The government knew of Donaclo Medina from the very beginning, because he tried to make a drug deal from them. They hid knowledge of Donaclo Medina from the jury, however, in order to place blame on Ramsey Muniz instead.

The defense tried to present a key witness whose records would prove that Medina was not staying with Muniz. The witness refused to show, and the judge would not enforce a subpoena, saying that it would confuse the jury.

The trial was held in Sherman, Texas. The case was lost, appealed to the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals, and to the Supreme Court. The appeals were denied.

In October of 1997, a 2255 was filed and denied by the Eastern District of Texas. We are awaiting the approval to present the 2255 to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. All legal work has been filed Pro Se.

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RAZA Palabras



Hispanic-

Refers to people of Spanish origin, and was coined by the U.S. Government. It denies the indigenous background that is in our Chicana/Chicano culture.

LATINO~

REFERS TO PEOPLE WHOSE MOTHER TONGUE DERIVES FROM THE LATIN LANGUAGE, WITHOUT REFERRING TO SPECIFIC CULTURES OR NATIONALITIES.

Mestizo-

Refers to the people whose blood is mixed among African/European, African/Indigenous, or Indigenous/European Cultures/Races.

Chicana/Chicano-

Refers to people who embrace cultural pride in having "Indigenous" blood, while at the same time embracing political, social, economic, and spiritual solidarity with all oppressed people of indigenous origin throughout America. 4

A Letter From R. Muniz to Citlaltlmina

Citlaltlmina:

At times we have lost the clarity of the past era, but the social, political and economic conditions are the same. It is only because our vision is blurred that we can't see it as clearly as we did once before. I am one who has not lost the vision of that time and spirit.

I will never lose faith and be lost like certain contras and Pharisees who described themselves as serving la raza, but who serve revived Rome. We, of the Rising of the Sixth Sun, will re-open the hearts and minds formed at one time by Prince Cuh and Princess Mu. When we study and meditate on their immortal

contributions, we know what to do. They placed the architectural plan of the temple with a tracing board, so that we could build the temple. This did not merely imply the act of designing grand buildings by cutting, squaring and setting stone. Building the temple means to build character armed with the spirituality of the Rising of the Sixth Sun.

Our awakening was preordained. Our noble lineage is symbolized by the mystical ladder, even in human biochemical genetics -- the double helix which contains the unique physical characteristics and soul attributes of a given raza.

Our calendario prehispánico designed by Quetzalcoatl and his grandparents reveals this esoteric teaching. We know that they devised our calendar because a primary source of our history and culture, a secret church document prepared in the 16th century by Fr. Gerónimo de Mendieta, unveils this great secret. His book is entitled La Historia Eclesiástica Indiana.

We, the hermanos of the craft are not only aware, but we are aware of being aware. That's a dragon of a different color. In the mysteries of The Mexican Pyramids by Peter Tompkins, we see that la raza had their dragon. If we did not know it was Aztec, one might think that it was Chinese or of the orient. Dragons are symbols of life itself, and what a life force it is!

The prophet Jacob was not the only one adept in envisioning the mystical ladder. Our beloved leader, Ixcatlilpoca, "Smoking Mirror" and master of hearts who gives life, also envisioned the ladder. I look forward to my birthday on

December 13th, because it corresponds with our prophet's birthday.

No, I do not want to deny my destiny. My destiny is to continue the struggle. In exile, Ramsey R. Muniz-Ixcatlilpoca.

"There has never been a people in the world so religious and devout, or so dedicated to the faithful fulfillment of their duties in maintaining the love to their gods, as the people of new Spain (the Mex-Kans)

Barloome De Las Casas. Apologética Historia Sumaria

"Not in vain do I stand chained and shackled in solitary confinement, for it is I and the Mex-Kans who will adhere to the Rising of the Sixth Sun."

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APPENDIX D: EL SEXTO SOL EXPLANATION

There have been a number of Suns or Solar Ages in the history of our planet, that prophetic texts and indigenous traditions speak of in different ways. For the Aztecs and later civilizations of the Americas, these solar ages were recorded in their Sun Calendars, each sun lasting a duration of just under 5,200 years making up the 26,000 year precessional cycle.

In December 2012 we transitioned into the Era of the next solar cycle. The Sixth Sun cycle. The mission of the Fifth Sun was to create movement in great waves of cleansing and change in order to make ready for the Sixth Sun. It meant the breaking down of old patterns and belief systems from third dimensional materialism and external control before moving into inter-dimensional realms, expansion of our collective consciousness and understanding our placement within the universe as fully actualized beings of light.

-Nikki Williams (2017)

APPENDIX E: THE TRAVELED SPACE - MONTERREY

It was May and school was almost over. As I talked with my other classmates about their plans for the summer, we laughed at how many of us had the same plans of going to Mexico and visit our family. Some of us were going to Chihuahua, while others were planning trips all the way down to D.F. – Mexico City. Our family was going to Monterrey and Saltillo - two cities less than an hour and a half apart, but with worlds filled with entirely different experiences.

By the end of the third grade, the summer trips to the two cities were part of our most anticipated annual vacations. We would usually go to Monterrey first and stay with one of my mom's *primas*, tía Elvia. My *tía* Elvia is the aunt everyone is immediately drawn to – very much like what others say of my mom. It is not surprising they were and continue to be each other's favorite cousin. Her five kids, my *primos*, were between seven to twelve years older than us. The prime of our visits to my *tía*'s house was probably between my third grade year through my eighth grade year. Her three boys were in their teenage years during this time and always had something for us to do. We would have pillow fights in their upstairs room, where their three beds were lined up side by side like a military barracks, so we could jump from bed to bed to bed. They would take us to do errands for my aunt and uncle like take empty deposit Coke bottles to trade in for filled ones. We would go to a nearby park and run around the plaza or find a store that sold rocket fireworks. They always knew to save a couple of empty bottles so we could stick the long stick of the rocket inside to launch it straight up. As we grew older, they would have us hold the bottle in our hand and light up the firework just for the rush of it.

APPENDIX F: THE TRAVELED SPACE - INTO SALTILLO

After spending a couple of weeks in Monterrey, we would pack up and head to where most of my mother's side of the family lives. It was an hour and a half drive to Saltillo, but it was the most adventurous part of our eight-hour drive from Dallas. Before the wide toll roads that now exist in the *autopistas*, or freeways, that connect the two cities, there was only a two-lane (one for each direction) highway. This highway curved through winding mountains and it was always filled with semi-trailer trucks that seemed to be always stuck in first gear. The only way to pass them up was to wait for a straightaway and make sure there was no oncoming traffic. My dad never passed them up and would patiently drive behind them until the truck finally turned or moved when a shoulder was available. My mother would tell us a variety of stories of how people fell off the sides of these mountain roads and how the wreckage would be left below because of the difficulty in bringing it up. Other variations were told by relatives included buses full of people tumbling down off the side of the mountain and instantly bursting into flames. After hearing these seemingly tall tales, we did not mind if our dad drove slowly. As we grew older, she told us legendary tales of the ghosts of people who died off this stretch of road. After listening to these stories, we would ask our dad to drive faster, especially at night. At the halfway point and coincidentally near the highest elevation of this bypass, there was an oasis consisting of a large restaurant and gas station called Casablanca. We always would stop here to get gas or something to eat, but mostly to say goodbye to Monterrey. Casablanca, with its off-white peeling paint and seemingly endless arched columns along its front façade, gave a spectacular view of Monterrey from high up in the mountains, especially at dusk when we were usually passing through. As we situated ourselves in our bright orange van to continue the rest of our journey, we

knew it darkness would consume the day as we pushed into the depths of the mountains meandering through massive walls of rock. Headlights from oncoming travelers and trailers were especially bright through here. The path was mostly downhill from here. And in a sudden curve of the road, there it would be – a million lights shine below us and creeping up the sides of neighboring mountains – Saltillo. The lights seem to all be an orange hue, except for the radio towers blinking red at the top of the higher peaks of the mountains. They are the only visual clues at night that tell us how the city sits in a valley.

The air is different here. It is cold at night, even in the summer. We drive straight to our *abuelitos*' house. My grandparents had twenty children of which nine died. Some lived for years while others died at birth. Of the eleven brothers and sisters who lived through adulthood, ten of which are still living, my mother was born somewhere near the upper middle. Something to note about my mother and her family is that they mostly had European physical features. My grandfather had a white complexion and green eyes and my grandmother was also very fair skinned with piercing blue eyes. All of my aunts and uncles are light skinned with green eyes, with the exception of one of my uncles who has my grandmother's blue eyes. In Mexico, the fair-skinned tend to be the higher classes, but that was not the case for my mother's family. My mother grew up in poverty and had to drop out of school at an early age to help her family. Ironically, almost all of my aunts' and uncles' spouses are darker skinned with more indigenous features with the exception of my *tío Née*, who has never married. They lived in an area known as "*el Ojo de Agua*" located near the city's center. This urban area had homes and businesses connected by long walls. The only way to tell the difference among the different places was through street numbers, signs, or decorations hanging along the face of the wall. My grandfather

had a very small store at the front of their home where he sold cold drinks, milk, cheese, candy, snacks, and, best of all, slingshots! Their home was unique in that it had a garage opening on the front part of the building rather than the side or back. This is where we usually entered when we arrived. Because they had so many children, my *abuelitos*' home was enormous. Although they only had four bedrooms, each of the bedrooms was the size of a classroom. My favorite part of their home was the enclosed open patio. Every morning, the roofless area was always cool and damp with an airiness that smelled of *México*. It looked like a back street of Spain, where the morning sun's light could not yet touch the decades old cracked Saltillo tile floor. I would inhale each morning ready to take on the day – and my other *primos* – my *primo hermanos* (my first cousins).

Due to my mother marrying at an older age compared to her sisters, most of our *primos* in Saltillo were either way older than us or much younger than us. Because my mother had so many brothers, sisters, and relatives we had to split the little time we spent there with many of them. My mother's favorite brother, Joaquin, had four kids near our age so we would spend a lot of our time at their home. He was the humblest brother of the family, but he was also an alcoholic, which made it difficult for him to have a steady job and consequently making him the poorest economically of the siblings. His two boys were near our age, so it was another likely reason for us to spend even more time at their house. Behind their home, I recall an endless white field of rocks. It was an ideal place to practice using our slingshots. Being away from adults, it was also their ideal place to take shots at our use of Spanish.

At the time, we did not know how to respond to it. We definitely felt anger, but kept it inside by laughing off their pelting. We felt diminished, yet it was difficult to

vocalize this to each other. I kept it inside for years and my brother must have as well, because he never told me how much it affected him until years later. Subconsciously, or possibly even consciously, by brother and I found a way to change the subject and change the conversation to something we were somewhat experts at.

“*¿Quiéren jugar roca guerra?*” (“Do you all want to play rock war?”) my brother asks.

“*Se dice piedra, no roca. Una roca es demasiado enorme para recoger. Y la pregunta debe ser dicha, ‘¿Quiéren jugar una guerra de piedras?’ ¡Si! ¡Vamos a jugar!*” (“I will called a pebble, not rock. A rock is too enormous to pick up. And your question should be asked ‘Do you all want to play war of pebbles?’ Sure! Let’s play!”) our older cousin, Carlos, corrects him.

With a smirk on our faces and a slingshot in our back pockets, we looked at each other and knew what to do. You see, we have been playing rock wars for years with our friends and the neighborhood kids back home, so we learned how to dodge, where to hide, and when to throw. The simple rule was no rocks over the size of a quarter, but even that rule was broken when someone was hit pretty bad and retaliated in anger by throwing a ping pong-sized rock at whoever hit him. The war would usually end when someone was hit hard enough to draw a significant amount of blood. Our cousins drew plenty of blood from us with their words, but we were not going to let it end there.

Call it accidental vengeance. Call it karma. We could not define what happened that day, but it was something that affected my brother’s relationship with Carlos into adulthood. The dynamics of the rock war playing field were much different than we were used to. We lived on two acres of land with plenty of trees, bushes, and high grass to hide

in. This battleground was a flat field of chalk rock and a few sparse cacti— no trees, no bushes, and no grass. We set up a two versus two war – us versus them. We all had slingshots, and although we had never played with them, both sides agreed we could use them. Amongst ourselves, we were aged between seven and nine years. And because of this, we did not think it through on how much more significant power and accuracy a slingshot would have compared to an eight-year old kid's throw. As soon as we began, it ended. My brother found the perfect sized chalk rock, placed it inside the folded leather pad, aimed it at my cousin, Carlos, pulled the thick tubular rubber as far as he could stretch it, and let it go. It was so fast, that I could not even see it flying. All I saw was my cousin fall backwards, knees bent. We both ran as fast as we could. Before we could get to him, his younger brother, Jose, was already kneeling next to him screaming to go get help. I glanced and saw his bleeding forehead as I ran past them and straight to my *tio*'s house. The rock had hit him on the border of his hairline and the top of his forehead. The blood was everywhere. He was conscious and screaming when my uncle and dad put him in my dad's van to take him to the hospital. When they returned, he came in with angled eyebrows, sharpened eyes staring straight, lips hidden inside his mouth, and a gigantic white patch near the top of his head. At first glimpse, it looked like a white rose barrette had been clipped onto his hair, which seemed amusing at the time, but I held my laugh in. Underneath that rose were seven stitches. Obviously angry, he went straight to his room where his mother followed him to offer some consoling. Our aunt and uncle were not upset with us, but our parents were and the slingshots were immediately taken away. In subsequent years, our grandfather would secretly give us a new one every summer. From that point into adulthood, my cousin, Carlos, would never speak to my brother. Carlos

now lives in Texas, has forgiven my brother, but still bears that scar.

APPENDIX G: AT THIS MOMENT

At This Moment

Sitting here in a coffee shop,

Books and papers all laid out,

Writing. Wondering Why?

Brown boy walks in –

3rd, 4th grader?

He glances around and sees me,

He stares for a couple of seconds.

I look up.

He looks away.

Catches up with his family,

They order and sit near me.

He looks at my cluttered table,

I look up.

He looks away.

He scans the room

He sees others but doesn't look at them

They see him but don't look at him.

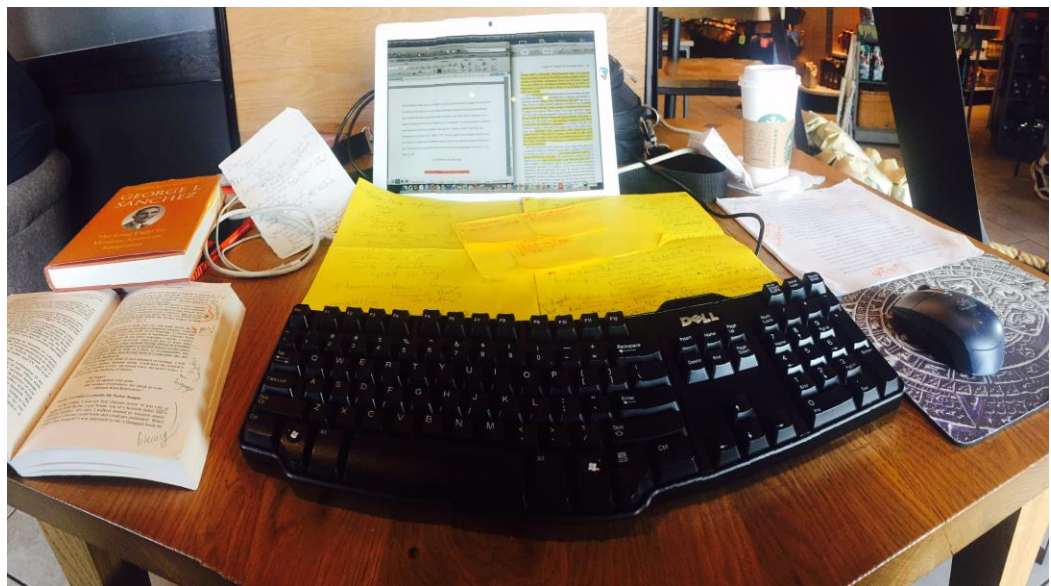
They don't look like him.

He looks at me again.

He watches me.

I wonder what he is thinking?

I look up and smile.
He smiles back and looks away.
We have spoken through our eyes.
I look up to him,
I hope he looks up to me.
I go back to writing.
I remember why.



The moment I wrote about above happened in real time. We talk about the influence of policy on practice, lest we forget the power of practice at the micro-level is even more crucial. It is essential to identify formation.

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