APPLIED CRITICAL RACE THEORY: THE IMPACT OF A COUNTER-STORYTELLING CURRICULUM

by

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Abstract

Generations of Latino students have been negatively impacted by de-culturalizing policies, epistemologies, pedagogies and assessments in the U.S. educational system. This de-culturalization has denied many Latino students access to their immense Community Cultural Wealth, which has led to lower engagement and fractured identities. The purpose of my research was to examine the impact of Critical Race Theory (CRT) in the classroom. By using an applied CRT curriculum in the classroom, I explored the impact of a youth-centered effort designed specifically to address the lowered engagement and fractured identities. This Counter-storytelling curriculum was aligned with a Youth Participatory Action Research methodology based on research actions steps created by the student/co-researchers participating in the study. I create an ethnographic portrait of my year implementing a CSTC, which documents and contextualizes the journey and transformation of the student/co-researchers. My research demonstrates a revolutionary way to engage Latino students. By exploring their personal counter-stories, Latino students were able to 1) tap into their cultural wealth, 2) provide insight of their social context and, 3) repair some of the wounds caused by a racist and oppressive educational system. Replication of this curriculum could create academic opportunities for Latino students that would counter the racist and oppressive educational system.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

I stood over his casket and could not believe how atrophied his once powerful body had become. I was haunted by the sound of his mother’s uncontrollable sobbing and his younger brothers standing by helplessly. Antonio (a pseudonym) was just 15 when he died from a bullet to the head from a rival gang member. He was a former student of mine that was pushed out of school because he would not conform to the de-culturalizing forces of the United States educational system. Antonio is like many Latino youth that are not engaged by the traditional educational curricula and dominant ways of thinking. Many Latino students drop out of school because they are unwilling and unable to navigate the culturally oppressive educational system, many times to destructive ends.

As a member of the Latino community I have experienced firsthand the impact of the de-culturalization of the U.S. educational system. Like Antonio, I struggled with the cultural oppression of our subtractive schools that try to eliminate our culture. I was involved with crime, violence and drugs. I was fortunate to survive my turbulent adolescence and get a second chance at an education and life. I discovered that I did not have to succumb to the low expectations that teachers had for me and I reinvented myself through arts education. While working with incarcerated felons it became very clear that the Latinos in jail were simply the children that slipped through the cracks of the educational system that de-culturalized them and were later caught up in the streets. It was at that moment that I dedicated myself to working with and educating children before the known cycle continued. However, after spending the last 10 years working in school systems that continue to strip away the culture of Latino students with
many casualties along the way, I decided to get my Doctorate and attempt to create an alternative way of engaging Latino students.

**Problem Statement**

A new way of educating Latinos is desperately needed because Latino youth in the United States educational system are in crisis (Covarrubias, 2011; Yosso, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999). Latinos are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population (NCES Data, 2011). According to the U.S. Census Bureau data, the Latino population increased approximately 58% from 1990-2000 (22 million in 1990 to 35 million in 2000) (NCES Data, 2011). By comparison, the total population increased only 13% (NCES Data, 2011). In 2010, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated the Latino population to be approximately 50.5 million or about 16% of the U.S. population, a 43% increase from the previous census. During this same period of time, Latino and white students test scores increased, but the gap remained at 21 points for the 4th grade and 26 points for the 8th (NCES Data, 2011).

The “educational pipeline” shows us that Latinos that do not navigate, or are unable to navigate the educational system, exhibit grave academic disparities. Only 44 out of 100 Latino students entering elementary school can expect to graduate high school, only seven out of these 100 will graduate with a bachelor degree and less than one will receive a Doctorate (Yosso, 2006). The educational pipeline clearly shows that Latinos are among the most poorly served of all racial communities and are pushed out of school with some of the highest rates of racialized groups (Covarrubias, 2011). There are many reasons for Latino underperformance, of which I will address three. In this introduction, I highlight the effect that the current educational paradigm has had on the cultural lives of Latino students. Specifically, I examine 1) the historic de-culturalization of Latino students, 2) the hegemonic Eurocentric epistemologies and lack of
culturally relevant curriculum and, 3) the impact that de-culturalization has had on Latino students’ identities and engagement.

**De-Culturalization of Latino Students**

The de-culturalization of Latinos in the United States has inflicted a mental, emotional and spiritual wound on Latino youth as they try to navigate the educational system. This de-culturalization includes the loss of language, values and ancestral wisdom in the pursuit of whiteness and forced assimilation, which has been reinforced by a series of laws targeting Latinos such as California’s Propositions 227 and 187 and Arizona’s HB 2281 and HB 1070, which I elaborate on in chapter two. These laws show the dominant culture’s continued effort to de-culturalize Latinos through legislation and policies that strip away the language and culture of Latinos; a subtractive process which is manifested in the classroom setting (Valenzuela, 1999). As Delgado Bernal explains, “For too long, the histories, experiences, cultures and languages of students of color have been devalued, misinterpreted or omitted within formal educational settings” (Delgado Bernal, 2002). This Eurocentric epistemology creates an environment that makes Latinos feel inferior and culturally and linguistically deficient by curriculum that places the English language and white values in a superior position to Latino values and the Spanish Language.

Eurocentric epistemologies are the basis of knowledge and justification of beliefs that place White values and the English language in a superior position to all other ways of thinking (Smith, 2008; Anzaldua, 2007; Delgado Bernal, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Freire, 2000). These destructive Eurocentric epistemologies, which portray Latinos as backward, broken and unable to transform their communities, manifest themselves in current educational policy, pedagogies, curriculum and assessments (Tuck, 2009). Students express disappointment at the
lack of culturally relevant curriculum and the school system’s focus on a Eurocentric history that denies the history of students of color (Delgado Bernal, 2002). These Eurocentric epistemologies reinforce the subtractive element of our educational system that strips away the culture of Latino students (Valenzuela, 1999). Valenzuela describes subtractive schooling as a process that divests Latino youth of vital social and cultural resources, which leaves them vulnerable to academic failure (Valenzuela, 1999).

**Impact on identity, engagement and academic performance**

Many Latino students are negatively impacted by the loss of culture experienced in our subtractive educational institutions. This de-culturalization manifests itself in the stripping away of cultural identity, which leads to a lowered self-esteem, a lessened connection with community and a loss of family history. The Eurocentric epistemologies that dominate schooling make many Latinos feel inferior because of the domination of White values and language in the curriculum, pedagogies and assessments. As Valenzuela (1999) clarifies, “Schools are organized formally and informally in ways that fracture students’ cultural and ethnic identities, creating social, linguistic and cultural divisions among students and between the students and staff” (p. 5). These fractures result in a loss of cultural identity, perpetuating a destructive cycle that leads many Latino students to become lost and disengaged in their educational journey (Valenzuela, 1999; Tello, 2008). My former student Antonio and many of my friends and family growing up are an example of this disengagement. The loss of cultural knowledge, connection with ancestors and understanding of their familial counter-stories creates a cultural vacuum and forces many Latino students to search for something to fill the void, many times to destructive ends just like Antonio. The loss of culture experienced by many Latino youth has negatively affected their
self-identities, which has contributed to low student engagement and poor academic performance (Valenzuela, 1999; Tello, 2008).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of my research was to examine the impact of Critical Race Theory in the classroom. By using an applied Critical Race Theory (CRT) curriculum in the classroom, I explored the impact of a youth-centered effort designed specifically to address these fractures. CRT offers a critical examination of our educational system and culture at the intersection of race, policy and power. CRT acknowledges that our structures and systems are founded on white privilege and white superiority, which continue to marginalize people of color (Yosso, 2005; Delgado Bernal, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Delgado, 1990). I have chosen CRT as the epistemological lens to frame my curriculum because it challenges Eurocentric epistemologies that continue to suppress the Latino culture in the classroom. My CRT curriculum places counter-storytelling at the center of the instruction.

Counter-storytelling is one of the main components that critical race theorists use to define the reality of marginalized communities (Yosso, 2005; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Delgado, 1990). Delgado describes storytelling as a type of medicine to heal the wounds caused by racism (Delgado, 1989). Yosso defines majoritarian storytelling as “a method of recounting the experiences and perspectives of those with racial and social privilege.” (Yosso, 2006, p. 9). Yosso explains that a counter-story recounts the experiences of racism and resistance from the perspectives of those on society’s margins (Yosso, 2006). Furthermore, it serves as a counterpoint to majoritarian storytelling in which published texts portray images of education that all students have access to the same educational opportunities (Yosso, 2006). Counter-storytelling is a way to tap into the vast cultural wealth of the Latino
community and these stories will challenge the oppressive nature of the status quo. Solorzano and Yosso explain how counter-stories challenge the majoritarian narrative by stating, “The counter-story is also a tool for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege. Counter-stories can shatter complacency, challenge the dominant discourse on race, and further the struggle for racial reform” (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 32).

The implementation of the Counter-storytelling Curriculum (CSTC) integrated the concept of Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) developed by Yosso. She defines CCW as “an array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression” (Yosso, 2005, p. 77). Using CRT as the framework and counter-storytelling as the curriculum allowed CCW to be elevated into a position of power. CCW taps into the vast cultural resources and focuses on the positive areas of cultural capital that communities of color possess. This is in direct contrast to the deficit model that strips away the cultural resources Valenzuela referenced. Through the implemented curriculum, students researched the counter-story of their families’ immigration to this country, connecting them to their own ethnic background, for, as Valenzuela (1999) argues, “Loyalty to one’s homeland culture provides important social, cultural, and emotional resources that help youth navigate through the educational system” (p. 11).

Dissertation Overview

This research examined the impact of CRT in the classroom. Using applied CRT with counter-storytelling and CCW allowed Latino students access to their vast cultural wealth in order to challenge the oppressive schools they navigate. Over the course of one academic year, I documented how Applied CRT and CCW impacted Latino students in an urban charter school in California’s Bay Area. The central research questions were:
1. What is the impact of a counter-storytelling curriculum on Latino student identity?

2. What is the impact of a counter-storytelling curriculum on Latino student engagement?

In Part One of Chapter Two, I provide a macro-historical perspective of the de-culturalizing legislation and educational policy that serves as the foundation for cultural oppression. I follow by demonstrating the Eurocentric epistemologies that dominate the educational landscape and the resulting lack of culturally relevant pedagogies. I conclude this section with literature that examines the negative impact that de-culturalization has had on Latino student identity, engagement and academic performance.

In Part Two of Chapter Two, I introduce an alternative way of engaging Latino students that honors Latino culture by building culture and historical knowledge into the curriculum. I begin by examining literature that places CRT as the epistemological lens for the curriculum because CRT challenges the oppressive nature of the status quo. I follow this by deconstructing literature on counter-storytelling and demonstrating that my curriculum contains the elements of Culturally Relevant Pedagogies (CRP). These elements are based on Ladson-Billings’ three elements of CRP including 1) high academic expectations, 2) cultural competence, and 3) critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995). I conclude by introducing Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) as an important element of both a critical race curriculum and research methodology.

In Chapter Three, I outline research methodologies. I begin with the creation of the YPAR research questions and describe the sample of participating student/co-researchers. I follow this with an analysis of the site context where the research was conducted. I then discuss
data gathering tools and then provide an overview of the curriculum. I conclude this chapter with the data analysis plan and clarify the validity of the data.

In Chapter Four I create an ethnographic portrait of my year implementing a CSTC with a group of student/co-researchers. I provide and in depth illustration of the phases of the CSTC and the alignment with the methodological stages. I create a portrait that demonstrates the journey and transformation of the student/co-researchers. In it I show the creation of the YPAR actions steps and their integration into the curriculum.

In Chapter Five I provide the data analysis based on the aforementioned YPAR actions steps. I illustrate how the CSTC allowed for several forms of CCW to be accessed through the CSTC. I also demonstrated the impact that the CSTC had on several of the student-co-researchers. I discuss how the CSTC was an example of the intersection of art and research. Lastly, I discuss policy recommendations, potential teacher trainings and curricular suggestions designed to implement this revolutionary educational approach. I conclude with areas of further research and my reflection.

My research demonstrates a revolutionary way to engage Latino students. By exploring their personal counter-stories Latino students were able to 1) tap into their cultural wealth, 2) provide insight of their social context and, 3) repair the wounds caused by a racist and oppressive educational system. Replication of this curriculum could create academic opportunities for Latino students so fewer youth end up like Antonio.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The U.S. educational system has created an environment that strips Latino students of their home culture. As a result, Latino students experience a loss of connection with culture, language, values and history, which has negatively impacted their identity and engagement (Valenzuela, 1999). In part I of this literature review I expand my examination of the Hegemonic Educational Paradigm (HEP) by demonstrating the effect of the historic de-culturalization of Latino students through legislation, educational policy, methods and curriculum. Then I discuss the negative impact that the ensuing Eurocentric epistemologies have had on humanity, curriculum and methods. Lastly, I conclude part I with literature that explains the impact of subtractive schooling on Latino student identity and engagement. In part II, I construct a Counter Educational Approach (CEA) that places Critical Race Theory as an appropriate epistemology for this new paradigm. I follow by demonstrating counter-storytelling as a way of accessing Community Cultural Wealth and implementing Culturally Relevant Pedagogies (CRP) in the classroom. I conclude by examining Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) as an empowering and transformative research methodology.

Part I: The Hegemonic Educational Paradigm

De-culturalization: Definition and Methods

De-culturalization is the subtractive process that strips away the culture of Latino students in mainstream U.S. schools. Joel Spring defines de-culturalization as “the educational process of destroying a people’s culture (cultural genocide) and replacing it with a new culture” (Spring, 2010, p. 8). De-culturalization is based on the belief that white culture is superior to the
cultures of people of color (Spring 2010). Spring describes six methods used to de-culturalize: 1) segregation, 2) denial of home language, 3) curriculum content that focuses on dominant culture, 4) textbooks that focus on culture of dominant group, 5) denial of culture and religious expression and, 6) teachers from the dominant group (Spring, 2010). In this dissertation, I examine two different de-culturalization methods that have been implemented at the site I am examining: 1) the forced change of language from Spanish to English and, 2) curriculum content that focuses on the culture of the dominant group.

The elimination of the Spanish language in education stands out as the most important educational issue for Latinos (Spring, 2010). The Spanish language was targeted because like all languages it is one of the main components of culture. Spring (2010) explains:

> An important element in the Americanization of Mexican school children, as it was for Indians, was eliminating the speaking of their native language. Educators argued that learning English was essential to assimilation and the creation of a unified nation. In addition, language was considered related to values and culture (p. 97).

As I show in the next section legislators and educators tried to eradicate the use of Spanish as a way to oppress Latinos. Delgado Bernal explains this legislative process as “a social philosophy and a political tool used by local and state officials to justify school segregation and maintain a colonized relationship between Mexicans and the dominant society” (Delgado Bernal, 1999).

The second method used to deny the culture of Latinos in the United States was the use of curriculum content that focused on the culture of the dominant group. By using curriculum that focuses on the culture of the dominant group, such as text books and novels that reflect the white culture based on white characters, schools tried to eliminate the culture of Latinos and replace it with the dominant culture of the United States. Schools intentionally used a
Eurocentric curriculum in an attempt to subtract the culture of Latinos. As San Miguel explains schools became “subtractive institutions, meaning that they sought to de-ethnicize the Mexican-origin population and to remove all vestiges of ethnicity from their operations and curriculum” (San Miguel Jr., 1999, p. 31). Schools used curriculum as an attempt at cultural genocide by trying to remove the culture of Latinos from the curriculum (San Miguel Jr., 1999).

**Historic Legislation and Policy.** In his book *De-culturalization and the Struggle for Equality*, Joel Spring chronicles the history of U.S. oppression through legislation and educational policy of Latinos and other racialized groups. These de-culturalizing legislative decisions and educational policies were also administered on Native Americans, which resulted in boarding schools that practiced isolation, forced English usage and the elimination of religious expression (Spring, 2010). Enslaved Africans were also the victims of de-culturalization policies, which led to cultural assimilation and segregation (Spring, 2010). In this section I overview the different legislation and policies that were used to achieve cultural genocide within the Latino community.

Prior to 1848, the states now known as California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and parts of Nevada, Utah and Colorado were all part of Mexico (Menchaca, 1999). Mexico lost these territories after losing the Mexican-American War, which began as a result of escalating friction between Mexico and U.S. settlers in the Texas territory. The conflict was fueled by Manifest Destiny and animosity towards Mexicans. Many whites felt the U.S. was destined to rule the continent because of its Protestant culture and republican government (Spring, 2010). The war was unjust with a much stronger nation declaring war against a weaker one. Racial, religious and cultural superiority provided much of the motivation for the U.S to take over Mexico (Spring, 2010). The war ended in 1848 with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe
Hidalgo but left a huge problem with all of the Mexicans living in the newly annexed American territories (Spring, 2010; Menchaca, 1999; San Miguel Jr., 1999).

Prior to the war, schools in Mexico were in the process of implementing an educational system that would attempt to educate the masses. This system was in direct contrast to the Spaniards that had a system designed for the elite citizens. As Menchaca explains, the Mexican government’s view on education “considered public education a practical way to level the economic disparities caused by Spain’s racially biased system” (p. 17). San Miguel Jr. describes schools during the time before the Mexican-American war and before the arrival of whites as community schools implemented by Mexicans that allowed for the promotion of culture within the educational setting (San Miguel Jr., 1999).

However, after the war, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo set the foundation for future legislation and policy designed to eradicate the culture of Latinos. The Treaty gave citizenship to Mexicans in U.S. territory, but the treaty was broken and Mexicans never received that promised citizenship (Spring, 2010). This created limitations on voter rights (Spring, 2010). Without the protection of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexicans had no way of using the legal system to protect themselves. This created a situation where Latinos in the educational system were even more vulnerable to de-culturalization policies. Menchaca also cites the Treaty of Guadalupe as a major moment in U.S. history when the racialization of Latinos occurred (Menchaca, 1999). Menchaca (1999) gives her definition of racialization as, “the use of legal process to confer legal privilege upon whites and discriminate against people of color” (p. 3). Racialization was a crucial element during this de-culturalization because it gave whites full political rights while Mexicans could be barred from voting. The broken Treaty of Guadalupe
Hidalgo allowed for legal racialization, which allowed federal, state and local governments to replicate the racialization and de-culturalization of Mexicans in the educational system.

The eradication of the Spanish language as a form of de-culturalization also has a long history of oppressive legislation. In 1855, the California Bureau of Instruction mandated that all instruction be done in English (Spring, 2010; San Miguel Jr., 1999). In 1870, Texas made it a law that English be the language of instruction in all public schools (Spring, 2010; San Miguel Jr., 1999). In 1918, Texas made even more rigid legislation by making it a criminal offense to use any language in school but English (Spring, 2010; San Miguel Jr., 1999). This process of attempted language elimination has been reintroduced in California with more recent legislation, such as Proposition 227 (1998), which requires all public education to be conducted in English. Prior to this California instituted Prop 187 (1994) made illegal aliens ineligible for public benefits including education, but was never implemented.

Legislation and educational policy also affects curriculum and content. In Arizona, HB 2281 (2010) was created to continue the de-culturalization of Latino students by eradicating the Mexican American studies program in Tucson. The Mexican-American studies department had classes designed for Latinos and advocated for ethnic solidarity, which accessed the culture and language of Latino students and was achieving improved academic results within the Latino student community. However, with HB2281, the elimination of the Mexican-American studies means that curriculum will once again feature the culture of the dominant group, which continues the de-culturalization of Latinos through exclusive curriculum and content. In 2010 Arizona governor also signed into law HB 1070 which authorized police to demand papers proving citizenship status, which compounded the discrimination against Latinos through legislation.
Eurocentric Epistemologies

The implementation of de-culturalization policies and methods has led to an academic environment that is dominated by Eurocentric epistemologies. Once the culture, language and history were stripped away through legislation and curriculum, the cultural and epistemological vacuum was filled with Eurocentric epistemologies. Eurocentric epistemologies are the basis of knowledge and justification of beliefs that place white values and culture and the English language in a superior position to all other ways of thinking, teaching and speaking (Smith, 2008; Delgado Bernal, 2002; Freire, 2000; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The domination of a Eurocentric lens portrays Latinos as backwards, broken and unable to transform their own communities (Tuck, 2009). This lens also divests Latinos of their culture and creates an academic environment that has little room for culture and language to be accessed as an academic and social resource (Valenzuela, 1999). In this section, I examine the impact of Eurocentric epistemologies on the humanity of the oppressed. I follow this by demonstrating how the curriculum and teaching methods in U.S. schools have become inundated with Eurocentric epistemologies. I conclude with how this Eurocentric domination makes it difficult for Culturally Relevant Pedagogies (CRP) to exist in our current educational system.

Impact on Humanity. The significance of a Eurocentric epistemological foundation lies with the impact that it has on our humanity when the Latino epistemological framework is oppressed. Latinos are a people with a rich and varied history with many different epistemological frameworks and a foundation of historical and cultural knowledge; however this knowledge has been damaged and oppressed throughout U.S history (San Miguel Jr., 1999: Menchaca, 1999). Through the de-culturalization and Americanization process Latinos have been separated from their history and culture, which has taken away their true identities. Anzaldua (2007) argues:
The gringo locked into the fiction of white superiority, seized complete political power, stripping Indians and Mexicans of their land while their feet were still rooted in it. *Con el destierro y el exilio fuimos desuñados, destroncados, destripados.* We were jerked out by the roots, truncated, disemboweled, dispossessed, and separated from our identity and history (pp. 29-30).

Dehumanization occurs when a group of people lose their culture, language and values; they begin to be seen as the “other”, “less than” and “savages” when compared to the dominant group (Anzaldua, 2007; Freire, 2000; Smith, 2008). Tello (2008) explains the impact when Latinos had their knowledge, history and culture wiped out,

If you destroy the semblance of a people’s authentic self, you destroy their spirit. Thus, we truly begin to understand the tremendous trauma that was perpetuated and the disequilibrium that was manifested-so profound in nature that we still feel it today (pp. 48-49).

Without an intact epistemological framework many Latinos are unable to access their history and knowledge, which contributes to their dehumanization.

In the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire discusses this epistemological oppression and the dehumanizing effect that it has on the oppressed. Freire explains this dehumanization as, “The oppressed, who have been shaped by the death-affirming climate of oppression, must find through their struggle the way to life affirming humanization. The oppressed have been destroyed precisely because their situation has reduced them to things” (Freire, 2000, p. 68).

Furthermore, Tello (2008) explains how the process of epistemological dominance and oppression occurs, which includes the subsequent impact on their humanity:
Oppression has an order, and the cycle begins with the circulation of lies, misinformation, or half-truths about a people. This misinformation then serves as the justification for their mistreatment. The cycle continues, whereby this misinformation is woven into the fabric of society. The final stage is when the target group believes the lies are attributed to a deficit in their own culture, and they begin internalizing the oppression in actions and behavior against themselves, thus breaking their own spirit (p. 44).

Eurocentric epistemological dominance creates an environment where Latinos are unable to access their own knowledge source and change their current oppressive plight. These Eurocentric epistemologies create a monopoly on knowledge and deny Latinos as holders and creators of knowledge. Castillo (1995) elaborates:

Who, in this world of the glorification of material wealth, Whiteness and phallic worship would consider us holders of knowledge that could transform this world into a place where the quality of life for all living things on this planet is the utmost priority? (p. 149)

Friere (2000) argues it is the responsibility of the oppressed to restore their humanity and liberate themselves,

…individuals or as peoples, by fighting for the restoration of their humanity they will be attempting the restoration of true generosity. Who are better prepared than the oppressed to understand the terrible significance of an oppressive society? Who suffer the effects of oppression more than the oppressed? Who can better understand the necessity of liberation? They will not gain this liberation by chance but through the praxis of their quest for it, through their recognition of the necessity to fight for it (p. 45).

This transformation can more easily occur with access to an epistemological source that is created by and for Latinos.
**Curriculum and Teaching Methods.** Eurocentric epistemological dominance through the curriculum and the subsequent suppression of Latinos knowledge began after the Mexican-American war. San Miguel provides historical context for the beginnings of this Eurocentric epistemological domination after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. He explains that schools became subtractive institutions that were intentionally trying to eliminate the Mexican culture from public schools and replacing it with an idealized Americanized version. By the 1850’s most of the governing officials were able to eliminate courses that explored Mexican history in California and Texas. San Miguel (1999) explains the evolution of the subtractive curriculum by stating,

The curriculum became Anglocentric by the 1870’s. History books, which began to appear after the Mexican-American war in 1848, contained only disparaging comments about the Mexican presence in the southwest. These books consistently denounced the character of the Mexican people, and stressed the nobility of the Anglos (p. 44).

This epistemological dominance in our curriculum and the absence of other epistemological frameworks is also explained by Smith (2008) here, “Through the curriculum and its underlying theory of knowledge, early schools redefined the world and where indigenous peoples were positioned within the world” (p. 33).

Eurocentric epistemologies continue in mainstream contemporary U.S. education through the curriculum, which adds to the invalidation of Latino students as holders of knowledge. The state of California has educational codes that mandate that instructional materials be multicultural in nature, but an evaluation of these materials shows the content to be racist and non-inclusive (Perez Huber et al., 2006). Furthermore, the California State Teaching Standards (CSTS) continue to place whites in a superior societal position. Perez Huber (2006) explains:
In the California U.S. History Standards, whites are the central focus while people of color are insignificant backdrops. People of color are never represented as complex cultural groups who have contributed in great ways to the U.S. Instead, they are sidebars to a larger white narrative (p. 195).

Even though Latinos are a huge population in the Southwest especially in California where they comprise over 51% (Census, 2010) there are no standards that reference Latinos. Only Mexicans are referenced in the CSTS and only seven times as settlers and border disputes (Perez Huber et al., 2006). This is yet another example of the marginalization Latinos face due to the Eurocentric viewpoint and is significant because the CSTS guides teachers in state-required curriculum content.

The domination of Eurocentric epistemologies also impacts the methods that teachers use to transmit knowledge. Since the Eurocentric view is based on a belief that white values, language and culture are superior to all others, the dominant group has a vested interest in retaining that hegemony (Sleeter, 2012). Freire (2000) explains the existing relationship between teacher and student as a banking concept: wherein teachers deposit knowledge into students, who are viewed as empty containers (p. 72). Freire elaborates on this process as,

In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry. The teacher presents himself as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute, he justifies his own existence (p. 72).
This banking methodology of transmitting knowledge continues the cycle of Eurocentric epistemological domination because the content is Eurocentric and creates an educational environment that makes it difficult to challenge this knowledge. In California approximately 70% of the K-12 teachers are white (Flores, 2011). This combination of oppressive methods and Eurocentric curriculum leads to some students becoming passive on their educational journey.

**Impact on Culturally Relevant Pedagogies.** The dominance of Eurocentric epistemologies makes it difficult for Culturally Relevant Pedagogies to exist in our current system because CRP is a threat to white domination. Sleeter (2012) elaborates on this threat by stating there is an “elite and white fear of losing national and global hegemony” (p. 562). The current educational system has been standardized to align with neoliberalism (Sleeter, 2012). This neoliberalism is based on concepts of individualism and competition, which support a Eurocentric framework. Sleeter explains that this fear is based on the perception that CRP is a threat to the existing social order, which places Eurocentric epistemologies in a superior position (Sleeter, 2012). This fear and perceived threat makes it difficult for CRP to flourish and is further supported by a standardized Eurocentric curriculum. Even if teachers choose CRP they are often punished or dismissed if they do implement these pedagogies, which I discuss in further detail in this section.

Ladson-Billings (1995) outlined the three main components of CRP: 1) high academic achievement, 2) cultural competence and, 3) critical consciousness (p.160). However, these elements cannot be regularly and consistently achieved in the classroom because each element comes into direct conflict with an aspect of the Eurocentric framework already in place. In this section I will examine the three elements of CRP and the intersection with the previously mentioned aspects of Eurocentric epistemologies.
I begin with high academic achievement and the intersection with Eurocentric epistemological dominance in the curriculum. Ladson-Billings (1995) explains that in order to achieve culturally relevant teaching, the needs of student’s academic needs must be met (p.160). She elaborates on the difficulty of achieving this component by stating, “The trick of culturally relevant teaching is to get the students to ‘choose’ high academic excellence.” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 160). However, because of the dominance of a Eurocentric framework students are less likely to choose this academic excellence on a large scale because students also need the opportunity to draw on issues and ideas that the students think are important (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Teachers are confined by the standardized Eurocentric curriculum and are punished or dismissed when they choose CRP. Knaus (2011) explains:

The narrow focus on standardized adherence to white values creates a double bind for urban educators attempting to empower students of color. Even if educators respond in culturally relevant ways to their students, their effectiveness is still measured by student test scores that measure their facility at expressing White values and White-normed language (p. 58).

This focus on white values that is reinforced by standardized testing contributes to an environment that does not allow for CRP to take hold in the classroom.

Secondly, Eurocentric dominance does not allow adequate space for cultural competence to exist in our current educational system. Both Eurocentric curricular dominance and current teaching methods negate this component of CRP. The current curriculum taught by the majority of teachers is based on Eurocentric epistemologies, which makes it difficult for the Latino culture to thrive classrooms (Perez Huber et al., 2006). Furthermore, the banking method described by Freire (2000) makes it difficult for Latino culture to flourish because the
Eurocentric values, language and culture dominate the content being poured into many students. It is the combination of curriculum and methods that impedes the element of cultural competence to thrive therefore CRP is hindered form taking hold in our classrooms.

The final component of CRP, critical consciousness, is not widespread in mainstream U.S. education because CRP is viewed as a threat to the established Eurocentric framework. The intention of critical consciousness is to challenge the status quo and the oppression of people of color as Ladson-Billings (1995) explains, “students must develop a broader sociopolitical consciousness that allows them to critique the cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities” (p. 162). Critical consciousness is limited in its implementation because the dominance of Eurocentric epistemologies are supported by whites who only want to continue their oppression of Latinos due to their fear of CRP and its threat to the established social order which places whites in the superior position (Sleeter, 2012). This fear of CRP is based on the previously mentioned neoliberalism described by Sleeter which she describes as, “negating the central importance of teacher professional learning, as well as context, culture, and racism, reverse the empowered learning that culturally responsive pedagogy has the potential to support.” (p. 563).

**Subtractive Schooling: The Negative Impact on Student Identity and Engagement**

The de-culturalization of Latino students continues today with what Valenzuela (1999) calls “subtractive schooling.” According to Valenzuela (1999) subtractive schooling is the process that divests vital social and cultural resources of Latino youth, which leaves them vulnerable to academic failure (p. 3). Valenzuela (1999) discusses subtractive schooling in the United States, the educational system’s intentionality to eradicate the culture of Latino students, and the impact that this has on student academic performance. Valenzuela locates “the
problem’ of achievement squarely in school-based relationships and organizational structures and policies designed to erase students’ culture” (pp. 9-10). Her analysis continues that this subtractive schooling, by the elimination of student culture, takes away valuable cultural resources for Latino students (Valenzuela, 1999). Additionally, she explains the importance of the Latino culture as an academic resource by stating, “loyalty to one’s homeland culture provides important social, cultural and emotional resources that help youth navigate through the educational system” (p. 11). In this section, I demonstrate the impact that subtractive schooling has had on student identity and conclude by examining how identity is connected to academic engagement.

This subtraction of Latino culture in schools has a direct impact on the identity of Latino students, which is a part of the crisis. Valenzuela explains the connection between the subtractive schooling that takes away cultural resources from Latino youth and the impact that this has on student identity. Valenzuela suggests “that schools are organized formally and informally in ways that fracture students’ cultural and ethnic identities, creating social, linguistic, and cultural divisions among students and between the students and staff.” (p. 5). This fracturing of cultural and ethnic identity has created an atmosphere that makes it difficult for students to engage in their educational process. Pizarro (2005) clarifies:

Many students therefore began to develop an identity that valued their ethnic background and even pushed it to the forefront of how they saw themselves, while simultaneously devaluing the need for that identity to be linked to school success, for it is often made clear to them that the two cannot be related (p. 62).

For many Latino students identity and academic engagement do not exist because the forging of an identity that values their homeland culture does not allow for them to coexist.
Furthermore, this negative impact on identity also adds to a toxic environment that impedes some Latino students to engage in even the most basic of educational needs. Valenzuela (1999) explains the connection between subtractive schooling and the inability to foster caring relationships, when she states, “Teachers fail to forge meaningful connections with their students; students are often hostile toward one another, as well; and administrators routinely disregard even the most basic needs of both students and staff” (p. 5). The relationships between student and teacher are negatively impacted by the institutional devaluation of the Latino culture. Valenzuela further argues “The systematic undervaluing of people and things Mexican erodes relations among students, as well as between teachers and students” (p 20). This negative and toxic environment ultimately leads to a negative impact on student identity. Pizarro (2005) explains:

For many, Chicana/o students, not only is identity a pivotal issue in their school experience, but it is tied to their motivations as well. Chicana/o students are quite often confronted with their subordinate role in school as a function of their race and class. Many students recounted experiences when they were engaged in a racial confrontation with a teacher or administrator or sometimes with another student. These experiences were crucial in the formation of their social identity because it was made clear to them that they were ‘different’ (p. 62).

In order for all many Latino students to become engaged in the academic process the educational environment needs to address the cultural needs of the students.

The de-culturalization of Latinos and the subsequent domination of Eurocentric epistemologies have made it difficult for many Latinos to be engaged in the academic process. Yet some Latinos have found ways of resisting the subtractive nature of education by creating a
subculture and identity that does not fit into the current mold of academic success. Students create identities that try to preserve their cultural identity, but these identities involve Latino youth rejecting schooling and academic achievement because it is associated with being white. Valenzuela (1999) discusses *cholos*, which are Latino gangsters that rebel against the educational process because it is viewed as white washing. She describes this youth subculture as adapting strategically to the oppressive nature of schooling in ways that preserves all that remains of their cultural identity (Valenzuela, 1999). This defiance and non-compliance is a way to preserve the vitally essential component of culture, but also it means sacrificing academic engagement and achievement in the process. Pizarro (2005) explains:

> The racial confrontations they experienced were the central distractions they faced, and the lack of strong support not only from their families but also blatantly from their teachers, led to dramatic disinterest in school and their subsequent failure, all of which became incorporated into their identities (p. 62).

The intersection of academic engagement and the development cultural identity is one of the missing components in U.S. schools and is a part of the problem of Latino students doing poorly in school.

Conchas reiterates Valenzuela, in that negative impact on identity leads to low engagement. Conchas (2001) describes Mexican Americans as involuntary minorities because Mexicans were incorporated through conquest as he explains in his analysis, “In general, involuntary minorities are believed to develop oppositional subcultures and identities resistant to the assimilation process prevalent in schooling” (p. 477). In this analysis, identity created by subjugation and the ensuing subculture makes it difficult for Latino students to engage in Eurocentric epistemological education. The low level of engagement is partly due to Mexican
Americans who do not wish to assimilate in the educational process because they know they have very little chance of benefiting from an education. Conchas explains that “unique historical and social experiences relate to high levels of pessimism toward the opportunity structure and towards schooling in particular” (p. 477).

**Conclusion Part I**

In Part I of my literature review I have outlined the dysfunctional cycle of the Hegemonic Educational Paradigm HEP (Figure 1). In figure 1 I create a visual representation that demonstrates the de-culturalization process going from macro policy and legislation to micro implementation and the impact it has on Latino student identity and engagement. I began by demonstrating the crushing oppressive forces that macro-historical legislation and educational policy have had on Latinos over the course of U.S. history. Next, I examined the Eurocentric epistemological lens that devalues all things Latino and also contributes to the de-culturalization of Latinos in school. Lastly, I showed the effect that these macro level policies, systems, epistemologies, cultural values, assessments, pedagogies and curriculum have had on Latino student identity and engagement in the classroom. The status quo is creating a destructive cycle and as a result many Latinos underperform, drop out school and do not transform their own communities. This macro-to-micro cycle of de-culturalization can be reversed with a shift in the epistemological lens to CRT, which acknowledges and directly addresses the oppression of Latinos. In part II of my literature review, I offer up a Counter Educational Approach that implements applied CRT in the classroom and taps into the vast cultural wealth of the Latino community.
Figure 1. Hegemonic Educational Paradigm

- De-Culturalization: Historically Racist Legislation and Policy.
- Eurocentric Epistemological Domination: Devalues Latino Culture
- Lack of Culturally Relevant Pedagogies
- Subtractive Schooling: Loss of Cultural Resources
- Disengaged Student Citizens; Negatively impacted Cultural Identities
Part II: A Counter Educational Approach

Critical Race Theory

I previously outlined how Latino students are culturally oppressed by the U.S educational system (Spring, 2010; Valenzuela, 1999; San Miguel Jr., 1999). Although the U.S. educational system attempts to de-culturalize Latino students, the Latino community has many incidents of resistance towards keeping their culture and language intact. This study is another attempt at reclaiming Latino culture and heritage within the educational system. In order to achieve this, the epistemological lens needs to be shifted. Reframing the epistemological lens gives Latino students an opportunity to challenge the racist structures and systems so prevalent in their daily educational lives. It is important that the epistemological lens be CRT because it is an attempt to understand oppression of a dominant culture within society in order to create transformation of the individual and the society (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Yosso, 2005; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Delgado Bernal, 2002; Delgado, 1990). Applied CRT using counter-storytelling (CST) allows Latino students even more access to their vast cultural wealth to then challenge the repressive schools they navigate. In this section, I outline a counter educational approach to the hegemonic educational paradigm. I begin by defining CRT and examining the five elements that make up CRT. I then discuss counter-storytelling and demonstrate how counter-storytelling is culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP). I follow by examining CRT, Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) and the intersection with subtractive schooling. Lastly, I demonstrate how Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) is an essential research methodology of CRT for my study.
The Five Elements of Critical Race Theory. Critical Race Theory is defined as a way to understand the role of race and racism in order to create transformation for individuals and society (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). CRT provides an analytical and theoretical framework that challenges the previously framed hegemonic de-culturalizing purpose of education and provides a way to counter this oppression (Lynn et al., 2002; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Matsuda (1991) defined CRT as,

…the work of progressive legal scholars who are attempting to develop a jurisprudence that accounts for the role of racism in American Law and that work toward the elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of eliminating all forms of subordination (p. 1331).

Solórzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) explain the role of CRT in education as challenging “the dominant discourse on race and racism as they relate to education by examining how educational theory and practice are used to subordinate and marginalize Chicana and Chicano students” (p. 312). Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) is a subset of CRT and very similar to CRT but addresses issues specific to the Latino community such as: language, immigration, ethnicity, culture, identity, and sexuality (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Critical race theory in education has five components that encompass research methodologies and pedagogies (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). These elements are outlined by Solórzano and Yosso (2002) as: 1) The intercentricity of race and racism with other forms of subordination, 2) The challenge to dominant ideology, 3) The commitment to social justice, 4) The centrality of experiential knowledge and, 5) The transdisciplinary perspective. Each of these elements is crucial for a CRT framework and each
intersects with some of the previously mentioned oppressive elements of the current educational paradigm.

**The Intercentricity of Race and Racism with other forms of Subjugation.** According to Solórzano (2001) CRT in education begins with the premise that race and racism are central factors in explaining the experience of people of color. However, even though race and racism are central factors, this component of CRT also demonstrates that race and racism intersect with other forms of oppression such as gender, class, immigration status, accent and sexuality (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). It is at the intersection of these different forms of oppression that we can begin to find answers to transform our hegemonic educational system. Solórzano and Yosso explain, “Here in the intersections of racial oppression, we can use critical race methodology to search for some answers to the theoretical, conceptual, methodological and pedagogical questions related to the experiences of people of color” (pp. 25-26).

**The Challenge to the Dominant Ideology.** The dominant ideology is based on the false assumptions that our educational system is objective, meritocratic and color-blind (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lynn et al., 2002; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). CRT challenges the hegemonic view that mainstream education is objective, meritocratic and race neutral (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Yosso explains, “I define CRT in education as a theoretical and analytical framework that challenges the ways race and racism impact educational structures, practices and discourse” (p. 74). The dominant ideology also perpetuates the oppression of people of color and supports the privilege and power of the dominant groups (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lynn et al., 2002; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). CRT is the
appropriate epistemological framework to counter the hegemonic educational paradigm because CRT challenges white privilege and research methods designed to silence the epistemologies of Latinos (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lynn et al., 2002; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

**The Commitment to Social Justice.** Solórzano and Yosso (2001) argue that CRT envisions social justice education as the curricular and pedagogical work that leads toward: “(1) the elimination of racism, sexism, and poverty; and (2) the empowerment of underrepresented minority groups” (p. 473). Solórzano and Yosso (2001) explain how CRT works towards social justice,

> CRT has the benefit of hind sight in addressing the critiques of other theories and is explicit in its purpose to focus on race and racism, to challenge the dominant ideology, to work toward social justice, to validate the experiences of People of Color, and to utilize transdisciplinary approaches (p. 475).

If Latinos and student researchers are to work towards social justice for people of color then a CRT epistemology will work towards those ends with a commitment for social justice (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Solórzano and Yosso, 2001).

**The Centrality of Experiential Knowledge.** In order to understand, analyze and teach about oppression there needs to be an understanding of oppression from the perspective of the oppressed (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lynn et al., 2002; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). CRT provides a theoretical and analytical framework that explains the importance of experiential knowledge (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Solórzano and Yosso (2002) explain:
…the experiential knowledge of people of color is legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing and teaching about racial subordination. In fact critical race theorists view this knowledge as a strength and draw explicitly on the lived experiences of people of color by including such methodologies as storytelling, family histories, biographies, scenarios, parables, *cuentos, testimonios*, chronicles, and narratives (p. 26).

Counter-stories are one way that Latino students are able to tell their stories and connect with their cultural heritage.

*The Transdisciplinary Perspective.* The transdisciplinary perspective gives us a broader contextual foundation in order to better understand the role of race and racism in the lives of people of color (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Solórzano and Yosso (2002) explain this transdisciplinary perspective as challenging “ahistoricism and the unidisciplinary focus of most analyses and insists on analyzing race and racism by placing them in both historical and contemporary contexts” (pp. 26-27). A CRT methodology also relies on other fields of knowledge in order to broaden its contextual foundation as Solórzano and Yosso (2002) explain,

Critical race methodology in education uses the transdisciplinary knowledge and methodological base of ethnic studies, women’s studies, sociology, history, law and other fields to guide research that better understands the effects of racism, sexism, and classism on people of color (p. 27).

CRT in education is a way that taps into the many different fields of knowledge thereby providing a broader foundation for the access of context.
**Latino Resistance and Counter-storytelling**

Even though the U.S. educational system is designed to de-culturalize Latino students, Latinos have a rich history of resistance. One of the most prominent and notable is the 1968 school walkouts in Los Angeles (Delgado Bernal, 1998). Over 10,000 students walked out of school to protest the inferior and inequitable educational opportunities for Latino students (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Delgado Bernal, 1998). They operated on a platform that called for bilingual education, more emphasis on Chicano history, removal of racist teachers and administrators, improvement and replacement of inferior school facilities and the addition of Mexican history and culture into the curriculum (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Delgado Bernal, 1998).

Another mass protest occurred in 1993 when a group of students on the University of California, Los Angeles campus occupied the faculty center to protest the decision to not support the expansion of the Chicano Studies Program to departmental status (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Delgado Bernal, 1998). Over 100 students were arrested and taken to jail, which ended the faculty center occupation, but was followed with a hunger strike, demonstrations and marches (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Delgado Bernal, 1998). These instances are part of a long history of student activism that demonstrates Latinos resisting the attempt of an oppressive educational system stripping away their culture. Again illustrating the importance of the Latino culture and history to Latinos.

Solorzano and Delgado Bernal discuss both of these protests through the lens of transformational resistance through CRT and LatCrit (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). In their work they discuss resistance that demonstrates an understanding of oppressive conditions and a desire for social justice (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). They also integrate counter-
storytelling to illustrate this transformative resistance (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). This integration of transformative resistance within the Latino community and counter-storytelling demonstrates the importance of counter-storytelling.

Counter-storytelling is the method of telling the stories of people on the margin of society, which are very often not told (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). These counter-stories directly challenge the majoritarian stories in our society and have the power to transform our society (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Majoritarian stories are part of the master narrative that perpetuates the privilege of whites, men, U.S. citizens, English speakers, the middle and upper class and heterosexuals (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Solórzano and Yosso (2002) explain how counter-stories challenge the majoritarian narrative by stating,

We define the counter-story as a method of telling stories of those people whose experiences are not often told. The counter-story is also a tool for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege. Counter-stories can shatter complacency, challenge the dominant discourse on race, and further the struggle for racial reform (p. 32).

Counter-storytelling falls directly under the element of centrality of experiential knowledge (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001), but also connects with the other four elements of CRT.

This study is based on the concept of counter-storytelling and follows in the history of resistance within the Latino community. The Latino community has a long history of cultural
oppression, however, it also has a long history of resistance. This study will add to the work of Delgado, Delgado Bernal, Ladson-Billings, Solorzano and Yosso as well as aligning with the students in this long line of historical resistance.

**Community Cultural Wealth**

By shifting the lens to CRT and accessing the experiential knowledge of Latinos educators will be able to access the cultural assets of the Latino community. As Yosso (2005) explains,

CRT shifts the research lens away from the deficit view of Communities of Color as places of cultural poverty disadvantages, and instead focuses on and learns from the array of cultural knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed by socially marginalized groups that often go unrecognized and unacknowledged (p. 69).

Counter-storytelling provides Latinos the platform to tap into their vast cultural knowledge and the ensuing *Community Cultural Wealth (CCW)* (Yosso, 2005). Yosso’s (2005) work outlines six forms of cultural capital that often go unrecognized unless CRT is used as an epistemological lens: 1) Aspirational Capital, 2) Linguistic Capital, 3) Familial Capital, 4) Social Capital, 5) Navigational Capital and, 6) Resistant Capital.

In her work on cultural capital, Yosso (2005) challenges the notion that communities of color do not have cultural wealth. Yosso explains her theory on privileged cultural perspectives as, “Cultural capital is not just inherited or possessed by the middle class, but rather it refers to an accumulation of specific forms of knowledge, skills and abilities that are valued by privileged groups in society” (p. 76). The norm is that the white middle to upper class is the subset that has the most cultural capital, but Yosso (2005) demonstrates that there are other forms of cultural
capital in communities of color as well. Yosso (2005) defines these 6 forms of CCW within communities of color:

1) Aspirational capital refers to the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real or perceived barriers. 2) Linguistic capital includes the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language. 3) Familial capital refers to those cultural knowledges nurtured among familia (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition. 4) Social capital can be understood as networks of people and community resources. 5) Navigational capital refers to skills of maneuvering through social institutions. 6) Resistant capital refers to those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality (pp. 77-81).

These six forms of CCW contradict the cultural deficit view and provide a framework that demonstrates the vast cultural wealth within communities of color. The different forms of CCW have the power to transform and empower as Yosso explains, “The main goals of identifying and documenting cultural wealth are to transform education and empower People of color to utilize assets already abundant in their communities” (p. 82).

Previously, I examined the work of Valenzuela and San Miguel and the negative impact of subtractive schooling. I showed how Valenzuela and San Miguel’s research demonstrated that our educational system as one that views the Latino culture through a deficit perspective and therefore strips away the culture of Latinos (Valenzuela, 1999; San Miguel Jr., 1999). Yosso’s (2005) work on Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) provides a way to challenge this deficit view on schooling. Yosso explains, “CRT shifts the research lens away from a deficit view of Communities of Color as places full of cultural poverty or disadvantages, and instead focuses on
and learns from these communities’ cultural assets and wealth” (p. 82). Yosso challenges the hegemonic interpretations of cultural capital by demonstrating that the traditional cultural deficit perspective can be shifted by placing CRT as the approach towards education (2005). This CRT approach provides educators with an educational framework that can negate the subtractive nature of our current system.

**Counter-storytelling and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**

This research placed counter-storytelling at the center of an academic curriculum. In this curriculum, students researched their family history and wrote narratives based on their familial research. These narratives were aligned with the CSTS, both the process of researching and writing their counter-stories met the criteria of CRP. In her work, Ladson-Billings (1995) describes the three main criteria for CRP: 1) Students must experience academic success, 2) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence and, 3) students develop a critical consciousness that they use to challenge the status quo (pp. 160-162). In this section, I will demonstrate how counter-storytelling intersected with the components of CRP.

The first element of CRP is that students must experience academic success. Ladson-Billings (1995) describes the importance of this first element by stating, “all students need literacy, numeracy, technological, social and political skills in order to be active participants in a democracy” (p. 160). This is something that the status quo would agree upon, the difference being that academic success does not have to come at the cost of cultural relevancy. Ladson-Billings describes the challenge of finding this balance as, “Culturally relevant teaching requires that teachers attend to students’ academic needs, not merely make them ‘feel good.’ The trick of culturally relevant teaching is to get the students to ‘choose’ academic excellence” (p. 160). A curriculum based on counter-storytelling provides an option in the classroom that restores their
knowledge and history and therefore, will be chosen by students because it relies on cultural values already established within the Latino community.

The second element of CRP is cultural competence, which is achieved by meeting academic excellence while maintaining cultural integrity. Ladson-Billings (1995) explains how culture can be integrated to ensure cultural competence by stating, “Culturally relevant teachers utilize students culture as a vehicle for learning” (p. 161). Ladson-Billings explains how Patricia Hilliard achieved cultural competence by using the student’s love of rap music to teach academics when she states, “the teacher reproduced them on an overhead so they could discuss literal and figurative meanings as well as technical aspects of poetry such as rhyme scheme, alliteration, and onomatopoeia” (p. 161). Through Counter-storytelling, Latino students will tap into their history, knowledge, language and culture. Counter-storytelling provides the platform for achieving cultural competence by tapping into the storytelling aspect of the Latino community. *Cuentos, testimonios* and the re-telling of family history is a natural part of the Latino community and a curriculum based on this CRT element will be a natural way to achieve cultural competence.

Lastly, critical consciousness is a part of being culturally relevant by challenging the status quo and the institutions that produce and maintain social inequities. Solorzano and Yosso (2002) explain how this counter-storytelling achieves this element of CRP:

The majoritarian story tells us that darker skin and poverty correlate with bad neighborhoods and bad schools. It informs us that limited or Spanish-accented English and Spanish surnames equal bad schools and poor academic performance. It also reminds us that people who may not have legal documents to “belong” in the United States may be identified by their skin color, hair texture, eye shape, accent and/or surname. Standard,
majoritarian methodology relies on stock stereotypes that covertly and overtly link people of color, women of color, and poverty with ‘bad’, while emphasizing that White, middle- to upper-class people embody all that is ‘good’ (p. 29).

By investigating their counter-stories, documenting their history and by presenting their stories to the public, students will directly challenge the perceptions and stereotypes of the community. The students will uncover the covert racism endured and look for ways to change perceptions and stereotypes. Counter-storytelling contains the element of critical consciousness by challenging the status quo’s views of the storyteller.

The Importance of Relationships Between Students and Teachers

In looking at Latino student achievement it is important to look at the component of teacher support. There is a direct correlation between teacher support and the level of engagement by Latino students. As Brewster & Bowen (2004) explain, “As the level of student perceptions of teacher support increased, mean levels of problem behavior decreased and mean levels of perceived school meaningfulness increased” (p. 55). They conclude that teacher support is important for the engagement of Latino students. The importance of creating relationships based on trust cannot be underestimated in its importance in building student engagement with Latino students.

Romero, Arce, and Cammarota (2009) explain the sharing of a teacher’s own life and how that helps foster these types of meaningful relationships:

Teachers share their poems with students, which is another opportunity for teachers to reveal their hearts and souls. The reciprocation of thoughts, concerns, fears, desires, etc, presents an opportunity for both teachers and students to establish connections, and it
provides teachers with the opportunity to gain interpersonal capital with the students (p. 223).

The creation of relationships with Latino students is dependent on opportunities that validate the home culture of Latino students, only then can the teachers create the relationships that are necessary for academic success. In Romero et al. (2009), it was the sharing of both stories that led to the building of trust and the creation of positive relationships.

This study relied on shifting the lens to CRT as an epistemology in order to negate the false belief that the Latino culture does not give resources to Latino students. This epistemological lens shift allowed Latino students to see their lives, history and stories as a source of community cultural wealth as a resource that can support Latino student learning. Conchas (2001) discusses a program of implemented curriculum and pedagogies that reflected the social and historical backgrounds of the student populations (pp. 495-500). This approach aligned with a diverse student population created an environment with higher engagement and academic performance. He argues that structure and culture are both important factors in student engagement by saying “The distinct Latino voices in this study demonstrate the importance of school communities that structure learning environments that link academic rigor with strong collaborative relationships among students and teachers” (Conchas, 2001, p. 502).

This research creates the opportunity for students and teachers to both create relationships and to provide opportunities for the students to access their social and historical backgrounds. This research echoes Romero et al. (2009) by giving the students and instructor opportunity to create a trusting relationship through the mutual sharing of their counter-stories. This research also taps into Concha’s work (2001) by creating an educational environment that has a structure
that is based on counter-storytelling research that taps into the historical and social background of the students involved.

**Youth Participatory Action Research**

The literature on YPAR shows this methodology as a way to counter the notion that communities of color are powerless to make change (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Ginwright, 2008). I chose YPAR because I did not want to add more information to the literature that shows the Latino community as damaged or incapable of transforming itself (Tuck, 2009). YPAR as a research methodology can lead to systemic transformation as Cammarota and Fine (2008) explain, “YPAR is a formal resistance that leads to transformation-systemic and institutional change to promote social justice” (p. 2). This research used YPAR as a research methodology and tapped into this resistance as we, my students/co-researchers and myself, strove towards social justice. I begin this section by examining the connection between YPAR and CRT, and then demonstrate the intersection of YPAR, student voice and CRT.

YPAR comes from CRT, and is also directly aligned with the counter educational approach that I researched. Cammarota and Fine (2008) explain this intersection of CRT and YPAR as one of the main tenets of CRT, “Stakeholders participating in PAR projects tend to be critical race researchers, adhering to the CRT tenet of intersectionality” (p. 6). The CRT tenet of intersectionality, which incorporates YPAR as methodology, aligns with the notion that race is one of the main factors of inequity in the United States (Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995; Cammarota and Fine, 2008).

The YPAR aspect of my research tapped into student voice, which also has connections to CRT. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) explain how voice is connected to CRT,
The ‘voice’ component of CRT provides a way to communicate the experience and realities of the oppressed, a first step on the road to justice. As we attempt to make linkages between CRT and education, we contend that the voice of people of color is required for a complete analysis of the educational system (p. 58).

The integration of YPAR into the counter-storytelling curriculum allowed the students the space to voice their realities through YPAR, and allowed them the platform to attempt to transform the educational system. Ladson Billings and Tate (1995) explain the importance of voice in conducting research by stating, “without authentic voices of people of color it is doubtful that we can say or know anything useful about education in their communities” (p. 58).

Communities of color, and in particular the youth in communities of color, are a missing voice in the discussion of how to transform our dysfunctional school system. Cammarota and Fine (2008) affirm the importance of youth engaged in YPAR as, “What distinguishes young people engaged in YPAR from the standard representations in critical youth studies is that their research is designed to contest and transform systems and institutions to produce greater justice-distributive justice, and procedural justice” (p. 2). The students participating in the implementation of the counter-storytelling curriculum were the co-researchers as we studied the impact of the curriculum and the effect that our stories had on their engagement. They decided on research action steps to align the curriculum and answered their own questions as members of the community being studied. Their voices were recorded in their own words and they were holders and creators of the knowledge for this study.

The methodological resistance that YPAR embodies supported the entirety of this research, beginning with CRT as the epistemological lens to counter the effects of Eurocentric epistemologies and counter-storytelling as culturally relevant curriculum. Cammarota and Fine
(2008) explain this resistance noting that, “YPAR represents not only a formal pedagogy of resistance but also the means by which young people engage transformational resistance” (p. 4). I chose YPAR because it aligns with the transformative stance that is CRT, counter-storytelling and CCW. The methods of the research matter if we are to ignite a transformative revolution in the educational system as Ginwright (2008) elaborates, “We move beyond the rather static and restrictive notions of methodology to a broader and richer understanding of how our bold imaginations, dreams, and visions can lead us to revolutionary forms of participatory action research” (p. 21).

Conclusion Part II

In part II of my literature review, I outlined an educational approach that counters the cultural oppression of the hegemonic educational paradigm. I began with literature that shows CRT as the appropriate lens for the proposed curriculum and study. I followed this by demonstrating how counter-storytelling is connected with Latino historical resistance and is a central component of CRT. I then examined the connection between counter-storytelling and CRP. This was followed by literature that showed the intersection of Counter-storytelling, CCW and subtractive schooling and how CCW can counter the deficit view of the Hegemonic Educational Paradigm (HEP). Next, I showed how counter-storytelling is a culturally relevant way of addressing Latino academic needs. Lastly, I demonstrated YPAR as a research methodology that will challenge the hegemonic research methodologies that portray the Latino community as unable to transform itself. My research project was an alignment of epistemology, pedagogy, curriculum and research methodology that challenges the racist hegemonic policies, epistemologies, pedagogies and methodologies and was an attempt to balance the inequitable scales that oppress Latinos at every level (Figure 2).
Figure 2. Balancing the Scales

Counter Educational Approach

- CRT as Epistemology: Counter-storytelling Curriculum
- Community Cultural Wealth, Culturally Relevant Pedagogies and YPAR

Hegemonic Educational Paradigm

- Historic Deculturalization: Legislation and Policy
- Eurocentric Epistemologies and Subtractive Schooling
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGIES

Introduction

In order to examine the impact of CRT in the classroom, I implemented a counter-storytelling curriculum (CSTC) and developed procedures to examine the impact of the CSTC on Latino student engagement and identity. This curriculum, which the students and I called “Liberation Arts”, existed at the intersection of Critical Race Theory (CRT), Community Cultural Wealth (CCW), Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) and Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR). In this chapter, I begin with the rationale for the methodological design including both my use of a qualitative approach and work with student researchers. This is followed by a discussion of the sample and site context. Then I discuss methodological stages that guided data collection tools. Followed by an overview of the curriculum phases. I conclude with a discussion on the analysis of the data and the validity of data collection.

Two main research questions guided my qualitative research:

1. What is the impact of a counter-storytelling curriculum on Latino student identity?
2. What is the impact of a counter-storytelling curriculum on Latino student engagement?

Methodological Design

This qualitative study was designed to explore the impact of a CSTC on Latino student engagement and identity. A qualitative study was chosen to provide an opportunity to create a rich portrait that brings the participants, the course and the impact of the course to life. I begin by examining the nine components of a qualitative design and how these components specifically align with my study.
Qualitative Study: Rationale

Creswell (2009) outlines nine characteristics of a qualitative study and why each is significant: 1) the study occurs in the participant’s natural setting, 2) qualitative researchers gather the data themselves, 3) qualitative studies gather multiple sources of data, 4) inductive data analysis is implemented to organize the data, 5) the participant’s meanings of the problem are taken into account, 6) qualitative research has an emergent design, 7) qualitative research allows for specific theoretical lens, 8) qualitative research is interpretive and 9) qualitative researchers try to develop a holistic account of the issue being studied.

A qualitative approach was chosen for my study because my research is aligned with the characteristics outlined by Creswell: 1) This study occurred on the campus where the students attend and was a part of their elective programming. 2) I gathered data directly as a part of the ethnographic research. 3) There were multiple sources of data, described in detail later in this chapter. 4) I constructed themes from the bottom up until I had a comprehensive set. 5) Through YPAR, I learned from the students and relied on the student’s perspectives of the problem. 6) My study and methods changed as I went through the process. 7) I was able to use CRT and CCW as a specific theoretical lens. 8) I made interpretations through the entire process culminating in this dissertation. 9) My study incorporated many different perspectives to develop a complex picture of the problem. Each cited component is essential for my study.

Sample

I began my study in the fall of 2011 with a total of 23 students (see Table 1). There were 20 girls and three boys. Nineteen of the 23 students were 1st generation American born with either one or both parents migrating from their country of origin. Eighteen were Chicana/o (Mexican decent born in the U.S), one was of Cuban decent, one was from Mexico, and the
remaining three were of mixed race, Puerto Rican/El Salvadorian, Iranian/Chinese and Cuban/Venezuelan. Most of the students spoke their homeland language and were bilingual with a total of 18 able to speak English and Spanish. Three spoke English and some home language, with the remaining two speaking only English.

Table 1

Student Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Citizenship Status</th>
<th>Language Ability</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Chicana</td>
<td>1st Generation</td>
<td>Bilingual/Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Chicana</td>
<td>1st Generation</td>
<td>Bilingual/Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debbie</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Iranian/Chinese</td>
<td>1st Generation</td>
<td>English/Farsi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monica</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Chicana</td>
<td>1st Generation</td>
<td>Bilingual/Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Cuban</td>
<td>1st Generation</td>
<td>English Only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Chicana</td>
<td>1st Generation</td>
<td>Bilingual/Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lola</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Chicana</td>
<td>1st Generation</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Paula</td>
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<td>1st Generation</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reyna</td>
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<td>Chicana</td>
<td>1st Generation</td>
<td>Bilingual/Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ana Maria</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Puerto Rican/El Salvadorian</td>
<td>3rd Generation</td>
<td>English Only</td>
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<tr>
<td>Juan</td>
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<td>1st Generation</td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theresa</td>
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<td>Chicana</td>
<td>1st Generation</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2nd Generation</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Jose</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Chicana</td>
<td>1st Generation</td>
<td>Bilingual/Spanish</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Site Context

I conducted this research at Imagination Charter School (a pseudonym), a charter school in the San Francisco Bay Area over the course of the 2011-12 school year. The site was
appropriate for this research because the demographics were typical of an urban school with a high percentage of white teachers serving mainly students of color. Eighty percent of the families were classified as low income and the student population was 652. Approximately 96% of the population is classified as students of color, of this 78% are classified as Latino (Ed Data: Online school finance data sources, 2011). There were also a high number of students that were English Language Learners (ELL) with approximately 67% of students classified as English Language Learners and approximately 10% of students qualified for special education services. However, this diversity was not represented in the staff; most of the school’s teachers were white.

**Methodological Stages Overview**

Four interconnected stages of data collection shaped this research (Figure 3). Stage one was my own personal research of my family history, which was based on my membership of the community and resulted in the creation of the literary source, *Ni de Aquí Ni de Alla*, (Appendix 1) for stage three. Stage two was my ethnographic research of the impact of a CSTC and overlapped with stages three and four. Stage three was a student application and analysis of the aforementioned literary source, which was used to initiate their writing process and research their family’s counter-story. Lastly and most importantly, stage four was the student’s/co-researcher’s YPAR study of the impact of counter-storytelling on their identity and engagement. Stage four was the most important because it was the stage that answered my research questions. In this section I will provide an overview of the methodological stages and relevance of each research stage. In chapter four I elaborate on the methodological stages as they align with the CSTC. Each of the methodological stages is directly connected with the four phases of the CSTC, which is discussed in an overview of the curriculum in the next section.
Figure 3: Theoretical Construct of Methodological Stages

The process for stage 1 began with my research of my family’s history. I took a year off from my formal educational process to investigate the stories that I heard of my family when I was young. The first stage of the research was based on the videotaped interviews of my father, grandmother, aunts and uncles. This first stage also consisted of the beginnings of the written chronicles compiled by two maternal uncles. The interviews were then transcribed and written into narrative form. This stage was important because it accomplished three objectives: 1) served as the foundational narrative for the course, 2) served as an academic model of interviewing and using the interviews to inform counter-storytelling and, 3) created relationships
between the student/co-researchers and myself as the instructor because the student/co-researchers witnessed me going through the same process of sharing personal information (Romero et al., 2009). Stage one began before I implemented the curriculum to develop the literary source for the curriculum and the original counter-story was shared during Phase II of the Liberation Arts curriculum. Since I was conducting the research on a site where I also served as an administrator there was an obvious power dynamic between myself and the participants (Anderson et al., 2007). Stage one allowed the opportunity to address this limitation by establishing a safe place for us to work together that was not connected to my normal role, which helped to address the power dynamic between me and the student/co-researchers (Anderson et al., 2007). By being very clear on the expectations of the class/research, which included their participation in all phases of the study, I was able to prepare them for the YPAR construction of stages two through four.

Stage two was my ethnographic portrait of the students participating in the project. It was my intention to conduct an ethnographic portrait based on my field notes and audiotaped class discussions that documented the students/co-researcher’s journey as they engaged with the CSTC. I focused on the student/co-researchers as they engaged the intervening variables/obstacles that impede many students as they attempt to achieve their academic goals. My process was aligned to overlap with the student/co-researchers YPAR process. This stage was present during each of the four phases of the Liberation Arts curriculum. I took field notes to document the implementation process, and report on those notes in the forthcoming Chapter 4. While not findings, per se, they provide the context of the ethnography. Also, in Chapter 5 I address the curriculum and how it was implemented as it directly shaped what students were
responding to during the course. I began taking notes for the ethnographic portrait during Phase I of the curriculum and continued through each subsequent phase.

Stage three of the research process was the adaptation of the stage one process and narrative into a Culturally Relevant Curriculum that is aligned with the California State Teaching Standards (Appendix 2). This stage consisted of the analysis of the narrative written by myself and was used as the literature for the curriculum used by the student/co-researchers participating in the project. This analysis was followed by the counter-storytelling research conducted by the student/co-researchers as they researched their own familial history and the immigration story of their own families. This stage was aligned with Phase II of the Liberation Arts curriculum and culminated with the student/co-researchers creating their own familial counter-story. During this stage the student/co-researchers developed action steps for the study based on a preliminary analysis of the data. The action steps are as follows:

1. Examine the impact of our stories on my motivation towards my education.
2. Examine the impact of our stories on my racial cultural identity.
3. Examine the impact of our stories on my relationships with my family.
4. Examine the impact of our stories on my self-confidence.

These action steps were initiated during Phase II and were revisited during the student/co-researcher reflection process in each subsequent phase.

Stage four was conducted by the student/co-researchers. This stage used the reflections and field notes of the students for data and treated the student/co-researchers as holders and creators of knowledge (Delgado Bernal, 2002). This stage focused on the action steps created by the students/co-researchers, which informed the curriculum co-creation and subsequent data analysis. The analysis of the data during this stage resulted in the final material for the script,
which I discuss at length in chapters four and five. This stage of research was initiated during phase one of the curriculum and continued through phase four. Data was collected from four sources: 1) student field notes and reflections, 2) Audience Q & A with the actor/co-researchers after each performance, 3) impromptu conversations with students, parents and family members and, 4) written audience reflections. This stage was initiated during phase three of the Liberation Arts curriculum and carried over into the final phase.

**Liberation Arts Curriculum: Overview**

As stated previously, the methodological stages of the study were embedded into the Liberation Arts counter-storytelling curriculum. The curriculum lies at the intersection of Critical Race Theory (CRT), Community Cultural Wealth (CCW), Culturally Relevant Pedagogies (CRP) and, Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR). The curriculum was designed to specifically draw from or align with components of each. The study was designed to examine the impact of the curriculum on the student’s identity and engagement. In this section I will give an overview of the counter-storytelling curriculum. In Chapter 4, I provide a more detailed ethnography of the implementation of the curriculum.

**Phase I: Leadership class, YPAR and co-researchers.** The first phase was an essential time during the Leadership class because it was the foundational work for the development of the Leadership class itself and for setting up the YPAR component of the research. We began with the creation of the definition of leadership and the mission statement for the Leadership class. This phase also introduced the students to Youth Participatory Action Research and created the environment where all things were co-created and co-constructed. It was during this phase that the students became co-researchers and began their research. During this phase the student/co-researchers created one main action step:
1. To explore the impact of our stories.

**Phase II: Counter-storytelling research.** Having initiated the YPAR component of the research, the student/co-researchers began the process of co-creating and implementing research tools for their counter-storytelling research. The process for the counter-story exploration included the following steps:

1. Reading and analyzing a counter-story, *Ni de Aquí Ni de Alla*, completed with the same process that the student/co-researchers replicated. The counter-story is my own counter-story narrative and served as both the literary source for the project and a model for narrative writing.

2. Co-creation of interview template for family member that has migrated to the United States. Guiding question for template creation: “What do you want to know about that which you do not know?” (Pizarro, class 2011)

3. Select and interview a family member using the co-created template.

4. Translate interview into a narrative aligned with California State Teaching Standards (CSTS).

5. Create and participate in a Writers Circle in Leadership class.

6. Write, edit and revise until the narrative is complete.

7. Refine student/co-researcher action steps.

During this phase the student/co-researchers revisited their original action step based on their counter-story research. This allowed them to refine their YPAR actions steps into the final aforementioned action steps.

**Phase III: The intersection of art and research.** Once the students completed their counter-storytelling narrative it was time to adapt the stories into an original play. Student/co-researchers participated as writers, directors, actors, costume designers, and production
coordinators in preparation for their world premier of their theatre piece. This phase also incorporated an analysis of some of the preliminary data, which was then incorporated into the theatre piece. This phase also began the process of the student/co-researchers preliminary examination of the impact of the curriculum, using their research tools and applying their YPAR action steps.

**Phase IV: Teatro Libertad.** The final phase was the culmination of all the student/co-researcher’s hard work over the course of the school year. This phase began with the world premiere of their original play entitled *La Guerra Cultural: A Culture Clash*. The world premiere performance initiated the “Season Of Service”, which was the final quarter of the school year during which the students/co-researchers took their show on the road as a part of the service component of the project and performed at a number of high profile events. This phase also had the student/co-researchers found their own theatre company entitled, *Teatro Libertad*. This phase concluded with an in depth examination of the impact of the curriculum by the student/co-researchers.

**Data Collection Tools**

There were three data collection tools used in this research 1) field-notes, observations, audiotaped class discussions and informal conversations with students, staff and family members, 2) student/co-researcher field-notes and reflections used to examine the YPAR generated action steps and, 3) the student/co-researcher’s written script, counter-story narratives and performances. In this section I will elaborate on the data collection tools describing their purpose and methods.

Field notes, observations and audiotaped class discussions were the data used to create the context for the ethnographic portrait. Through observations and constant communication with the participants I was able to create a framework for the ethnographic portrait of the students
participating in the counter-storytelling curriculum. I chose an ethnographic portrait because it allowed me the structure to capture the context of the experience of the students participating in the project. This constant communication and student clarification of the process by the students also provided the in-depth data for the portrait. The narrative form of an ethnographic portrait also provided a way to demonstrate the impact of the curriculum that captures the natural setting, integrates the multiple sources of data, integrates the participants meanings of the problem, allowed for CRT and CCW as a specific theoretical lens, provided the opportunity for interpretation and gave a holistic account of the journey (Creswell, 2009).

The student’s field notes were incorporated into the ethnographic portrait as a component of the YPAR of the research and were driven by the students/co-researcher’s action steps. One of the guiding theories of my research was that the youth are holders and creators of knowledge (Delgado Bernal, 2002). Student generated field notes captured the student/co-researchers journey throughout the project and were used to directly answer the research questions. This process of gathering data directly from the student/co-researchers also gave them direct access to the data, which they were then able to analyze during the writing of the script and the performance phase. This approach also allowed participants the opportunity address the difficult issues facing the Latino community demonstrating Cammarota and Fine’s argument, “Young people that possess critical knowledge of the true workings of their social contexts see themselves as intelligent and capable, therefore academic capacity should increase along with problem-solving abilities” (2008, p. 7).

The last form of data collected was the script based on their counter-storytelling narratives and the performance of the play. The student/co-researchers used their interviews to gather the material for the narratives, which were then adapted for the stage and resulted in an original script entitled *La Guerra Cultural: A Culture Clash*. Their action steps were used as
writing prompts for reflections and monologues that captured their journey. These reflections provided data, which was analyzed by the student/co-researchers throughout the process. The performed script included the creation of two characters based on the journey and transformation of the student/co-researchers. The creation of these characters was based on an analysis of the student reflections and examination of the impact of the CSTC.

**Data Analysis**

The analysis of the data for both the ethnography and the student field notes was done in 7 steps based on the analysis steps outlined by Creswell (2009): 1) gathering the raw data, 2) organizing the data, 3) reading through all the data, 4) coding the data, 5) separating the data into themes and descriptions, 6) advancing how the description and themes will be represented in the narrative and 7) interpreting the data. In this section, I explain the analytical process for chapter four. In chapter four, I use the previous steps to analyze the data to create an ethnographic portrait.

There were two main sources of data gathered for the ethnographic portrait: 1) data based on my role as participant observer and, 2) student/co-researcher data based on the guiding principles. For my data collection I took field notes at the end of each class or performance. I gathered student/co-researcher generated material in their fieldwork notebooks at the end of each day and kept these notebooks under lock and key in my office.

I began by gathering and organizing my data based on field notes and audiotaped class sessions. My field notes were kept in one document on my computer, which was split into three sections: 1) impressions, 2) methods and, 3) research questions. The student/co-researcher generated data based on their guiding principles was organized by theme and date. The counter-story narratives were submitted via email and kept in one document on my computer. Lastly, the
final script was constructed in class and scenes were submitted via email, which was also kept in one document on my computer.

Observations and field notes were organized chronologically and split into three categories: 1) impressions, 2) methods and, 3) research questions. In order to organize the student/co-researcher generated data I read through all the journals to first get a general impression of the data. I then began transcribing the journals word for word based on each of the guiding principles created by the students in unit two, which created an organizational framework of the YPAR data. I transcribed data one action step at a time for each individual student creating another layer of organization to the data.

In order to get a better understanding of my field notes I read in two phases, which helped make the following steps more manageable. The first phase was to create an outline of the school year that was aligned with the curriculum units. Then I took my field notes and began constructing a narrative outline of the process that filled in each unit of instruction. This aligned the curriculum with the study and helped keep all the data organized.

For the student/co-researcher data I first transcribed all the data onto three different documents 1) reflections based on individual students examining each of the guiding principles, 2) counter-storytelling narratives and, 3) the original script. Once all the data was transcribed I then read through all the data once again. This data, as opposed to the ethnographic data, was student/co-researcher created and generated in their own words.

The next step was to code my observation and fieldwork data. As I mentioned I began by reading though the data and constructing a basic narrative of the main events, which were aligned with the curriculum. I then went through my field notes yet again looking for repeating words, phrases or themes. These repeating events were highlighted using different colors based
on themes. I also looked for major moments in my notes where there was a visible impact, such as a student showing great emotion, effort or anything out of the norm.

Before I began the actual coding of the student/co-researcher data I revisited the work of Yosso on Community Cultural Wealth (2005). This is one of the main differences between my ethnographic analysis and the YPAR analysis. For the YPAR analysis I relied heavily on Yosso’s work on cultural capital. As stated in my purpose of the study, the CSTC I have created tapped into the cultural capital of the student/co-researchers. Therefore, the coding of the YPAR data was viewed through a CCW lens.

In order to separate the data into themes I relied on the work previously done by the student/co-researchers when they separated their work into guiding principles. During phase two the students took preliminary data from their counter-story research and described the impact as a class. This data was then analyzed and split into themes, which then became their final research action steps, which became the framework for organizing and coding the data. These four guiding principles were the impact on: 1) motivation towards education, 2) racial/cultural identity, 3) relationships with family and 4) self-confidence.

In order to advance these themes I also relied on the preliminary work of the already created ethnographic portrait, the intentional note taking process and the student created guiding principles. I began by using the ethnographic narrative outline that described what occurred in each unit. Then I took the aforementioned student/co-researcher themes and used them as a guide as I wrote the final ethnographic sections. Lastly, I integrated my observations with the student/co-researcher’s final monologues/reflections and portions of the dialogue from the play into the ethnographic outline to complete the portrait. These monologues/reflections and dialogue were based on the analysis of the guiding principle data.
Limitations

One limitation for this study was the sample itself because many students that wanted to participate were precluded. When the project/study was presented to students a much larger group of students expressed interest on the research project. However, they were not allowed to participate in the project because of the school’s policy regarding their academic standing. This limited the number of students that could participate to students that were already meeting at least basic academic requirements. Therefore, the lowest academic performing students were not allowed to participate because they were put into academic intervention classes, which ultimately led to many of the lowest students being retained or pushed out of school. In chapter five I provide policy and teacher training recommendations for wider implementation of this curriculum and research as a way to address this limitation.

Another of the limitations in this study was my role as both researcher and administrator on the same site. I conducted the research at a site where I had been an administrator for four years at the time of the research implementation. I had established relationships with nearly all stakeholders, which put me into a position of power with the participants (Anderson et al., 2007). In order to address this limitation I incorporated four components to the research (Creswell, 2009): 1) Triangulation of the data, 2) repeated observations and interactions with the participants over a long period of time, 3) involving student/co-researchers in all of phases of the study and 4) building a class/research culture of equality and centering the students work in all phases of the curriculum and the research. Each of which I discuss in the next section of my dissertation.
Lastly, the self-reporting nature of the data was a limitation of the study. This research is founded on the principle that students are holders and creators of knowledge (Delgado Bernal, 2002). They live within the social context that is being studied so they are the ones I chose as experts. However, this also serves as a limitation of the study for any number of reasons including: wanting to please me as their teacher, not being able to reflect on how they felt before the study or their assessments may just be wrong. Again, in order to address these limitations I used the three aforementioned components, which I discuss in further detail in the next section.

**Validity of Data Collection**

Data was triangulated through collection procedures that yielded three sources of data, once again based on the work outlined by Creswell (2009): 1) my field notes used in the ethnography, 2) the recorded class discussions and student field notes and, 3) the student written counter-stories and script. One source of data was my daily notes and audio taped class sessions. The second source of data was the student/co-researcher journals that contained their reflections on the process based on their research questions. The third source of data was their counter-storytelling narratives. The final source of data was the student/co-researcher’s script based on the counter-storytelling narratives. These multiple sources of data created an abundance of data for later analysis.

I also conducted the research over the course of an entire school year with repeated observations. For this research I was with the student/co-researchers at least two times a week for the entire school year, but I spent much more time with them outside of class having informal conversations, data analysis, script writing and working through problems unrelated to the research as our relationship grew, which I document in more depth in chapter four. All of these interactions and time spent together allowed for our relationships to grow, analyze data.
organically, co-create the curriculum to address challenges and check for understanding of their written reflections. This large amount of time spent together also allowed for the participants to be involved in all the different phases of the research. Many times these added interactions allowed for informal conversations that went much deeper than we could go in class because of the smaller group setting and natural flow of the relationship.
CHAPTER FOUR

ETHNOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT

Introduction

In this chapter I create an ethnographic portrait of my year implementing and studying CRT in the classroom. This portrait is framed by the four phases of the counter-storytelling curriculum (CSTC). The counter-storytelling curriculum, Liberation Arts, was implemented as a part of a Leadership class at an urban charter school in Oakland California over the course of the 2011-12 school year. The Leadership class was part of the elective programming for the middle school students and met twice a week for 1 hour each day. The class was conducted in partnership with an outside organization as a Service-Learning project. Service-Learning, as defined by the Leadership students is, “A project that is a fun, educational and a way to teach your community by identifying an issue, researching the issue, taking action through projects, and reflecting”. The students chose to address the issue of immigration and the research conducted during the counter-storytelling curriculum was aligned with the service-learning project. The counter-storytelling curriculum was split into 4 phases over the course of the school year with each phase having a main objective: 1) Co-creation of leadership and YPAR framework construction, 2) counter-storytelling research, 3) theatrical adaptation; the intersection of art and research, 4) Season of Service and the formation of Teatro Libertad. These phases were also connected and aligned with the previously mentioned methodological stages. The analysis for the data for this chapter was conducted using the previously mentioned 7 steps of qualitative research outlined by Creswell (2009).
We began the class/research in September of 2011 with the students defining “Leadership” and creating a mission statement for the class that would guide us through the project. The work was set up by creating small work groups and letting them collaborate to generate ideas, and established the collaborative process for all future curriculum and research creation. This allowed the students to work together and for the students to have their voice heard. The following are the final products of their collaboration:

**Definition of Leadership:** *Leadership is a role in society where you make important choices that will benefit your life, as well as, others. Leadership means taking responsibility, sticking up for yourself, bringing your personal best to all your classes and taking action for sticky situations that arise*

**Mission Statement for Leadership class:** *We believe that the Leadership class is a place where you have a zone to be your true self, get to know one another and help ourselves gain courage. Leadership class will be a place where we can express our writing through acting and use Theatre to influence and teach people.*

It was during the process of creating the definitions that student voice began to emerge. The students worked in their small work groups and did an excellent job of allowing all of the students to have input on the creation of the definition and mission statement. They worked collaboratively to bring the different ideas together and did not stop until they reached consensus. There were three main research themes that arose during this phase: 1) a high level of enthusiasm, 2) the emergence of student/co-researcher ownership of the research and, 3) increased trust and improved relationships with participants.
This phase was designed for the student/co-researchers to set up their YPAR research. Their enthusiasm manifested itself in two ways during this phase. The first was the high level of focus and energy with which they engaged the creation of the class definition and mission. The second was the determination they demonstrated as they created the framework for the class. The Leadership class was an elective class and they received no grade so it was done solely because they wanted to participate on the project. It was during this initial phase that I began to have visitors in my office during lunch and recess to discuss the project. This was interesting to note because normally students only came to my office when they were in trouble because of my regular role as Dean of Students and the disciplinarian of the school.

This phase also saw the emergence of ownership of the research process. As we created the definition and mission of the class the students were very serious as they collaborated with one another. They made sure to have their voice heard as they generated ideas and created the terms for the class. They also demonstrated a high level of interest and curiosity on the research itself. They expressed that it made them feel important because an adult was interested in their thoughts and ideas on the issues that were important to them.

Lastly, my relationships began to improve and students began to have trust in both me, and the research we were conducting. This manifested in their interest in the research and in their curiosity about their family’s stories. This phase was essential in the creation of the YPAR component of the research. The students embraced the research on the impact of the curriculum and were very excited about beginning the research of their family’s counter-story. The foundation of our relationship was based in my sharing of my own counter-story and why I was conducting research on this issue. I began by explaining the doctoral program I was in and the purpose of my research. I told them of my personal history growing up in schools that did not
know how to work with Latino students and the impact it had on me. During this time I introduced the concept of counter-storytelling and my journey of researching my family’s history. I shared my own experience growing up and how difficult it was as a teenager not knowing my history. I also shared how powerful it was for me to go back as a man and research my family’s history. They agreed to become co-researchers on the project so from this time forward they will be referred to as student/co-researchers. Another interesting thing occurred during this phase and that was the choosing of pseudonyms to protect their anonymity, which became their nicknames and a great source of pride for them. They were able to choose their own pseudonym/nickname and later they expressed that it made them feel special to have a name that both meant something to them and was part of a bigger purpose of being co-researchers. However, their pseudonyms/nicknames were so popular that they began to be known more by those names than their real names. Therefore, it was necessary to create pseudonyms for their original pseudonyms in order to protect their anonymity. This phase concluded with a single YPAR action research step to guide the next phase: To examine the impact of our stories.

**Counter-storytelling Research**

With the establishment of my partnership with the newly formed group of student/co-researchers and the YPAR research initiated, it was time to delve into the research of the participant’s counter-stories. This phase consisted of the 7 previously mentioned steps: 1) read and analyze a counter-story, 2) co-create an interview template, 3) select and interview an interviewee, 4) translate interview into a narrative, 5) participate in writer’s circle, 6) revise narrative until it is complete and, 7) refine research action steps. In this section, I elaborate on these steps.
For the first step, I introduced the counter-storytelling narrative, *Ni de Aqui Ni de Alla*, which is a narrative of my family’s history. However, while reading and analyzing my personal counter-story, I did not tell the student/co-researchers it was my family’s story because I did not want their knowledge of it to affect their perception of me or the counter-story itself. Basically, I wanted honesty about the story and the writing. Near the end of our exploration of my narrative, I told them the author was going to come by class to answer any questions about his story. They were very excited to meet the author and had many questions. I left class as if to get the author at the front desk and when I returned I sat in the chair prepared for the author. It took a moment, but they finally understood that it was my narrative. This was an interesting moment in our class/research process that helped in creating relationships and building trust similar to the approach developed by Romero (2009).

During this phase, and specifically after sharing my story, I saw an improvement in the relationships I had with the student/co-researchers. They had no idea some of the challenges I faced growing up, they simply know me as the Dean of Students, the disciplinarian of the school. The students talked about the piece and how it helped create trust. They particularly liked the honesty of the writing and how it was as a young adolescent being lost. They said it seemed real and it was a story they could relate to. “It was cool because it was real” (Paloma). “The story that Mr. Cuevas wrote was real. It seemed as if you were actually in the story” (Debbie). “I thought the story that Mr. Cuevas wrote was very interesting. It impacted me by making me think of what was my family’s life before. I really liked it because it was honest and shared unique ideas that shows how cultures are different from each other” (Dulce). “I like the way he was himself” (Procorro).
The next step was to co-create an interview template that each student could use to interview a family member that immigrated to the United States. The interview needed to be with someone that immigrated to the United States because it was the student chosen issue to be addressed in the service-learning project. We began with a basic researcher concept that would guide this process “What do you want to know about that which you do not know?” (Pizarro, class 2011). Basically, what do you want to ask your family? What are you curious about? So as a class we brainstormed a list of questions. Most of the questions overlapped and asked very similar things. Simply put, they wanted to understand their parents and grandparents better and this is reflected in the wide range of questions (Figure 4).

Once the students compiled the master list of questions they were split into groups in order to create one master template that was organized and had a natural flow. The student/co-researchers took the master list and broke it into themes. Once it was split into themes repeat questions were eliminated and the final interview template was created. The final template was designed to capture the four following elements and was based on what the student/co-researchers wanted to learn more about: 1) “Day in the life” which showed what life was like in their home country and explored the extreme contrast between growing up in the United States and the Latin countries of origin, 2) “Immigration” which told the story of why their families immigrated and how they accomplished the journey, 3) “Land of the free” which told the story of what is like when their immigrant parents arrived; and 4) “Reflections” which became an organic way to get the parents to reflect on issues such as race, culture, education and family.
Counter-storytelling Interview Template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part I: The Beginning/Childhood life</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What is your full name? Nickname?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. When were you born?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Where were you born?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What were your parent’s names? Siblings?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What was life like?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Describe an average day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Describe your best childhood memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Did you go to school? If yes, next question. If not, Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. At what age did you start school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. When did you stop going to school? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Did you like school? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. What did you wish or dream of learning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. What did your parents think about education?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. What was your best experience in school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. What was your worst experience in school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. What did you think of your teachers?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part II: Immigration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. When did you immigrate to the United States? How old were you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Why did you immigrate?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Please describe the experience:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. How did you get here?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Where did you end up?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. What happened when you arrived?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. What do you miss the most?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Have you experienced any racism in the United States? Explain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Do you regret coming here? Second thoughts? Explain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part III: Reflection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do you consider my education important?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What do you think of my school and teachers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What would you do if I didn’t go to school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What are your dreams for me?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What else would you like me to know?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part IV:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What else do you want to know about that which you do not know?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The student/co-researchers were now ready to do their research on their family history. Each student chose a person in their family they would interview and they went out into the community to conduct research on their family’s counter-story. Most interviewed their mothers or fathers because the class consisted of primarily first generation Americans. For the most part students were able to identify someone in their family that they could interview with two glaring exceptions, Ana Maria and Rita. Ana Maria could not find anyone to interview because her parents and grandparents were all American-born. Rita had a difficult time reconciling her status as first generation Mexican-American. In chapter five I elaborate on why it was so difficult for Rita and Ana Maria to engage with the interview process and the ensuing transformation as a result of the counter-storytelling research.

The remaining student/co-researchers returned the next week with their completed interviews and we began the process of creating a writing circle that would support the writing process of both the narratives and later the adaptation into an original theatre piece. We started by taking volunteers to read the answers to the questions in front of the class. The other students took notes on three main points: 1) list a minimum of three things you liked and, 2) list a minimum of three questions about what you want to know more about and, 3) which moment in the story would you like to explode into a theatre scene. Once the interviewer shared the preliminary information, the rest of the class, including myself, gave feedback. The interviewer then took that feedback and started writing the information into a narrative that was aligned with the California State Teaching Standards (CSTS). This alignment with the CSTS gave the class an academic foundation because I held the student/co-researchers accountable to a high level of
academic excellence. This academic excellence was vital to the curriculum because it connects to the first component of CRP (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

We went through a complete cycle where everybody had a chance to share their preliminary findings on their family’s history and they had time to write the interview answers into a narrative. Once the narrative was completed, they came back to our writer’s circle and read the narrative as a flowing story. Once again the class gave feedback based on the aforementioned process. The student sharing their story took this feedback and went back to their interviewee to ask follow up questions based on feedback and revised their narratives one last time. This final draft was then turned into me for approval.

It was during the writing and sharing of the student/co-researcher counter-stories that I began to see a transformation in the participants. This was, after all, the whole point of the study to examine the impact of our stories. Once again, the analysis for the data for this unit was conducted using the seven steps outlined by Creswell (2009). During the coding process is when certain events continued to the surface of all the qualitative data. During this phase of instruction I saw a continuation of some of the initial themes as they increased in frequency and intensity: 1) I saw an increase in enthusiasm towards the project, 2) I also saw a tremendous amount of growth in my relationship with the student/co-researchers and 3) I witnessed an increased sense of ownership of the research which led to one of the major discoveries of the data analysis. The biggest discovery during this unit on the impact of the curriculum was the emergence of answers to the original action step created by the student/co-researchers, which led to more refined action steps. These previously mentioned research action steps then became the framework of all subsequent data gathering and analysis.
The theme enthusiasm manifested in several different ways. First it appeared in the way that the students engaged with the work. I did not have to push or prod for student/co-researchers to complete tasks. On the contrary, they took it upon themselves to complete work and did so with a great energy. Since the class was an elective they were not required to do anything, it was completely voluntary. Nor were they being graded or receiving credit towards graduation or passage to the next grade. Student/co-researchers made appointments with me during lunch, recess and after school. I was informed that the student/co-researchers were working on scenes and monologues during outdoor recess and sharing what they were doing with other students not in the class. They were always trying to make their work as good as possible. I did not have to provide any stimuli; the motivation and desire came from them. I simply had to manage my time outside of class for the increasing requests to work with individuals or small groups.

Their enthusiasm also manifested in how they interacted with me and with others working on the project. Whenever class started the student/co-researchers came in excited and ready to work. When I walked in for class they would announce my arrival and give me a round of applause, which would signal the beginning of class. They were always smiling and laughing, energetic, working together and always being supportive of one another. Their enthusiasm was contagious and was the best part of my day. At one point José blurted out “I love Leadership!” The other students agreed and we continued on with our writing circle work.

During this phase I also began to see many different signs that signified a heightened ownership of the project. One way the student/co-researchers demonstrated ownership during this phase was the increase of appointments made by the participants outside of class. The student/co-researchers began showing up at my office at lunch, during recess, on off days and
after school hours. They also began sending me emails for feedback on written material. This was all done for an elective class that was not being graded and in alignment with their group goal of creating a high quality product that we could travel with and change the thinking of other people.

As for the transformation in my relationships with the student/co-researchers, it could be seen in many ways. The first was in the open and accessible way that they would greet me on campus. They were always smiling and energetic when saying “Hi” or “Sup”. This was much different than my normal interactions with other middle school students, since most students only interacted with me when they were in trouble. Another interesting development was the way that many of them created ways of coming to see me in my office, which as I stated previously was not the norm at our school. Some would come by just to say hi and talk about their day, work on their pieces, ask advice or to work out other problems. Lastly, was the raw and emotion filled way they would share their stories. It was very normal for students to shed tears as a part of our process and the rest of the class accepted this and supported each other during the process with supportive comments about how much courage it took to share and by giving many hugs when others broke down.

Lastly, was the emergence of answers to the action steps, which led to a heightened ownership of the research and the evolution of the student/co-researcher’s preliminary action step. The YPAR generated action step began to yield results because this is the first unit where the students engaged with their own familial counter-story. This phase was the first to actually tap into the counter-stories of the student/co-researchers and because of these conversations results began to emerge organically about the impact of the stories. These conversations initially began as a part of the natural communication between myself and the student/co-researchers.
They were surprised and expressed shock at the challenges and sacrifices their parents made so that they could get an education. They also expressed anger at times because of the racism and injustice experienced by their family members.

These informal conversations and comments enabled the group and provided the preliminary data to revisit their initial YPAR action step to develop a more structured system for research. Some students began expressing a change in their relationships with their family and how they viewed their parents “I feel more connected to mom. It’s fun because I got to learn more about my mom” (Dulce). They also began to have a fuller picture of the sacrifices that their families made as expressed by Reyna “I feel like I know more about the sacrifices that they made for us and if I ever get mad at her I think about the sacrifices she made which makes me think about my actions.” The preliminary data was much more simple than the journal entries in subsequent units. In the next phase, after the complete implementation of the curriculum, the data was far more vivid, complex and thoughtful. I elaborate on the transformation and evolution of data in chapter five.

After the student/co-researchers went through one round of interview answers we began the process of refining the YPAR research action steps. Once the round was completed each student gave examples of the impact that their stories had on them and we created a large class list of responses. The responses were then categorized by the students according to similarities they had. The categories were given themes by the students so that we could differentiate them. Once the responses were all categorized and given thematic titles, the students wrote more specific research action steps according to the theme of each category. The result was four different categories that gave us more specific research action steps, which became their final YPAR framework. These previously mentioned action steps were posed to the students on a
monthly basis with a final posing of their action steps at the end of the class/research in May. In chapter five I give a complete account of the co-creation of the final YPAR action steps.

**The Intersection of Art and Research**

With the narrative writing process nearly complete it was time to begin writing the adaptation for the stage. The class was set up as an elective class at the end of the day and was completely voluntary. I allowed the student/co-researchers the freedom to do their work for my class at their own speed because I did not want to pile on the writing as homework with deadlines. It was important that our class/research not impede their other classes because they would be pulled out of my class if they slipped academically in their other classes. This meant some students completed their stories quicker than others. Once the final draft was turned in and I had a small group that finished their stories, the class was split into two work groups. The first group worked with Socorro (pseudonym), my assistant teacher, and began the adaptation of their stories into vignettes. The other group continued revising their narratives with me until they were complete.

The acting group took their stories and began with a series of improvisation activities to find the central moment in each piece that could be performed. In order to do this in an organized manner we chose to split the play into four sections, which mirrored the sections in the interview template 1) “Day in the life” which showed what life was like in their home country and showed the extreme contrast between growing up in the United States and the Latin countries of origin, 2) “Immigration” which told the story of why their families immigrated and how they accomplished the journey, 3) “Land of the free” which told the story of what is like when their immigrant parents arrived and, 4) “Reflections” which became an organic way of
telling the effect that the stories had on each student participant through monologues of the characters.

At the beginning of the narrative adaptation, Socorro and I had to walk them step-by-step on how to adapt the play and how to shift the writing form narrative form to script form. It was painstakingly slow in the beginning, however, after they completed the process once, they began writing scenes on their own and bringing them into class already written. I was overwhelmed with the amount of material during this time. The students really took ownership with their scenes and began casting and rehearsing outside of our class time and would come into class with scenes that were already blocked and had the basics in them. I asked them why they were working so hard for a class that they didn’t receive credit and they simply said they want it to be really good. At this time, I began my process of directing the separate vignettes and worked with the students in a co-director partnership. I began putting the scenes in an order that made sense and gave them director notes to clean up the scenes. All the vignettes were written before we went on winter recess and many were casted and had the beginnings of basic blocking, which is the process that establishes where an actor is supposed to stand or sit at any given moment.

Over the winter break I had time to look at our timeline and how much more work we had to do to turn the vignettes into a performance ready piece. It became clear that we did not have enough time to complete the process in time for our previously scheduled world premiere in March. I presented the problem to the students the very first day that we came back from winter break and tied it into the goals that we had for the class, specifically the goal to write and perform a high quality theatre production. I also explained the obstacle of our limited time together. This was the moment in the process when the student/co-researchers took complete responsibility for the play and for the research. The student/co-researchers decided they would
do whatever it took to complete the project and volunteered to stay after school two days a week to prepare for their World Premier performance. They also volunteered to work during lunch periods on an appointment basis to complete a project they could all be proud of. The rehearsal process was an exciting time because the students showed real Leadership and ownership of the project. In many ways it was effortless for me to get the students to work because their effort, enthusiasm and commitment to the project propelled us through the two and a half months. It was a joy and an honor to work with them. They came to class prepared and pumped up about rehearsal.

Another major challenge came up for the class during the rehearsal process in the form of playwriting and resulted in the student/co-researchers co-creation of the leadership curriculum. We had all the vignettes based on their family’s stories and they were in an order that was loosely tied together. We needed some way of tying each of the vignettes that was creative, made sense and was aligned with the overarching research project. I presented the problem/challenge to the students and reminded them of the definition of leadership. We had a brainstorming session, which led to the first of many amazing and unforgettable moments. As a class they came up with a theatrical device that would tie all the vignettes together. It was their idea on how to bring the vignettes together and hence their co-creation of the curriculum.

This student/co-researcher created theatrical device was the moment when art and research intersected and began to co-exist. They decided to create two main characters that would take the audience on a journey through the vignettes. The first character was a young student that was having problems at school, issues with his/her (the role alternated between a boy and girl) family and didn’t know about his/her cultural identity. This first character was based on their assessment of how the student/co-researchers perceived themselves prior to the counter-
storytelling research. The second character was an angel/ancestor (depending on who played them) that took the troubled student on a “Dream Journey” showing him/her all the vignettes. This theatrical device by itself was a great moment for me as a teacher, but the fact that they aligned it with the research project took it to the next level. They wrote the two characters based on the journey that they themselves went on as they explored their family’s stories. The characters were written based on their analysis of collected data based on their reflections and guided by their YPAR action steps. The troubled student mirrored the loss of culture, damaged self-identity, low academic engagement and poor academic achievement that some Latino students experience due to a loss of their family history and culture. However, the troubled student is transformed as he/she explores the counter-story vignettes and regains that which was lost. The characters were based on the reflections, field notes and the student/researchers experiences during their own counter-storytelling research.

The World Premier and the Formation of Teatro Libertad

The final phase was centered on a Season of Service, which was a quarter of performances meant as service in the community and was the culmination of the Service-Learning project. The kick off for the Season of Service was the world premier of their play/research. The student/co-researchers titled the play/research La Guerra Cultural: A Culture Clash, which was based on conversations that focused on the deeper meaning of the play/research. They decided to call it La Guerra Cultural: A Culture Clash because through their counter-storytelling research the student/co-researchers saw very clearly the clash between their homeland culture and that of the United States. Through researching their family’s stories they were able to see the sacrifices that were made for them to have educational opportunities, and also explore racism and oppression through the eyes of their parents, hence the name La
Guerra Cultural: A Culture Clash

There were several scenes that capture the power of the performance and the depth of the counter-story plot lines. In one scene the main character is witnessing a Mexican cross the desert to come to the United States. The Mexican immigrant is accosted by armed bandits, chased by the border patrol, nearly starves and almost dies of heat exhaustion. The guardian angel asks the main character if she knows who the man is. The troubled student responds “Some wetback trying to cross the border!” The guardian angel responds that the man is her grandfather risking everything so that he/she can have opportunities that he/she never had, opportunities that accompany U.S. citizenship and an education. This is the turning point for the main character that is lost, confused and in denial about his/her culture. It is this point where he/she begins to understand the sacrifices that were made for him/her, to be grateful for the opportunities that he/she has and the importance of his/her culture.

In another scene the guardian angel is taking the lost soul to witness the story of Miguel’s grandfather that fought alongside Emiliano Zapata. During the sharing of the original narrative written by Miguel, the question came up in the class “Who is Zapata?” Not one student/co-researcher in the class knew who he was. This became a very important moment in the class/research for several reasons: 1) the student/co-researchers became co-creators of the curriculum as they decided to do research on Zapata and his place in Mexican history, 2) The student/co-researchers became very aware of the lack of Mexican/Latino history and culture in their regular classes and, 3) They learned that Zapata was the leader of the Mexican revolution and were able to work it into the script in a very clever way addressing several issues. The following is a snapshot of the scene:
Scene 4: Who’s Zapata?!

Dominique/Jose

What’s up with the fists in the air and who’s Zapata? (spoken with an English accent)

Ancestor/Guardian Angel

Uhhhhhh, he led the Mexican Revolution!

Dominique/Jose

How was I supposed to know? I only study American History!?

In the writing of the scenes the students tried to show how the main character is lost and does not know who he/she is. He/she has lost her racial/cultural identity and it is exacerbated by the fact that the classrooms are dominated by Eurocentric Epistemologies. This short scene captures the student/co-researchers understanding of these concepts based on their own data analysis.

In the third section of the play/script the students wrote of the racism, discrimination and abuse their parents and grandparents endured. This discrimination was captured in the play as their parents arrived to the United States and were discriminated against for their undocumented status, their inability to speak English and their lack of an education. Since the scenes were based on interviews of family members and were based on true stories the student/co-researchers became aware of the fact that their family members were regularly called “wetback”, “spic” and told repeatedly to “speak English” and “go back to Mexico where you belong!” All of which was portrayed in the script and on stage with great conviction, integrity, compassion and courage by the student/co-researchers as actors in the play.

In the final scenes of the play, the main character finally understands the importance of his/her culture, their relationships with their family and the value of an education. They begin by illustrating how much they were denied by saying, “Wow, I didn’t know anything! I didn’t know
my culture or my ancestors! I didn’t realize all of the challenges and sacrifices!” Once again these lines of dialogue in the play/performance mirror the transformation of the student/co-researchers as they analyzed their own data. The epilogue gave each student/co-researchers the opportunity to perform their final monologue/reflection:

I want to take this time to appreciate my ancestors because they did so much to make me become a young lady. They sacrifice their life for me because they wanted me to have a good future. If I never heard their stories I would never have realized everything they went through. This makes me appreciate my education to become someone important. I will never let go of an opportunity that I have. I will always try to shine and be the star my parents want me to be. I love you mom you are always in my heart (Paula).

This monologue is just one example of the many beautiful things written and spoken to their parents in front of an audience. Each student/co-researcher had an opportunity to recite their final monologue whenever their families were in attendance. We had many performances during our final phase in order to give all the actors the opportunity. In chapter five I provide a deeper analysis of these student reflections.

The final script and monologues were performed at the world premier of the play/research, which kicked off the Season of Service and was held for staff and parents of the charter school. The world premiere also served as the signature project of a demonstration site for an outside partner on how to implement service-learning and CRP. The performance was a smashing success! The student/co-researchers were perfect in their execution of the performance/research components and were ecstatic at the standing ovation and overall reaction from the crowd. The staff and parents were moved to tears by the incredible storytelling. During a brief question and answer session with the audience both family and staff expressed how powerful the play/research was and how important this type of work was for the
community. Parents came to me with tears in their eyes and hugged me thanking me for providing an opportunity for their stories to be told. Parents also expressed how their children benefited from the work and the change they had seen in their children. For weeks after the world premier I was still receiving emails and congratulations on the performance/research. Many of them expressed how it should continue next year and expanded on the school site and the funder was very excited by the success of the demonstration site. However, it is important to note that I also began to see a growing tension between myself and some of the core teachers and administrators, which I will address in my final reflection.

Immediately after the world premier the student/co-researchers took part in the demonstration site visit with school officials from across the country. During the site visit they took part in a much more in depth question and answer session behind closed doors, which was one of the more powerful moments during the entire research process. During the question and answer session the visiting educators asked questions about the importance, value and impact of the curriculum. The student-co-researchers completely opened up and shared incredibly personal information unlike anything we had seen to date. Many tears were shed as Ana Maria, Rita and Debbie shared how painful it was while exploring their cultural identity. Participants were inspired as José, Dulce, Esperanza and Reyna described in detail how vitally important the curriculum was for their motivation, identity, relationships and self-confidence. In chapter five I go in depth on the impact of the curriculum that was revealed during the site visit question and answer session.

After the world premier the student/co-researchers took their show on the road and performed in a variety of different venues and culminated in the formation of Teatro Libertad. The student/co-researchers performed for various grade levels at their own charter school, a cohort of soon to be teachers at San Jose State University, the Institute for Teachers of Color at
Santa Clara University and, the National conference for our outside partner in Las Vegas.

Each time they performed the students became more confident in their abilities, which showed in the individual choices they made to make the play/research better. They also wrote final reflections that integrated the research and data analysis with the performance component that fully integrated art and research, which I discuss in chapter five.

*Teatro Libertad* was formed as a result of the student/co-researchers desire to found an organization that was dedicated to reclaiming their culture and history and as a way to pass this type of work to the younger students in the school. During the formation and naming of the new theatre company Paloma, one of the leadership members stated “We are *Teatro Libertad* because our parents have these stories in their hearts and when they tell them to us, we set them free, and their stories set us free!” Her statement clearly showed the importance of our counter-stories, was agreed upon by all the other members and instantly became the name of our troupe.
CHAPTER FIVE
DATA ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

I’d like to thank everyone for their time, devotion, cooperation, but most importantly their stories. I would have no sense of direction and no path paved for me. Every story they told, every rule they broke, every obstacle they surpassed only to get me the education and life everyone deserves but few achieve. I have to take advantage that my education has been given to me for free unlike my ancestors that fought so hard but still were ignored. Their voices however still live in me, in my culture in my history and in my future. I want…no I need to prove that their struggles weren’t all in vain and that our voices will not be silenced. Just as my mother worked for her children, I will work for my future. Just as she was forced to quit school for work, I will force myself to stay and achieve my goals and aspirations. She is my inspiration, she is my warrior and I will not let anything my warrior did for me be forgotten and only spoken in the whispers of the wind. Now that I have portrayed an event that someone else lived I feel privileged to be who I am so I walk like I only have one life to live and stand like I have nothing to lose. I stand here as a proud Latina looking ahead to my future (Esperanza).

The above reflection was written by Esperanza, one of the student/co-researchers as a monologue that synthesized the YPAR action steps and integrated the data analysis of her reflections. The monologue/research was performed at the world premier of La Guerra Cultural: A Culture Clash. She performed in the play and recited her monologue at the conclusion with her mother in attendance. It was a powerful moment with not a dry eye in the
audience. All of the student/co-researchers wrote monologues using the same process and had opportunities to do the same when their parents were present. It was the intersection of research and performance and was amazing to behold. Her monologue contains some of the answers to the YPAR action steps and illuminates the impact that a CSTC has on Latino students. Her monologue also contains some of the components of Yosso’s (2005) Community Cultural Wealth (CCW). In this chapter I will provide the findings of the YPAR-generated data and discuss the intersection with CCW (Yosso, 2005).

This study relied on the student/co-researchers as holders and creators of knowledge (Delgado Bernal, 2002), tapped into their community’s cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005), and implemented YPAR as an aligning methodology. Since so much of the study depended on the student/co-researcher voice, leadership, data generation and data analysis, I frame findings based on the action steps created by the student/co-researchers. In this chapter I focus on a small group of participant reflections because although the data on the questions was very similar, some students went into much more detail in their written reflections. It was the details in some of the reflections that illuminated the impact most clearly. Also, due to the immense amount of data and reflections I chose to focus on a small group for a more in depth analysis of the data. I begin by discussing how the student/co-researchers created their YPAR action steps. This is followed by a section that includes the impact on their motivation towards education then a section on the impact on their racial/cultural identity. Next I discuss the impact on their relationships with their families and self-confidence. I then provide a review of my dissertation before presenting the implications.
Creation of the Student/Co-researcher Action Steps

The development of the student/co-researcher action steps began during the first phase. When the student/co-researchers first chose to participate in the Leadership Class, I explained my own process of researching my family’s history and the impact it had on me. I told the students that if they were to participate in the project they would develop their own research action steps on the impact of the Counter-storytelling curriculum. Their original action step was to examine the impact that their counter-stories had on them. This original action step was further developed at the culmination of the second phase after the student/co-researchers initiated the research of their family’s counter-story.

In order to research their family’s counter-stories the student/co-researchers created the previously mentioned interview template based on a simple research premise “What do you want to know about that which you do not know?” (Pizarro, lecture 2011). They listed the questions that they wanted to know more about from their family members. In class they shared their questions, categorized the questions and agreed on a final template of questions. They then interviewed a family member that immigrated to the United States. From the answers of the questions they created a narrative telling the story of their interviewee. They each had a chance to read their narratives out loud to the class and the rest of the class gave feedback. They then took the feedback and revised their narrative into the final version of the story.

After they all had a chance to read their narratives and receive feedback, I posed their original action step: “What is the impact of our stories?” Each student/co-researcher gave an example of the impact that their stories had on them and we created a large class list of responses. The responses were then categorized by the students according to similarities they had. The categories were given themes by the students so that we could differentiate them.
Once the responses were all categorized and given thematic titles, the students created their final action step according to the theme of each category. The action steps were examined at benchmark moments over the course of the year. The students wrote their responses to the student generated action steps into their fieldwork notebooks. I will give examples of these responses in the next four sections, as they were primary sources of data. Since some students learn and express themselves differently, we also recorded some responses to appeal to different types of learning.

It is also necessary to know how they created the definitions of each action step. As stated previously, the first phase of the curriculum culminated with the creation of their original action step. The second phase culminated with a refinement of their original guiding action step after they completed their counter-story research and we did a preliminary analysis of the data. During the third phase it became clear that we needed to create a theatrical device that connected the separate vignettes into a cohesive theater production. During a brainstorming activity the student/co-researchers decided on creating two characters that would tell the whole story, which would be based on an analysis of their data that mirrored their own journeys. This was a moment when theatre and research began co-existing and the play itself became research based on data analysis. This was also a moment when the student/co-researchers also were co-creators of the CSTC.

On this particular day during phase 3 the student/co-researchers completed rehearsal and did a reflection on how it was impacting them. Nearly all the students volunteered to share their findings. As they were reading their info aloud, Maria made an observation of the data “Some of the answers don’t make sense. It seems like some people are answering different questions.” During the ensuing discussion the student/co-researchers came to the conclusion that some
student/co-researchers were unclear, for example, on the meaning of motivation towards education. We needed a definition that all could agree upon. In order to create a consistent definition we returned to small work groups to generate ideas, shared them as a group and agreed upon final definitions for each of the four action steps, which are embedded in the four sections.

**Motivation Towards Education**

The first action step created by the student/co-researchers was to “Examine the impact of our stories on my motivation towards my education.” Using journals, the student/co-researchers reflected regularly on the impact that the CSTC was having. In the analysis that follows I rely upon the student/co-researcher definition of motivation towards education: *Continuing to get educated and inspired to do well. A yearning to want to accomplish something.* These journals capture some of the student journeys that demonstrate a transformation in motivation towards their education.

**Examining the Impact: Sacrifice, Opportunity and Gratitude**

During in-class reflections student/co-researchers shared findings with the group. During the analysis of motivation towards education, two things became clear: 1) the student/co-researchers were not aware of the sacrifices made nor the challenges and oppression that their parents endured so that the students could get a quality education and, 2) once the student/co-researchers made this connection and understood the difficulties their parents faced, students shifted their view on education for the better.

All of the students relayed conversations with their parents in which their parents would tell them to do well in school because they themselves never had the opportunity to go to school. However, the students also expressed that many times this became a lecture that fell on deaf ears. The student/co-researchers explained that the lectures did not provide the context or counter-
story that explained the reason why it was so important to their parents. Through interviewing parents, writing them into stories and creating a performance, the student/researchers were able to connect with and understand what their parents were trying to communicate.

Early on the responses were often very short, did not give detail and showed little to no connection with their stories. For example, the first time that we implemented the original research action step about the impact of their stories Procorro wrote, “Ummm, I don’t really know but, I think because our parents wanted us to have the education they never had.” The responses were similar when I spoke with and asked probing questions of the other student/co-researchers. They would discuss how the stories should motivate them but could not elaborate as to why.

However, as we went through the process, their reflections became deeper as their understanding of their parent’s journey deepened. Esperanza elaborated on the impact shortly before our world premier by writing:

I’m much more motivated to continue my education because I know who I’m representing when I receive that diploma. I yearn for a fulfilled life and I’ve learned that it begins with an education. Through these stories I’ve gained a unique understanding of exactly what our ancestors had to go through for my success. I feel a strong need to defend what they fought for (Esperanza).

In this reflection, Esperanza connected sacrifices that her mother made with deep empathy and tapped into both familial and resistant capital (Yosso, 2005). She explained that through gaining a deeper understanding of her ancestors, in this case her mother, she wanted to do better. She also demonstrated a level of resistance in wanting to defend the progress made by her mother.
Reyna was another young Chicana that articulated the impact of her journey when she reflected:

These stories made me think and realize that my ancestors and family members could not have this experience. So I need to take responsibility for my actions in school and take opportunities that others were not able to have and make them proud. When I realized this, I figured out that I need to push myself to work my hardest and be successful in life to be somebody important not as somebody who joined a gang and took drugs (Reyna).

Reyna was able to reflect on the transformation the CSTC had on her motivation towards her education through not only showing how she understood her parent’s sacrifices, but what learning this meant to her. In this reflection Reyna also directly addressed intervening obstacles such as: gangs and drugs, which many of them face on a regular basis with a newly found resistant capital.

Lastly, Dulce was another of the young Chicanas in the class whom went into great detail on how the CSTC and the ensuing stories impacted her perception on her motivation towards her education. Dulce specifically addressed the impact on her view of writing:

The stories impacted MY education by allowing me to take advantage of what I have. My family members never had something so special like I do. Education is a big aspect in life. It can create a special feeling in a person’s soul. Without education no one would have the capacity to express themselves mentally. For example, writing is taught in school. Where do you think poets learn to write? It is not just a skill. Education takes time and effort. Those who make the best of education will always be able to look back and be proud of what they do. I can say that education is not just a daily activity. Its something I look forward to everyday. It is what made me today. As I grow in life this will get harder and harder but I will have that skill in my pocket everyday (Dulce).
Her response was particularly interesting because it was her ability to integrate poetry and prose into the writing of the script that elevated the quality of the performance. Dulce had to ask permission to use poetry in the writing of her scene, once she got it, she ran with it and it influenced the rest of the group. By the time it was done, all of the participants included poetry to some extent to express their thoughts and it began with Dulce’s willingness to incorporate poetry into her story.

**José’s Journey and Transformation**

In this section I elaborate on a single student as an example of the action step: Examine the impact of our stories on my motivation towards my education. José was a 13 year old Chicano. José described this shift in his perception towards education as he interviewed his grandfather. Like all of the other student/co-researchers his reflections early on were very simple and did not capture the full impact of the CSTC. José wrote early on about his grandfather “It changes me because it makes me proud and makes me want to have what my grandpa didn’t have, an education!”

However, his later reflections show a much more complete picture of the impact. He explains that he began with an attitude that did not value education. He then elaborates on how his understanding changed once he understood how difficult life was for his grandfather and the sacrifices that were made for him:

I used to think that having an education wasn’t everything in life. I used to try my best to ignore responsibility. I was about to give in but then I had the interview with my grandfather. He told me how he had to drop out of school because of money and that’s when it hit me. My grandpa didn’t come to America for nothing, He came to give future generations the life he didn’t have. I then felt that an education was a privilege and that it
will get me places. My motivation towards my education has evolved to something big and I owe it all to my grandpa. My grandfather did so much for me. He faced vicious conditions and was nearly killed just to give me and my mom a better life. He motivated me to keep learning and to never give up (José).

His later reflection captures a much deeper understanding of the sacrifices that his grandfather made for him and ultimately the greater impact that these sacrifices had on his motivation. Once again aspirational capital is highlighted as a result of the CSTC. José’s research of his familial counter-story illuminated the immense challenges, struggles, dangers and sacrifices made for José to have an opportunity for education. Once this revelation was made, José shifted his perception towards education with more motivation to do well in school driven by being grateful for his opportunity.

Racial and Cultural Identity

The second action step created by the student/co-researchers was to “Examine the impact of our stories on my racial/cultural identity.” Student/co-researchers defined this action step as:

Special languages, rituals, food, celebrations and values that make you, you. Makes you special and unique and defines where you come from and who you are. Your roots. Student reflections based on the action step show a transformation in racial and cultural identity. In this section, I discuss how student/co-researchers transformed themselves as they engaged with their families’ counter-stories.

Examining The Impact: What you don’t know can hurt you!

As with the previous action steps, in-class reflections and findings were shared with the group. During analysis of racial/cultural identity three things became clear: 1) the student/co-researchers had been de-culturalized and did not even know it, 2) once the student/co-researchers
made this connection and understood their loss of culture and the importance of their culture they became determined to reclaim it and, 3) racism existed with their parents and now with them, and part of their role was now to fight against discrimination.

Esperanza described the impact that her mother’s story had on her cultural/racial identity by reflecting:

Before I learned about my family’s story I never felt a need to learn who I truly am and who’s blood flows through me. What heritage that is engraved in my skin, lungs, and heart didn’t matter but now I feel foolish that I ignored all the stories written on me when I look in the mirror, I’ve learned that my race gives me another reason to stand tall and brace against any obstacle in my path. Being Latina gives me a sense of fear of the discrimination that I will face but with that it also brings a sense of courage because I know I am not standing alone. I’m standing with many Aztec and Mexican soldiers (Esperanza).

Esperanza described how she was at first unaware of her heritage and did not even realize the importance of exploring her culture. Through the curriculum she was able to reclaim her cultural heritage and also tapped into Yosso’s (2005) resistant capital. She explained how learning about her race helped her develop internal fortitude to “stand tall brace any obstacle in my path.” Her transformation also demonstrated her courage and resistance against discrimination that she knows she will have to face, but now knows that she can.

Reyna described her transformational journey of engaging with her counter-story in a written reflection:

Before these stories I was kinda ashamed that I was Mexican because people thought that we would be 16 and pregnant, in gangs or on drugs. But also they think that Mexicans
cannot succeed or do well but after reading these stories I realized that I am MexiCAN not MexiCAN’T, so now I can go into the world and say that I am Mexican and proud. These stories help me understand my culture and why it’s important because if I do not know my culture than I don’t know who I am (Reyna).

In this reflection Reyna directly addressed how important it is for Latinos to know their culture. She explains how knowing a culture helps define who a person is and in doing so taps into a resistant capital to succeed. Reyna transformed from feeling ashamed to being proud. She also reinforced the importance of knowing your cultural self in order to withstand the intervening obstacles that stop many students from achieving their goals. Her journey tapped into aspirational capital as described by Yosso (2005) by proclaiming that now that she has regained her culture she will be able to overcome the negative stereotypes and succeed.

José explained the impact that the curriculum had on his racial/cultural identity. In his reflection he directly expressed the courage to stand up for what he believes:

In the future I will fight against stereotypes because of Leadership. Stereotypes have set different cultures apart from society because of fake lies that others have created to put different people down. Leadership has given me the courage to continue fighting for what I believe in. Leadership has given me the cultural knowledge so I could pass on the stories from generation to generation. It has created the ability to fight for my beliefs and has created the path for my success because I know who I am (José).

He demonstrated the courage attained by reclaiming his cultural heritage and the impact that it had on him. By engaging with his counter-story through the CSTC curriculum he also tapped into resistant capital like all the other students, but he also tapped into familial capital. He
describes the importance of these stories and the impact that they had on his identity, and also the importance of passing it on to the next generation.

**Ana Maria’s Identity Journey and Transformation**

Most of the students in the class were first generation Mexican Americans (Chicano/a) and their journeys were very similar in how they did their interviews and the impact that it had on each of them. However, one student in the class did not fall into this category and her journey and transformation was different than the rest. Ana Maria was a 14-year-old with Latina with Puerto Rican and El Salvadorian parents. She was one of the few students that did not speak the language of her family’s origin. She is third generation on her mother’s side and her father migrated to the United States legally. She had a very difficult time with the class/research early on because she felt completely disconnected from her homeland culture, which impacted her identity.

During one of our early class discussions while implementing the counter-storytelling research Ana Maria was one of the two students that was unable to complete the counter-storytelling research as it was designed in the curriculum. Mainly because she had no one that she could interview for the project as the curriculum was planned. I tried several times to collaborate with her to find a curricular solution but she was very frustrated with her situation as it was so different than the rest of the participants. She had a difficult time with her identity and expressing who she was culturally. She also explained how her racial, cultural and home language disconnect impacted her:

Okay, so me not knowing about my culture sucks. I asked my mom and dad and they know nothing! But I understand why I never learned Spanish. My dad knows Spanish and stuff, but when I ask him when I was trying to interview him ‘How did you guys
come here?’ He’s like ‘I don’t know, I don’t remember, I just remember that I grew up here.’ He doesn’t have an accent, he never taught us Spanish he doesn’t know really about his culture. With me I’m completely clueless and I’m like, I’m American but if somebody asked me, I’m latin American, I don’t know it’s weird, like I’ve always wondered. These stories make me wonder like what happened with my parent’s parents, my great grand parents. I want to know more, like I wanna know my family. My parents say they don’t know anything about the immigration stuff of our family (Ana Maria).

Ana Maria wrote this during the interview research of the curriculum and it was during this phase that she opted out and was around for class only sporadically. I communicated with her different ways of participating but it was clear that she was uncomfortable because she was unable to connect with her family during the counter-story research process. This was compounded because all of the other students were flourishing in the class. She opted out and returned fulltime during the analysis of the data as it specifically pertained to her situation. Ana Maria explains this process of why she left and why later on she returned:

Leadership was fun at first when we were doing all the acting stuff, but when it came to the cultural identity I left for a period of time because I didn’t have anybody to talk to about cultural identity, I didn’t have anybody to talk to interview because I didn’t know anything, my parents didn’t know anything, so I guess our past just kinda faded away, but when I found out about the main character, it was similar to what I was going through, she didn’t know who she was and she was just lost and stuff. I connected to that and I wanted to be the main character. Everybody else had a story in the play, I didn’t and I wanted to be something in the play. I’m so glad to come back to leadership because it made me aware of everything that I was letting go. It motivates me to figure out who I
am. Before Leadership I was ignoring my past. I thought it wasn’t important. Now because of Leadership, I’m able to find out my identity because I know it means something. In the future I will teach my kids what life was like. I will take my kids to our country and really try to involve my culture (Ana Maria).

Ana Maria demonstrates how our culture and language are important to us and what can happen to a student when they are disconnected from it.

The previous section also refers to the main character, which was based on an analysis of the data and resulted in two characters that frame the play/research. The main character begins as a young boy/girl that is having behavioral and academic difficulties in school and is in constant conflict with his/her parents. The second character is like a guardian angel/ancestor that comes to the main character at night and takes him/her on a dream journey to discover his/her past. The two characters go in and out of different scenes that are based on the counter-stories of each of the other student/co-researchers in the class. By the end of the play the main character is transformed by witnessing the power and strength of their immigrant ancestors through the sacrifices, challenges and racism endured. The young boy/girl is transformed into a person that is connected with their racial/cultural identity, is motivated towards their education, repairs relationships with their family and filled with self-confidence. Ana Maria explains her connection with the main character:

I connect with the character. I really don’t know anything about my culture. I’m trying to learn, I really am. When I am acting as the character, that’s really me, like I don’t know about my ancestors. I don’t know about this, I really don’t. So I really am the character (Ana Maria).
Ana Maria was one of the driving forces on the development of the main character and her analysis of the data and subsequent work on the script during this time was a clear example of the intersection between research and art. The transformation of the main character that was lost confused and struggling in school was a reflection of her journey.

During the final phase of the curriculum and the analysis of the final data Ana Maria explained the importance of the culture and how the curriculum impacted her. This journey and transformation mirrors that of the main character. Ana Maria like the main character, learns the importance of culture and the steps she is going to make to rectify her current plight:

I’m just scared that when I do have kids, and I don’t talk about this, our culture is going to completely fade away because I have nobody to talk to about it. Because I don’t know anything and my parents don’t know anything, so before leadership, I’m just gonna be transparent is that ok?” “Please do” “Why do we have to do it on immigrants, why can’t we do it on something better? My entire life I’ve been claiming that I am American, but I wouldn’t claim that I am Latin, and if somebody says ‘Do you speak Spanish” “I’d be like no, I’m born in America. After leadership class, I feel more obligated to find out more about my culture, than all the hard work of my ancestors and their ancestors is gonna fade away and my kids will never know (Ana Maria).

The de-culturalization that Ana Maria endured is similar to many other Latinos in the U.S. educational system. However, through the CSTC she was able to reconnect with her culture and begin the process of reclaiming her cultural/racial identity. Her journey demonstrates the importance of the homeland culture and language.
Rita’s Identity Journey and Transformation

Rita also had some differences in her journey and transformation largely because she was one of the most deeply impacted by the oppression, racism and stereotypes. This had a tremendous impact on her identity, how she engaged with the curriculum and ultimately exposed different issues and challenges than the rest. In this sub-section I will discuss her journey.

At the beginning of the process, Rita was as enthusiastic as everyone else to do her interview and adapt it into a play. However, when it came time to share her interview and narrative she began to shut down and, even though she was done with the interview, it took her several weeks to share her story. I did not push as I wanted the student/co-researchers to feel ready to share such intimate information on their families. One day she came to my office without an appointment to discuss her story. In the conversation she revealed that she was having a hard time with her story because she was afraid to share her story. She also informed me that her mother would not let her share this information in class because her mother was afraid that someone might use this information against her in the future. I explained to her that she did not have to share this with the class but that I would still like to be a part of the class and that we would not put her story into the play.

After the world premier and during the question and answer session Rita broke down and discussed how difficult the process was for her and framed other issues that Latina/o students face when they enter the U.S. educational system. Through her tears she stated:

I remember thinking “Why does god hate me?” It took me a really long time to learn English. I was in kindergarten and all I spoke was Spanish, why am I the only one. It started a long time ago when I was in kindergarten. I used to ask my parents “Why am I so dark skinned? I see everybody else is light skinned even though they’re Mexican?”
There was few of us Latinos in the kindergarten and I kept asking her “Why, why me?” she never wanted to tell me, and magazines and books all these light skinned people very skinny, and I remember thinking “I want to be somebody like this, skinny with light skin” You want to be how the media wants you to look like and its true. I’ve been criticized, told by people that I’m not good enough because, they wanted me very skinny with power and documents and they saw that I didn’t have that, I didn’t speak English right, I had my accent, I still have it and I really don’t care what they said, but it hurt me so bad just to say that my dream was falling apart because everybody was telling me that “You’re not good enough, you’re not good enough, everywhere I went.” Everybody just stared at me because I was darker and I didn’t speak English well, they didn’t care if I was smart enough, they just looked at the physical (Rita).

Her comments highlighted the difficulties that Latinas sometimes face, particularly not being able to speak English. She also discussed other identity issues in her appearance, mainly her dark skin and desire to be thin, which were both reinforced in the media. She carried with her this emotional wound and it was revealed through the process.

However, she also discussed later on how important it was to go through the process and work on her own cultural identity as she explains in the following reflection:

Hi my name is Rita and Leadership has opened my eyes in a way that I can see life not as something to give up on, but something worth fighting for. Before I was in Leadership, being teased at was something that everyday I had to fight with. Always hearing, ‘Look, her future is to be 16 and pregnant, join a gang, and do drugs and get deported where she belongs!’ I hated myself, and my dark skin tone and not having papers. But now I see that both my race AND my skin color are beautiful. My parents are the sun in my life,
without them I would just be a lonely dark girl with no trace of who I am. These stories have made me grow closer to them because I know that I can trust them. I want to be the woman that stands out in a crowd and doesn’t hide in the shadows, the woman who blew away the minds of others, the woman who can make you think, ‘She’s different’ the woman I want to be is the woman who doesn’t bleed out for others so that they could just throw it away, but a woman who heals. A woman who found out who where she belonged, here, with her family and friends. I’m proudly Juan and Rosa Maria’s daughter with dark skin, an Acapulcan (Rita).

Rita’s journey and transformation captures the importance of cultural identity to young Latina/os in education. She also demonstrates the cultural capital that was gained through the CSTC in the forms of aspirational, resistant and familial capital. Her journey also illustrates the spiritual wound inflicted described by Tello (2008) as a result of the loss of culture and history. Lastly, her journey shows the healing impact of reclaiming our counter-stories.

**Relationships With My Family**

The third action step created by the student/co-researchers was to “Examine the impact of our stories on my relationships with my family.” Student/co-researcher’s defined this action step as: *How we get along with and understand our parents.* Student reflections based on this action step show a transformation in their relationships with their family. In this section, I discuss how student/co-researcher’s relationships were transformed as they engaged with their family’s counter-stories.

**Examining the Impact on Relationships: Empathy and Understanding**

Esperanza demonstrates the impact and transformation that the curriculum had on her relationship with her mother by describing her shift in perspective as she learned of the daily
sacrifices, discrimination and abuse her mother had to endure. In her final reflection she explains how it made her more grateful:

Before this experience I wasn’t grateful of every day-to-day sacrifice my mother makes to lift me up and bring forth success. Like how she face discrimination and abuse from her own family. I now feel a sense of pride because I have a mother that went through hell and back and still stands tall with her head held high. She still works for her family and everyday I look at her in awe of how much courage and strength she has (Esperanza).

Esperanza discusses how the CSTC transformed her relationship and put her in touch with a familial capital that she was unaware of at the beginning. Her mother’s story was made more profound because she played her own mother and portrayed the difficulties she endured as Esperanza elaborated: “It was a really challenging experience since most of the roles I played I was being abused. It was mind blowing every time I thought of how much struggle they went through.” Through her exploration and subsequent portrayal of her mother she was able to understand her mother’s sacrifices which ultimately led to Esperanza being more grateful for her mother.

Dulce also explained the transformative impact of exploring her mother’s story when she elaborated in her final reflection:

My relationship with my family has changed dramatically. I never respected my mom and dad. I always questioned why did they push me to the extremes? Or why did they treat me this way? I always discouraged their feelings. Then that night it was cold and seemed like the perfect night to surprise them with the feeling of me being curious. The memories and the feelings just exploded from my mother’s mouth. The energy and excitement in her voice made me realize that I was wrong all along. I didn’t believe that
I can miss out on so much. After that our relationship was so entwined. There was no way I was going back to my old life. I no longer question her authority (Dulce).

Dulce’s journey demonstrates the transformation that the CSTC had on her relationships with her mother. Before she explored her mother’s story, Dulce did not respect or understand her parents. After going through the process of researching her mother’s counter-story, Dulce understood her parent’s motivation and decision-making.

During our final reflections José discussed the significant impact that the curriculum had on his relationships with his family. His reflection demonstrates a great depth of understanding gained by exploring his grandfather’s story. It also illustrates the impact that it had on his relationships and in doing so connects with the familial capital that these stories directly tap into:

These stories have made my family relationship increase to a level where they make up everything in my life. Now that I understand my grandpa’s struggles, I know that life wasn’t as easy as it is today. I know that my grandpa went through a lot and now I respect him so much more. Every time I see my grandpa, I see a proud man, a hero to the entire family. He’s the one that created a free life for me and my mom. I am much closer to him now. I ask him questions whenever we have time and I don’t feel uncomfortable. Now I feel like I can tell my grandpa and my mom anything and they won’t judge me. I enjoy my grandpa’s presence because it soothes me and I enjoy how, anything that I do, say or watch is connected to him somehow. I love how anything that happens, he connects to his life, the simplest moments can bring bad or great memories from his past and it makes us so close. My grandpa and I, and all of my family love one another, but these stories made me love my grandpa even more (José).
José’s journey with his family, specifically his grandfather shows the impact that the stories had and the familial capital that was gained through the curriculum. Through this capital he is able to maintain a connection with his family, which enables José access to a fountain of wealth to navigate the complex world around him.

Self-confidence

The final action step created by the student/co-researchers was to “Examine the impact of our stories on my self-confidence.” Student/co-researcher’s defined this action step as: Stand up for who you are. Proud, not afraid to be yourself. Speak up for yourself and what you believe in. Student reflections based on this action step show the impact that the stories had on their self-confidence. In this section, I discuss how student/co-researcher’s self-confidence was impacted as they engaged with their family’s counter-stories.

Impact on Self-Confidence: Strength, Pride and Resistance

As previously mentioned José’s journey demonstrated a transformation in his relationship with his grandfather. This improved relationship put José in touch with his familial capital and it also had a great impact on his self-confidence. As a result of the curriculum and specifically his grandfather’s story, José explains the impact that it had on his self-confidence:

I feel extremely confident now and feel like I can do great things. These stories have given me the knowledge to keep fighting for what I believe in. I am not afraid to change stereotypes because they are wrong and for me that’s enough to fight back. I have the courage to stand up and fight back. I am proud to be Mexican, knowing my cultural background has released my mind because I know where to go now. These stories have inspired me to be brave and persist because my grandpa did. He was brave so should I (José).
José’s self-confidence was transformed, his relationship improved and the understanding of his cultural background deepened. This transformation was buttressed by aspirational, familial and resistant capital.

Dulce was a young Chicana that echoes much of the same transformation in her self-confidence as a result of the counter-storytelling research when she states:

The impact that the stories had on my self-confidence was very breathtaking. Before this I was very quiet and didn’t know how to interact with the world. I made sure that no attention was placed on me. When I joined I felt a rush of excitement. I was excited to speak up and be heard. I wasn’t going to be afraid, not anymore. I wanted to believe in myself. In various times I couldn’t see myself performing. I reached for advice and once I did I felt better. It was exciting to be in the shoes of another. I could be anything I wanted as long as I believed in myself. Now I’m not afraid (Dulce).

Dulce shows her transformation going from someone that did not want to interact with the world because of her fear. In the following quote Dulce discusses how she felt prior to engaging with the CSTC and exploring her families history:

Before Leadership class I was very self-conscious about myself. I didn’t believe in my ability to do amazing things. I never tried to get attention of people. It was as if I was just a drop of water in a bucket full of water. I never saw the importance in myself. I didn’t want to get involved in anything. But the one thing I wanted was to show the world what I wanted to do, but most importantly to become a leader. In my culture I always put aside where I came from. I shoved it under my bed (Dulce).

The previous quote was written by Dulce and demonstrates the low level of confidence that she had and how self-conscious she felt. She also connects this low self-confidence with the
oppression of her culture. In the following quote she describes her transformation as a result of reclaiming her history:

Now because of Leadership I am someone who takes advantage of both my education and offers like Leadership. I believe in myself and no longer see the need to put myself down. All these new found emotions and actions were found under my bed just waiting to be found. I can come forward and express myself in any way. I don’t care what people say as long as I am being me and doing what I love doing. No one is going to stop me now and who I am inside and out. My cultural essence has sprouted and has implanted in my daily life. When I began I was a new seed being planted in the soil. Now I am growing into a rooted tree. I can lead and be myself without worry about what others think (Dulce).

Her transformation demonstrates how being connected with her culture gave her roots that allow her to stand strong. She tapped into aspirational and resistant capital in the process, giving her the self-confidence to express herself. Her transformation went from a quiet, passive student to one of the leaders of the class that played a major role in both acting and the inclusion of a high level of poetry integration into the script writing.

**Dissertation Review and Implications**

This research examined the impact of CRT in the classroom. Using applied CRT with counter-storytelling and CCW allowed Latino students access to their vast cultural wealth in order to challenge the oppressive schools they navigate. Over the course of one academic year, I documented how Applied CRT and CCW impacted Latino students in an urban charter school in the California’s Bay Area. The central research questions were:

1. What is the impact of a counter-storytelling curriculum on Latino student engagement?
2. What is the impact of a counter-storytelling curriculum on Latino student identity?

In Chapter One I discussed the problem of de-culturalization and the impact that it has on Latino students. I demonstrated how Eurocentric epistemologies dominate curriculum and pedagogies. I also showed how this Eurocentric domination did not allow for Culturally Relevant Pedagogies to flourish in our educational system. I concluded this chapter by illustrating the negative impact that this subtractive schooling has on Latino student engagement and identity.

In Part I of Chapter Two, I outlined the Hegemonic Educational Paradigm (HEP). I began by providing a macro-historical perspective of the de-culturalizing legislation and educational policy that serves as the foundation for cultural oppression. I followed by demonstrating the Eurocentric epistemologies that dominate the educational landscape and the resulting lack of culturally relevant pedagogies. I concluded this section with literature that examined the negative impact that de-culturalization has had on Latino student identity, engagement and academic performance.

In Part II of Chapter Two, I introduced a Counter Educational Approach (CEA), which is an alternative way of engaging Latino students that honors the Latino culture by building culture and historical knowledge into the curriculum. I began by examining literature that places CRT as the epistemological lens for the curriculum because CRT challenges the oppressive nature of the status quo. I followed this by deconstructing literature on counter-storytelling and demonstrating that my curriculum contains the elements of Culturally Relevant Pedagogies (CRP). These elements are based on Ladson-Billings three elements of CRP including 1) high academic expectations, 2) cultural competence and, 3) critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings,
1995). I concluded by introducing Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) as an important element of both a critical race curriculum and research methodology.

In Chapter Three, I outlined research methodologies. I began with the creation of the YPAR research questions and described the sample of participating student/co-researchers. I followed this with an analysis of the site context where the research was conducted. I then provided the methodological stages and curriculum phases. I then discussed data gathering tools and provided an overview of the curriculum. I concluded this chapter with the data analysis plan, limitations and clarified the validity of the data.

In Chapter Four I created an ethnographic portrait of my year implementing a CSTC with a group of student/co-researchers. I went in depth to illustrate the phases of the CSTC and the alignment with the methodological stages. I created a portrait that demonstrates the journey of the student/co-researchers. In it I show the creation of the YPAR actions steps and their integration into the curriculum.

In Chapter Five I provided the data analysis based on the aforementioned YPAR actions steps. I illustrated how the CSTC allowed for several forms of CCW to be accessed through the CSTC. I also demonstrated the impact that the CSTC had on several of the student/co-researchers. Lastly, I discussed how the CSTC was an example of the intersection of art and research.

I now discuss the implications of the impact of a CSTC on Latino student engagement and identity. One of the main concepts of my research was that students are the holders and creators of knowledge (Delgado Bernal, 2002). This concept was woven into the methodological framework through the use of counter-storytelling and YPAR. Therefore, in order to stay true to both of these research concepts, the following sections provide answers to my main research
questions using a framework based on the four student/co-researcher action steps. Each of the student/co-researcher action steps provides insight into both of the central research questions. In the final chapter I discuss policy recommendations, potential teacher trainings and curricular suggestions designed to implement this revolutionary educational approach. I conclude with areas of further research and my reflection.

Implications RQ1: Impact of a CSTC on Latino Student Engagement?

The first research question guiding this research was based on the impact that the CSTC had on Latino student engagement. Through the use of YPAR and the first action step it was clear that it had a significant impact on their engagement as the student/co-researchers described in their own words the impact on their motivation towards their education. The student/co-researchers clearly demonstrated and articulated that the investigation into their familial counter-stories heightened their gratitude, which increased their motivation towards their education. In the case of the student/co-researchers this increased motivation sprang forth from their desire to do well because they shifted their perspective towards education. Their research into their stories and interviews with family members that migrated to the U.S. opened their eyes into the sacrifices, challenges and racism that their families endured. This inspired in them the desire to do well mainly because they saw that their own parents and grandparents did not have the opportunity at a quality education. This inspiration to do well is an example of aspirational, familial and resistant capital (Yosso, 2005), which was tapped into as a result of the curriculum.

This first research question was also answered through the second action step as the student/co-researchers explored the impact on their racial/cultural identity. As the student/co-researchers explored the impact on their racial/cultural identity they articulated the transformation that it had on them as human beings and the important place that culture holds in
the Latino community. The student/co-researchers discussed that through the CSTC they were able to reclaim their culture and through this reclaiming they were also inspired to do well and be more engaged in school. This inspiration was driven by the aspirational, familial and resistant capital (Yosso, 2005) gained as a result of the CSTC.

The third action step was based on the impact that the CSTC had on their relationships with their families, and this too, heightened their engagement in their education. As a component of the CSTC the student/co-researchers were required to interview their parents and grandparents. Through this interaction the student/co-researchers reported improved and transformed relationships with their family members. This improvement in relationships was directly connected to the access with the gained familial capital (Yosso, 2005) and resulted in the desire to do better in school.

The first guiding research question intersected with the final student/co-researcher action step and also demonstrated a heightened level of self-confidence which also led to a rise in their motivation towards their education. The student/co-researchers demonstrated how engaging with the CSTC gave them access to a cultural wealth and a gained racial/cultural identity, which inspired them to do well in school and take advantage of their academic opportunities. Once again the data showed how the CSTC tapped into aspirational, familial and resistant capital (Yosso, 2005), which gave them the foundation to want to better in school.

**Implications RQ2: Impact of a CSTC on Latino Student Identity?**

The second guiding research question was specific to the impact that the CSTC had on Latino student identity. For this research question I once again relied on the data of the YPAR action steps. The data from the YPAR action steps demonstrated how the CSTC allowed for the
student/co-researchers to create healthier identities as they reclaimed their culture, stories and history. In this section I discuss how the CSTC impacted the student/co-researchers identities.

The first action step revolved around their motivation towards their education. The data showed that the student/co-researchers were able to transform their educational identities. Many of the student/co-researchers reported a transformation in their attitudes their motivation towards their education. After engaging with their stories they discussed how it heightened their gratitude as a result of understanding their families struggles, which led to them transforming their identity within an educational setting.

The second action step was based on the impact that the CSTC had on their racial/cultural identity. This action step directly addressed the importance of culture and race and the data showed a significant impact on their racial/cultural identity. All the student/co-researchers reported how being Latino gave them a heightened sense of pride as a result of learning their familial counter-story. They explained that they now felt much more desire and inspiration to fight against racism and stereotypes. This action step demonstrated the familial, aspirational and resistant capital (Yosso, 2005) gained as a result of the CSTC.

The third action step was based on the impact that counter-stories had on relationships. This action step demonstrated how engaging with the CSTC can improve relationships with family members. The student/co-researchers explained that as a result of the CSTC their relationships improved with the parents and grandparents as they began to understand and empathize their sacrifices and struggles. This changed their identity by changing how they viewed themselves within the Latino community. The student/co-researchers tapped into their familial capital (Yosso, 2005) and this transformed them into members of the community that
were now proud of their parents and ready to stand tall with their community in the fight against racism.

The final action step revolved around their self-confidence. Once again the data demonstrated a transformation in the student/co-researchers as they reported a heightened sense of self-confidence. This impacted their identity as they now had access to the familial, aspirational and resistant capital (Yosso, 2005). As a result they now felt a sense of connection with something larger than themselves and were now inspired to do more with their lives and for the Latino community. They now wanted to make their families proud and had the confidence to do so.
CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

When I began this research I was searching for an alternative way to academically engage Latino students. My research demonstrates a revolutionary way to engage Latino students. By exploring their personal counter-stories Latino students were able to 1) tap into their cultural wealth, 2) provide insight of their social context and, 3) repair some of the wounds caused by a racist and oppressive educational system. Replication of this curriculum could create academic opportunities for Latino students so fewer youth end up like Antonio, the student of mine that dropped out of school and later died as a result of gang violence.

The year that I spent with my student/co-researchers was the most profound year I have spent as an educator. It has completely changed my views on education and I feel blessed to have had the opportunity to work with such amazing students. When I started out on this research I was simply another piece of the U.S. educational system that de-culturalizes Latino students. However, the results of this research have demonstrated that there is an alternative way to teach Latino students that shifts the epistemological lens. This epistemological shift allows for the culture of Latino students to be placed in the center of pedagogical approach that taps into the homeland culture of Latino students that increases engagement and has a positive impact on their racial/cultural identity.

Through the implementation of a CSTC, the student/co-researchers demonstrated that they were able to directly tap into their vast Community Cultural Wealth. This enabled them to heal old wounds attributed to a loss of culture. They were able to reclaim their racial/cultural identity. They were able to improve their relationships with their families. They experienced a heightened sense of self-confidence. This all led to the student/co-researchers wanting to do
better in school. They reported a transformation in their attitudes as a result of understanding the sacrifices, challenges and racism endured by their family members. The data showed that when students are denied their culture they are missing a very component that makes them who they are, but by engaging the CSTC they were able to reclaim their culture and history.

The following is a letter written by Maria to an organization in order to secure funds so that the Leadership program continues. In it she explains why the program is so important to her and the other Latina/o students:

Dear friends at the Oakland Foundation (a pseudonym),

My name is Maria I am a 7th grader at Imagination Charter School in Oakland, California. During our study hall time we have an optional class or an extra curricular class. One of the amusing and amazing classes is known as Leadership! To continue visiting different colleges to perform our play that we pieced together ourselves known as “La Guerra Cultural: A Culture Clash” we need money for traveling fees. That's where you come in.

Leadership class is a class where you can simply express yourself in a different and fun way which is acting! It has also been extremely moving for each student involved. This year we've accomplished so much such as our play La Guerra Cultural: A Culture Clash. However, we had a process to be where we are now. We first each had a questionnaire for an important person in our family on their childhood, education, and their journey to the United States. Next, we shared what we learned with “the wolf pack” (the leadership group is known as the wolf pack because our acting coach, Mr.Cuevas is known as the main wolf). We received comments and ideas for possible scenes. We then reached deep into our minds and wrote scenes that later became the
We casted parts and practiced, practiced, practiced! All that was left was to perform where we were wanted. Later, we wrote monologues on our real experiences after what we heard in our interview with our family member that is included in our play. From this program I've learned not just my families past but the past of others. I dreamed and thought of the struggles and negativity others who have crossed the boarder and began living their life here endured. To succeed in this project, as a student, you need to be really committed and actually understand your character to make an actual connection.

Leadership NEEDS to be a program because it shows responsibility, persistence, and collaboration within a student. As it is expected, leadership is a two-way program. You have to pull your weight of the wagon. Having homework, classwork, and the things that needs to be done within the program, getting everything done on time and correctly can be rough but really gives the student backbone and have them step their game up because if they don't try they won't succeed. With the student showing that their responsible it gives a sense of maturity and since the leadership program is for seventh and eighth graders it influences us to be more mature and act our age. From the responsibility being so hard, you have to have the urge to be persistent. Your first writing piece won't be the best. You have to keep making improvements. Once this is shown, it gives others the idea of the person handling what they have to do even when they don't do it right. Knowing that someone does something over and over again shows how determined they are. Since its mandatory you collaborate with different people within the program whether it is practicing a scene or simply asking for clarifying questions, it often brings someone out of their shell. You may ask anyone in the program and their answer will have something about boosting self confidence or being able to be someone who accomplished the dream of a lifetime. By knocking down this barrier of silence between
each other, we were able to become a family and to create something bigger than just what is in the newspaper. Myself personally went through these three phases. I had to juggle all three classes with their assignments and the requirements for leadership. I had rough spots in my own writing that I smoothened out over time. I was afraid of communicating with others because of the fear of possibly being wrong or laughed at. This group as I said before is a place to express yourself and is a safe environment.

Leadership is a necessity to our school! We have guiding principles, such as having integrity or being compassionate, and high expectations for each student to lead them to a bright future. Leadership clearly makes it easier for students to achieve something beyond what they'd originally do in a classroom. It opens doors to new experiences as well! Seventh and eighth grade is where students have to make that sudden change from toys to tools. This program really brings out their maturity. As you have read, it would be a great gift if we had this beneficial program for the generations to come and we'd like you to be the people who help us get to this goal. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Maria

This letter summarizes the counter-storytelling research process from the student/co-researcher and highlights the impact and importance of the Leadership program. Maria also began the conversation about why this curriculum is so important. She also demonstrates the beginning of how this curriculum can be replicated in schools with Latino students without betraying the standards that teachers need to adhere to in order to be in academic compliance. The impact is very clear and now the curriculum has been studied by those with the most to gain
from engaging in this type of research. In Maria’s words, “Leadership is a necessity at our school!”

**Policy and Teacher Training Recommendations**

I expand on Maria’s thoughts by providing policy and teacher training recommendations, though it is difficult to reduce such complex issues into bullet points, and I do so with hesitation. Each of the following policy and professional development recommendations are very large and complicated issues that must be implemented within already established structures and systems. For my part I hope that this study and the voice of the student/co-researchers becomes one of the pebbles necessary to create a ripple effect that helps change the course of our toxic, dysfunctional and failing educational system. I list macro level changes, as well as policy and teacher professional development recommendations, and conclude by outlining an implementation plan to achieve the highest level of impact.

**Policy Recommendations**

1. Increase parent and community engagement components for all schools.
2. Provide parent trainings and workshops that educate parents on the policy-making process and pressure points in which they can influence decision-making processes.
3. Organize parents and families to advocate for legislation that empowers Latino communities and against laws that strip marginalized communities of their rights.
4. Grant school districts and schools more autonomy in order to choose curriculum that allows teachers to implement curriculum based on the student demographics they teach.
5. Extend the hours of all schools to create more opportunities for family and community engagement.
6. Foster partnerships with outside organizations dedicated to equity and social justice.

7. Create systems that share best instructional practices across district and charter schools.

**Teacher Professional Development Recommendations**

1. A realignment of teacher credentialing programs that shifts the epistemological lens to CRT.

2. Professional development opportunities for all teachers on the implementation of CRP.

3. Invest money for professional development opportunities on cultural sensitivity and awareness of white privilege.

4. Professional development opportunities for teachers to learn the languages of the students and families they serve.

5. Replication of a CSTC for Latino students in all middle school settings.

As stated previously, these are very large systemic recommendations and distilling them into bullet points does not provide a blueprint on how to make true change. I believe that there are several ways that this research can be utilized to make immediate impact on our toxic educational system. This process focuses on the teacher professional development recommendations. By using this research and the organic fusion of art, research and pedagogies there is a natural way to take this research into the educational community to demonstrate how to engage Latino students in an alternative way.

The first way that I will proceed following the completion of my dissertation is to present the findings of this research at as many relevant educational conferences as possible. Currently I have been accepted to one national conference to present and one other submission pending. The
student/co-researchers will be a part of this process by performing their work, which contains the data analysis. They have become quite articulate over the time we have worked together and this will provide a forum for them to continue to share their voice.

Another way I intend to affect change is by using the service-learning component of the curriculum as a vehicle of demonstrating the power of student voice. Our service-learning project served as the signature project of a demonstration site for service-learning and educators from across the country witnessed their work and research. Each of the educators was significantly impacted by the work and inspired to try different ways of reaching urban youth. Their project also served as the signature project and centerpiece of a school-wide professional development on how to implement service-learning, therefore I plan on continuing to take the show on the road at as many school sites, conferences and PD opportunities as possible.

Lastly, with the encouragement and support of my dissertation committee I intend to publish the findings from this study. Throughout this doctoral process I was informed by the research that came before me and it greatly impacted how I conducted this research. Just as I was inspired by the stories of my family and the stories of my student/co-researchers, I was also inspired the published researchers that came before me. It is my intention to spread this research, and the voice of my student/co-researchers, as a way of inspiring others to go further in their chosen areas of research and impact change.

**Areas of Further Research**

One of the limitations of this research was in the sample that participated in the study. I was only allowed to work with a small group of students at one charter school. This sample was further limited because these students were passing most of their classes and were already relatively successful in school. This type of study that shifts the epistemological lens to CRT
and places the counter-stories of the participants in the center of a culturally relevant curriculum needs to be studied within larger school settings. It also needs to be studied with the students that are most marginalized and in jeopardy of being pushed out of the traditional schools, which I address in the epilogue. Lastly, the CSTC needs to be implemented with other marginalized racial groups that have proud stories and cultures that have also been oppressed in the U.S. educational system.

**Researcher’s Reflection**

As stated previously, my year implementing the CSTC was the most profound year of my 15 years as an educator. I set out to examine the impact that the CSTC had on Latino student identity and engagement not realizing that I would be transformed and tested along the way. As a member of the Latino community, one thing I have learned is that our stories, history, language and culture are incredibly important. Without them we are nothing. This journey has had a significant impact on me both professionally and personally.

As a professional educator, this research illuminated my role as an educator and not in a way that made me feel good about my practice. I was participating in an educational system that was contributing to the de-culturalization of Latinos and I did not even know it. Even though I was experiencing success as first an instructor and later as an administrator, there was something not quite right. The schools that I was working for were experiencing success in API growth, graduation rates and college acceptance rates, but I was still witnessing large numbers of our young Latinos being pushed out of school and the blame always on the students and their families. Through this research I have found that there is so much more that we can do to reach every student. This research has shown me that there is a way to tap into a strength that comes
only from the community and culture of the students. This CSTC is a way to tap into this
strength that can provide some of the missing ingredients for them to navigate this crazy world.

This research has also contributed to my departure from the institution where I conducted
the research. It wasn’t until just recently that I understood how dangerous and frightening this
type of work is to the status quo. Upon completion of the initial year of CSTC implementation,
the response was incredible. Many teachers, administrators, parents and students talked about
how important and special this work was. I felt that the time was ready for me to push this work
and get wider implementation within my former institution. However, I believe that this
increased pressure to expand on this work made many people feel threatened and contributed to
the recent non-renewal of my contract. Anderson describes how this work can scare some
educators: “It is political in the obvious sense that asking critical questions about one’s practice,
classroom and school can offend those with a stake in maintaining the status quo.” (Anderson et
al., 2007, p. 5). The year following the initial implementation of the CSTC was very difficult. It
began with my removal as director of the Leadership program that I founded and developed,
followed by the elimination of my position from the school. Students, staff and family members
were devastated by my departure and the way I was treated by my supervisors. My last few days
on campus were filled with many tears and sad goodbyes.

Ultimately, I was able to complete the second year of CSTC only because some of the
teachers spoke up on my behalf and on the importance of the program to this community, but I
was still let go from the school. My former school was not ready for such a different approach of
educating Latinos. I humbly move forward and serve my community with a new organization
that is active in community voice. I am grateful for the opportunity to work with the Leadership
students and feel as if I have reclaimed my own cultural essence through this journey. I have no
regrets because along with my student/co-researchers I believe we fought a good fight. I have also reclaimed my own familial counter-story along the way, which I have researched as part of the curriculum and will pass along to my young son. I hope that the student/co-researchers will continue to work for the Latino community. I believe in them to change the world!

Epilogue

As stated previously this curriculum and subsequent research was a life-changing experience for me as a researcher and professional educator. The work I founded and researched continues in the hands of my assistant teachers and of the student/co-researchers. However, it still exists at a school site that is threatened by such work and subsides in a school system that relegates this work into elective status which means only certain students have access to the opportunity. I believe that this work needs to reach the most marginalized students and all students of color, for they are the students most in need.

During my year of researching the CSTC I was having a significant impact on the student/co-researchers that I was allowed to work with. While this work was going on there was a group of Latino males that were in danger of being retained and all interventions that were tried failed. It was expressed by our nearly all white staff that it would be nice to have a Latino male come in and do some alternative way of working with them so see if there might be some kind of change in the boys engagement and achievement. This was strange to me because all they had to do was ask me and I would have been happy to do so. Instead I had to manipulate the situation and was finally allowed to work with a special group of failing Latino males during the final quarter of the school year that I was conducting my research. In order to do so I had to agree to do the extra work without being paid. I took the opportunity to replicate the CSTC with a
separate sample and the impact was immediate. The boys took to the work and enjoyed it immediately. This was interesting to me because it was reported that they would not do anything in their other classes. In fact they added a whole other component that addressed their gender. The boys added an entire section on what it meant to be a man and how to become a man. This group of boys was a joy to work with. They participated, did their homework and enjoyed the process. The class was filled with laughter, smiles and engaged participants.

What followed was truly amazing. The problems they had prior to my intervention began to improve in all their other classes. The boys began participating in their other classes and doing all that was asked of them. They did their homework and followed through with their core teachers. I began receiving positive reports from their instructors on their behavior. This group of failing, disengaged behavior problems were now transforming into academic participants. The teachers that were complaining about the boys prior to the class were now beaming and expressing gratitude at the opportunity to participate and the subsequent transformation. Of the 12 boys that took part in this project ten were able to make enough progress to pass to the next grade. The two that were retained improved but were in too deep a hole to turn around. Given the success of the demonstration site of the initial service-learning project with my research group, and now the success with an entirely different group I was sure that the administration of our school would expand the program.

However, this was not to be the case. As stated previously this work is frightening and makes some educators not from the community uncomfortable. Over the summer I advocated for an expansion for the program. I now had the backing of the core teachers because they witnessed firsthand the transformative nature of the work with even with the least-engaged students. The staff was shocked when the administration attempted to remove me as lead of the
program and it was only because of teacher advocacy and the threat of losing funding that kept me on the project. By then the damage was done and my position was cut a month later; I now work in exile with the school that I helped transform into an award-winning institution. I believe in this work and I will continue to push for the policy and teacher recommendations that came from this study. I am still in contact with my former colleagues and the work is still continuing because others saw the value, so even though I was eliminated, the teachers – and students – see the value and still push forward.
APPENDIX A:

LA GUERRA CULTURAL: A CULTURE CLASH

La Guerra Cultural:

A Culture Clash

Written By:

The Student/Co-researchers of Teatro Libertad
SCENE I: OPENING

(Jose is sitting in his room playing video games. His mom busts into his room and begins
scolding him.)

Mom
Jose, Mr Cuevas called me again today because of your 10th referral. You are being suspended
again. I am taking your cell phone, your videos games and you are grounded. What is wrong
with you? I’m so mad I can’t even talk to you right now!

Dominique/Jose
I’m lost. I don’t know what’s happening. I’m confused, I don’t know who I am. I need help.
What’s wrong with me? (3X and fades to sleep)

(Enter Guardian Angel, she smacks him in the head and wakes him up.)

Ancestor/Angel
Wake up!

Dominique/Jose
Who are you? Freak! Why’d you wake me up? Why are you even in my room?? I don’t know
you!

Ancestor/Angel
Shhhhh….. I don’t want to wake your parents.

Dominique/Jose
What do you want?

Ancestor/Angel
I’m going to take you on a dream journey
Dominique/Jose

What is this scrooged??

Ancestor/Angel

Sure if that helps, but you said you were confused so I’m here.

Dominique/Jose

Well after all this is a dream.
SCENE II: DAILY LIFE

(Two children, Maria and Jose walk into the stage and sit together. The mother also comes in on stage left pretending to stir a pot of food looking warn out for the long day.)

Narrator

My mother’s name is Maria. Born and raised in Huhua, Michoacán since November 21, 1970. In total, my Grandmother gave birth to 12 children but living in poverty only nine survived.

Maria

(curiously but cautiously) “Mom can you tell us again about our brother and our two sisters that pasted away.”

Mom

Well, they were all very young and for your little sister we tried to take an airplane to get her to the doctors. Sadly, we were too late and she passed away. With you little brother, however, we were too poor to afford the doctors and it was a pain to watch him suffer knowing that you can do nothing about it.

Maria

I remember ‘Ama. I remember when Pano and I would run around getting our feet dirty and stepping on rocks along the way.

(Two actors, a female and a male, while holding a “baby” come on stage looking down upon the scene as if they are their protectors)

Mom

*Ya se mijita* we love all of them and know that they are still watching over us. *Sigh*... *Mis angelitos Del cielo*, my angels from above.
As you can see life wasn’t easy when she grew up, however, it was beautiful in the sense that there was a lot of innocence and peace. Her favorite memory was when Maria, her cousins and siblings would make dolls out of the cob of the corn left over and play house.

They would take the corn that their mother would hand them and wrap a towel over them. Then they would assign the roles.

Jose

I’m the dad and you are the mom. Don’t forget the house Maria!

(The actress begins to set up the house.)

Then they would grab branches from a tree and hang another towel over them. They would also rip little leaves into pieces and pretended they were food.

(Two children rip leaves. They begin playing)

(Dad enters on stage left and knocks on the door. Mother greets him kindly and children get excited to see him.)

Dad

Ayy Niños you don’t know how tired I am, picking the corn, grain, and fruits from the fields. I’m glad today I had work and I beg God that tomorrow there will be work to.

Mom

Well, we are just glad you came home safe and sound. Don’t worry I have faith and I know you will find a way to make ends meet.
Maria

Apa! Tell us about what you do for a job.

Maria

Yeah dad, and then tell us about the day where you hurt your foot en un Cerro, on a hill.

Mom

Kids can’t you see your dad is tired. Let him rest.

Dad

It’s okay Vieja. My job is extremely hard. I have to leave in the morning, around six. Then drive in a truck to the field with my machete by my side. Each time I harvested I have to load the truck and drive to the city to sell. Even if the sun is beating on me I can’t give up and the wind or rain can’t stop me either. You know why?

Jose

Because you know you have people depending on you. I know dad.

Maria

Now tell us about the hill. I love this story!

(Narrator begins to speak meanwhile the family pantomimes in slow-motion like a dream.)

Narrator

For her it was like a dream reflecting on it today. Nothing could really compare to the feeling of the most innocent happiness, joy, and glee that anyone could ever experience. Everything was so familiar and everyone was your neighbor, your best friend, your family.
SCENE III: NO SCHOOL

Marcos

My name is Marcos Garcia. I was born April 15, 1984 and was born in Guatemala. I have nine siblings including myself.

Narrator

My dreams of school were to become an architect and be a professional soccer player. Every school day we would wake up at 6 sixam (everyone wakes up). Get dressed in our blue and white uniform (the five main siblings get dressed facing audience).

Marcos

No puedo esperar para jugar un partido de futbol!

Narrator

We would sometimes eat Pan Dulce from the Panaderia and drink Guatemalan coffee before we left.

Evelia

(Lilian makes coffee and bread and serves it to three siblings)

Aquí hay café y pan dulce para que coman rapido.

Marcos

Hoy tengo un examen para matematicas.

Evelia stands behind the kids.

Rita

Apurence ban a estar tarde para la escuela y la educación es muy importante.

(Everyone except Rita leaves stage)
Narrator

I remember when Rita told me I could no longer go to school because of financial problems.

(Marcos walks in happily and juggling a soccer ball.)

Rita

Beni aqui Marcos Necesito platicar con vos. No voy a poder seguir pagando tus estudios.

(Marcos puts his head down sadly and everyone comes in to support him and FREEZE in place)
SCENE IV: MY EDUCATION IS FREE

(Enter Dominique/Jose and Ancestor/Guardian angel)

Dominique/Jose

Wait, he couldn’t go to school? He had to pay??

Ancestor/Angel

They were poor.

Dominique/Jose

My education is free.

Ancestor/Angel

Then stop wasting it you need more work; let’s go see another one.
**SCENE V: DULCE**

Dulce

(Father, Hands around back of neck looking up thinking with a face that looks stressed.

Mother, Pretending to chop a tomato with a glum face with back towards daughter and father.

Daughter, Hands together, fingers crossed, with the expression of begging)

Narrator

My name is Dulce. (Daughter waves to audience then goes back to beginning postion.) I was born on May 11, 1951 in La Concha Viejo, Municipio de Manuel Doblado, Guanajuato, Mexico. It was difficult to live because my father’s salary wasn’t enough to feed us, cloth us, or pay for more education.

(All characters begin to move as if any other day.)

Daughter

(In hopeless voice) Please, I love school. I love to learn. Please papa Pay for more!

Father

(In sad voice) I’ve told you billions of times, I can’t.

Mother

(Turns from beginning position) This is ALL we have to eat! We NEED more!

(As narrator reads next line pulls out milk carts in a bars form.)

Narrator

I would get my second grade books, climb up on a tree and read the books constantly. The tree was short y bien raspado antes que yo me subi (and very scratchy before I got on.) But I had gone up there so much that it smoothened out. (daughter climbs up and sits on third bar pretending to open a book.)
Daughter

Where was I? Oh yeah, the prince and princess danced all night long and fell in love and they lived happily ever after. The end.

(Closes book and puts it on 2nd bar and sighs looking slightly down and forward.)

Narrator

It was the best view ever, marevelloso (marvelous.) I could see the entire village. (Church goers come on their knees forward.) Mi casa, La Iglesia, y el arroyo (my house, the church, and the river.)

(Daughter waves to the church-goers and they wave back.)

When I was up there it almost took away the idea that was real that I wouldn’t be able to eat that very night.

(Daughter puts right foot on 2nd bar. One hand rubbing stomach and leaning on other.)

I spent so much time up there that when my mother looked for me she knew to look there, there she saw me, reading my books.

Mother

(Walk around tree saying Mija until getting to 1st bar.)

(Daughter picks up book again but nervously as soon as hearing mother’s voice.)

-Mija, mija, mija. Oh there you are. Of course you’re here.

Narrator

The true ideas flew through my mind, hitting each side causing bad ideas to join it.

Mother

Come one Mija lets go home.(gestures her to come.)
Daughter

Okay ma. (Steps off still holding her stomach with one hand and the book with the other with an ugly face on and moaning a little.)

Mother

Mija are you okay?

Daughter

I’m fine ma.

Mother

Okay then. (continues walking with daughter straight behind her.)

Narrator

My mom had enough to worry about. I didn’t want to be the complaining child.
SCENE VI: MCDONALDS

(Enter Dominique/Jose and Guardian angel)

Dominique/Jose

Wait…. Why is she even hungry? She should just go to McDonalds.

Ancestor/Angel

Even if they did have money, there ain’t no McDonalds, come on lets go see another one.
SCENE VII: VIVA ZAPATA

Cecilia

(Enter center stage reading book, and sit in chair.)

Narrator

My grandmother’s name is Cecilia, born August 15, 1948 in Jojulta Mexico

Cecilia

I love school and an education

(Spanglish)

(Continues to read book)

Jesus, Teresa

(Together)

Come play volleyball with us Ceci

(Spanish)

Cecilia

Leave me alone I have to wash our uniforms, do my homework, then go to catechism class. So

GO PLAY OUTSIDE

(English)

Jesus, Teresa

(Together)

Storm off mad, mumbling

(Jesus mugs her)
Cecilia

I enjoyed reading on my narrow bed because we had no couches around.

(Take book to bed and lay down) “Ouch gosh stupid rock”

Cecilia

My great grandpa came over a lot and told us stories, he told funny, sad and times about difficulties. It was fun because we didn’t have a TV it was just his voice and different voices.

Great x3 grandpa

Well let me tell you about how I used to work in the fields in town and pick berries, black, red, blue, and strawberries. I didn’t get paid enough; Zapata. He was fighting for what he thought was important (pause)

Shadow 1

It’s better to die on your feet than to live on your knees!

Shadow 2

*Tierra y libertad!!*

Great Grandfather

I joined in the fight for equal rights along his side and assisted him. Zapata led peasants like me in the war against the rich to get back our land and to restore justice. This house you live in now used to be a place for people who lost their jobs, and houses in the fight. And to this day the memory with him was a life changing experience.

Cecilia, Jesus, Teresa

(Together)

I wish I would have been alive during the revolution…..
Great grandpa

Ohh no it was a lot of work and sacrificing

Cecilia

I’m glad I don’t have to work like that or I would cry waterfalls, my aspect in life changed once I found out what he had to o before we were born.

Great grandpa

Well I had fun children, *regresare manana*.

(Spanish)
SCENE VIII: WHO’S ZAPATA?!

Dominique/Jose

What’s up with the fists in the air & who’s Zapata?

Ancestor/Angel

Uhhhhh, he led the Mexican Revolution!

Dominique/Jose

How was I supposed to know? I learn American History!?

Ancestor/Angel

I have to show you ANOTHER one.
SCENE IX: SCRIPT FOR EDUCATION

Narrator

My name is Maria Lopez-Garcia I was born July 13, 1971 in Districto Federal. My mom’s name was Eva Gonzalez and my dad’s name was Humberto Del Vega. He died from a heart attack when I was one year old. I have two brothers name Sergio and Carlos.

Maria

Carlos Sergio rapido ban a llegar tarde para la escuela!

(Carlos and Sergio quickly get there school stuff) (Sheila steps out until her scene begins)

Carlos and Sergio

Ya bamos mama!!

Narrator

Every day my way to school was very challenging because when it was raining we would have to walk in the mud and we will get really dirty like dirty little kids. And when it was hot we would be really thirsty and sweat a lot.

Carlos

Ya llegas a la escuela esta etoy muy cansado.

(Actors get ready to become chickens and run around)

Narrator

Something that was very fun for me during school was I had a class that was called ganaderia were we would kill them and put them in a bowl with boiling water we would cut their heads and we would put them in the boiling water so that their fur could fall of. And then we would cut their stomachs and we will take everything inside of them and when they were ready we will send them.
Maria

*Ya tengo muchos pollos, ya los puedo vender!* (Actors are ready to make pyramid)

Narrator

Another thing that I enjoyed to do was when my school had festivals we would dance and make pyramids. (Actors create human pyramid)
SCENE X: IMMIGRATING

Narrator

My name is Ving Nam but I changed my name to Iris when I came to the United States. I was born October 17th, 1964 in Cholon, Vietnam. I left Vietnam on December 24th, 1978 which was Christmas Eve. I immigrated to escape from the communists because there wasn’t much freedom.

(Ving comes on stage and is dribbling a basketball)

Ving

Come on! The boat is gonna leave tonight.

(3 siblings come one stage & start packing with Iris)

Sibling 1

If we don’t leave tonight, who knows when we’ll get another chance to escape the communist?

Sibling 2

I can’t wait to get to America.

Sibling 3

It’s a good thing that we’re leaving. It isn’t fair that our parents have to give up so much money that they work hard for.

Sibling 2

Yeah especially when the money goes to some people that don’t even work.

Narrator

First, I took a fishing boat to a refugee camp to Indonesia.

(Ving & 3 siblings get on the boat)
It was a very dangerous journey. It all depended on the weather. We could not control the sea so we had to be prepared for anything.

(2 people shake blue scarfs, to represent water, very rapidly)

Narrator

We had very little food. My biggest struggle was my longing for water.

Sibling 1

I’m thirsty.

Sibling 2

So am I.

Narrator

It took us 7 days to get to Indonesia.

(Ving & 3 siblings grab their belongings and get off the boat)

Sibling 1

Are we in America?

Sibling 2

No. Not yet. But let’s go find some food and water.

(Sibling 1 and 3 & Iris look around for food while sibling 2 gets off the stage)

Narrator

We stayed for 8 months waiting until someone sponsored us.

(Sibling 1 and 3 & Iris sit down)

Sibling 1

How much longer are we gonna be here?
Ving

I don’t know. It seems like forever.

Narrator

My cousin eventually did.

(Sibling 2 runs onstage)

Sibling 2

He sponsored us! He sponsored us! Let’s go!

Narrator

We left on a boat again to Singapore.

(Ving & 3 siblings pretend to be rowing a boat)

We got to the airport in the middle of the night and had to wait ‘till morning for the plane to arrive. (Ving & 3 siblings lay on the floor in a pile and are “asleep”)

We landed in San Francisco.

(They wake up)

We stayed with our cousin.

(Cousin comes on-stage. In slow-motion, Ving & 3 Siblings run up to hug their cousin but freeze right before the hug him)
SCENE XI: LEAVING CUBA

Narrator

My name is Juan Espinoza, I’m 27 years old and I’m leaving Cuba because I want to see the world.

Narrator

Juan was preparing for his journey to the US. Him and 3 of his friends were huddled on the coast waiting for the coast guard to be off his guard.

Juan

Coño asere este viento esta fuertísimo.

Friend 1

Do you think it would be too hard to take the raft the la Yuma?

Friend 2

¡Claro que no! Mira si tienes duda quedate aquí. (Friend 2 shakes his head no)

Juan

Emm.. yo vengo en un minuto se me quedo algo

Both Friends

Hurry up man! (Juan walks into the house)

Juan

Sis I’m leaving to Los Estados Unidos

Maria

Do what you have to do. I would go with you but I can’t swim. I love lil bro

Juan

Toya, if I die you have to tell my story (hugs Maria)
Te quero mucho

(Juan exits stage left)

(Maria walks toward stage right and cries)

(on stage left Juan and friends push off the raft and exit)

(Maria’s tears create large waves)

(Procorro comes on to stage)

Procorro

Your daughter told me about Juan

Maria

(wiping tears)

Mama de que hablas?

Procorro

Don’t lie to me where did my son go!

Maria

He….He

Procorro

(crying)

If my son dies I will NEVER speak to you again!

(Procorro exits)

(Maria on stage crying lights fade to black)
SCENE XII: IMMIGRATION

(Two actors in the center of the stage one pretending to be hurting the other one Meanwhile to other actors in front of them one pretending to be daydreaming)

Matilde

Ayy Mama que haces??!! Porque me pegas? What did I do wrong??

Choncha

Tu abuela told me you were what you did puerca! Maldesida!

Matilde

QUE?! De que hablas? Yo no hice nada!

Choncha

Callate! Tu abuela me dijo! You are pregnant! Puta mal agradesida!

Matilde

Pregnant?!! I'm not pregnant!

Choncha

Don’t lie to me. Do I look like I'm stupid?! Now Get Up and finish your chores before I regret letting you off easy!

(Edelmira walks out the stage cursing under her breath while Maria snaps out of her daydream)

Guy

Where are you heading?

Maria

North

Guy

I am too. How are you planning to get there? Do you have a coyote?
Maria

No, I guess I never had time to think about it.

Guy

Well, I know a family friend that’s gonna help me out too. You in?

Maria

Really? Thank you and Yeah I'm in.
SCENE XIII: COYOTES

Dominique/Jose

Why did they need a coyote?

Ancestor/Angel

They were immigrating to get a better life. & its not an animal.

Dominique/Jose

Wow, I just didn’t realize all the challenges & sacrifices, I feel kinda bad about my attitude towards, well everything.

Ancestor/Angel

I think you almost got it. Come on I have more to show you.
SCENE XIV: IMMIGRATION

Narrator

Hello my name is Victor Garcia I Immigrated from Nochistlan Zacatecas this was 11 years from my first immigration I was around 36 years old but still immigrating.

Victor

Vamonos nos esta esperando el Coyote en el otro lado ya nomas nos falta unos cuantos pasos y vamos a salir de la sierra

Friend 1

Quidado nos van a oirr algien y no cerremos que nos oigan la migra y despues si tenemos problemas

(Actors act out sneeking around in the dark trying best to be quiet)

Victor

Ya no me puedo esperar a yegar al norte sin que escondernos por donde quiera y final mente descansar.

Narrator

We walked for what seemed like an eternity through the tough and tree filled hills. (Coyote howls)

Friend 1

Hey maybe that our coyote that we’ve been looking for?

Victor

Mira ya vamos a salir

Friend 2

Y nomas falta unos quantos pasos y vamos a descansar despues de tanto caminar
Narrator

Just as we were exiting the hill we heard some rustling and out came a group of men with knives and guns yelling at us.

Robber 1

Vamos vamos ya danos todo y no traten de aser un hero no nues fueren a ser algo que los dos no ceremos aser

Friend 2

Que cieren no tenemos nada

Man 2

Todo plata, oro, dinero, lo que sea andale andale apurence

Narrator

We gave them everything we had and made our way. We jumped over a fence and went to the van that was waiting for us, which we rode to Southern California but on the way we were extremely shaken up and barley talked but we made it. This time when I immigrated it was a frightening experience, but you never forget the first.

Narrator

I left Nochistlan when I was around 24 or 25 I had been traveling from Suidad Acuna for three days so far and we finished all of our resources. We crossed the border through a river at around 1:00 pm. It was very challenging because we had to slip through without La Migra catching us. (Two actors are trying to sneak by some officers on guard through a river as if current is pushing against them. Officers are searching to find any people crossing the river. Victor looks back at the other side of the river and realizes all that he is leaving behind. Actors freeze)
Narrator

At that moment, I realized the life that I was leaving behind. I was sad that I was going to leave those innocent days of fishing, hunting, and selling. It would be gone in a flash if I were to be caught and my worst nightmare would come alive.

*(Gonisasio pulls on Victor’s arm to get him to snap out of day dream and keep going)*

*(Sun and moon cycle)*

*(Sun stands right over them)*

**Victor**

*Vamonos tengo mucha seth, no emos comido o tomado en dias y tenemos que buscar por un rio o un modo de conseguir agua*

**Gonisasio**

*Si ,tenemos que o nos vamos a kemar aca fuera*

**Victor**

*Oye Ganisaso creo que puedo ver un rio ,can you see it?*

**Ganisaso**

*Si, I can see, it. Let’s go! This is the miracle we’ve been waiting for after all these days of starving and looking for something that may not be there.*

**Narrator**

We raced over to the river. We drank and drank we even took baths. It was a 5 day walk to a farm were I would work but it was not all in vain.

*(Victor and Gonisasio get out of river and rattles start to circle them)*
SCENE XV: JUST SOME WETBACK

Jose/Dominique

Snakes!! Man this is a crazy dream!

Angel/Ancestor

Do you know who that man was?

Jose/Dominique

I don’t know just some wetback trying to cross the border.

Angel

That was your grandfather, he risked his life so that your mother could have a better life. Don’t you get it yet?

Jose

OOOohh, That’s why she was so mad at me.

Angel

Finally, let’s go see another one.
SCENE XVI: WATERFALLS OF TEARS

Mom

My name is Visita. I am from Guadalajara, Jalisco……….(pause and look around at crowd, and sigh) I left on May 13, 1995 to El Norte. I was 23 years old. My husband Emilio and my two-year-old son Juan accompanied me. I am going because I am trying to find a better life for my family and with the dream to be someone important.

Narrator

When I arrived I cried for many days. I was crying waterfalls of tears because I was melancholy for leaving all that I had and for leaving my beautiful country.

2ND Mom

(10 sec. Cielito Lindo – Vicente Fernandez playing on background)

(Cries while husband tries to comfort her)

Narrator

I missed the days with mi abuelo where we would go out and get sour sop flavored ice cream and hang out in the public gardens, where the radiant flowers giggled secrets with the wind. The pollen tickled my nose. (Birds chirping sound)

Grandpa

Mija, Guess where we are going today!?!??

2nd Mom

Donde Tata? (Jumping up and down eagerly)

Grandpa

Horita you’ll see, just get ready! Vente niña apurate (Both walks offstage)
Narrator

My life seemed perfect. I always enjoyed every single splendid second of my childhood. My problems and my mind were empty, the only thing that mattered were… were … the people I cared for.

Mom

I also really missed the view called La Colonia Piete.

Narrator

You could see the sunset. All the sunrays falling on your skin and the warmth engulfing your body. I loved the view, overlooking the whole place. It was a place where I could think, dream, and write my poems.

Mom

*En esta tarde tan clara,*

*Tan insegura y fragil*

*Al igual que mi esperanza.*

*Las nubes con el viento juegan*

*Sopla el viento de humedad perfumado*

*Y el domido arbol bosteza*

*Como si el mundo hubiere despertado*

*Alegrate Alma MIA!*

*Cantale y dale gracias al Creador*

*Que dia con dia el sol nos alumbra*

*Y nos regala calor y todo su explendor*

*Que dificil ha sido aqui la Vida*
Me ha arrancado lagrimas pero no me quitara me sonrisa

Ma ha roto el Corazon, mas no ha conseguido partirse el Alma

A veces me ha robado una que orta ilusión, pero jamas me quitara mis sueños

Podra vida ponerla arrugas a mi cara

Pero no conseguira envejecer mi Corazon <3

I was libre ... or at least that is what I thought

(Leaves poem on seat and walks off stage)
SCENE XVII: THE LAND OF THE FREE?!

Jose

So it was hard but once we got here it was all good ..... right? This is the land of the free right?

Angel

It wasn’t all peaches and cream, come on let me show you.
SCENE XVIII: BEGIN RACISM MONTAGE

Narrator

I walk in the cold humid and lifeless room full of people who look worried and afraid to be here.

An office with many chairs and stands, as long as the eye could see. Should I also be scared? I shake the question out of my head and spot an empty chair, what looks like miles away. (Others glare at her)

Mom

(Eagerly walks towards chair making a worried face)

(Whispers) **Por fin**!

Narrator

I look to my right and I notice I am sitting with a *gringa*. I smile but she shoots me with a hideous frown. Did I do something? I turn around as quickly as I can. I wait for about 2 hours.

Waiting, waiting, just waiting.

Mom

(Awkwardly plays with fingers and taps her floor with shoes making a rhythm)

White Lady

Can you STOP!!!!!!! That is very annoying.

Mom

Hi my *nombre* is Maria (trying to remember the word)

*No entiendo* sorry. (Nervously reaches for purse)

White lady

Maybe you can understand this, *estupida Mexicana***! (Walks away)
Mom

(Runs to the door, weeping silently)

Narrator

I stop in front of the door because I hear someone calling my name. I really didn’t want to deal with these people. All my dignity was shattered in pieces but it couldn’t get any worse… right? I walk towards the counter avoiding everyone’s devilish eyes. When I got there I saw a young African American person. I try to remember the words I recited at home but it’s as if my mouth was glued together. I say something when the lady looks at me impatiently.

Mom

Can I have a translator? (Bad English accent)

Lady

Nope sorry (Annoyed tone) you either talk to me in English or you don’t talk at all!

Mom

(Biting lip) It okay. I speak English a little bit (ignoring the fact she was ignoring me) I am trying to, how you say ummm, oh si apply for medical.

Lady

Sit down (stern voice)

Narrator

I didn’t realize her attitude after I heard her voice. I prayed to god that I get this over with as soon as possible. After this I was going to stay in my home for the rest of my life, like a scared turtle in its shell. I wasn’t going to give up because I was doing this for my children, which meant the whole world to me. I sat there quietly looking at the ground wait for her to finish typing on her computer.
Lady

(Typing) What more do you want!

Mom

I don’t understand, aren’t you going to help me?

Lady

So you want money? Do you work and as what?

Mom

SI! I work as a housekeeper and I make pasteles. I earn 15 dollars an hour with my house
keeping business and just charge like 50 per cake. Why?

Lady

(Ignoring question) Do you have a social security number or are you even a resident of the
United States?

Mom

Do I have to answer the question? (Confused face)

Lady

(Laughing in a sarcastic manner) Do you really think you can fool me by telling me that with
such little earning of money you can raise four children? You probably want the money so you
can go off to some party and get drunk.

Narrator

I was so confused; I was like a mouse in a maze. What was I supposed to reply to that? I had no
power. I was undocumented and that is how everyone in this county thought of me. I was useless
and alone like a baby bird that was expected to fly and survive for itself. Except the fall was way
worse because there was never an ending I would just keep falling and falling. I sat there shaking
and not making a movement because I thought maybe if I pretended I was dead she would just walk away. She finished her paper work and walked away leaving me all alone once again. But I knew if I let other treat me like that I would lose.

Mom

(Storms out the door) *La Guerra ha comenzado!*
SCENE XIX: RACISM MONTAGE CONTINUED

Narrator

It was a hot day after work when me and a couple of friends were on the bus because the heat was too high to walk at all.

Julio

*Man ese trabajo era muy duro hoy.*

Friend

*Ay no puedo esperar para llegar a la casa*

Julio

Yea I can't wait to eat some enchiladas and watch *el partido de mexico contra estados unidos.*

(strangers enter a full bus)

Strangers

HEY GET OUT OFF THE BUS GIVE ME YOUR SEAT YOU DON'T BELONG HERE GO TAKE A BUS BACK TO MEXICO.,YOU DON'T BELONG HERE

(strangers walk off joking and laughing.)
SCENE XX – RACISM MONTAGE CONTINUED

Dulce

(In bad accent) Please I need a home for my family and I….

Landlord

NO! You have too many kids……

They will just grow up to be troublemakers!

PLUS YOU’RE MEXICAN!
SCENE XXI: RACISM MONTAGE CONTINUED

Police

I’m giving you a ticket because you were too close to the car in front of you and because you don’t have a license.

Marcos

No entiendo! ESPLICAME!

Police

Your kind never has papers AND don’t even speak English! I’m tired of you Mexicans!!!

Marcos

No soy Mexicano! Soy Guatemalteco!
SCENE XXII: RACISM MONTAGE CONTINUED

(Reina is cleaning an attorney’s office cleaning the windows attorney is talking on the phone loudly)

 Lawyer

You have a strong case don’t worry I’m the best lawyer in town I will get you all the money you

......

(Reina drops the broom)

 Reina

Ohh I so sorry…..

 Lawyer

Fuck you stupid Mexican get out of my office now!!
SCENE XXIII: RACISM MONTAGE CONTINUED

(End of work day, all mechanics walking to car.)

**Boss**

Hey Julian! Where are you going? You still have to sweep, mop, and take the trash out. Get back here!

**Julian**

_Pero señor, ese no es mi trabajo. Porque no lo hace somebody else?_

**Boss**

Either you do it or you’re outta’ here. You should be glad I’m giving you a job even though you don’t have any papers. Plus, you’re Mexican, you’re good at cleaning!

(Julian walks back to tire shop and grabs the broom. *Sad look on his face and his head down.*)
SCENE XXIV: JOSE AND ANGEL...I GET IT NOW!!

Jose

I…I get it now. My grandpa and many others suffered and tolerated all the hate for a good life.

Angel

Do you see what’s been happening now?

Jose

Yes!

Angel

Are you still confused with anything?

Jose

No!! (voice elevating)

Angel

Do you know what you’ve been doing all wrong?

Jose

YES! YES!

Angel

One more question

Jose

What?

Angel

Do you know who you are?

Jose

Yes, I am Latino and proud, I’ve taken my life for granted when others have sacrificed so much & it makes I want to take what I have and savor it because it might not last.
Angel

What else?

Jose

I believe now I can change & become the person who can change stereotypes.
The only person that can make my parents proud.

Angel

Just in case you ever separate from the pack, this will lead you back. (Hands him a book of his family history.)

Jose

What’s this?

Angel

You’ll find out on your own. My job here... is done. (Angel walks out of scene leaving Jose to fall asleep and wakes up startled when his mom enters room.)

Mom

MIJA! Wake up!

Dominique/Jose

What, ancestor! Where are you? I’ve changed!

Mom

What are you talking about? Mija its graduation today silly! You need to prepare for your speech as valedictorian.

Dominique/Jose

Oh yeah! What a dream!? (All the students come on stage for graduation. They recite their final reflections/monologues directly to parents in the audience.)
APPENDIX B:

FINAL REFLECTIONS/MONOLOGUES

Esperanza

My name is Esperanza; I'm graduating today because of the hard work put it by my family, my ancestors and myself. I’d like to thank everyone for their time, devotion, cooperation, but most importantly their stories. Without their stories I would have no sense of direction and no path paved for me. Every story they told, every rule they broke, every obstacle they surpassed only to get me the education and life everyone deserves but few achieve. I have to take advantage that my education has been given to me for free unlike my ancestors that fought so hard but still were ignored. Their voices however still live on in me, in my culture in my history and in my future. I want . . . no I need to prove that their struggles weren’t all in vain and that our voices will not be silenced. That our cries, our shrieks, our songs will never vanish but live on in everything I do and everything I stand for. Just as my mother worked for her children, I will work for my future. Just as she was forced to quit school to work, I will force myself to stay and achieve my goals and aspirations. I no longer questioned every piece of advice she gives to me because I know it’s for the best and I know that every problem I have, she has gone through but in greater proportion. She is my inspiration, she is my warrior and I will not let anything my warrior did for me be forgotten and only spoken of in the whispers of the wind. Now that I have portrayed an event that someone else live I feel privileged to be who I am so I walk like I only have one life to live and stand like I have nothing to lose. I stand here today as a proud Latina looking ahead to my future. I always knew I had Mexican blood but now I can feel it. I can feel every piece of history escaping through my mind and soul wanting to be shared with anyone that listens. Like volts of electricity these stories flow through my mouth, through my actions,
through my culture, through my life. I'm glad I'm Latina because now I have a chance to prove all stereotypes wrong and make everyone beg for mercy. We as Mexicans will let our voices be heard and we will show how much we are capable of doing. Better yet will with let these words be sung and change “do” to “done”. Thank You.

José

Hello my name is José. I come from a family that gets things done. As a child the number one rule was to do things yourself or to not do them at all. Growing up in America is a privilege but at the same time I was losing what made me I was loosing my culture, my language. My culture was retreating into a dark place in my mind that was cloudy and blinded me from reality. This place, I called home for so long. My soul was trapped under the blanket of lies and misconceptions. I thought I would lose my soul and the very thing that made my life what it is today but then came the stories. These stories lifted the fog and liberated my soul. All these stories made me understand and made me realize that I lost many things that made me Mexican and make me proud to be one. I am proud to be who I am and know I am now ashamed of having tacos in my heart and mariachi in my soul. Know that I heard these stories I realize all the sacrifices my grandpa and all of our ancestors went through just to get us the life we have today. Know that I see all the importance my grandpas role in my life is makes me happy to be his grandson now I don't just respect my grandpa as an elder but as the person that made it all happen the person that made my life what it is today. These stories have influenced to make a change in my community and make stereotypes seem like another nightmare of the past. I’m not afraid anymore to destroy any barriers that make me want to give up. I am now willing to illuminate the truth through, not only my eyes, but the eyes of society. Now that I realized the importance that my education in my life i will change to be the person that will be grateful of my
chance and i will not take it for granted. These stories have perfected the path that my
grandpa created. These stories have set my mind free i am now changing the present to change
the future. These stories have set me free. It set our souls free to speak and speak to spread our
stories and at the same time spreading my soul.

“The Woman In Me” by Rita

Hi my name is Rita. Leadership has opened my eyes in a way that I can see life not as
something to give up on, but something worth fighting for. Before I was ever in Leadership,
being teased at was something that everyday I had to fight with. Always hearing, “Look! Her
future is to be 16 and pregnant, join a gang, do drugs, and get deported were she belongs!” I
hated hearing that constantly not only being told to me, but to my older sister. I hated myself, my
dark skin tone and thinking, “Why do they get life SO easy? Why do their parents have money to
blow and my parents, money to hide?” But now, I see that both my race AND my skin color are
beautiful. I shouldn’t try to be someone I’m not, even if stereotypes are beating at my door to
never let them in because they’re only gonna make me bleed and bleed out who I really am. My
parents are the sun in my life, without them, I would just be a lonely, dark girl with no trace of
who I am. These stories have made me grow closer to them because I now know that I can trust
them, always and everyday. My parents, sisters and I run the same track, running to a dream that
most people think is fake; being someone in life, finding out who we are. Because of this, I want
to be the woman who stands out in the crowd, the woman who blew away the minds of others,
the woman who can make you think, “She’s different” the woman I want to be is the woman
who doesn’t bleed out for others so that they could just throw it away, but a woman who heals. A
woman who found out where she belonged, here, with her family and friends are. I’m proudly
Able and Patricia’s daughter with dark skin, an Acapulcana, who has a craving for food,
education, and persistence to become a dark skinned woman who everyone will talk about not because I’m ugly or fat, but because I made a difference that’ll tattoo your mind forever.

“I am Dominique” by Ana Maria

My name’s Dominique, and before I learned about these stories by a special someone I was blind to what was in my blood. I don’t know my culture, the past of my ancestors, I don’t speak Spanish I don’t even eat Latin food! My culture has faded into the dust and I was so naive to the fact that there are more countries around me including my own. My parents, as well as I have let go to who we are, our stories have been dimming in the shadows and our ancestors been blown away in the wind. The past is just a big blur, leaving the unknown about me a ditch in my heart. The vague memories make me curious and just wonder… The little I do know motivates me to realize how lucky I am to live in such an amazing country. Education is a privilege to me because I push to the best of my abilities to succeed in life and be a star, shining, being looked upon in awe. My family pushes me extremely hard to be all that I can be and more because they want me to live to my full potential on behalf of the ones watching over me who didn’t have my opportunity to be something. I will never forget that one night March 11, 2012 laying down with my dad curious about how things happened in the past, and getting little responses because he knew as much as I know. Barely anything. I’m thankful for my parents, my aunties, my grandparents, uncles and cousins for all their support. I’m Puerto Rican and El Salvadorian and I know nothing about either. But I won’t give up. I won’t stop there. I will find out what’s in me. Who I am. I will not stop at anything I will learn about the ones before me, and I will thrive and persist, I will find my answers because that’s what will keep me on my feet when I feel like a failure and just throwing everything away. Those stories will make me firm. If I had the opportunity to say anything to my ancestors I would be curious, and say thank you. Because
without them I wouldn’t be here as well as my parents. Thank you to all my parents for being there. Thank you family for the support. My curiosity doesn’t stop there. I will stop at nothing. I will regain my past. Thanks.

**Dulce**

Hello, my name is Dulce. I come from a family that knows how to fight for what they believe in and will not let anyone push them around like a broom. And that is why I want to appreciate my parents for the unrelenting sacrifices and unconditional love they have for me and the rest of my family. They play a big part in this because their stories motivate my education. I have learned to take pride in who I am as a person. I also take pride in my culture. I need to take advantage of what my family couldn’t have. As a Latina I need to show what I am capable of achieving. Without education there would be a shallow hole inside my heart. Not only that but being Mexican is a privilege because I thrive in the cultural essence. The Mexican flag is like a tattoo in my heart. My relationship with my family has improved because I no longer question their authority. This experience has made me understand why they do the things they do. Everyone has rough paths but my parents always get back up with their heads help up high and keep going like nothing happened. It has also gotten me to do things I wouldn’t do. Being in someone else shoes helps me learn from them. I am glad to be who I am. I am brown and proud.

**Debbie**

Hello. My name is Debbie. I want to appreciate my parents for everything they have done for me. They overcame many challenges to get me and my brother to where we are today. Not once did they lose hope. No matter how fast and unexpected that rollercoaster they call life was, never have I seen them give up. They are always fighting the odds and that is something I learned from them. They always pushed me to do my very best in school. The education that can
be my ticket to a great life. In the beginning, I didn’t understand the importance of it. I then realized that I had the opportunity that they didn’t have and that I should seize this chance of learning because it may not be there forever. They wanted me to succeed in life and it begins with my education. Their stories have inspired me to embrace who I am as a person. I am half Chinese and half Iranian and I’m proud. My race makes me unique. It motivates me to stand up for what I believe in and not be afraid to be myself. The fact that I’m two different races makes me my own color in the rainbow of humanity. Honestly, without my fun and unconditional loving parents I wouldn’t be here today. I wouldn’t be the unique, soccer loving, smart girl I am today.

Maria Part I

Hi, my name is Maria. As you can see, I'm Mexican inside and out. I know what most people think. “She is Mexican, she will get pregnant at fifteen or she is only good for cleaning and cooking.” No matter the stereotypes, I'm proud. Not just of who I am but of where I came from, who I came from and why I came. I came from the place where the mighty tides strike the end of the land. Where the sun and its spectacular colors hit the backs of persistent people. I come from people who are determined, heart warming and much more. All those traits reflect on a mirror and are clearly visible on me. I can't take credit for what isn't mine but, what I absorbed from the people who I love. The people I call my family are the people who push me to thrive. The people who inspire me everyday, every glance, every time. The people who will be there when my biggest goal is accomplished. To others it may just seem as a piece of printer paper wrapped in a red ribbon but, to me and who I come from, it's a ticket out of the stereotypes, the underestimates, and best of all, not just opens doors but opens windows with the sunlight almost as bright as my future. Just there waiting for when I'm ready. With the stories I've heard, there's no way I'm letting those black curtains put me in darkness because I came to prevail and that's
what I'm doing .... all day everyday.

**Maria Part II**

Hi, my name is Maria. As you can see, I’m Mexican inside and out. Believe it or not I’m proud. Not just of who I am but of where I came from, who I came from and why I came. I came from the place where the mighty tides strike the end of the land. Where the sun and its spectacular colors hit the backs of persistent people who I come from represents who I am. All those traits reflect on a mirror and are clearly visible on me. I can’t take a credit for what isn’t mine but, what I absorbed. The people I call my family are the people who push me to excel. The people who inspire me every day, every glance, every time. The people who will be there when my biggest goal is accomplished. To others it may just seem as a piece of printer paper wrapped in a red ribbon but, to me and who I come from, it’s a ticket out of the stereotypes, the underestimates, and best of all not just opens doors but windows with the sunlight gleaming through almost as bright as my future. Just waiting there for when I’m ready. With the stories I’ve heard, there’s no way I’m letting those black curtains put me in darkness because I came to prevail and that’s what I’m doing …. All day every day.

*“The boy with out his flag” by Miguel*

Hello my name is Miguel, and before I was aware of my family tree, I was a kid who was born and lost in a big maze. Growing up plackacian (Puerto Rican black and Mexican) is not easy, because the things I have to go threw to become some one important. I like to think that I was born to work for what I want because the ones who got it good can’t handle as much as we do. My grandparents taught me a lot of who I am, but before this all happened I was “The boy with out his flag”, lost in my own world knowing that “there’s a little colored boy at the bottom of the sea “ playing “Spanish roulette” to find myself, but before I was completely gone
mentally, I asked for help. And the things they taught me was the best advice I could ask for. Being aware of who I am the key to life, because if you don’t know who you are, then how do you expect any one to know you. My family has a long story and a story that will never die, and our “ship of dreams” will still be going against the heavy waves and stop at nothing. My family never gave up and why should I. as Zapata said “I rather die standing, then living on my knees”, is something that’s replays on and on in my head in tough situations. Because I will fight for my family, even though my parents have created the force shield for me to live in I have to do the same thing for the next generation if not better. My family has done a lot for me and my brother, considering we are the only grand children, we no longer takes or lives for granted. My family has created something for me no one else can an unfinished path at least its something. They did most of the hard work and my job is to finish constructing the path that will eventually make me shine. Our story ought to be told, it shall not be one of those titanic traumas. We will all shine together, in our souls and in our hearts. The Puerto Rican, Mexican and black flag are all conjoined together as 1 tattoo that has sliced its way threw to the center of my heart, to now have the warmth and love of every single family member in one place. I thank my family for being the ones to snatch me out of the black hole I was floating in. and its my job to not let any thing my family has created to be standing on a mysterious island but to be a legacy that flows threw every single one of us. I’m proud to say I have my true colors swiftly flowing threw my blood, and I’m proud to be born in this family. And I thank my family for feeding me the best gifts ever my cultural identity. Finally I’m brown and proud, Latin and glad.

Matilde

Hi, mi nombre es Matilde. Vivo con my mom, Maria y my step-dad, Jose. After hearing todos los stories de otros y tambien el mio I learned to take advantage of my learning
opportunities. My effort towards school has gotten greater porque I now know otros no tenian money for school y no puedian seguir escuela. My chances of accomplishing the things I want to do in life are way beyond the chances mi padres’ tenian. My education can lead me to complete my goals in life and be alguien importante. Estas historias me ayudaron abrazar a quien soy como persona. They helped me realize que mi espanol no es muy bien even though los dos lados de mi familia hablan Spanish. I understand espanol more than I can hablar Spanish. Mi cultura me deja like a bird leaves a nest when all grown up. These stories have taught me to be more appreciative to everyone around me. I want to thank my grandma, grandpa, auntie, uncles, cousins, siblings, mom and step-dad for always being there for me and pushing me to go above and beyond in school and at home. I especially want to thank my grandpa even though he passed away; he is my motivation to never give up because nobody’s perfect. I am Puerto Rican and Guatemalan. I don’t really eat food from Puerto Rico or Guatemala because I think it’s weird and doesn’t look good. My mom doesn’t know much about her culture, in fact she knows about how much in know, nothing. I don’t know of any Puerto Rican or Guatemalan traditions so we don’t really have any important days to look forward too. I’ve lost a huge part of me but I’m hoping I can slowly regain my past. Before learning about these stories and then acting them out, I was insecure, lost, shy, and doubtful of myself. I didn’t believe I could accomplish my goals in life or become someone ever important. I now know I can complete anything if I put my heart and mind to it. I love where I’m from and don’t ever regret not knowing about it because that means I get to have an adventure to look forward to. I will regain my past and never give up when it’s hard because I’m not only finding out about my past but for my kids too. I will stop at nothing and shine as bright as the stars in the sky at night.
Anne

My name is Anne. These past few months that I’ve been on the Leadership team, I have learned a lot. Not only about myself, but about my peers, their families, and my own family. When I started writing my dad’s story, I often got emotional and I was constantly surprised as he told me all the challenges that he went through, yet overcame. It amazed me how he was so strong through his experience, even though he had no choice. My father’s story led me to feel more motivated to stay in school and always try my best on every assignment. When he was young, he had to go to school, and then go to work right after. I know now that I must take advantage of school because it is my only responsibility. I don’t have to go to work afterschool, I don’t have chores, nor do I have anything else in the way of me completing homework or having good grades in all my classes. I am extremely proud to be Mexican-American for many reasons, but mainly because I can say loud and clear that my parents went through a lot, and to this day stand strong. Also, because my culture has marked many important events in history. My family's' stories have made me feel ten times more powerful and be more motivated to achieve my dreams and be successful. Before, I knew a little bit about what my parents had been through, but I never took it very seriously. Now that we have performed this play and have written stories, I have much more respect for my parents and family because I understand the struggles they overcame to give my aunties, uncles, and parents this life. These stories have made me feel more confident about myself because I just feel so much more motivated to do what I want to do in life. Most importantly, I would like to thank my parents for the sacrifices to give me and my siblings for everything and showing me what brave is!
Cindy

My name is Cindy and my life has had huge impacts since these plays took form and unfolded the blind fold off my eyes and gave me a clear vision of who I am and where I come from. Before I used to be very self-centered and I especially didn’t know who I was.

One of the impacts of these stories toward me is that I should not waste my education. My parents always wanted an education but unlike me they didn’t have a chance to finish school. Under the covers of education is a lost and forgotten dreams that many people never accomplished. By this I realize I should not waste my education but make the most of it and take a advantage of something many others didn’t have.

These stories have taken away the shield that blocked me from the reality of my beautiful culture. Now I see my food, my family, my language, and my family reunions in a different way that is no longer despiteful but admirable.

When we finished this play and I saw what all these people have been through and I reflected on how I have been toward my parents and how I should be more respectful because they have been through tons worse things than I have. Also now I understand why my parents expect more and more of me its not to make me feel bad, but it is for me to accomplish something they always wanted to.

My self-confidence had a great boost because now I feel like I can take a stand for my culture and for what I believe in. Also I’m no longer afraid to say I am brown and proud, Latina, Mexicana, Zacatecana

“Leaving the Island” by Elizabeth

My name is Elizabeth. I’m so proud to be who I am Cuban, German, Haitian, French, and American. All of these cultures have answered all my questions and robbed me of any doubts I
had about myself. They have made me understand what my parents have done for me, and why my father came to the U.S. His huge action has brought me to be standing here today. I understand how important my education is not only to me but my parents. They inspired me to follow my dreams and to be responsible in life. My father's story has motivated me to be the best I can be in everything that I do. To always know that I can never stop learning, there is always more to learn. Like the depths of the ocean where no one has been, I’ll dig deeper and deeper to learn more about myself, my culture and the rest of the world. I know not to be blind to others and to be grateful for what I have. I know to give back and help those who are suffering because that is what my parents would do. They have taught me to be kind and generous and to always find love for everyone. This array of cultures that flow through my blood feed my heart with compassion and the need to know that the world doesn’t revolve around me but the people near me. I know that children in other parts of the world are grateful for what little they have. They can do so much with so little so I want to do so much more with what I have.

I am not just another American girl who talks about who she is, I’m an American girl who feels who she is.

**Paula**

Hi my name is Paula. I want to take this time to appreciate my ancestors because they did so much to make me become a young lady. They sacrifice their life for me because they wanted me to have a good future. If I never read these stories I would have never realized everything they did and went through. This makes me appreciate what I have and use my education to become someone important. I never thought about how hard they worked and the struggles they went through. This is why I learned so much and I have taken my life for granted I have finally
realized how much work it was to get here. I will never let go of an opportunity that I have. I will always try to shine and be the star my parents want me to.

I also want to thank my mom because she always sacrifices her life so we can have what we want. She works hard and never gives up. She always motivates me by telling me to always work hard and show people who I’m and where I come from. And if you work you can achieve your goal. She is the person who you can go talk to and say anything you want just as if she was a diary. She will always give you advice on what you need. I come from a family that never gives up and that always supports each other in good moments and bad moments. I’m Latina and I’m proud I will never change who I’m. I’m going to show people that even though I’m Mexican I can become someone important. And just because I’m Mexican is doesn’t mean I’m going to grow up and be in a gang because most people think like that about Mexican I will change those stereo types by representing my culture and letting people know what we can do. I will show people that I’m a smart young Latina and I can break any obstacles that come in my way of letting me shine. I’m Latina and I’m proud.

I love you mom you are always in my heart!

Arlene

Hi, my name is Arlene. Hearing the stories of my parents and other people have motivated me to do better in school. Before hearing more about how hard life was and how hard it was to come to the United States I only tried to get good grades so that I wouldn't get in trouble. Hearing more about how hard life was and how hard it was to come motivated to get good grades so that I could have a better life. Now I feel lucky for living in a country that gives a lot of opportunities to receive an education. The stories have made me more proud of being Latina. I am proud to come from a place were people fight for what they believe in. Coming
from a place where people fight for what they believe in has made me feel more confident when I talk. Now I respect my parents more, for suffering so that I could have had been born here. I appreciate my parents for sacrificing some things, like leaving their families, being caught by la migra, and my mom could have given birth while trying to come to the United States. I appreciate my parents for everything that they have done for me.
REFERENCES


Knowledge. *Qualitative Inquiry, 8*(1), 105-126.


