

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Mariana C. Zaragoza for the degree of Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies in Ethnic Studies, Education, and Women Studies presented on May 31, 2013.
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There is an ever growing number of Latinas/os who reside and have settled permanently in rural America. Unbeknownst to most, rural Latinas/os face adversities unfamiliar to those living outside of this scope. As it stands, the barriers urban Latinas/os students face when transitioning to college has been well documented. However, there is a lacunae of research on Latinas/os experiences when transitioning into college from white rural high schools. This study will focus on the process of self-identification involving Latinas/os from rural areas and their experience in a more diverse college community. Informal interviews were conducted with Latinas/os who attended high school in rural areas located in the Pacific Northwest region enrolled at institutions of higher learning in this same region. The *testimonios* of Latina/o students' experiences of living in a predominantly white, rural area with little influence from the Latina/o culture on their self-identification were collected. The interviews were analyzed utilizing the theoretical frame work of Critical Race Theory and LatCrit. Additionally, my own self-reflection as a Latina attending high school in rural Wyoming where there was little Latino influence and subsequent transition into a predominantly white institution of higher learning was

analyzed. This was a two-fold process of analysis of my own Latina self-identification using Anzaldúa's stages of *conocimiento*. My findings revealed that students had both positive and negative experiences in their predominately white rural communities. The *testimonios* of the participants as well as my own self-reflection revealed that our lived experiences help us grow as individuals and as a collective, to negotiate relationships, and gain perspective on viewing the world through multiple lenses. The results also highlighted the importance of creating and fostering a rural *conciencia* to better understand our lived experiences.

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Rural Latinas/os of the Pacific Northwest: College and the Experience of Self-
Identification

by
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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Mariana C. Zaragoza, Author

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>SECTIONS:</u>	<u>PAGE:</u>
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
Testimonio of a Rural Latina/o	1
Identity, Borderlands/Frontera, and the Journey to Community	5
Voice.....	6
Contextualizing Rural Latinas/os Voice	8
Analysis of Literature	10
Rural Oregon	10
Statement of the Problem	12
Research Question	13
Definition of Terms	13
Limitations and Scope	14
Organization	15
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	16
La Experiencia de Nuestra Raza	17
Effects of School Segregation	19
La Experiencia: Latinas/os in Elementary Education (K-8)	20
Latinas/os in Secondary Education (9-12)	22
Transition from High School to College	23
Bilingual Education: Impact on Latinas/os	24
Perceived Low Academic Achievement and the Pipeline to Dropouts	26
Identity Formation: Latina/o? Chicana/o? Mexicana/o?	27
Rural Education	29
Rural Latinas/os	30
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY	31
Research Design	31
Interview	33
Selection of Sites and Participation	34
Data Analysis	35
Limitations	36
Conclusion	39

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

	<u>PAGE:</u>
CHAPTER 4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	41
Critical Race Theory (CRT)	42
Latina/o Critical Theory (LatCrit)	43
Chicana Feminist Theories and Philosophies	47
Testimonio as Theory & Method	50
Conclusion	52
CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION	54
Participant Profiles	54
Germina	54
Juana	56
José	57
Coding Process	58
Common Themes	58
Theme One: "Othering"	59
Theme Two: Heteropatriarchal Institutional Violence	61
Theme Three: In and Out of the Box	62
Theme Four: Negotiating Identity, Collision of Culture and Gender	65
CHAPTER 6 RESULTS	70
CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION	77
REFERENCES	79

Chapter 1 Introduction

Testimonio of a Rural Latina

I attended school in Saratoga, Wyoming, a small town with approximately 2,000 people. My high school had 150 students total, twenty-three of those students in my own class. I remember being surrounded by mostly white children, and it wasn't until middle school and high school that I had two Mexican classmates. They later moved away and I became the only one for the remaining years in high school.

Growing up I had conceived of college as a place that would grant me the ticket out of Saratoga and award me great honor. Little did I know that it would afford me opportunities I had never imagined while challenging me in ways I could have only fantasized. I attribute much of my success to my sister who was able to beat adversity and leave home to become the first in my family to attend college. My parents never attended college. The highest grade level they attended was the eighth grade, but I never saw them as being lesser than others. I think back to all the things that I have learned from my parents and realize that they provided me with knowledge that cannot be taught in the classroom. They also taught me the importance of giving back which contradicted the white mentality of doing it for your own benefit.

They taught me to always help others because we were not made to navigate life alone. They grew up in communities that helped one another. They tried their hardest to instill those values and beliefs within us. To this day my parents remain active in our community helping the few Mexicanas/os living in and around our community. My parents offered advice and support, in return my parents ask for nothing. There have been

instances when they have helped someone only to be disappointed and disrespected, but it was through these experiences that they showed us that no matter the outcome, we learned from it. It is lessons like these that I live by. Whatever is going to happen will happen, but no matter what, I have and will learn from it.

The years leading up to my graduation from high school were difficult. Despite being very involved sports, clubs, band, I never felt as if I belonged. I constantly changed my hair color and style trying to “find myself”. At one time, I even sporting fire engine red hair and wore hairy gorilla boots, as if these things represented who I was. Even my close friends did not understand that every day my family struggled to not only make ends meet, while simultaneously being bombarded with a constant clashing of cultures.

Almost daily, I dealt with racial comments from classmates and teachers. There were constant, what I know now as, micro -aggressions. However, even within this hostile environment, I was and still am grateful for a handful of teachers who never gave up on me. There were two people in particular my English teacher, Mr. Patrick, and my librarian, Mrs. Taylor that were influential. They believed in me when I had given up in myself. College was possible because they showed me how to apply for scholarships, a job better reserved for a counselor. They diligently looked over my application materials making the necessary edits and offering suggestions. One thing they never did was take away my voice when writing my personal statements. They found value in my experience. I look at this moment, as the first time I wrote a *testimonio* of my life. It was because of their help that I received the 2006 Coca-Cola Scholar of the Year Award for

the state of Wyoming and was flown to Atlanta to receive the award. This was only one instance in my life that proved I was destined for great things.

The day I graduated, I watched in disbelief my classmates cried as they watched our senior video. They kept saying “Oh, the Memories!” I sat emotionless. Even through our horrible vocal arrangement of R. Kelly’s song “I Believe, I Can Fly,” that would have made R. Kelly cringe, I felt nothing. Rather, I felt like a weight had been lifted from my shoulders. I cannot fully describe what it felt like. Thinking back now, I can only describe it as leaving the struggle of trying to fit into a predominantly white community/school standing, the time when I could reconnect with my roots, and not feel ashamed of who I was.

There were many instances when assimilation was deeply rooted in my thoughts. The English I spoke was “perfect” despite the fact that it was not my first language. Culturally, I was ashamed of everything that encompassed being Mexican. I just wanted to belong. I spent the majority of my day at school constantly being pressured to be “more White” and “less Mexican”. I can only imagine the frustration my parents felt in watching me and my siblings refusal to speak Spanish at home. I remember begging our parents for sandwiches, so we wouldn’t have to go to school with burritos. It is hard to believe that all the things I rejected like learning to cook comida Mexicana and the different celebrations, traditions, stories, and people are the same ones I am so grateful for today.

Who was I? This question was constantly posed by myself. Here I was confused by the culture in which I was born into and to add to that, I did not know how to identify

myself. I did not have an understanding of what it meant to be Latina, Mexicana, Chicana, or Hispanic. Everything at school was Anglicized from the students, to teachers and even the curriculum. I can only recall discussing Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, and Native Americans on Thanksgiving during my classes. What was I? To others I was perceived as Hispanic. After all, I had the dark hair, dark eyes, and the dark complexion parent. I, myself, was lighter skinned but the golden ticket was also possessing light hair and light eyes. (Government forms guides my teachers and those teachers guided me to Hispanic.) “Who am I?” ... “You are Hispanic.”

The many blessing afforded me the opportunity to attend the University of Wyoming. I refer to this period of my life as “my enlightenment”. Like a sponge, I absorbed information. Reflecting back on the amount of growth I had in my first year, it is unbelievable. This is not to say that it was a smooth ride because that was not the case. My first year of college, I took a class that was instrumental in “my enlightenment”. It was a Chicana/o Studies course taught by an instructor who, I could tell, enjoyed teaching this course. He was also, coincidentally, the first instructor to also give me a D on a college paper. He wanted a critical analysis and at the time, I didn’t know what that meant. That is until we really delved into our history of oppression. What were the systemic issues keeping us down? They were everywhere. The system was against us and people of color. Anger...this was one of the many emotions that I felt. Cheated...came right after. It was with these emotions that I began to think critically about our situation. How did we make it? By supporting one another through la lucha...that meant fighting to survive. I had received this support from parents, while also learning to give that same support. Fight for what you believe is something my

parents had also taught me. This class also taught me everything I was not. I was not Hispanic, that was a government imposed term and symbolized a tool of colonization. I was not an “illegal alien” because the border crossed us, as only one of the many injustices that they committed against us.

My identity also came into question during and long after this class. Hispanic did not encompass the same meaning for me as it did in high school. I could no longer ignore the history and knowledge I had acquired. I was Mexican and American, but I was hesitant in claiming American. I wanted to disassociate myself from a country that was a source of my pain and the pain of my people and many others. Mexican encompassed everything I wanted to be, and everything I had been ashamed of being in my hometown. The more knowledge I acquire, the more my identity changes, so I cannot say my identity has been solidified. In fact, it changes on a daily basis I am continuously challenged to think critically about who I am. Living in rural Wyoming I navigated a borderlands unfamiliar to many. Navigating my identity as a rural Latina is a constant journey that I connect to the seven stages of *conocimiento* by Gloria Anzaldúa. I hope to draw from my own testimonio and analysis to begin developing a rural theory.

Identity, Border Lands/Frontera, and the Journey to Community

My research objective is to bridge gaps and provide insight on those rural Latina/os who, in some ways, have been forgotten. Gloria Anzaldúa discusses Identity is one of the challenges of living in the Borderlands/La Frontera, as Gloria Anzaldúa discusses. Our experiences navigating life become the theories we have become accustomed to reading and connecting with. I want to center their voice and introduce

people to the valuable contribution *testimonio* has in providing insight and perspective. I want this research to be for rural Latinas/os, not about them. It is difficult to achieve this goal because of the privileges I poses. Regardless, as a scholar, I have always been told to write for my people. As an educated woman of color, I have unintentionally separated myself from my community by pursuing higher education. I constantly remind myself of the importance of not getting caught up in the academic jargon. I pursued academia with the goal of providing the platform to discuss systemic issues that plague our communities. Just as we write about these issues, we must also be willing to leave the ivory tower and go back into our communities to pass on the knowledge we have acquired to empower to create change from within. The task is not to instruct our communities on how to make changes but collectively combine ideas and encourage the new generation of community leaders.

Voice

In this study, I use “we, us, our” to refer to the experience of Latinas/os in history, telling the memories and voices. I do this for a number of reasons, First, I find it difficult to separate myself from the history of my people. The history of oppression belongs to me, just as it belongs to those who may or may not acknowledge it. As a researcher this is also problematic because we should not attempt to speak for anyone, however, this is not my intention. I only speak for myself and if my community chooses to stand next to me then it is “we” and “our”, *lucha*. The “we, us, our” is also a reminder to my people that although, I am physically absent from my community, I am with them in spirit. I always remind myself that despite the struggles I experience, I still have the support of my people. I disagree with the use of “they, their” to describe a history of

which, in my opinion, attempts to other Latinas/os experiences, including my own, just as a hyphen, for some, in between Mexican and American is an attempt to “other” us. Coming to know the past is a critical pedagogy of decolonization. As Linda Smith explains “transforming our colonized views of our own history (as written by the West), however, requires us to revisit, site by site our history under Western eyes. This in turn requires theory or approach which helps us to engage with, understand and then act upon history” (34). Another reason it is difficult to separate myself from my history. My use of “we, us, our” also refers to a mestiza consciousness, I possess. Gloria Anzaldúa (1999) describes the mestiza consciousness, as the act of “break(ing) down the subject-object duality that keeps her a prisoner and to show in the flesh and through the images in her work how duality is transcended” (Anzaldúa 102). Further, “it is imperative that *mestiza* support each other in changing sexist elements in the Mexican-Indian culture (106).

One of the on- going struggles we face as researchers is being reflective of where we place ourselves in the context of our work. Sofia Villenas (1999) discusses the complexities of being a woman and an anthropologist disciplined through a male gaze. The male gaze (colonizer) delves into the historical roots of a male dominated society. Thus, it is imperative that as feminists we clarify with deconstructing how we view things. Villenas explains “women anthropologists are written by culture, we pay attention to the ways in which we are gazed upon with imperialist eyes and how that affects whom we write and for what purpose (75). She makes reference to herself in which she toils with the same conflicts of separating herself from her people. Villenas explains “as a Xicana and indigenous woman, I cannot escape my own experiences of marginalization and dislocation in this artificially bounded entity known as the United States of America.

At the same time, I cannot escape the privilege afforded to me as a university professor. Yet precisely because we are not the same “we” anthropologists, our interrogations, revelations, and vulnerabilities in a feminist praxis generate intriguing insights and creation” (76). I am, in the words of bell hooks and Emma Perez, “claiming a space and place from the margins” helping me to “be reflexive and critical about how and why we take up the politics we do and why we evoke particular regimes of truth, such as spirituality and faith (76). Similar to what Villenas describes, I cannot separate myself from my experiences of marginalization, nor can I escape the privileges afforded to me. It is through these insights that I attempt to study of rural Latinas/os as a college educated Latinas.

Contextualizing Rural Latinas/os

Historically, Latinas/os have been oppressed by acts of colonization in which we were denied equal access to numerous things including education, jobs, housing, and healthcare. The separation of Latinas/os from whites went as far as restricting accessibility to common spaces. Places, such as restrooms were often designated for “whites” only. This type of segregation impacted the places they lived, the schools they attended, and even the entertainment they sought. Segregation has since been abolished; however, the systemic inequalities remain, particularly in terms of Latina/o education. Historically, Latina/o high school dropout rates have remained among some of the highest in the country at 40% (Castro-Salazar & Bagley 80). In 2010, a report by America’s Promise Alliance, Civic Enterprises, and the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University revealed that high school graduation rates for Latinas/os had risen at U.S. schools (80). Further, U.S. born children of Hispanic (Latina/o) immigrants

have comparable college enrollment rates with their White peers, yet they are less than half as likely to graduate from four-year universities (81). As the Latina/o population increases, the U.S. Bureau predicts the Hispanic (Latina/o) population will reach 73 million (30 percent of the total U.S. population) by 2050. Latinas/os make up an overwhelming majority and represent in spaces both urban and rural. Nonetheless, I have found the rural perspective is limited in terms of research. In a literary analysis done of Saenz and Cruz C. Torres, they make reference to the limited research done on rural Latinas/os. More specifically, they claim that among 250,000 articles published between 1975 and 2001 listed in Sociological Abstracts, only forty-two focused on rural Latinas/os discussing topics of social inequality, education, health and aging, and substance abuse and violence (Saenz & Torres 62). Rural Latinas/os research should be more significant considering statistics which show the number of Latinas/os (Hispanics) working in the agricultural sectors is large and continuously increasing. According to the Pew Hispanic Center an estimated 1 to 1.4 million unauthorized workers are employed in U.S. agriculture (4). The research available is limited to few studies that are poorly integrated theoretically and methodologically and as a result we lack concise and succinct understandings of rural Latinas/os (Saenz & Torres 62). This study on rural Latinas/os is an attempt to free a gap in the research literature by utilizing *testimonio* to center rural voices. The importance of *testimonio* as a crucial means of bearing witness and inscribing into history of those lived realities that would otherwise succumb to the alchemy of erasure (The Latina Feminist Group, 2001, p. 2).

Analysis of the Literature

The literature depicts the images of Latinos in urban areas and their experience living and attending schools where there is a large Latina/o concentration. Strikingly absent are the experiences of Latinas/os from rural areas and their experiences in living in locations where there is perceived to be little to no Latina/o cultural influence. Their rural environment is one prone to poverty, limited education, and issues of health care. Their stories differ from those of urban Latinas/os who, in some instances following their graduation from a predominantly multicultural based high school, transitioned into a predominantly white institution with little multicultural base.

Rural Oregon

Defining rural is difficult and it is often adapted according to the context in which it is used. Generally, rural is defined using criteria such as overall population, population density, commuting patterns, and/or distance from other settlements (Crandall & Weber 2005). The U.S. census makes reference to rural as the space where “urban meets rural” leaving much to be defined. In order to understand the U.S. Census Department’s conceptualization of what a rural space consists of, an understanding of “urban” is imperative. Urban is defined using population density as one of the many categorizations. From a population standpoint, urban places are defined starting with a block group that has a population density of 1,000 persons per square mile and adding on block groups and blocks that have a density of 500 persons per square mile (U.S. Census 2010). For example, if a territory has 2,500 people or more, it is then called an urban area (ibid).

Urban areas are called urbanized areas if they have 50,000 or more people and urban clusters if they have between 2,500 and 49,000 people (ibid). Thus, urban is defined demographically, which doesn't consider land use, a more political.

While the U.S. Census has made attempts to clarify the vague definition of rural, however it has provided an even more convoluted definition. Perhaps this was done in an attempt to encourage individual states to define rurality, including Oregon based on statewide characteristics. In Oregon, the very large county size and diverse communities within them means there will be a lot of sparsely settled territory in "metropolitan" or "urban" Oregon (Crandall & Weber 7). For example, Lane County has a large urban center in Eugene, which makes it metropolitan or urban, but it also encompasses rural areas of both the coast and the Cascades. Thus, urban Oregon is defined as communities of 50,000 or more in the surrounding area within 10 miles of these cities. Under this categorization, there are six urban areas in Oregon that include Portland, Eugene, Salem, Medford, Bend, and Corvallis.

The multiple and oftentimes conflicting definitions of rural including isolated rural and frontier rural and is an attempt to reconcile for the disparities using the U.S. Census definition. Rural, as defined by Oregon, is a geographic area that is at least 30 miles by road from an urban community; characterized by some commercial businesses, two or fewer densely populated areas in a county, an economy changing from a natural resource base...and reasonable but not immediate access to health care (Crandall & Weber 13). Two more classifications included isolated rural and frontier rural. *Isolated rural* is an area that is at least 100 miles by road from a community of 3,000 or more individuals; characterized by low population density (fewer than 5 persons per square

mile), an economy of natural resources...large areas of land owned by the state or federal government and predominantly unpaved streets (Crandall & Weber 14). *Frontier rural* is defined as at least 75 miles by road from a community of less than 2,000 individuals; characterized by an absence of sparsely populated areas, small communities, and individuals working in their communities, an economy dominated by natural resource and agricultural activities, and few paved streets and roads (ibid).

Although these definitions capture the rural character, however, they also pose an issue. Clarifying the definition highlights the positive attributes of rural living, but outlining its deficiencies when compared to urban. In the words of one author, “these categories characterize what it is about the diverse rural landscape that may make communities more likely to have high poverty, low educational attainment, high unemployment, and low infrastructure (Crandall & Weber 14). This is only one example of the urbancentric framing of rural as disadvantaged. For the purpose of this study, the general definition utilized by the U.S. Census will be referenced to demonstrate that the influence of viewing rural through urban standards is one that begins first with the government’s interpretation and then filters down to the state and local levels.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to examine the identity development of Latina/o students from predominantly White rural communities who are attending college in the Pacific Northwest, an overlooked population. Students who are currently enrolled in college (at either two-year, four-year, public or private institutions of higher education) in

the Willamette Valley. Drawing on *testimonio*, participants shared how their college experience influenced their self-identity.

Significant research that has been done on the identity development of Latinas/os from urban areas and their transition into predominantly White colleges. While studies on Latina/o testimonies focus on urban areas found that the transition from predominantly multicultural high schools where they comprised the majority did not feel the pressure to assimilate, the identity development of rural Latina/o students has been overlooked.

Research Question

For Latinas/os attending a predominantly White college, the pressure on identity due to their cultural isolation is strong. The primary research question is

- How are rural Latinas/os from historically monocultural rural areas pressured to assimilate in college?
- How does their identity development change?
- How does transitioning into college that is perceived to be more culturally diverse affect their identity development?

As the Latina/o college student population increases, it is vital to examine their transition into college, their experiences, and their identity development.

Definition of Terms

This study's use of a few terms requires defining a number of key terms for better and more thorough understanding in the context of rural Latinas/os. These terms were

specifically chosen due to the number of definitions and contexts in which they are used within the literature.

Rural: This study utilizes the 2010 United States Census definition of “all territory, persons, and housing units not defined as urban” (United States Census Bureau 2010).

Latina/o: Term that arose in the late twentieth century to describe peoples of Latin America who have been colonized and dispersed throughout the Americas (Guidotti-Hernández 2).

Limitations and Scope

There were a number of limitations that impacted this study. One of them was time. It took a significant amount of time to get approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Their job is to ensure participants in this study were treated in an ethical manner by taking all of their needs into consideration. The researcher and underwent multiple reviews with months to receive approval. This shortened the recruitment for this study. Recruitment materials were distributed to seven institutions in the Willamette Valley to a number of cultural centers, student organizations, departments, programs, directors, faculty, staff, and students. Scheduled IRB recruitment to two weeks. Interviews were scheduled the following week.

Another limitation was my position as a graduate student at Oregon State University. There was limited time to become actively involved which limited my interaction with students who could potentially serve as participants. Unable to build rapport with an extensive number of students limited the scope of my study to not only

Oregon State, but also decreased my chances of recruiting students from other institutions.

Organization

The purpose of this study is to examine the identity development of Latina/o students from the predominantly White communities who are attending college in the Pacific Northwest. The first chapter is an introduction to my own *testimonio* as a rural Latina which provides a personal perspective for the basis of the study. It goes on to detail the purpose of this study by highlighting the research questions, outlining the methodology, and finally, discussing its limitations. Chapter two is a literature review beginning with the historical oppression of Latinas/os in society with an emphasis in education. It concludes by calling attention to the limited research on rural Latinas/os. Chapter three lays out the methodological process in which the research was conducted while also detailing the theoretical framework. The fourth chapter is describes the Critical Race Theory and LatCrit theoretical frameworks used to analyze the data. Chapter five details the findings of this study. It is divided into three sections including personal profiles, coding process, common themes. The themes are support through quotes from the participant's perspective. The results are discussed in Chapter six. Finally, the conclusion summarizes and provides closing remarks on the study and any future implications.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

From a historical stand point Latinas/os have encountered a great deal of hardships that set them apart as outsiders. This is particularly true in the area of education where dropout rates continue to increase, stereotyping Latina/o youth as the problem rather than looking at the failing educational system. Some would argue this system only benefits the wealthy, leaving the poor unsupported with no prospects of forward progression.

There is a significant amount of literature written on Latinas/os in a wide variety of spaces and places. This being the case, the literature should encompass Latinas/os living in urban areas as well as those in rural areas. However, it does not. The U.S. Census Bureau claims, the Hispanic (Latino) population will reach 73 million or about twenty-percent and quickly increase to thirty-percent by 2050. This being said, research on rural Latinas/os should be more common due to their overwhelming presence in the agricultural sector. One of the largest employers is California employing 67.9 percent of Hispanics (Latinos) in the agricultural sector. Rural Latinas/os could provide a unique experience and valuable insight on the importance of reform in rural schools, as well as provide support for those students transitioning into higher education. There are a significant number of rural Latinas/os who are completing K-12 and transitioning into higher education contrary to what some would think. Studies often focus on the experiences of Latinas/os as they navigate society given the historical oppression we have faced.

La Experiencia de Nuestra Raza

“So I’ve heard even wealthy parents put it...men and women whose children have always gone to private schools; and so I have hear the poor say , over and over, as they try to imagine a life for their sons and daughters that’s better than the present one. Such being the case ...a universal yearning for the improvement of public education in the world’s most powerful nation, one wonders why we must us the word “save” in connection with our schools and our children.” Marshall Frady

The schooling of Latina/o students has historically been known as segregated and unequal. The problems facing students today, stems from their historical mistreatment not only affecting Latina/o students but many students of color. Cases such as Mendez v. Westminster School District of Orange County initiated desegregation of schools in the 1930’s long before the infamous 1951 Brown v. the Board of Education calling for racial desegregation. Mendez v. Westminster marked one of the first cases addressing segregation among Mexican-American students. The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) led a campaign supporting families who pursued lawsuits in favor of desegregation. In a ruling District Court Judge Paul McCormick cited educational theory focusing on the assimilation of Chicanas/os and Whites stating it would occur more so through integration than by segregation (Ramos 1). McCormick further stated that “Spanish-speaking children are retarded in learning English by lack of exposure to its use by segregation (1). The Westminster School Districts appealed the decision however, lawyers for the Mendez case argued Nazi ideology was fueling segregation (2). This reference made by Mendez to racial and social prejudices within Texas schools and changed school board member’s minds (2). The lawyers’ strategic moves produced an outcome in favor of the Chicana/o students. The Mendez case affected all Chicanas/os across the West and they could now utilize the case in their own struggle towards

equality. The downfall was the lack of protocol to dismantle segregated schools. Thus, the issue of segregation continued well into the 1950's when *Brown v. Board of Education* when federal courts upheld segregation.

Americanizing Mexican-American students was done on the behalf of the teachers and districts who felt inferiority was due to language differences, amongst a number of reasons. Segregation of students from their White peers in public schools began in the post-1848 decades following the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (Valencia 42). School boards across the country justified segregation claiming Latina/o students would learn better if they integrated into American society by assimilating into the dominant culture (Valencia, Garcia, Flores, & Juarez 22).

The post 1848 period, there were few school facilities for Chicano children. A lack of local and state political leaders' commitment to public schooling, racial prejudice, and political differences among Whites and Chicanos accounted for this practice (Atkins 184).

Student from Colorado to Texas experienced inferior schooling conditions (Valencia 43). Herschel T. Manuel one of the first authors of Chicano education described White schools in rural districts in North Central Texas as having teachers with superior training within White schools while down the road Mexican schools had students who were housed in a 20 feet by 20 feet school houses with thirty students occupying a space large enough for only 12 (Valencia 44). As conditions continued to worsen, one could only imagine the long term effects of school segregation.

Effects of School Segregation

The long term effects of school segregation were evident by the achievement or lack thereof by not only Chicanas/os but also other students of color (Valencia 50). Legal records showed White students needed to be segregated for pedagogical reasons such as students holding back White students. Thus, Chicanos needed to be segregated to receive special instruction before the two could be placed in the same classroom. This was a biased conclusion given that at the time tests had not yet been developed to measure the proficiency of Mexican-American children in English (44). This purist mentality created barriers among students of color who felt they had the right to achieve an education equal to White students. The de-segregation issued by well-known cases did not dismantle the practice of excluding Latinas/os in the classroom but rather it became normalized. The notion of Chicanas/os being perceived as lazy and un-intelligent was due to their perceived language barrier. As Richard Valencia stated "it is not surprising that Chicano students have experienced persistent and pervasive language suppression and cultural exclusion (9).

Many students suffered at the hands of their teachers facing abuse on a daily basis. Intellectual inferiority was said to blame for many of the problems Latina/o students faced in the classroom. Their inability to score above their White students on standardized tests kept them from being recognized as equal students (San Miguel, Jr. & Donato 30). At the elementary level, Latino children were assigned to mostly slow-learning or non-academic classes (31). On the Secondary level (junior and high schools), administrators assigned them to non-academic classes, most of which were either vocational or general education courses (31). The oblivious cultural and special

educational needs of Latinas/os went unnoticed. The long process of student eventually disengaging from school began with placement on a vocational or general education curriculum track (Rumberger and Rodriguez 32). The curriculum was in most cases linguistically and culturally subtractive which Guadalupe San Miguel and Rugen Donato described as a mean the curriculum constantly devalued, demeaned, and distorted the children's linguistic and cultural heritage and systematically sought to eradicate it from the content and instruction of public education" (Guadalupe San Miguel 32). By way of resources available to students the teacher to pupil ratio has been shown to have a significant impact on the success of students. The quality of teacher also has a significant impact of student engagement.

La Experiencia: Latinas/os in Elementary Education (K-8)

High levels of performance among young Latina/o did not prevent them from being separated in their educational studies. According to the Latino Education Crisis, Latino/a children are much more likely than black or white children to be found in kindergarten at ages four and five. Different preschool experiences combined with different patterns begin to have consequences early in the educational careers of students. One particular experience outlined by Patricia Gandara (2003) described how first grade teachers commonly grouped students for reading instruction according to their reading level. These practices of grouping children through educational level would transfer into every day interactions among students. This included the playground and lunch time. Over time the students who are separated in the classroom using this method began to with these groups outside the classroom. Rather than combining students with various reading levels to aid one another, teachers were in fact "othering" students. Early K – 6

separating continues throughout their K-12 academia. The long term effects of singling out students could possibly lead to disengagements and in some cases drop outs. Singling students out at an early age leads to long term effects and begins the track of disengagement.

Another perceived issue that arises in the classroom is one of isolation due to a perceived language barrier. In American schools speaking a language other than English is generally considered an impediment to learning.” For many students their lack of English language skills becomes cumulative, making it difficult for them to catch up on the academic skills missed because of their limited fluency in English (Capps, Fix & Murray, 2005; Garcia 1994.) In the national Assessment of Educational Progress (NSEP) used to measure subject achievement in Mathematics, reading, writing and science, Latino students have shown to test below the national average. The academic disadvantages becomes especially pronounced in mathematics and the sciences where training needs to begin relatively early in a child’s schooling (Gandara, 2006). Disparities in math and science often continued through age 17. Latinos/as struggles not only occur at a young age but they continue well into their secondary education. The struggle of Latinos/as in education have been well documented within the literature. Similarly, my participants encountered many of the challenges described here but in addition they were isolated from their culture due to the lack Latino/a population presenting their rural towns. Its effects are evident within the different grade levels as described by the author in this work.

Latinas/os in Secondary Education (9-12)

The educational problems among Latinos carry on throughout their academic career. An unstable grade school foundation carries on leading to the high dropout rates. In 1998, 30 percent of all Latinos/as ages 16 to 24 year olds were dropouts (1.5 million), more than double the dropout rate for blacks (14%) and more than three times the rate for whites (8%) (Latinos in Education). The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) measured scores of Latino/a students at age 17 and found that they fell well below the scores of their white peers in the areas of math, reading, and science. Latinos/as have been shown to perform well in computer science, foreign languages and English courses. Hispanics (Latinos) students are more often than not tracked into general courses that satisfy only the basic requirements and not those that provide access to four year colleges or rigorous trade technical schools (Latinos in Education). Only thirty percent of Latinos enrolled in college preparatory or academic programs. The long term effects of Latino/a student's transitioning into higher education is often viewed through the urban lens. Missing is the rural lens which I would predict could yield similar experiences as these students transitioning from culturally diverse urban high schools into predominantly white institutions primarily ivy league institutions. Similar to the students in Mooney and Drakes study who described their experience in three distinct themes (assimilation, accommodation, and resistance) while attending institutions of higher education these descriptions might also be used to describe the experiences of Latino/a students who attended a predominantly white rural high schools.

Transition from High School to College

Research on Latinas/os in rural areas and their transition into institutions of higher learning has been limited. However, the transition of Latinas/os in urban areas has been well documented by researchers. In a 2008 study conducted by Margarita Mooney and Deborah Rivas-Drake, 1,000 Latinos were interviewed in which forty-five percent attended a predominantly multiethnic high school (70 percent). The study paid particular attention to the transition of these students into college. Upon interviewing, the participant's transcriptions revealed difficulties they encountered due to racial disparity where they became the minority on campus. Their transition into higher learning was marked by often unfavorable encounters with a predominantly white student body. They described their experience in three distinct ways; assimilation, accommodation, and resistance. Assimilation referred to students integrating into the larger population due to the pressure to fit within the predominantly white student body. Accommodation described the acceptance by white students who tolerated the Latinas/os on campus. The final description was the overall resistance Latina/o students had towards white students. This particular study reflected the experiences of Latina/o students who transitioned from predominantly multicultural institutions to primarily white institutions.

Latinas/os face a multitude of challenges they need to overcome from an as early as kindergarten to their transition into higher education. Each grade level brings about a new challenge according to Gary Stern, this is hindering Latinos (Quiro, 2002, p.324). A 2005 study of Latino students in Chicago public schools expressed interest in attending college (Mooney & Rivas-Drake. 2002. pp. 1-3). Despite aspirations students are not well supported in the areas of parental income and education. It has become quite

apparent in the United States that Latinas/os continue to lag behind. Evident are the overwhelming number of dropouts reported yearly. As it stands, the rate of Latino/a dropouts is 17 percent. Latinas/os in the classroom are facing unequal treatment due to perceived notions of educational lag in which a student is labeled as performing “below average”. In an attempt to support students they are separated from their classmates and placed in Bilingual Education class in an attempt to provide additional instruction needed to perform at a proficient level. Isolation leads to damaging long term effects. Studies show that by “othering” Latino/a students, schools are prepping these students to become the next generation of dropouts. Students as early as first grade are disengaging and eventually resigning from school.

Bilingual Education: Impact on Latinas/os

“Since language is a close and meaningful proxy for national origin, restrictions on the use of languages may mask discrimination against specific national origin groups.” –Yniguez v. Arizonans for Official English (1995).

Language is a primitive component of one’s individual identity and a vital component of cultural identity (MacDonald and Juan F. Carrillo 19). U.S. courts and policies have been historically consistent in depriving Latinas/os of native language use in sectors outside of the home (p. 20). As history reveals, Spanish was excluded from much of the curriculum as a means of instruction, some schools in the Southwest institutionalized “no Spanish” rules regarding conversational use of Spanish between students in classes and school grounds (9). Bilingual Education was often portrayed as special benefit given to Mexican Americans and other language minorities, and have argued that these communities should be provided the same English-language education

(Valencia, Garcia, Flores, & Juarez Jr. 81). The banning of Spanish in the class room was initiated despite studies done on White children who learned multiple languages and tested higher in the classroom, while also being praised by society for their bilingual and trilingual skills (20). On the other side Latina/o student were chastised for the use of a language thought to be threatening rather than accepted. Language in the 21st century globalization and transnationalism, Spanish speaking is still considered in deficit terms, “in the American case, the ability to speak two or more languages would be views as advantageous unless the person who speaks the language is a subordinate speaker (usually an immigrant), in which case it would be considered a handicap (Valencia, Garcia, Flores, & Juarez Jr. 20). Language for Latinas/os has sought to reinforce their common identity by asserting their language within American culture that often rejected them (Gandara and Contreras 122). When languages compete in the public sphere, they can become a critical marker of social and political status (123).

Beginning in the late 1800’s, Texas made it a crime to teach in any public school using any language than English (82). World War I lead to the formal abolishment due to an Anti-German stance Americans took. Fear and hysteria lead the government to take drastic measures in order to restore order to a country stricken with fear. However, the Supreme Court held that many of the states passing their own laws to outlaw the use of languages aside from English was unconstitutional. In the 1960’s students were punished for using.

Perceived Low Academic Achievement and the Pipeline to Dropouts

The low achievement by Latinas/os was first officially documents done by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Mexican American Education study (Valencia, Richard R., p. 19). Prior to this study in 1927 a graduate researchers by the name of Drake initiated a study entitled *A comparative Study of the Mentality and Achievement of Mexican and White Children* reporting on the achievement pertaining to Chicano and White students (The Plight of Chicano Students, Richard R. Valencia, p. 19). Results demonstrated a bias which included a depressed mean, restriction of variability, and a positively skewed distribution. In an example some Chicana/o students performed higher in some areas than White students at a median rate of 15.4 percent (p. 19). Misleading data has contributed to the misrepresentation of students of color in the classroom and the example of Chicana/os it has labeled them as “slow learners” categorizing and othering them in the classroom.

Disengagement has been outlined as one of the possible contributing factors to high Chicana/o dropout rates. As Russel W. Rumberger and Gloria M. Rodriguez discuss “several studies, based on long-term studies of cohorts of students, have examined the predictors of dropping out from as early as first grade (Chicano Dropouts p. 82). Continued research has revealed early academic achievement and engagement (attendance, behavior) in elementary and middle school predicted eventual withdrawal from high school (p. 82).

As Latina/o students navigate through education they experience a host of impediments marking their success. The lack of support on a social, psychological, and

educational support at school and in the community can and does limit the potential of many Latina/o students (The Latino Education Crisis, Patricia Gandara, Frances Contreras, 2009. Pg. 20). Some students go on to defy the odds by meeting the minimum demands of schooling and become competent citizens (p. 20). Some go on and defy the odds demonstrating competence in schools settings and going on to college (p. 20). Failure to perform at high levels in school, given the enormous barriers that Latina/o children face, is not evidence of a lack of intellectual ability, but proof that educational support systems are not in place to help students succeed (p. 20).

Identity Formation: Latina/o? Chicana/o? Mexicana/o?

Schooling for Latinas/os has included the assimilation of many into the majority pressured by a system negating the existence of an identity distinct from white students. As the literature reveals there is no Latina/o nationality; there is not Latina/o state (p. 330). However, it has not prevented this group from coming together despite their distinct differences. Researchers agree that Latinas/os have both cultural similarities and differences based on their countries of origin and their histories in the United States (Aida Hurtado, Karina Cervantez, and Michael Eccleston, p. 290). Another thing Latinas/os have in common is being colonized by the Spain and controlled for 300 years leading to the mixture of peoples of Indigenous, Spanish, and African blood (p. 330). As Rodolfo Acuña describes, Latinas/os have distinct characteristics:

“Most U.S. Latinos speak Spanish although again with different intonations. They all have strong sense of connection with their mother countries and being with them distinct historical memories and cultural variations. In their homes, many U.S. Latinos continue eating foods favored in their mother countries. Not all Latinos like chili: Enchiladas, tacos, and mole are all Mexican foods” (330).

The diversity of Latina/o identity stems from identities language, and culture are a hybrid of both the United States and their countries of origin (291). Individuals who identify with these political terms reject cultural and linguistic assimilation into the U.S. mainstream and instead seek to create a third culture through the hybridization of their ancestries and their status as residents and at times citizens of the United States (293). Individuals have had to choose an ethnic label that will benefit them in their struggle to gain political, social, and economic recognition in the United States (293). There is much in common between the political, social, economic and educational realities have more in common than we would suspect. Studies have documented Latina/o students connection, ethnic identity, and bilingual skills results in higher educational achievement than for Latinas/os that lose their cultural distinctiveness (294). A study conducted by (Feliciano) used the 1990 U.S. census data to examine high school dropout rates among 18-to-21 year-old youth in a number of ethnic groups which included Latinas/os groups; more specifically Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans (294). She found:

“Positive aspects of ethnic cultures (as measured by language use and the presence of immigrants in the household) may be explained by the increasing acceptance of cultural diversity in U.S. society in general and in schools in particular. There is still much to be done to fully implement multicultural education at every level of schooling but we cannot overlook the increasing cultural diversification that is now becoming commonplace in U.S. society and in the world” (p.854 of the *The benefits of biculturalism: Exposure to immigrants culture and dropping out of school among Asian and Latino youths*).

Positive outcomes can come from ethnic cultures and by its acceptance of cultural diversity in U.S. society in general and in schools in particular. Researchers have speculated that Latinas/os falling behind in school begins at an early age. It has been determined that much of the disconnect for Latinas/os in the classroom begins as early as elementary school and continues well into their high school education. There are

particular events in a these student's lives that determine whether they will make it into higher education.

Rural Education

Few people would acknowledge rural people as making up a minority of the U.S. population, but at the same time they are a very large minority indeed (Brown Swanson 1). Rural America has gone virtually unnoticed however, its people are real, their problems significant, their prospects worthy (Beeson & Strange 1). Rural schooling is a by far less noticeable in comparison to urban schooling, where forty-three percent of the nation's public schools are in rural communities or small towns fewer than 25,000 people, and thirty-one percent of the nation's children attend these schools (2). In about 20 states, mostly located in the South, Appalachia, Northern New England, and the Great Plains, more than thirty percent of the students go to school in these most rural communities (2). Rural schools face many pressures including increasingly diverse student backgrounds, learning styles, while also facing recruiting and retaining qualified teachers (Arnold, Newman, Gaddy, & Dean 1). Because rural schools tend to be smaller, the proportion of schools in rural communities tends to be larger in most states than the proportion of rural students, not in proportion to rural population, because many rural students are transported to schools in nonrural locales (Beeson & Strange 7).

Scholarly attention has been diverted away from rural children and their concerns often go unheeded (Lichter, Roscigno, & Condron 101). Rural educational achievement lags behind national norms, and dropout rates are pronounced (101). Rural schools are often thwarted by funding formulas that depend heavily on local property taxes (102).

Curriculum for these students has shifted toward specialized, vocational training and away from college preparatory course work that can provide broad-based skills for lifelong learning (102). Postsecondary becomes compromised due to the lack of educational courses steered towards preparation for higher education. Many are more simply steered into marginal jobs (assuming they are not unemployed after high schools that offer low wages and few fringe benefits and little job security (102). Among other issues in rural America, is the disproportionate number of people of color located in these areas.

Rural Latinas/os

America's most impoverished areas are populated disproportionately by minorities (105). However, rural areas are experiencing new in-migration of racial and ethnic minorities, especially Latinas/os (102). Mexican born Latinas/os have moved in large numbers into rural communities of the Midwest and South, often towns with meat packing or food-processing plants, and have spread throughout the rural Southwest, the central valley of California, and the Pacific Northwest (105). The United States has relied heavily on the labor of Latinas/os in the agricultural business. Despite their existence in rural areas, there is a dearth of information about Latinas/os (Saenz & Torres 57). Based on the 1990 and 2000 census that the growth of Latina/o populations rose faster than the metropolitan Latina/o population in three regions (Northeast, Midwest, and South (58). The nonmetropolitan Latina/o population decrease from 66 percent in 1990 to 53 percent in 2000, the South increased its share from 11 percent to 19 percent and the Midwest from 10 percent to 13 percent between 1990 to 2000 (59).

Chapter 3 Methodology

My “method” is not fixed . . . it is based on what I read and how it affects me, that is, on the surprise that comes from reading something that compels you to read differently . . . I therefore have no method, since every work suggests a new approach. Barbara Christian

The purpose of this study is to examine the identity development of Latina/o college students from rural areas in the Pacific Northwest, who have lived in predominantly White communities. This research study utilized the oral tradition of collecting stories, as learned from our indigenous ancestors who collected and shared their experiences, so that future generations could inherit knowledge. What matters about particular narrative is the meaning it gives to the collective subjectivities and identities of individual people at a particular time (Salazar & Bagley 30). In this study, rural Latinas/os attempt to undermine the dominant history of Latinas/os to demonstrate complex history as it decenters urban Latinas/os to highlight the plurality of experiences. This form of counter history is not about facts but about cultural and collective memory (30). Narratives and counter-narratives are about shaping intricate contexts by those who tell the story (30).

Research Design

This research is conducted through the one of the oldest known indigenous ground of the spoken word (Moraga 16). The qualitative methodology known as *testimonio*. It highlights the stories of our lives, to reveal our own complex identities, in this case, of rural Latinas/os college students. *Testimonio* is a crucial means of bearing witness and inscribing into history those lived realities that would otherwise succumb to the alchemy of erasure (Latina Feminist Group 2). Through story telling one’s awareness

of the world and its meanings grows and changes (Moraga 16). Stories tell the history of a people. Stories have an identity; it is a “who” or a “what” and contains the presence of persons, that is, incarnations of gods or ancestors or natural and cosmic powers

(Anzaldúa 89). Anzaldúa goes on to say:

“Like all people we, perceive the version of reality that our culture communicates. Like others having or living in more than one culture, we get multiple, often opposing messages. The coming together of two self-consistent but habitually compatible frames of reference causes *un choque*, a cultural collision. One such cultural collision is the commonly held beliefs of the white culture attach commonly held beliefs of the Mexican culture, both attach commonly held beliefs of the indigenous culture. Subconsciously we see an attach on ourselves and our beliefs as a threat and we attempt to block with counterstance” (Anzaldúa 378).

Counter-historical narratives contest the negative representations, in this case, of Mexican culture and peoples of Mexican origin (89). Gloria Anzaldúa describes stories as “acts encapsulated in time, “enacted: every time they are spoken aloud or read silently” (89). Further counter narratives, counter truths, counter memories contained in this work represent a recovery of history, “‘counter-rhetoric’ against the dominant side of American history, which is centered on the advancement of some by the exploitation of many others (Castro-Salazar & Bagley 31). Providing a “counter-rehetoric” involves the work of claiming a “linguistic space”. In the words of Gloria Anzaldúa, she describes what this means and how she places identity within her work “I consider myself a mestiza multiculturalist teacher and writer informed by my identity as a Chicana Tejana dyke from working-class background. I am involved in an anti-colonial struggle against literary assimilation, claiming linguistic space to validate my personal language and history (204). At the center of this research study is the participant’s voices that have always been present, not one that needed discovery. Rural Latinas/os occupy a third space in which they attempt to claim linguistic space and seek a means to transform

pedagogical and institutional practices so that they will represent these ethnic people (204). Education of our history depends on incorporating all different points of view, white, colored, and mestiza, drawing on and from the lenguas of our peoples.

I came to this research from my own experience as a rural Latina, a Chicana feminist, a scholar, a first generation, low -income student, heterosexual, scholar-activist, Spanish speaker, English speaker, single woman. If we are to serve our community we must recognize the differences but also be willing to look for commonalities that are present even amongst the most diverse. Commonalities become catalysts for transformation as activists develop specific actions designed to challenge individual and systemic racism, sexism, homophobia, and other social injustices (Anzaldúa 13). Although, my experiences are similar to the participants, I recognize we are different. Our struggles, histories and feminisms are similar, in an act of solidarity, I produce the *testimonial* voices of my participants.

Interview

The research study utilized semi-structured interview questions formulated in advance to offer structure (Hesse-Biber 116). Participants were asked to answer a series of twenty-seven open ended questions in a face-to-face interview which lasted approximately an hour and thirty minutes. This also allowed the researcher to guide the participant's responses and ask follow up questions (116). The researcher learned to savor the informant's every word for its cultural or subcultural connotations as well as for its denotative meanings to determine how their college experiences influenced their self-identity. (Fetterman 40). Asking specific questions has its advantages including assisting

in building a relationship with participants. The Interview questions covered topics including the impacts of growing up on a predominantly white community, family dynamics, culture, and college. An audio recorder was utilized to capture their voices.

The questions probe further into established category of meaning or activity, while refining and expanding an understanding (44). The use of open ended questions allowed for participants to interpret the questions (46). The depth of perspective these techniques provide was invaluable in piecing together the complex lives of participants (55). The digital recorder was utilized in this research study. It was instrumental in effectively capturing long verbatim, quotations, essential to good fieldwork, while the researcher maintained a natural conversational flow (70).

Selection of Sites and Participation

This research was conducted under the faculty supervision of Dr. Norma Cárdenas (primary investigator). All research materials were extensively reviewed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Oregon State University before distribution to ensure participants were not harmed or exposed to risks during the research process. IRB protects against the exploitation of human research participants by protecting the rights and welfare. In compliance with the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the names of participants were changed to protect their identity. Explaining the nature of the research study was done prior to signing the consent forms (Hesse-Biber 128). All data used in this research study was stored and locked in a secure location.

The three participants were self-selected based on the criteria of having lived in a predominantly White rural community, having transitioned into a predominantly white

college, and were over the age of 18. All participants were currently enrolled college students in either a two-year or four-year, public or private institution of higher education in the Willamette Valley. The schools included Oregon State University (OSU), University of Oregon (U of O), Chemeketa Community College, Lane Community College, Linn Benton Community College, Mount Hood Community College, and Willamette University. University faculty, staff, departments, student organizations, student programs, and cultural centers all aided in recruiting participants via listserv distributions, personal invite and referrals.

Data Analysis

At the conclusion of each interview, the recordings were transcribed and coded individually for main themes. Within the coding process, patterns or themes were identified that placed incidents and experiences into broader social and political contexts (Buch and Staller 213). The act of coding refers to the process of assigning a word or description representing what is seen happening in the data, in this case the *testimonio* (213). A pattern refers to the process of identifying how similar processes recur repeatedly in the data (213). Comparing and contrasting refers to the process of looking for similarities and differences between and among different actors encountered in the field, as well as similarities and differences and how they may be handled (213). The individual main themes, in this case, were reexamined for intersecting themes between and among each individual *testimonio*. In support of the themes, quotes were excerpted from the *testimonios* to highlight and contextualize the incidents and experiences that tie them to a broader social and political context.

An extensive journal was kept by the researcher as a method of inquiry to provide a deeper understanding of the researcher's experiences during the interview process. It provided information about concerns prior to and after interviews as a way to ground the research. The journal was also a tool to help retain focus and support oneself by personal reflection or ideas, personal impressions and reactions as the research is undertaken. No identifying information within the journals linked content to any specific participant.

For the interpretation and data analysis, Critical Race Theory (CRT), Latina/o Critical Race Theory (LatCrit), were utilized as frames of reference. CRT advocates a counter-historical narrative that contests the negative representations of Mexican culture and peoples of Mexican origin (Castro-Salazar & Bagley, 31). CRT situates their narratives "in a broader perspective that includes economics, history, context, group- and self-interest and feelings and the unconscious" (Delgado & Stefancic, 3). The counter narratives, counter-memories, and counter-truths contained in this study represent a recovery of history, "a counter-rhetoric against the dominant side of American history, which is centered on the advancement of some by the exploitation of many others" (Castro-Salazar & Bagley, 31).

Limitations

There were considerable limitations in conducting this research study. My own (position) within Oregon State University when sending out requests to potential research participants posed a problem. I had attended the institution a little over a year, prior to beginning the research process. Under these conditions, I was not well connected and few people knew who I was. Feminist research calls for researchers to become active

within the community in which they want to conduct research. Although, I was in a number of clubs, many students could not place a face to my name. I contemplated creating a video to circulate with my consent forms, but in the interest of time and predicting a possible hang up with IRB, I decided against the recruitment tool. I regret this decision. Based on the feedback I received from faculty and staff, students are more receptive to digital material, such as videos and would have lent more validity to the study.

Time constraints, I felt, were also an issue. Late submission into the IRB limited recruitment time. I relied heavily on emailed requests for flier distribution to listservs. If time had allowed, I would have attempted to schedule face to face recruitment meetings at all seven institutions with key faculty, staff, student organizations, programs and cultural centers. I was able to visit one institution and give a brief presentation to a student organization, but unfortunately, the issue of being established in a community came up. I did not personally know anyone at this institution and was not able to successfully recruit anyone. In order to comply with deadlines set by the graduate school. I had to limit recruitment from 1 month to two weeks to recruit and schedule interviews.

I also realized that rural communities in this region are small and in some cases, closed off to outsiders. Issues of mistrust could have easily dissuaded participant involvement. Another disadvantage to not becoming involved in the community is the limited possibilities for the distribution of recruitment materials were and or individuals would personally invite members to participate.

Another limitation was in the clarity of materials. After I sent them the consent form and list of questions. In some cases, it took some coaxing to ensure that the IRB process was not intimidating. In a few instances, I simplified the language and discussed what each section meant. I urged students to set up a time to meet with me and get to know me on a more personal basis before conducting the interview. I provided my phone number, email, and office hours. One student agreed to meet, but later canceled with no explanation.

The nature of the interview questions was sensitive and personal. This also may have limited the number of people who would have participated. The participant can only trust that the information they share is done in good faith by the researcher. As a researcher I understand how difficult it would be for me to share intimate information about my life experiences. Two of the participants expressed that this had been the first time they had participated in a research study. They described it as not being “as bad” as they thought it would be. I did not think to ask what this meant but again, I imagine the consent form was a contributing factor to the number of participants who actively participated. The verbal consent may have alleviated the problem.

Another problem I encountered was that participants were confused by the assumed shared definition of rural. Since I did not provide a definition on the flier, this may have also affected the number of participants. One participant emailed to say that she did not fit the criteria for rural because her town was 13,000 people. By not defining rural and leaving it open to individual interpretation people were more stringent in their definition of rural I hoped I would get more participants even ask if they could interview.

The demographics of Oregon was also unique. There are many towns that, rural, have a large population of Latina/o people who, work in agriculture. I realized this was due to the large agricultural sectors in the towns. Oregon plays an important role in agriculture with 10% of the economy invested in production (Oregon Agriculture). More than 140,000 or 1 in 12 Oregon jobs are tied to the industry, with 60,000 of these located on farms (Oregon Agriculture). All most 80% percent of Oregon's agriculture production goes out of the state, with half of it marketed overseas. In some instances, participants admitted to never having attended school with white students until they came to an institution of higher learning. This presented a unique perspective to my research and was the complete opposite of my experience where I attended school with predominantly white students. This proved that rural is contextually defined and Latinas/os are still segregated.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the identity development of Latina/o college students in rural areas in the Pacific Northwest, who have lived in a predominantly white communities, *Testimonio* were collected to highlight the stories of rural Latinas/os, awareness of the world, and their experiences. At the center of the research is the participants' voices that are always present and absent dominant narratives. If we are to serve the community, we must recognize the differences but also be willing to look for our commonalities; present in even the least diverse communities. Using a semistructured interview I was able to savor the participants words for their cultural and subcultural connotations to determine how their college experiences influenced their self-identification. Participants self-selected and interviewed. Their

transcriptions were coded and particular patterns and themes were identified. They were compared and contrasted for similarities and difference using the lens of Critical Race Theory.

Chapter 4 Theoretical Framework

In Western academia, people often forget the important role life experiences play. Even with the context of Latina/o education, rural students are rarely mentioned and their stories untold. After all, it is through lived experiences that theory is born. As Gloria Anzaldúa claims in *Borderlands/ La Frontera*,

“What is considered theory in the dominant academic community is not necessarily what counts as theory for women of color... (Necesitamos teorías) that will rewrite history using race, class, gender and ethnicity as categorized, of analysis, theories that cross borders, that blur boundaries new kinds of theories with new theorizing methods... And we need to find practical applications for those theories. We need to de-academize theory and to connect the community to the academy” (Anzaldúa, 1990, pp. xxv-xxvi).

In this quote Anzaldúa is referring to a division between communities and academia when it institutionalizes practices, such as testimonio and storytelling. These methods of communicating valuable history have been used by indigenous ancestors for thousands of years. Mending the division between the two opens the channels for exchange of valuable information. This study on rural Latina/o experiences is just one example. There is little information about their experiences. They are viewed from a macro-level and depicted through an urban lens. Anzaldúa’s quote could not be more fitting in this study on rural Latinas/os.

Critical Race Theory

CRT scholars challenge those who are unwilling to value experience as a research method or theory to examine challenges people of color face in a society where racism, sexism, and classism are normalized as a way of life. My study privileges the voices of rural Latinas/os to understand how their lives offer a counter view that is often defined through the lens of urban normativity and the norms are those of the people who create popular culture living in urban locations (Thomas, Lowe, Fulkerson, & Smith 153). This study heeds Anzaldúa's (1990) call for "theory to be informed by the lives of those it presumes to explain and understand."

To understand and explain the experiences of Latinas/os who have lived isolated in the rural communities of the Pacific Northwest, the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT), more specifically, Latina/o Critical Race Theory (LatCrit). Together, they emphasize the importance that knowledge of experience among marginalized peoples and the roles it plays in linking it to theory. This study will provide much needed perspective of rural Latinas/os in the Pacific Northwest by which theory can be written.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a theoretical framework was developed to address the social inequalities experienced within society. According to Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, "Critical Race Theory (CRT) movement is a collection of activists and scholars interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism and power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 2). Through CRT, a number of lenses are used to acknowledge race, class, power in U.S. society. The genealogy of CRT reveals a contextual and historical relationship to critical legal studies, and ethnic social

movements that date back to W.E.B Dubois, Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglas, César Chávez and the Black Power and Chicano Movements of the 1960's and 1970's (Delgado and Stefancic 2). Further, CRT, “emphasizes the importance of perspective and historical context in analyzing phenomena, while claiming that race is a central, not a marginal, element in understanding individual experiences of societal structures (the law, schooling work environment) and identity” (Gillborn, 2006; Solorzano and Yosso, 2000, 2001, 2002). Although race is a socially constructed idea, it has real impacts on real people who do not always understand the extensive implications of their “otherness” (Castro –Salazar & Bagley, 2012, p. 28). Critical Race Theory has since branched out into sub frameworks which look critically at issues of social inequality including Latina/o Critical Race Theory (LatCrit), Critical Race Feminism (FemCrits), Asian Critical Race Theory (AsianCrit), Queer Critical Race Theory (QueerRaceCrit). This study will utilize LatCrit which looks specifically at the historical inequalities in Latina/o society.

Latina/o Critical Theory

As a subset of CRT, Latino Critical Race Theory or LatCrit theory responds to the historical presence of Latinas/os in the lands now known as the United States of America (Malavet 7). The theory points to distinctions among national origins as often ignored and social constructions that grouping Latinos/as together as homogenization. LatCrit emerged partially, as a result of what some scholars felt was a “CRT black/white binary that did not allow the intersection of race, class, gender, sexuality, language, immigration status, and other important issues related to Latinas/os to be sufficiently addressed” (65). CRT and LatCrit share some basic views that include viewing laws and lawmaking within a historical and cultural context in order to deconstruct their racialized

content (ibid). Racism, white privilege, and the myths of meritocracy, neutrality, and objectivity are understood to dominate institutions, social norms, and daily practices (Alexander Evans & Delgado Bernal 65). As is an interdisciplinary/ transdisciplinary perspective, LatCrit places issues of racism, colonization, discrimination, castification, and other forms of oppression in contemporary and historical context (Castro-Salazar & Bagley 29).

Viewing the counter narratives of rural Latinas/os puts their lives into a broader context revealing the in socially oppressing experiences which is in stark relief to voices that are mystified because of a hallmark of the American Dream. Their voices are often silent due to their demographic locations often characterized by the mystical idea that small town living is part of the American Dream. As noted by Critical Rural Theorists Alexander Thomas, Brian Lowe, Gregory Fulkerson, and Polly Smith, rural communities and populations fall into three categories: 1) rural as simple; 2) rural as wild; and 3) rural as escape (155). What matters about a particular narrative and counter-narratives are shaped by not only the people telling the story but also the meaning it gives to the collective subjectivities and identities of a particular people at a particular time (Castro – Salazar & Bagley 30). Castro-Salazar and Bagley, discuss how narratives and counter – narratives give voice to people who are marginalized while also providing a perspective people can relate too. For example the interviews conducted with rural Latinas/os provide a counter-narrative that might be beneficially for those living in similar area.

History can be thought of as a dominant paradigm this, in other words, is characterized as a predefined concepts that exist as unquestionable, unchallengable, are transmitted to us through the culture (Anzaldúa 38). The “culture” is made by those in

power-men (38). The history of Mexicanas/os is intertwined in White culture and we are portrayed as evil. The border becomes the tool of control. A border, la Frontera. Defined as a “dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary” (Anzaldúa 25). This border defines who and what can enter. Many Whites consider the inhabitation of the borderlands *atrevesados*, alien whether they possess documents or not, whether they are Chicanos, Mexicanos, Indians or blacks (25). Anzaldúa defined it as the place where ambivalence and unrest reside and death is no stranger (26).

Analogies to Anzaldúa’s description of the borderlands, rural spaces are also a part of the borderlands. What is known about these unique spaces is defined through urban normativity. This urban lens offers an understanding of rural areas to be spaces into which cities expand and absorb (Thomas, Lowe, Fulkson, Smith 64). Further, utilizing an urban lens frames rural spaces in a number of misconceiving ways. Common images include pastoral lands, small towns, close knit communities, salt-of-the-earth farm families that are honest, hardworking and “just trying to make it” (Thomas, Lowe, Fulkson, Smith 23). These picturesque scenes are also come with negative stereotypes often enforcing ideas of danger, wild, backward, and primitive (*ibid*). These common misconceptions shape the ideas of people who live outside rural spaces. These misconceptions negatively influence urban people’s thoughts and determines how they interact with rural people and places. This is particularly the case in relation to Mexicanos/as and rural areas, the two are historically intertwined.

As documented, the history of Mexicanas/os is one depicted by the constant oppression of peoples. Today the state of oppression experienced by Mexicanas/os

continues to be deeply rooted to a period of time our people refer to, as the day “the border crossed the people”. We continue to be greatly affected by the taking of our indigenous lands, pushed from our homelands and our *tierra* taken without explanation. Our land restrictions were informed by the land laws of 1883. They allowed private land development companies to receive up to one-third of any land they surveyed and subdivided (Takaki 293). Mexican farmers were forced to become tenant farmers, sharecroppers, leaving peasants especially vulnerable to exploitation (ibid). They were faced with extreme poverty working for the new land owners who stole and cheated the Mexicanas/os out of their earnings. The following is only one account of the many describing the hostility and mistreatment of Mexicanas/os by whites during the Mexican Revolution. As recalled by Elias Garza, “Owners gave us the seeds, the animals, and the land but it turned out that when the crop was harvested there wasn’t anything left for us even if we had worked very hard. That was terrible. Those land owners were robbers.” (Takaki 293). In addition to poverty, there was the danger of violence. The constant state of poverty forced migration into major cities. As Jesus Moreno describes, “We were running away from the rebellion. There were a lot of people coming to the city (El Paso) to wait out the conclusion of the Revolution . We thought it would be over in a few months” (Takaki 294). The Revolution lasted for years, very few returned instead they chose to settle in Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, California, and spread as far away as Michigan and Illinois. Most worked in agriculture sector feeding consumer demand.

The 1920’s were marked by the exclusion of Mexicanas/os from Anglo society and knew not to enter areas that were clearly “Anglo territory” (Takaki 230). Moreover, Mexican children were segregated in schools. The mentality surrounding the importance

of keeping them uneducated. The logic behind this, as one White Texas farmer explained “If I wanted a man I would want one of the more ignorant ones...Educated Mexicans are the hardest to handle...It is all right to educate them no higher than we educate them here in these little towns. I will be frank. They would make more desirable citizens if they would stop about the seventh grade” (Takaki 303). Educators at this time had the task of preparing Mexican children to follow in their parents footsteps (303). School policies were influenced by growers who needed Mexican labor in a growing agricultural industry. Mexican Children in the words of one male superintendent “if a man has very much sense or education either, he is not going to stick in this kind of work. So it is up to the white population to keep the Mexican on his knees in an onion patch” (34).

This brief history highlights only a fraction of the oppression experienced by Mexicanas/os from the past is present in today’s racial mentality. Latina/o students are still greatly affected by poor schooling conditions. Student continue to drop out at alarming rates. As history shows, the marginalization of Mexicanas/os and their depictions have been negative. CRT places narratives, written history as well as economic, context that includes, group- and self-interest, and even feelings and the unconscious (Delgado and Stefancic 3). CRT articulates the persisting issues of race and racism in the United States.

Chicana Feminist Theorists & Philosophies

CRT places emphasis on the societal inequalities particularly those among Latinas/o, Mexicanas/os, Chicanas/os. In addition to LatCrit, it is important to incorporate Chicana feminist theories to support and provide an additional lens of

analysis. Chicana feminist theories arose from matrix of the very discourses denying, permitting, and producing differences (Sandoval 42). The vision of third world feminism necessitates our willingness to work with people of color, the queer, the poor, the female, the physically challenged (1). It proves a space where women of color have called their own, where they feel comfortable expressing who they are and challenged who they are not. As Alice Chai emphasizes:

“What “feminism” means to women of color different is from what it means to white women. Because of our collective histories, we identify more closely with international Third World sisters than with white feminist women...A global feminism, one that reaches beyond patriarchal political divisions and national ethnic boundaries, can be formulated from new political perspectives” (1).

From the beginning of what was known as the second wave of the women’s movement, U.S. feminists of color have claimed feminism at odds with those developed by U.S. white women (U.S. Third World Feminisms 44.5). One of many issues and disconnects between U.S. women of color and white women, aside from race, was culture, sex, or class (46.7). Similarly, CRT attempts to point out the inequalities of Latinas/os in American history, however, another feminist lens of analysis was added. The third world feminist perspective and even more specifically Chicana feminist theory attempts to do what third world feminists did in the 1980’s white feminists women’s “modes of exchange” perceived to be universal by speaking to every woman’s experiences. However, analyzed through the lens of third world feminism, the “modes” were exclusive and hegemonic in nature. Adding another lens showed a perspective that limited and did not pertain to women of color. Looking at research through multiple lenses offers a multilayered approach, which yields results that a single layers perspective may not identify. In this case, looking at Latina/o rural experience through

third space feminisms and even more specifically, Chicana feminist theory, fills in the gaps CRT and LatCrit leave in the analysis. This process can also be thought of as a sieve. Different sized sieves capture the desired end result which is an outlook rich in history.

Complimentary to CRT and LatCrit, is *Borderland Theories*, one of a number of Chicana feminist theories utilized in this study. It was developed by Chicana feminist scholars who “turned to the history of the Mexico- U.S. border region as a point of departure to explain the historical, social, political, economic, and cultural position of people of Mexican descent in the United States (Elenes & Delgado Bernal 72). One of the main goals of *borderland* scholars was to explain the conditions of Chicanas/os/Latinas/os living between worlds, cultures, and languages (72). Another Chicana theoretical framework used in this research was *Theory in the Flesh* described as the place where “physical realities of our lives our skin color, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longings, all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity (Moraga & Anzaldúa 23). Further, it attempts to bridge the contradictions in our experience:

We are the colored in a white feminist movement.
 We are the feminists among the people of our culture.
 We are the often the lesbians among the straight.
 We do this bridging by naming ourselves and by telling our stories in our own words (23).

Paired with along with these theoretical frameworks is *differential consciousness* is created to, as Sandoval describes “permit movement among and between divergent logics and conceptual schemes and it hallmark is a higher order coordinating mechanism that enables them to collectively make sense and work together (Moya 58).

Third space feminist theories work to deconstruct and decolonize frameworks. It becomes important to create a space where people of color are represented. *A differential consciousness* describes the ability to “choose tactical positions, that is, to self-consciously break and reform ties to ideology, activities which are imperative for the psychological and political practices that permit the achievement of coalition across differences” (Moya 80). Critical in conducting rural research is to produce knowledge on a community that is marginalized. Rural people of color should play an active role especially, in academic writing. Linda Tuhiwai Smith speaks to books being dangerous for indigenous people for four main reasons:

1. They do not enforce our values, actions, customs, culture, and identity;
2. When they tell us only about others they are saying that we do not exist;
3. They may be writing about us but are writing things which are untrue;
4. They are writing about us but saying negative and insensitive things which tell us that we are not good (35).

The same sentiments can be extended to rural people whose stories, counter narratives, *testimonios* do not always fit in the broader context of theoretical frameworks, such as CRT. Although CRT has been adapted with a Latina/o consciousness, it too does not encompass the rural perspective. Rural Latinas/os representation is important as a concept because it gives the impression of ‘the truth’ (Smith 35). It makes people conscious of the fact that we do exist.

Testimonio as Theory & Method

As people of Mexican that are racially mixed descent, Anzaldúa explains that we are the new mestiza coping by:

“developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity... learns to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view... learns to juggle cultures... has a plural personality, ...operates in a pluralistic

mode, nothing is thrust out, the good the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected nothing abandoned” (101).

We are at a constant *lucha de fronteras*/ a struggle of Borders continually walking out of one culture and into another, because we are in all cultures at the same time (Anzaldúa 99). The process of reflection of our place in society and of the struggles we encounter along the journey of our experience becomes the basis of our theories. Our future depends on “the breaking down of paradigms, it depends on the straddling of two or more cultures. By creating mythos, that is, a change in the way we perceive reality, the way we see ourselves and the ways we behave” (102). In a process of our own self-reflection, we arrive at the importance of *testimonio* as a crucial means of bearing witness and inscribing into history those lived realities that would otherwise succumb to the alchemy of erasure (The Latina Feminist Group, 2001, p. 2).

By recovering our memories and reflecting on our identity and culture as a whole, we construct our *testimonio*. Seen as a voice from the margins, *testimonio* is and continues to be an approach that incorporates political, social political, social historical, and cultural histories that accompany one’s life experiences as a means to bring about change through consciousness raising (Bernal 2012, p. 364). Writing our *testimonios* is a means of confronting established and contested terms, identities, frameworks, and coalitions that have emerged in particular historical contexts (The Latina Feminist Group 2). It is essential to move past the notion that all Latina/o experiences are the same. We must place ourselves in varied histories, illustrating their positions within intersecting systems of power (4).

The lives of rural Latinas/os cannot be said to have the same experiences as those of urban Latinas/os. This research challenges the terms and frameworks by piecing together a counter narrative that brings the voices of rural Latinas/os to the forefront. Their *testimonios* will serve to disrupt the essentialized, homogenized understandings of Latinas/os, as rural Latinas/os present their respective genealogical and historical inheritances in rural America (6). As Ricardo Castro-Salazar and Carl Bagley state, “[Giving] a voice to the victims of unjust structures who are not the subjects of official history and provides the opportunity for their voices to be incorporated into the official critiques of the system is an intervention” (29).

The rural *testimonios* are “a source of knowledge, empowerment, and political strategy for claiming rights and bringing about social change” (Bernal 364). Bernal describes them as ‘pragmatic’ and ‘engaging’ employed to understand and establish a sense of solidarity as a first step toward social change” (364). These *testimonios* shed light on the identity formation of rural Latinas/os who in some cases, maybe isolated from a culture similar to their own. *Testimonio* provides the platform for rural Latinas/os to recount their transition into college and their re-evaluation of their identity. The result is a pedagogy in which we are able to hear and read each other’s stories through voices, silences, bodies, and emotions with the goal of achieving new *conocimientos*, or understandings (367).

Conclusion

Utilizing this multifaceted approach, the *testimonio* is analyzed from a Latina/o critical race theory that helps in identifying oppressions encountered in schools,

community, home and to better understand rural Latina/o oppressive experiences (365). Anzaldúa, among others have highlighted the importance of speaking to one's experiences because through reflection, theory is born. The goal is to provide a perspective or counter narrative to history, as it has been told through the framing of White patriarchal society. Critical Race Theory (CRT) was developed to address the social inequalities experienced within society. This lens acknowledges race, class, power in U.S. society, and its separation of humans. Although race is a socially constructed idea, it has real impacts on real people who do not always understand the extensive implications of their "otherness." Our history is one that reveals the extent of being "othered" and presented in a negative light. Recovering our memories and reflecting on our identity and culture as a whole, we construct our testimonio, seen as the voice from the margins.

Chapter 5 Discussion

The goal of this study is to examine Latina/o college student with a focus on college, experiences, and identity development. This study utilizes Critical Race Theory, more specifically Latina/o Critical Race Theory to understand the impact of race and racism in society (Zamudio, Russell, Rios Bridgeman 1). It highlights the importance of voice and provides an “oppositional voice” to the dominant or master narrative. It is an effective tool in making visible the structure, processes and practices that contribute to continued racial inequality (5). There are three main concepts of Critical Race Theory which include Whiteness as Property, Interest Convergence and Intersectionality. By drawing on this theory, rural Latinas/os will tell stories that frame and interpret society by highlighting aspects of society functions, meanings, causes, and consequences of racial inequality (3). The voice of rural Latinas/os challenges the dominant perceptions of urban Latinas/os that often categorized as monolithic. As the population of rural Latinas/os increases it becomes increasingly important to address their needs, not only in terms of community, but also in the areas of education. This is particularly true when emphasis is placed on their transition into higher education from rural schools.

Personal Profiles

Germina

Germina is 27 and grew up in the rural town of Jamesville located in Western Oregon. She was born and raised in migrant family. The population of Jamestown was approximately 15,000 people. Jamestown was and remains a town heavily invested in the agricultural industry. Jamestown is ethnically composed of primarily Mexicans,

Russians, and a small population of Whites. Germina grew up working in the fields alongside her mother, her tia, two uncles and twin brothers. Her mother was a single mom and as a result Germina spent much of her time with her abuelita. Germina reminisced about spending time with her abuelita and speaking only Spanish until her untimely death when Germina was only seven. Another influential person in Germina's life, aside from her mother and abuelita, was her Uncle George, the hippie, who went on to receive his Doctorate degree in documenting his own struggles in life. As a baby, Germina's mother wanted her to be a little doll, buying her dresses and taking countless pictures. As the oldest child, her role changed as she assumed the roles of mother and father, due to her mother's work schedule. She watched over her twin brothers by cleaning them, putting them to bed, cooking food, and also challenging anyone to fight when her brothers were bothered. In school, Germina remembers being targeted and not allowed to speak Spanish. Students of color, including herself, were often separated from their white peers. She was perceived to be a "bad student" and "trouble maker," which caused her to be suspended from one high school and sent to another where she would complete the remainder of her years. Her learning disabilities, she felt, also left her at a disadvantage in the classroom.

Germina describes her mother as a "rebel, who didn't follow the term." With her influence Germina decided "my identity was what I wanted it to be" and it was from those "bits and pieces" of that she witnessed and created her own identity. Having the opportunity to attend a 4 year institution was a turning point for her because it was never supposed to happen according to who. If it wasn't for the Trio-Programs, she would not be where she is today. She first majored in the Forestry as an undergraduate however,

in an effort to lessen the struggles they experienced while living in their rural communities. Negotiating Identity; Collision of Culture and Gender, the fourth theme, chronicles how students negotiated identity described as the collision of culture and gender with resilience.

Theme One: "Othering"

Each student recalled painful memories in which they were separated and made to feel different, mostly due to their ethnic backgrounds. Germina recalls,

"I didn't get a lot of schooling they put me in ESL classes and bilingual schools. I was separated from White children and placed in groups with Asians, Russians, Mexicans, Japanese and African American Children, so my education was separate" (Germina, Personal interview April 2, 2013).

Germina did not speak Spanish fluently as English was her first language. Learning English first, came at the discretion of her mother who did not want her daughter to be treated differently for having an accent and advised her to only speak English. Despite this, the school insisted she be placed in special education. It was determined much later that Germina was dyslexic, which had been undiagnosed since the school did not test her for this disorder. Her unnecessary placement in special education was not based on her dyslexia, which went untreated. .

Juana also attested to being "othered" in the classroom because of language. She recalls this happening as early as kindergarten and persisting through high school. Juana recalls,

"I knew I was Mexican because other students were White. They knew English. Ever since I was little I knew I was different and I hung out with people who looked like me and spoke like me because since kindergarten I remember walking in and not knowing what to do. It was really scary for me. Here I was six years

old and someone was talking to me in a language I didn't understand . So, I didn't like school at first. The other kids were kind of mean ...the other kids who spoke English" (Juana, Personal Interview, April 9, 2013).

Later, she went on to discuss how this early type of segregation prompted her to only hang out with students who were like her; they were ethnically Mexican. The school remained divided along racial and ethnic lines.

José had a unique experience where he described not feeling "othered" until he transitioned into higher education. In college, he went from being the majority to being a minority. He details his experience on campus as "having never seen so many white people in his life". Attending a high school that was majority Mexican ethnic and Russian, José did experience exclusion/seclusion. Germina and Juana attested to feeling excluding during the years leading up to their departure from their rural hometowns. José described his experience by saying,

"It wasn't hard to go talk to white folks because high school prepared me for that because being the majority you had a couple of white students and you would ask them to be my partner. So coming here it was like well now there are more of you. I can ask many of you to be my partner. But that didn't seem to be the case. It seemed to me that there experiences were different where they were always the majority. We both come from places where we were the majority only I became the minority and they maintained their status of the majority" (José, Personal interview April 11, 2013).

He was not intimidated by the number of white students, on the contrary it seemed as if they were intimidated by his presence. His exclusion was played out as a science major when being paired in labs, José was with anyone who was left after partners had been chosen. He was often paired with another person of color, who was also excluded in the classroom.

In relation to the critical race theory, these *testimonios* provide insight on the “othering” that takes place in the classroom, which continues despite the civil rights legislation. Interest convergence, the second theoretical concept of critical race theory, suggests that “racial reform has moved cyclically rather than linearly forward” (Zamudio, Russell, Rios, Bridgeman 34). Zamudio et. al. suggest that changes within a school setting will not change unless it converges with the interest of Whites (34). Inclusivity in a classroom setting threatens the societal status of middle and upper-class whites (34). Latinas/os, who are perceived as “low achievers”, are often separated from the class to deal with the issue of leaving a “no child behind”. Speak about José’s experience of “othering” differed in that he received institutional support. The consequences of these actions result in “othering” a student and create a divide between students of color and white students, such as the case of Juana whose “othering” began early in kindergarten and proceeded into high school. Another component of “othering” was institutional aggression, which added another layer of difficulty when navigating their lives as rural Latino/a students.

Theme Two: Heteropatriarchal Institutional Aggressions

The second theme addressed the ways in which institutional violence against Latinas/os and queer and trans Latinas/os persists in college and universities in the U.S. It is revealed in the ways social hierarchies of power are used in the daily practices in institutions of higher learning.

For Germina, college was an exciting moment full of new experiences, but also moments when she felt less than equal.

“When I came to campus eight years ago, I walked into the Latina/o center and was fine until they found out that I identified as gay, then, I was shunned. Pushed out, taken off listservs, not invited to anything” (Germina, Personal Interview, April 2, 2013).

Excluded on the basis of sexual orientation, Germina experienced a form of heteropatriarchal institutional violence while attending college at an institution of higher learning where it is presumed to value inclusion and social justice. Although, the institution creates inclusive and non-discriminatory laws and sanctions, it has no control over people’s individual actions.

Placing these incidents into the larger context of CRT, it is a form of revisionist history that reexamines America’s history in relation to minorities’ experiences. Insisting on the historical context of Latinas/os inequality in schooling and education, racism is maintained and perpetuated on college campuses . CRT acknowledges the legal banning of offensive treatment of people of color, however, it does not mean that institutions, such as schools are “postracial” and no longer play a role in fostering social inequality (Zamudio, Russell, Rios, Bridgeman 4). Combating this type of attitude from a materialist perspective means changing the physical circumstances of minorities’ lives before racism will abate (Delgado & Stefancic 25).

Theme Three: In and Out of a Box

The third theme was in and out of the box. This refers to the instances that participants felt pressure to assimilate and conform to the standards of the dominant culture. Participants were influenced in the way they identified, performed in school, and perception of a being an ideal student. Germina and Juana described their experiences as the inability to “fit in a box.” José discussed a similar experience when he was asked to

describe himself to white students. He often simplified his identity in an attempt to dispel any “assumptions” people made about him. Germina spoke to the negative stereotypes teachers had of her. Forced to adopt White middle-class values, behaviors, and ways of knowing, she was often in trouble, as she recalls:

“I was always getting in trouble because I was never doing what they were asking me to do...I didn’t fit in a box. That’s what really forced me to be white, think white...that’s the best way to be and forget about my culture” (Germina, Personal Interview, April 2, 2013).

Juana was often placed in a box within a white/black racial binary. Further, as the daughter of migrant farmworkers, teachers identified her as being disadvantaged. According to Juana, the socioeconomic “disadvantage” of being from a migrant family would determine whether she could attend college. She describes her experience:

“In high school I felt oppressed, constrained to this little box...you have to follow, this is who you have to be. You have no choice because you come from the bottom. There was a teacher in high school who really got to me ,...I asked for help with an essay for college and he told me why was applying for OSU if my parents couldn’t afford it? Or, why was I going there?... So when that happened, it was like am I doing this for the right reasons. It was very questioning and now, that I’m 3 months from graduating, every single struggle that not only my parents have been through... I can now go home and talk about breaking through that box. You can really be anything you set your mind too”.

In this excerpt, Juana reflected back on her experience of trying to navigate her way into higher education. She described her upcoming graduation as breaking away from the confines of an imaginary box she had been placed into as a result of her racial/ethnic, linguistic, and social status.

José had a strong sense of his racial identity in large part because of the institutional support and social environment, which contributed to his academic success. He described his high school experience as “amongst us we were all the same.”

Transitioning into college was different. He was one of only a small group of Latinas/os on a predominantly white campus. In his words, he was “amazed” that “[he] had never seen so many white people in my life”. Feeling alienated, José realized he had to learn how to define himself using terms people, aside from his ethnic peers, could understand.

“Depends what group I’m in. basically, if I’m with a majority of white students with no knowledge of any other ethnic background... I just say Latino because they pair that with Latin America and it’s easier for them. If I’m with Latinos, I say I’m Mexican because they know where Mexico is at. If I’m with Mexicans, they start breaking it down by states and from states they say what states they are from. I would say I’m from Oaxaca and when they want me to break it down further than that I tell them the region or the name of the indigenous group I belong to...I’m Mixteco. The more they know the more I can break it down to them”.

Cultural knowledge, for José, was important. He built connections with other students based on their knowledge and self-conceptualization of being Mexican.

The third theme deals with the concept of intercentricity of race and racism. It draws from the idea that race and racism are “endemic and permanent in U.S. society” (Yosso 7). The common misconception of meritocracy that all people regardless of race are given the opportunity to become successful in society, is challenged by CRT. CRT claims that it “not only fails to provide equal opportunity but also contributes to racial inequality” (Zamudio, Russell, Rios, Bridgeman 12). By focusing solely on an individual’s efforts and talents, attention is diverted away from analyzing the system as a whole and measuring its faults (13). Germina, Juana, and José discuss intimate moments in their lives where there was an attempt to make them “fit” into monocultural roles they did not identify with. Dominant society criticized them for what they were not rather than looking at the systemic issues that were working against them. They were able to defy the myth by developing a critical consciousness that allowed them to reflect their

values. . Excerpts from the *testimonios* of the three students, who were not given the same opportunities to be successful, show how power, privilege, and discrimination play out in different ways. Their efforts were met with continuous obstacles they needed to overcome in order to become successful. However, the idea of success is short lived due to systemic barriers they will continue to encounter if race and racism continue as permanent fixtures in American society.

Theme Four: Negotiating Identity, Cultural Collision and Resilience

The fourth theme was centered on cultural, familial, and gendered expectations. As the participants navigated their education (K-12 and college) they found it difficult due to the pressures on a cultural, familial and gendered basis. The pressure often led students to continuously negotiate where they stood in terms of expectations and their own identity formation. Germina stated,

“As a child, culture only played in the role in work, we did what were supposed to. My mom, not really a lot of culture. She tried to defy as much of it as possible...meaning when the boys were adventurous ones, the girls were supposed to be at home. I had to live that role but that was pretty much it (Germina, Personal Interview, April 2, 2013).

Germina discusses an interesting dynamic in which her mother disconnected from their culture because she wanted to protect her children from discrimination. Germina’s cultural expectations were impacted by the negative stereotypes associated with Mexicans, in part due to internalized oppression. In her words, “she did not identify”. This was her attempt at removing herself from the complications brought on by claiming to be Mexican.

Male and female gender roles were enforced within the family structure, which were conflated with race, class, national origin, sexual orientation, ability, and religion. For Germina, her mother was a single mom who relied on her only daughter to take care of her younger brothers. As the oldest, Germina fulfilled the role of surrogate mother “raised” her brothers. However, she did not identify with the gendered roles. She explains,

“When I was a baby, my mom wanted me to be a little doll. Little muffs on both sides of my head and in dresses every day. My family thought I was so cute. I was the first baby to be born. They bought me dresses and changed me every half hour to take pictures of me. I have pictures galore as a child. When my mom became a single mom and had boys. The expectations changed, I didn’t have to be a little lady, I needed to fend for myself. I took on the role of both mom and dad, when mom wasn’t around. Bringing up boys makes you be more tomboyish because they are boys. They like to get in fights and go ahead and pick other people and pick on each other. In that, I had to go fend for them and beat the crap out of whoever was bothering them. I had to have both roles. My mom always wanted me to be a lady but that was not possible. I did not like that idea because how do you become a lady when you have to chase after all of these people/kids and dealing with this stuff? She always tried to force me to be a lady. When I came out gay which I was gay all along, but I was beaten when it showed...at the age of 21 I decided that I wasn’t going to do it anymore. I wanted to live the life the way I wanted to live it” (Germina, Personal Interview, April 2, 2013).

Fulfilling gender roles became increasingly difficult due to the pressure she felt from her mother to be a “lady.” Navigating her gender and sexual roles was even more difficult when her desire to express her masculinity became apparent to her family. Punishment became the sure way of preventing her from exploring them. At age 21, she decided that she wanted to be comfortable in her own skin. Facing her family was difficult, but they accepted who she was.

“There was not a lot of culture that I seen. As I got older, I learned about my culture by dating a Mexican woman. I saw her family and saw close knit her family was the BBQ’s we were supposed to have the fathers would eat first then

everybody would eat next...dancing music came later... I didn't know what it meant to be Mexican. I didn't really understand it, but I learned it from her. If this is part of who I am I need to learn more about it."

For many years, Germina was disconnected from her cultural roots. She was hesitant to accept a culture in which people were often ostracized as "trouble makers" or "delinquents". Denied the opportunity of role models, she met and connected with someone she considered a part of her culture that allowed Germina to see the positive attributes of the Mexican culture.

For Juana, she describes her traditional background and the significant impact it had on her schooling expectations. Her parents had limited schooling, so finishing high school was a great accomplishment in their eyes. Getting married and finding an entry level job would comply with their wishes for their daughter.

"Coming out of high school at least in the culture I grew up, it was very traditional. At that age people were more looking into forming a family. At least getting married and starting a family and look for an entry level job. My parents thought that it was good enough. At first they thought it was good enough to have a high school diploma just because they had never obtained one so that was their life goal to get a child through high school. You know it was very unheard of ...in fact, I was the only one from my whole high school class that came to OSU that came, the only woman, that came.

From a working class family, Juana did not feel the pressure to obtain a degree in higher education. She realized education was important in her future after she attended a leadership event. Although her family could not afford college, this did not discourage her from attending. Today, as she nears the end of her college career, she is grateful for the decision to attend college and the support she has received from her family throughout her journey.

Notwithstanding, gender roles within Juana's family were common, however, according to her, college changed the gender roles she was accustomed to following at home. As she recalls,

"I think the biggest thing was having male friends. For my dad that was the biggest thing. Like what you hang around who all the time? It was a very big difference for him. You aren't supposed to be hanging around them too much because people are going to think this or people are going to think that. Even being out spoken, it's like don't raise your voice or don't be too noticeable in class. Listen to instructions. Also the curfews, a decent woman never goes out past 9 p.m. I'm at the library at the time!! Going to the dances and the bars was really hard for my parents to accept. My dad would tell me that I am not a man and should be going to the bar. You aren't going to find anybody to settle down with."

Juana's family did not pair success of a young woman as one who hung out at bars and attended dances. These activities were reserved for "male" only. As the first-born daughter, Juana had the added pressure of setting an example for her siblings and living up to the expectations set by her parents. She also carried the burden of setting an example for extended family members, particularly cousins. Some of those gendered expectations included finding a husband, getting married, and finding an entry level job.

All three participants spoke to instances where school clashed with their cultural, familial, and gendered expectations. The students were constantly negotiating and navigating the conflicts brought on by these institutions. Germina's experience was intertwined with her mother's perception of being "lady like," while trying to distance herself from the negativity associated with Mexicans. Juana's family played an important supportive role. Her family also stressed the importance of Juana starting her own family, someday. However, this was based on her ability to maintain a traditional role, which in her words, meant maintaining a lifestyle that included being home before

nine and staying away from bars. All the participants provided unique perspectives on navigating and understanding the binaries between culture, family, and gender and how it influenced who they became. In patriarchal fashion, José also had to maintain his male role as contributor to the family household income.

This final theme attests to the insightful *testimonios* collected from the students. It was also an example of instances that did not accurately fit the frameworks of CRT or LatCrit. As the researcher, I had to think critically about which framework would better suit and account for knowledge differences across rural Latinas/os. CRT and LatCrit were designed from an urban gaze, which assumes all Latinas/os are demographically located in similar areas. I propose designing a new method of analysis that further narrows the scope by encompassing the experiences of rural Latinas/os. Germina and Juana both attested to the disadvantages of navigating expectations that did not account for these differences among Latinas/os through the formation of their identity and familial challenges. A rural *conciencia* accompanied with CRT and LatCrit would provide another level of analysis, so we may further learn from rural Latinas/os.

Chapter 6 Results

As the motivating force behind this study, my own *testimonio* was analyzed using Critical Race Theory coupled with LatCrit to do my analysis but I realized that this theoretical framework did not fit, as well as I had anticipated. Critical Race Theorists have identified five key principles, Interest convergence, material determinism, racial realism; revisionist history, critique of liberalism, and structural determinism. The analysis of the data was difficult due to the broad perspective CRT had even when extended to a LatCrit consciousness of Latina/o experiences within and beyond the U.S. However, I felt the framework did not account for knowledge differences across Latinas/os such an urban gaze. The CRT and LatCrit set up their frameworks still assume all Latinas/os are demographically located in similar areas. As my research shows, Latinas/os in rural areas have distinct experiences, aside from their urban counterparts. Through the analysis of this work, a new *conciencia* or consciousness should be used when looking at Latinas/os in rural areas rather than an urban context. From the experiences of rural Latinas/os, a distinct rural theory emerges modeled after Gloria Anzaldúa mestiza consciousness and the seven stages of *conocimiento*.

My own *testimonio* fits into the scope of the study in ways that were not obvious using CRT/LatCrit. Following Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera*, she used auto-teoria based her life. Indeed, theory is written from lived experience. Developing a rural *conciencia* or rural consciousness should come not from a subtractive perspective macroanalysis, but from actual people of which it speaks, rural Latinas/os. The analysis of *testimonio* uses the seven stages of *conocimiento*, as a first step of working towards developing a rural consciousness. As a rural Latina, I find the process of *conocimiento*

describes my *Testimonio* as well as the research process. I am making sense of my rural experience in order to understand. The format will be descriptions of the stage followed by my own reflection from the *testimonio*.

Using my own experience, I apply the seven stages to my own life experience.

1. *“el arretrato...rupture, fragmentation...an ending, a beginning”*

“When two or more opposing accounts, perspectives, or belief systems appear side by side or intertwined, a kind of double or multiple “seeing” results, forcing you into continuous dialectical encounters with these different stories, situations, and people. Trying to understand these convergences compels you to critique your own perspective and assumption. ...Seeing through your culture separates you from the heard exiles you from the tribe, wounds you psychologically and spiritually. Cada arrebatamiento is an awakening that causes you to question who you are, what the world is about. The urgency to know what you’re experiencing awakens la facultad, the ability to shift attention and see through the surface of things and situations.” (Anzaldúa & Keating 547).

For me, growing up in a rural community was difficult. To embrace my culture meant being “exiled” from my community. Knowing this I often felt divided ...at home I was one person and at school I was another. I was constantly asking who am I? And why I was handed the misfortune of living in a place where I did not feel I had ever belonged? As, I reflect on my experience I realize that my research in this area is needed. The works of many scholars are based on what they have experienced and the method in which they navigated through the experience. The knowledge gained from this process is not limited to one person because as we begin to share stories with one another, we find how our lives intersect with one another. This common ground is the space needed to discuss the difficult issues we face as rural Latinas/os.

2. *“nepantla...torn between ways”*

“Each separate reality and its belief system vies with others to convert you to its worldview. Each exhorts you to turn your back on other interpretations, other tribes. You face divisions within your cultures of class, gender, sexuality, nationality, ethnicity. You face both entrenched institutions and the oppositional movements of working-class women, people of color, and queers. Pulled between opposing realities, you feel torn between “white” ways and Mexican ways, between Chicano nationalists and conservative Hispanics. Suspended between traditional values and feminist ideas, you don’t know whether to assimilate, separate, or isolate” (548).

During high school, I spent many days at school constantly being pressured to be “more white” and “less Mexican”. These pressures did not subside once I left my hometown. They continued to fill my thoughts as I entered college. I speak of attending my first Chicana/o studies course and being “enlightened” by the history of my people. At the same time I was conflicted with trying to understand my identity. Hispanic did not encompass the same meaning for me as it did in high school. I could no longer ignore the history and knowledge I had acquired. I am constantly “suspended between traditional values and feminist ideas” not knowing whether I should “assimilate, separate, or isolate.” Constant influences keep me thinking critically about who I am and I continue to reaffirm my identity when people of opposing views question it.

3. *“Coatllicue depths...desconocimiento and the cost of knowing”*

“Periods of being lost in chaos occur when you’re between “stories” before you shift from one set of perceptions and beliefs to another, from one mood to another. By realizing that it’s negative thoughts (your reactions to events) that rouse the beast and not something “real” or unchangeable out there in the outer world, you avert being hijacked by past trauma and the demons of self-pity and doomsday ruminations”(553).

I did not have an understanding of what it meant to be Latina, Mexicana, Chicana, or Hispanic. Everything at school was Anglicized from the students, to teachers, and even the curriculum. It becomes difficult not to dwell on all the experiences I missed out on living in my rural hometown. At the same time, it has given me an insight that most people do not have. It has made me appreciate what I have and everything I have accomplished with the help and support of individuals who cared. I have realized that many of those individuals I would not have met had it not been for me living in a rural area.

4. *“the call...el compromiso...the crossing and conversion”*

“Identity, like a river, is always changing, always in transition, always in nepantla. Like the river downstream you’re not the same person you were upstream. You begin to define yourself in term of who you are becoming, not who you have been” (556).

My journey through graduate school has helped me come to terms with my experience living in rural Wyoming. There was a time when I could not speak of my experience without feeling resentimiento or resentment. I recalled going home for holidays as difficult because I dreaded running into teachers who prided themselves in believing they were instrumental to my success when they had done nothing. Like my identity, these feelings of resentimiento needed to be reflected upon not with anger towards something

but analyzed through a lens of empowerment. My work and dedication to my studies has redefined who I have become, not who I have been and where I came from.

5. *“putting Coyolxauhqui together...new personal and collective “stories”*

“Tussling to remolinos (whirlwinds) of different belief systems builds the muscles of mestiza consciousness, enabling it to stretch. Being Chicana (indigenous, Mexican, Basque, Spanish, Berber-Arab, Gypsy) is no longer enough, being female, woman of color, patlache (queer) no longer suffices. Your resistance to identity boxes leads you to a different tribe a different story (of mestizaje) enabling you to rethink yourself in more global-spiritual terms instead of conventional categories of color, class, career. It calls you to retribalize your identity to a more inclusive one, redefining what it means to be una Mexicana de este lado, an American in the U.S., a citizen of the world, classifications reflecting an emerging planetary culture” (561).

Being identified within the confines of a box on a government form is not who I am or was before I learned the history of colonization of our people, I was the box uncritically checking boxes is another attempt by the government to colonize us and control how we identify ourselves and with each other. We are not either/or, we are a people of intersecting identities. Our intersecting identities are constantly under attack for the simple fact of not being understood. Having lived in rural America, it has become important to think of myself on more “global-spiritual terms” which is a difficult task when prior exposure has not supported this type of thinking.

6. *“the blow-up...a clash of realities”*

“The urgency compelling everywoman to give testimony to her views is so thick you can almost taste it. Caras reflejan angustia and blanched looks of shock; eye glint with hostility; feeling of disgust, bitterness, disillusionment, and betrayal clash, spatter, and scatter in all directions. These emotions flare through your body as you turn from one group to another like a weathervane” (563).

This stage speaks to the importance of giving testimonio and the rich data that comes out of it. At the same time, people question your reality. They do not understand the

significance of my experience and why my research should include rural Latinas/os voices. The hurt that comes from the rejection of my work by “others” is similar to the feelings of being rejected directly. My work is intertwined with my experience, to reject it is like rejecting me. I go from group to group looking for someone to accept all of me.

7. *“shifting realities...acting out the vision or spiritual activism”*

“Excessing dwelling on your wounds means leaving your body to live in your thoughts, where you re-enact your past hurts, a form of desconocimiento that give energy to the past, where it’s held ransom. As victim you don’t have to take responsibility for making changes. But the cost of victimhood is that nothing in your life changes, especially not your attitudes, beliefs. Instead, why not use pain as conduit to recognizing another’s suffering, even that of the one who inflicted the pain?” (572).

The importance of highlighting rural Latinas/os voices comes from the injustices they have faced of not being recognized as individuals but identified as a statistic. From my own experience I set out to learn whether rural Latinas/os have intersecting identities. How can our voices be accounted for when much of the work being done is through an urban lens? Our experiences good and bad can begin the discussion around recognizing who we are.

The seven stage of *conocimiento* have provide a framework in which to begin analyzing my experience and applying it into a broader context. This brief introduction into rural consciousness will inform my dissertation work on rural theory or what I will refer to as Rural Mestiza/o Conciencia. As I mentioned before, it is important to use multiple lenses of analysis because each offers a new perspective. Although, some may not be designed to fit the rural experience the insight it may provide is invaluable. CRT and LatCrit take Latina/o experiences and put rural Latinas/os into the larger scope by highlighting the injustices they have faced, however, Rural Mestiza/o Conciencia would

account for the life experiences outside the scope of classism, sexism, homophobia, and racism.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

“. . .The pain and joy of the borderlands--perhaps no greater or lesser than the emotions stirred by living anywhere contradictions abound, cultures clash and meld, and life is lived on an edge--come from a wound that will not heal and yet is forever healing. These lands have always been here; the river of people has flowed for centuries. It is only the designation "border" that is relatively new, and along with the term comes the life one lives in this "in-between world" that makes us the "other," the marginalized" (Norma Cantú 1).

The unique experiences of rural Latinas/os are central in creating a rural mestiza/o conciencia which would speak to the injustices and poor treatment received throughout their lives. However, rural Latinas/os also speak to joyous moments when their negative perceptions of themselves were challenged by individuals who saw the potential in them to succeed. Often facing harsh criticisms, my participants continued to work and prove they could make it. For every one person who put them down, there was another building them up and encouraging them to succeed. These brief excerpts offer a glimpse of their story

Germina:

"I was 16 at the time. I went through that program and was doing it because I had too. I wasn't going to listen to anyone. One of the teachers told me, "where do you see yourself in five years?" The only future for me is all I have ever been told...I'm going to be barefoot and pregnant, pop out a bunch of children...live on the man. Nobody had ever told me that I could be something else. The teacher told me I could be anything that I wanted to be. I told her she didn't know anything about me. I was told that I could be anything that I wanted to be. You have five years to change your life. Where are you going to be? That woman pissed me off. Here I am today graduating with my masters."

Juana:

"To this day, these are only places my friends dream of going too. And I have been there. It's so surreal to see dreams come true because coming from a small town where I graduated from a class of 65. You knew 50 of those from k-12, that

just doesn't happen. At least that's how a lot of people...I've even traveled more than some of my teachers in high school."

Jose:

"I was small first grade or second grade, I always knew I wanted to be a doctor. They told me I needed to go to college. I said, I'll go, whatever that is."

In the midst of oppression, my participants overcame the barriers, limitations and challenges set before them. As they move towards graduation, they are optimistic about creating change and encouraging other students to pursue higher education. They are setting an example for future generations, a voice from the margins.

Gloria Anzaldúa speaks of those at the margins as the "new mestizas" or those who inhabit multiple worlds because of their gender, sexuality, color, body, personality, spiritual beliefs, and/or other life experiences (Anzaldúa 10). This study goes one step further by proposing demographic location specifically, rural as a place where Latinas/os inhabit multiple worlds. This new form of thinking will be known as rural mestiza/o consciousness where, as Anzaldúa would describe is "a more whole perspective, one that includes rather than excludes" (10).

This research has provided a perspective that is not often heard. Rural Latinas/os are actively present and their testimonios are meant to be heard. This work will continue and a rural mestiza/o conciencia will be developed encouraging and empowering rural Latinas/os to continue telling their stories so that they may be released "into the world" in hopes to "unravel" words that have been forgotten.

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