

MUJERSITA YOUTH PEDAGOGIES: RACE, GENDER, AND
(COUNTER)SURVEILLANCE IN THE NEW LATNX SOUTH

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ABSTRACT

**ESMERALDA RODRIGUEZ: Mujerista Youth Pedagogies: Race, Gender, and
(Counter)Surveillance in the New Latinx South
(Under the direction of Claudia Cervantes-Soon and George Noblit)**

Though there is a body of research that deconstructs essentialized perspectives on Latinx youth (Cervantes-Soon, 2012; 2017; Cammarota, 2008; 2011; Denner & Guzman, 2006; Garcia, 2012; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Valdes, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999) a large body of research has failed to perceive Latina girls in nuanced ways. Additionally, mainstream research and broader discourses on Latina adolescents have been dominated by a hyper-focus on the “problem of [Latinx] adolescent behavior” (Akom, Cammarota, & Ginwright, 2008, p. 1). In the face of this, however, Chicana and Latina feminist writers use academic research and narrative writing to testify against deficit portrayals of Latinas. However, a review of these works has also spotlighted the reality that even this critical body of work has ignored the wisdoms and lived experiences of Latina youth. There has been much work that focuses on the perspectives of adult women who tend to look back to their youth in order to make sense of their adulthood. Conversely, this research age-gap has elucidated the importance of youth experiences and the need to for nuanced scholarship that centers their experiential knowledge.

The absence of Latina youth voices is even more conspicuous when we take context into account as their voices are also largely absent from the growing number of work on the New Latinx South. Historically, Latinx communities have been absent from the demographic, economic, cultural, and political systems of the South but in the past two decades, there has been

a profound shift in new immigration gateway states like North Carolina (Smith & Furuseth, 2006). This migration has disrupted the Southern socio-political consciousness that has largely been defined by the Black/White racial dichotomy (Wortham, Murrillo, & Hamann, 2002).

Drawing from Chicana feminist theory, *testimonio*, and Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain's (1998) sociocultural practice theory of identity and agency, this student presents a narrative about surveillance and counter-surveillance in the New Latinx South. Drawing from the *encuentros*, interview data, and observational data, I have identified three domains of surveillance. The first, surveillance of citizenship, refers to how racist nativist discourses about Latinx immigrants create a surveillance system in the form immigration *retenes*, heightened anti-immigrant sentiments amongst the students, and school's silence around these very issues. The second type of surveillance, surveillance of the flesh, refers to the raced-gendered discourses of power that situate the girls' emerging womanhood as inherently dangerous to themselves and others. The third surveillance finding, surveillance of student identity refers to the institutional patrolling (Alvarez-Gutierrez, 2014) practices of school personnel the closely monitor Latina bodies within the school. This monitoring presents itself through the push for visibility and compliance, the standards driven curriculum, and racialized constructs of intelligence. Through that awareness comes a responsibility to recognize that while the girls were being watched, they were also watching back by engaging in their own forms of counter-surveillance. As such, this study also points to moments when the girls deployed their facultades and border thinking (Mignolo, 2000) in order to disrupt the panoptic gaze and discourses of power imposed on them. I characterize this action as "counter-surveillance." Implications for the theorization of pedagogies and literacies are discussed.

Este trabajo está dedicado a las mujeres cuyas enseñanzas continúan guiándome, inspirándome y empoderándome: Mamá y Güelita, mis primeras maestras; San Juanita y Evelyn, mis hermanas; y Ati y Andrea, mis hermanas del alma. This work is also dedicated to the young women at the center of this study. My experiences with you have taught me what it means to be a teacher. A todas, las quiero mucho.

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PART 1

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Point of Entry into Sitwell Middle School

"We're a public school system and we don't need to ... turn our classrooms and our school buildings into political battlefields. There's enough of that going on out there right now and it's horrific. It does nothing but detract from the work of educating children." (Sitwell County Schools Board Member, 2016).

"There is no such thing as a neutral educational process. Education either functions as an instrument that is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, **or** it becomes the 'practice of freedom.' The means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world" (Richard Shaull in Freire, 2000, p. 34).

The 8th grade students of Mr. Brown's social studies class had been generally interested in the causes of the American Revolution. The past couple of lessons devoted much time to the students' perspectives on the growing political tensions in pre-revolution colonial America. On this mid-October afternoon, Mr. Brown's lesson focused on the differences between 'Patriots' and 'Loyalists'—the competing factions of Americans in the war for independence. After a group activity that involved charting people and social classes associated with each group, Alma—a Honduran immigrant—slammed her hand on the table and in her heavy-accent shouted: "I am a Patriot, man!"

The intercom sounded on and Assistant Principal Davidson's voice announced the arrival of several school buses. Mr. Brown grabbed his duffle bag and signaled to me that he was stepping out early to dress for football practice. The students began to gather their backpacks and

anxiously hovered by the door, waiting for Mr. Davidson to announce their release. I stood in front of the door, as if to block them from releasing too early, and joke: “What if I told you, that standing by the door, does not make time pass by faster?”

“*Maestra, usted se cree taaaaan funny*” [Teacher, you think you’re so funny] sneered Alma.

Mr. Davidson’s voice trailed off “Don’t forget...”

“Ugh, he’s so annoying. *Ya callate*. [be quiet]” Maritza groaned as she rolled her eyes.

“...to give your parents a hug. Have a good afternoon.”

The bell finally rang and the group spilled into the 8th grade atrium, which was already bustling with the 6th and 7th graders that were making their way to the parent pick up zone located in the back of the school. I was straightening up the chairs when I noticed that the cacophony of sounds had given way to the clear voices of the football team that had gathered outside Mr. Brown’s room. Though it took a couple of seconds to register what they were chanting, their words became clearer as I made my way closer to the door. “Build that wall! Build that wall! Build that wall! Build that wall!” Five football players were jumping and pumping their fists in the air as they excitedly continued their chant. My line of sight fixated on Alberto, one of the few Latinx students on the football team as he smiled and joined the chant. He stood next to a white teammate who was wearing a t-shirt that read “Trump for President 2016.”

Mrs. Moore, the English Language Arts teacher, and Mr. Spade, the science teacher, had also stepped out of their 8th grade classrooms and stood in silence as they watched the spectacle unfold. My body began to shake and the only words my brain could locate were filled with an anger I felt would only make the situation worse. Filled with a paralyzing anxiety, I stood in silence too. Finally, Mr. Brown’s voice boomed across the atrium. “Enough! Enough! You are

engaging in political speech on school grounds and that is against policy... For that stunt, you will be running laps until I say it's time to stop!" Almost immediately, the team arranged themselves into a single file line, and made their way past the crowd of students that I only noticed after my shock began to wear off. I hung my head and began to cry.

Mrs. Moore walked across the atrium towards Mr. Spade and me. She put her arms around me and in her Southern twang, lamented, "Can you believe that? I knew that t-shirt was going to cause problems." She relayed that the day prior, another White student had worn a "Trump for President" t-shirt. After several student complaints, the principal decreed that the shirt did not constitute a dress code violation and thus, he could not ask the student to change. He noted that only a disruption to learning would constitute a wardrobe change. On this day, a second student on had also worn a similar t-shirt. Given the tensions from the day before, the student response was almost immediate. Mrs. Moore continued:

When Alma and Erica saw Jonathan wearing that t-shirt they were so angry that Mr. Williams did not ask them to take it off. They were yelling at Jonathan, "racist! He is a racist, Miss!" I told them 'girls let's not call anyone names'. But they were so mad. I told them that I felt for them. I said, 'girls I feel for you, I do and I wish I could talk about it but I can't'.

She turned to me, put her hand on my arm, and continued:

You know, I don't belong to any party but what [Trump] says is just awful but you know we can't talk about it with the kids... So they asked to leave the room and work outside... but then I walk out and I see them just joking around. Erica was twerking on the lockers! One minute they are mad, the next they are twerking!

Purpose of the Study

The story about the football team reveals the racist-nativist anxieties (Pérez Huber, 2010) around these “bodies out of place” (Puwar, 2004). These anxieties have bred a hostile community environment for Latinx families who live under the threat immigration *retenes*¹ and rising numbers of ICE raids. In addition to documenting broader community experiences, it is important to interrogate racist-nativism within the microcosm of schools too. Sitwell’s football team chant of “Build that wall”, is embedded with racist-nativist discourses that has conflate Whiteness with “American” (Chang, 2017) and thus, designates who does and does not belong in this school. The dissonance between Latinx bodies and their educational spaces is salient. The underside of the North Carolina Latinx education reveals a deeply entrenched discourse that Latinx bodies are not naturally entitled to spaces of belonging inside or outside the school. As such, the purpose of this ethnographic study is to center the lived experiences of Latina girls coming of age in the New Latin@ South. Through the implementation of *encuentros* with a group of middle school Latinas, I sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How are Latina girls’ experiences and self-construction of identities defined and mediated by school?
2. How do Latina girls navigate systemic oppression and exercise agency in the New Latinx South?
3. What possibilities and discourses arise from liminal spaces like *mujerista encuentros*?

The Problem of the “It”

The months leading up to the presidential election had cast a brighter spotlight on the racial tensions in Sitwell County Schools. Less than a month into the school year, an English

¹ These are law enforcement checkpoints where undocumented status could more easily be discovered.

teacher tendered her resignation after an audio recording of a lesson in which students analyzed Donald Trump's modes of persuasion leaked to a North Carolina conservative blog. This blog and subsequent news reports would term this lesson, "The Trump-Hitler" lesson because the high school teacher can be heard comparing the two men's strategy of using fear to garner support. Despite the fact the teacher also made reference to Democratic Candidate Hillary Clinton's own similar strategy, this lesson was deemed an example of "unbalanced teaching" by several news reports. As a response to growing complaints, the school board drafted a letter to all county school staff in which they reminded us of the district's policy on the use of political content in class. This policy notes that while teachers can use political literature or campaign material for instructional purposes, they cannot use their position to promote any particular candidate, party, or opinion on a specific political issue.

In a statement to the media, one school board member warned of danger of 'turning' the school into a political battlefield (opening quote in this chapter). The word "turn" implies public schools are inherently politically neutral zones and puts forth a moral imperative to stop the politicization of schools. While at its surface, this desire to be neutral is painted as an act of caring that insulates students from the "battlefields" in the outside political world, such a statement reveals the hidden curriculum (Giroux & Penna, 1979) of Sitwell County Schools. This hidden curriculum compels schools to silence the experiences and perspectives of marginalized communities in order to maintain and perpetuate the hegemonic social order in the classrooms. Fine (1987) notes that the act of silencing is meant to control discourse—both who speaks and what is spoken. The proclivity for silence in schools is underpinned by an innate fear of naming structural inequities—thus, avoiding locating one's role in the perpetuation such inequities (Fine, 1991). As such, schools are structured in ways that attempt to situate the

schooling context as separate from the “political battlefields” of the “outside” world. The leaked lesson plan and subsequent policy email triggered a push for silence from the school board and served to further perpetuate silencing at Sitwell Middle School.

In her re-telling of the Trump t-shirt incident, Mrs. Moore uses this policy to silence Erica and Alma’s concerns over the t-shirt. At face value, the “it” she refers to could be the t-shirt itself; however, “it” is also being used as substitute for the racial tensions in her classroom. This colormuteness (Castagno, 2008) —a purposeful silencing around ‘race’ words—serves as way to distance herself from Alma and Erica’s emotional response. Mr. Stone, the principal, invoked a similar strategy after the “build the wall” incident. The day after, Mr. Stone made a television announcement in which he condemned bullying, disrespect, and harmful words. In the same announcement, however, he also noted that it was “okay” for students to “have different political opinions”, but that they “might not want to share those opinions in case someone disagrees.” This message echoes the silence that Fine (1987) termed ‘administrative white noise’ because while Mr. Stone seemingly renounced the football team’s actions, he did so without naming the action itself or addressing the racist implications, and willfully dismissing the Latinx students’ discomfort. Similar to Mrs. Moore’s problem with the ‘it’, the word ‘opinion’ here serves as a substitute for a symbolic act of violence that was directed towards the Latinx students of Sitwell Middle.

However, Alma and Erica’s naming of “racism” as the issue beyond the t-shirt shows a clear rejection of the Mrs. Moore’s, Mr. Williams, and Mr. Stone’s discursive practices that privilege colormuteness in the name of White comfort (DiAngelo, 2011). From Mrs. Moore’s point of view, the girls’ dancing gave the outward appearance that they were more interested in play rather than the schoolwork they had originally promised they would do. Their playfulness

might also give an outward appearance that the incident had not caused as much harm as they had made it seem. Valenzuela (1999) argues that a student that gives the outward appearance of ‘not caring’ about school can also be interpreted as a “form of resistance not to education, but to the irrelevant, uncaring, and controlling spaces of schooling” (94). It also reveals Ms. Moore’s belief that twerking takes away from the ability or right to speak about injustice. In other words, the girls’ rights to speak and be taken seriously are directly connected to their bodily performances of “good behavior.” My interactions with Alma both inside and outside the classroom revealed her critical thinking and subsequent critiques on issues surrounding schooling, immigration, race, and gender. While Mrs. Moore had rolled her eyes at Alma’s playful display after denouncing the Trump t-shirt, Alma would later critique teachers’ lack of understanding and respect towards their Latina students in such situations. She argued, “*como quieren que sígamos el ejemplo, si ellos no lo dan*” [how do they want us to follow the example, if they do not give it].

I begin this these narratives in order to paint a picture of the context of this critical ethnographic study and the events that inspired its guiding questions. What these narratives spotlight is the reality that Sitwell Middle is already the very ideological and political battlefield the school board member warned against. And even though there is a push to mute the conversations, Latina students have found ways to reject the norms of silence around issues of racism, ethnicity, language, gender, and immigration. In the face of this, perhaps in response to this push for silence, Latina girls are speaking back. Their discursive confrontations reveal how Latina girls negotiate power, author new identities, and engender decolonizing knowledge. As such, this study is meant to turn a listening ear to Latina girl’s discourses around these very

issues and provide an insight not just into their schooling experiences, but how they understand and navigate their worlds.

Why Girls?

Though there is a body of research that deconstructs essentialized perspectives on Latinx youth (Cervantes-Soon, 2012; 2017; Cammarota, 2008; Denner & Guzman, 2006; Garcia, 2012; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Valdes, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999) a large body of research has failed to perceive Latina girls in nuanced ways. Additionally, mainstream research and broader discourses on Latina adolescents have been dominated by a hyper-focus on the “problem of [Latinx] adolescent behavior” (Akom, Cammarota, & Ginwright, 2008, p. 1). Denner and Guzman (2006) found that through the uncritical examination of pregnancy trends, depression, and low academic achievement, research has perpetuated deficit perspectives of Latina girls that paint them as social burdens rather than agentic people who creatively navigate, negotiate, and subvert systems of power.

In the face of this, however, Chicana and Latina feminist writers use academic research and narrative writing to testify against deficit portrayals of Latinas. By theorizing Latina women’s lived experiences, epistemologies, and pedagogies (Anzaldúa, 1987; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1987; Hurtado, 2003; Latina Feminist Group, 2001; Arredondo et al., 2003; Castillo-Speed, 1995), Chicana/Latina feminist scholarship disrupts the apartheid of knowledge “sustained by an epistemological racism that limits the range of possible epistemologies considered legitimate” (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002, p. 169). These works interrogate hegemonic notions of womanhood, personhood, agency, and culture. However, a review of these works has also spotlighted the reality that even this critical body of work has ignored the wisdoms and lived experiences of Latina youth. There has been much work that focuses on the

perspectives of adult women who tend to look back to their youth in order to make sense of their adulthood. Conversely, this research age-gap has elucidated the importance of youth experiences and the need to for nuanced scholarship that centers their experiential knowledge.

With the exception of Claudia Cervantes-Soon's (2017) work with Mexican adolescents coming of age in Juarez, Mexico, Lorena Garcia's (2012) exploration of Latina girls' sexual identities, and Denner and Guzman's (2006) edited book on Latina girls, few Latinx educational studies that center youth voices have intentionally foregrounded an analysis of gender. The silencing of Latina youth has contributed to the production of "ethnographic research [studies that have] been largely confined to studying problems, prevention, and pathology, rather than [the] assets, agencies, and aspirations" of Latina youth (Akom, Ginwright, & Cammarota, 2008, p. 2). Research that silences and pathologizes young Latina girls proliferates fixed and problematic representations (Cervantes-Soon & Carrillo, 2016). Overwhelming deficit perspectives on Latina girls has left "little to guide teachers, adult allies, or parents on how to support...and... help them succeed" (Denner & Guzman, 2006, p. 1).

Latina Youth in New Latinx South

The absence of Latina youth voices is even more conspicuous when we take context into account. As Chang (2017) noted there is limited scholarship on the experiences of Latina adolescents growing up in rural spaces. The field of inquiry into Latina lived experiences has primarily focused on urbanized spaces. Consequently, urban portraits have dominated the national imagination, leaving the narratives of Latinas living in rural areas largely ignored. Additionally, Carrillo's (2016) work with Latino men living in the New Latinx South addresses the research gap (albeit growing body) of Latinx studies situated in the Southeastern United States. Historically, Latinx communities have been absent from the demographic, economic,

cultural, and political systems of the South but in the past two decades, there has been a profound shift in new immigration gateway states like North Carolina (Smith & Furuseth, 2006). This migration has disrupted the Southern socio-political consciousness that has largely been defined by a Black/White racial dichotomy (Wortham, Murrillo, & Hamann, 2002). The number of Latinx living in North Carolina has nearly doubled in the past 15 years (U.S. Census, 2002) and it now represents 9.1 percent of North Carolina's total population (U.S. Census, 2013).

This shift in demographics has transformed public schools in the Southeastern United States. In the 2010-2011 school year, there were 180,410 Latinx students enrolled in North Carolina public schools (NC Department of Public Schools). In the 2015-2016 school year, the year this study took place, the total Latinx student population in the state had grown to 238,837. Within the same time frame, Latinx student representation at Sitwell Middle School grew from 20 percent to 38 percent (NC DPI). This is a 91 percent growth in Latinx student population in one school in just five years. Furthermore, Latina girls make up more than half of Latinx population at Sitwell Middle.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in the contribution it makes to our understanding of Latina adolescent experiences—especially as they relate to how identities are formed, practiced, and mediated by schooling spaces and geographic spaces. The middle school era is a critical time for adolescent development because of the great importance placed on others' perceptions of us (Erikson, 1968) and due to issues such as discrimination, this period is when racialized difference also breeds a greater need for cultural solidarity amongst marginalized students (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2012). However, much of the adolescent research that examines the impact of marginalization on the education of racial-minority students focuses on African American

youth (Alfaro et al., 2009). Beyond focusing on racial and ethnic experiential differences and similarities, the findings of this study could be significant in understanding how gender and race intersect for Latina girls through the exploration their identity practices at a critical point in their educational trajectory.

Secondly, much educational research concerning Latinx students has focused on the “alarming statistics” that attempt to explain their underachievement in school (Gándara, 2015). Although this study is a story about school and schooling, it is not one that focuses on “academic successes” or “failures.” Instead, this study questions how knowledge, pedagogies, and literacies are constructed and understood. That being said, through its employment of Chicana/Latina feminist theory and methodologies, the findings of this study disrupt the epistemological racism present in both mainstream research and school curriculum by highlighting the epistemologies and language practices of Latina girls. The findings of this study subvert assumptions around race, adolescence, and knowledge by highlighting practices that build solidarity, resistance, and resiliency in and between these girls. By reframing the ways we understand and value authentic girl discourse (Cervantes-Soon, 2012), we can recognize how resistance to injustice is manifested and embodied in their discursive practices—thus, continuing the push to expand our notions and understanding of pedagogy and literacy for Latina girls.

Finally, this project contributes to the growing body of Latinx research in the New Latinx Diaspora spaces. Scholarship on these new immigration gateway states has found that schools have not been responsive to the growing Latinx communities (Hamann, Wortham, & Murrillo, 2002). As the Latinx population continues to grow, states like North Carolina are entering a new era of race and ethnic relations through the disruption of dichotomous (Black/White) notions of diversity (Carrillo & Rodriguez, 2017). The study is also significant to educators and education

researchers outside of this geographic region considering that work with young girls of color has put in the back burner in service to directing resources the “boy crisis” (Mariscal, Velásquez, Aguero, & Urrieta, 2017). The urgency around the “boy crisis” has incidentally spotlighted how the intersections of race, gender, and class have been obscured by girls of color. Research in area of educational attainment and gendered differences uses trends of Latina girls’ higher educational attainment as a marker of their social advancement thus creating a hole our understanding of how they are still marginalized within the educational system. In studying the intersections of race, gender, class, and immigration, there are many issues that go beyond high school completion and college enrollment. These findings speak directly to the marginalization of girls of color in educational research.

Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is divided into two parts. Chapter 2 includes a review into pertinent literature. Chapter 3 explains my subjectivity as researcher, the theoretical frameworks, and provides an introduction into the design of the study. Chapter 4 begins the second half of this study. It introduces the young women at the center of the study as well as the tenets of the *encuentro* space. It gives a look into how the spaces functioned and the role each of the young women played in it. Chapter 5 is the findings and discussion portion of the study. Through the girls’ *testimonios*, I unpack what I have termed the three “domains of surveillance”: surveillance of citizenship, their flesh, and student identity. This chapter also defines the term counter-surveillance within the context of the study as a redirection of the gaze that disrupts hegemonic discourses. This discussion into counter-surveillance reveals the girls’ border thinking pedagogies of resistance and resilience. Finally, chapter 6 provides a look into the implications for the theorization of literacies for Latina girls.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Constructing the Latinx “Other” in Schools

Situating schools as *racialized social systems* (Bonilla-Silva, 2009) provides a framework for understanding why and how schooling continues to perpetuate racial inequalities. In understanding this, we can firmly locate how the dominant discourses of meritocracy, the hegemony of English, and even notions of smartness are inextricably tied to White supremacy. These frameworks position White, middle class values, practices, and norms at the center and perpetuate the institutional authoring of Latinxs as culturally deficit, perpetually ‘at-risk’, and intellectually inferior people (Cuero & Valdez, 2012). They form the foundations of schools’ hidden curriculums— “the unstated norms, values, and beliefs that are transmitted to students through the underlying structure of meaning in both the formal content as well as the social relations of school and classroom life” (Giroux and Penna, 1979, p. 22). For Latinxs, these hidden curriculums push assimilationists practices and reify race-gendered-classes inequalities (Acuña, 1998) through the omission and distortion of people of color’s history (Yosso, 2002), the adherence to notions of meritocracy (Zamudio, Russell, Rios, & Bridgeman, 2011), and the framing of Latinx people as the very ‘problems’ that impede their own educational success (Murrillo, 2002; Villenas, 2001).

Historically, hidden curriculums augment the de-legitimization of people of color’s epistemologies and pedagogies. The omission of people of color’s ways of knowing from formal school settings results in what Delgado Bernal and Villalpando (2002) call an *apartheid of knowledge*, where official and productive knowledge is understood to stem from Eurocentric

epistemologies. The de-legitimization of Latinx ways of knowing is (re)produced through the positioning of Latinx students and their communities as empty vessels devoid of legitimate knowledge and cultural capital (Yosso, 2005). Thus, schools have used the *cloak of pedagogy* (Valencia, 2008) to justify coursework for Latinx students that is often segregating, remedial, and symbolically violent (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Curriculum is delivered through what Paulo Freire (2000) calls a *banking method*, where the relationship between student, teacher, and knowledge is defined by acts of depositing of information, rather than acts of cognition. The banking method of education is inherently fraught with contradiction as schools, in a way, acknowledge that students are *not empty* because they simultaneously engage in subtractive schooling practices (Valenzuela, 1999). Subtractive schooling turns “cultural and linguistic difference into deficit[s] rather than asset[s]” (Bartlett & Garcia, 2011, p. 21). One such subtractive practice is the subtracting the value of a students’ first language through re-inscribing the hegemony of English by designating children as “limited English proficient”—a label that describes what they lack as opposed to what they are adding as emergent bilinguals (García, 2009).

The frame of “official knowledge” also constructs hegemonic notions of “smartness” that ignore the epistemologies and pedagogies of people of color. The overreliance on grades, standardized tests scores, and the correlations between meritocracy and ‘success’, erases the real institutionalized barriers that marginalize students of color (Hatt, 2016). These practices have come to define what counts as intelligence and who is understood to be ‘smart’ (Hatt, 2007). Deficit thinking around Latinx intellectual capacities are used as a justification for tracking practices that pushed Latinxs into segregated education spaces, lowered academic expectations, and menial jobs (Solórzano, 1997). From the Latinx perspective, the tracking of students into

‘regular classes’, the identification practices in gifted programs, the segregation of language learners, and the over-representation of students of color in special education classes has led to the internalization of seeing themselves as intellectually inferior (Nieto, 1996) and the reinscribing of ‘Whiteness equals smartness’ (Hatt, 2016). To be considered intelligent within school settings, then, one has to perform according to White middle class standards (Carrillo & Rodríguez, 2016). Failure to meet such standards results in being seen as incapable of achieving upward mobility in the same way White people do (Camarota, 2008). This feeds the pervasive myth that “Latinxs don’t care about school” which has long been used to has historically been used to explain Latinx underachievement and re-inscribe the stereotypes of a morally laden Latinx community (Valencia, 2002).

Hegemonic discourses also contribute to the rising tensions between the world of schooling and the world of the Latinx home as Latinx students perceive these worlds to be at odds with each other (Lopez, 2007). The rhetoric around meritocratic road to post-secondary education, for example, obscures the real structural limitations to college, such as North Carolina’s refusal to afford in-state tuition to undocumented students (Lopez, 2007). Additionally, a principal in North Carolina described Latinx students as being “stuck in a cycle of permanent remediation classes and... lower performing cycles because of a *lack of services*” (Wainer, 2006, p. 157). The pervasive dehumanization of Latinxs has proliferated deficit frames that their cultural differences have rendered them flawed and in need of socio-cultural remediation (Villenas, 2002). Discourses that reduce Latinx to their “plights” creates benevolently racist practices that feed the White savior fantasy through construction of Latinxs as perpetual social service clients (Villenas, 2001). While Latinx students have been historically

underserved (MacDonald & Carrillo, 2010), framing the reason for their “low academic performance” as due to a lack of service obscures the power dynamics at play.

The incessant conscription of Latinxs into these deficit constructs is furthered by the dismissal of culturally specific understandings of education. For Latinx communities, a good *educación* is anchored in teaching and practicing moral values such as *respeto* and familism, in addition to academic endeavors (Villenas, 2002; Valenzuela, 1999; Valdés, 1996). Yet schools have been increasingly informed by neoliberal trends that position them as sites of competition in the global economy. Thus, subtractive schooling practices have been disguised as neoliberal additive practices. An area in which education scholars are highlighting this is in the commodification language in two-way immersion (TWI) programs where language is often positioned as an economic resource (Cervantes-Soon, 2014; Kelly, 2016). Economic interests in bilingualism have led to the gentrification of dual language education where discourses and practices reveal that TWI is molded to enhance the privilege of the White middle class (Valdéz, Freire, & Delavan, 2016). The curriculum, overbearing influence of White interests, and teacher’ deficit framing of Latinx communities, result in the “pervasive silencing” of Latinx students and their families (Cervantes-Soon, 2017).

Current State of Latina Education

In the midst of this, current education trends show that Latina educational attainment is on the rise with them even ‘outperforming’ their male counterparts in high school graduation rates (Gándara & Mordechay, 2017). While increases in high school completion are indeed a positive development, an in-depth look at trends in their educational trajectories reveals that for Latinas, institutionalized barriers remain salient. For example, even though they are graduating at higher rates, Latinas still have some of the lowest college-completion rates of all groups of

women (Gándara, 2015). In fact, data shows that by age 29, only 18.5 percentage of Latinas had earned a bachelor's degree (Gándara, 2017). When we take a closer look at the college application process, before they even graduate, Naranjo (2016) found that well-qualified high school Latinas were often under matched in the university application and enrollment processes—meaning they attend schools that were ‘less selective’ or competitive. For Latinas, Naranjo attributed this phenomenon to gendered norms around caregiving in their families and broader institutional barriers lack access to financial support for undocumented students.

Further complicating gendered familism norms, Ovink (2014) argues that girls simultaneously see educational attainment part of their responsibility to contribute to their families financially and as a vehicle for achieving independence. The imperatives of achieving educationally, then, are far more complex than neo-liberal, market-driven educational agendas as Latina students see education as a way to liberate themselves from oppressive gendered scripts (Camarota, 2008). Yet, with their aspirations in mind, Latinas must also contend with patriarchal oppressions that further marginalize them. In the same study where Naranjo found education to be a vehicle for independence for Latinas, Latino boys had already assumed their autonomy and thus their educational aspirations were articulated in terms of future families, as opposed to Latinas whose immediate concerns concentrated on parents and siblings. This, Naranjo found, put immense pressures on Latina girls that often felt burdensome.

Monitoring and Regulating the Latina Female Other

Threatening Bodies

The social construction of citizenship is discursively bound with racialization of belonging. The designation of which bodies do and do not have claim to the space and resources around them implicitly designate White people are ‘good citizens’ and marks Latinxs not entitled

to the spaces around them (Murrillo, 2002). This construction of borders as racialized boundaries that extend beyond geographical spaces, also racializes the concepts of belonging and trespassing (Anzaldúa, 1987). Surveillance and disciplinary practices then become tools used by a White hegemonic social order to regulate the bodies that traverse into ‘foreign’ spaces. One such surveillance practice comes in the form of policy. Lovato (2008) argues that policy makers have crafted a system of regulation for Latinxs that he calls the *New Juan Crow*. This “matrix of laws, social customs, economic institutions, and symbolic systems [enables] the physical and psychic isolation needed to control and exploit undocumented immigrants” (p. 2). While these policies make no explicit mention of race (Browne & Odem 2012), in practice, they do tend to target Latinx communities at alarming rates (Romero, 2006; Wainer, 2004). An analysis of policy discourses reveals how the social construction of race frames Latinxs as risky bodies that present threats to economic and social security (Rodríguez & Monreal, 2017). Rhetoric such as “suspicious”, “alien”, “illegal” and “unlawful” and “proof [of citizenship]” serve to *other* Latinx communities and justify an increase in surveillance practices and a push to limit access to public services such as education (Rodríguez & Monreal, 2017). Early fears that immigration officials were targeting students in North Carolina were confirmed when, in two separate incidents, immigration agents detained high school students as they were on their way to school.

The panoptic measures of surveillance and patrolling of brown bodies in schools is a direct response the rhetoric that situates their bodies as threats to security and the idea that schools must assume a ‘tough on crime’ stance (Pantoja, 2013). Thus, schools adopt policies and practices such as increasing the police presence and crafting zero-tolerance policies that are meant to restrict, surveil, and punish student bodies (Young, 2017; Madrigal-Garcia & Acevedo,

Gill, 2016). This creates what Lewis (2006) calls a “contradictory surveillance terrain” in which schools use concerns over safety as a guise but in practice, these very policies are used to create a hostile learning environment for students of color by designating them as outsiders. This culture of surveillance reifies the isolation of Latinx students in school by further isolating them and their educational/intellectual interests (Rodríguez & Monreal, 2017). Additionally, the notion of institutional patrolling takes on another dimension in schools when teachers and other students patrol Latinx spaces with the intention of socially/academically correcting them (Alvarez Gutierrez, 2014). Meaning, whereas surveillance has the guise of prevention and protection, for Latinxs, institutions of power act as if they are waiting to do something wrong which in turn, translates to the heavy monitoring and policing of Latinx-ness—their languages, their jokes, and even their forms of producing work in classroom spaces (Alvarez Gutierrez, 2014).

Sometimes, Latina bodies are marked as racially and socially different by their language, style, dress, and even music, so their mere presence can be seen as a disruption to White-racialized spaces (Thomas, 2009; Hyams, 2003). These anxieties and discomforts around bodies of out of place (Puwar, 2004) are deeply felt by Latina students that enter the “wrong territory” within the geography of the school. Carrillo and Rodríguez (2016) coined the term “smartness trespassing” to describe the tensions that arise when a Mexicana breaches the borders of White hegemonic intelligence. She is “caught” trespassing through her classmates’ surveillance practices that articulate that Mexicanidad and smartness are incompatible. Her body is seen as a threat to the White norms and bodies that dominate advanced classes in high school.

In an economy that is dependent on their cheap labor, Latinxs are often reduced to the controlling images of “good workers” (Villenas, 2001)—which leads to the construction of a

double-edged frame of Latinxs as “model minorities” (Wortham, Mortimer, & Allard, 2009). On the one hand, such an image seems to value Latinx contributions to society, but it also limits the possibilities of seeing Latinxs as intellectual human beings (Lopez, 2007). When brown bodies are welcome, it is as bodies of work and production and not as whole thinking, feeling human beings (Murrillo, 2002).

Risky Bodies: Latina Sexuality

Latina girls intuit that their experiences in school are interwoven with the gender and racial identities (Hyams, 2003). For example, the school discourses around college readiness pushes the rhetoric that students must “act grown up” and practice independence but practices such as asking permission to go to the restroom do more to infantilize them (Madrigal- Garcia & Acevedo-Gil, 2016). The discourse around ‘maturity’ and ‘immaturity’, for Latinas, are enmeshed with raced-gendered ideologies of idealized femininity and the dangers of Latina female autonomy. These controlling images, described by Collins (1991) as “ideological justifications of oppression that are central to the reproduction of race, class, and gender inequality drive the construction of the Latina as an inherently risky sexual object” (p. 68). The concept of controlling images extends beyond articulations of prejudice and stereotypes in that controlling images are embedded within ideological constructs and thus, systemic in their proliferation and their utilization (Vasquez-Tokos & Norton-Smith, 2017). As such, it is important to unpack the roots of the surveillance and control of the Latina female body. Thus, it is important to consider the intersections of race and gender for Latina girls and women. However, the continued bifurcation of the material (body) and the theoretical (reason), attempts to control the messy text (Cruz, 2001) that is Latina body that, with its intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and class, is “not only disruptive to the canon, but... also excessive in its

disorderly movements and conducts” (Cruz, 2001, p. 659). To understand the experience of the Latina, then, one must center how these controlling images are both a bodily experience and an intellectual negotiation. Latinas that infringe on race-gendered scripted norms by acting as subjects rather than objects are deemed too dangerous and troublesome to educate, so what is left but to regulate?

Chicana scholars have theorized that the constructions of *marianismo* and *malinchismo* have dichotomized women’s sexuality and moral values—noting that a good Latina woman cannot be good and sexual at the same time (Hurtado, 2003; Anzaldúa, 1987). La Malinche is an important figure in the colonization of Mexico because of her role as Hernán Cortés’s translator, her conversion to Catholicism, and her birthing of Mestizo¹ children (Perez, 1993). The figure of la Malinche and her sexual betrayal is used to patriarchal control over Latina bodies (Hurtado, 2003). On the other hand, *Marianismo* uses the image of the *Virgen de Guadalupe* to provide a gendered moral script that points to motherhood, nurturing, enduring pain and suffering, and subservience as being the virtuous high ground in which one can locate a ‘good brown woman’ (Hurtado, 2003). The dichotomization of womanhood and the dangers that a sexual body represents are the crux of Latina sexual education. As the Latina girl transition into adolescence, familial surveillance around her sexuality and virginity intensifies (Hurtado, 2003). Her family acts as the gatekeepers between the public and private spaces in an effort to control her body (Marsiglia & Holleran, 1990). Hyams (2003) argues that spaces outside the home are gendered and sexualized through the negotiation processes in which girls must “gain permission to ‘go out’” (p.544). Their ‘sexual vulnerability’ is something to be surveilled not necessary due to concerns over physical harm; instead, the danger is the visibility of their bodies and the

¹ A term to describe a person that is mixed-race: Spanish and Native American.

objectifying male gaze. The domestic sphere is used to confine, restrain, and in a way, protect (Cervantes-Soon, 2017; Hyams, 2003). For immigrant communities, this gatekeeping also takes on an imperative of maintaining their Latinx culture—mainly through the rejection of sexual practices that the Latina mothers in Lorena Garcia’s (2012) study associated with American culture and White woman. Similarly, the clinicians in Lopez and Chesney-Lind’s (2014) study also dichotomized Latina sexuality by designating adolescent Latina immigrants as ‘good girls’ whose pregnancies were a result of cultural norms and Americanized ‘bad girls’ whose irresponsible pregnancies were evidence of cultural deficits.

The paradox of brown women as either docile, subservient, domestic workers or hypersexual harlots, and teen mothers (Zavella, 2003) serve as the mechanisms through which control is enacted on their bodies (Vasquez-Tokos & Norton-Smith, 2017). The *culture of control* (McWhirter, Valdez, & Caban, 2013) exacted on them operates from the assumptions that Latina autonomy presents a danger to themselves and to society. For example, the construction of the Latinas’ as an exotic ‘other’ reduces their bodies to the objects of desire (Hyams, 2003), however, it is their fertility that incites panic amongst those who wish to ‘*make American White again*’² (Hernandez, 2009). For White supremacists, motherhood is imagined as part of an insidious plot to attain citizenship by operationalizing their own children as ‘anchors’ (Lopez & Chesney-Lind, 2014). This controlling image is used to justify policy rhetoric that not only argue for the building of a wall on the southern border, but also argue for a constitutional amendment to end birthright citizenship.

Moreover, the controlling images around sexuality impact Latina adolescents as they are constructed to be perpetually at-risk for pregnancy (Garcia, 2012; Lopez & Chesney-Lind,

² Make American White ~~Again~~ is an intentional play on Donald Trump’s “Make American Great Again” campaign slogan and it is meant to highlight the racist-nativist nostalgia for an America that never existed.

2014). Lopez and Chesney-Lind (2014) found there to be contradictions between Latina's self-constructions and the clinicians who worked with them. On the one hand, the girls were critical of race-gendered scripts that assumed they were promiscuous teen mothers. At the same time, however, they reject the shame imposed on Latina mothers by arguing that Latinas are good at motherhood. The adults in charge of sexual education, though, adhere to the idea that Latina pregnancy is a result of the pathological chaos inherent to Latino-American culture (Lopez & Chesney-Lind, 2014). Similarly, Lorena Garcia's work (2012), which examines how Latina girls negotiate their emerging sexual identities and attempt to create positive sexual experiences for themselves, found that girls' sex-education is largely informed by simplistic articulations of machismo's role in the education of Latina women—painting Latino men as sexually manipulative and Latina women sexually naïve and available people whose primary concern should be to control their fertility. While machismo and heterosexual patriarchy within Latino culture are governing forces in the shaping of Latina womanhood, it is dangerous to over-rely on such stereotypes to inform policy and practice because obscures it the ways young women exist beyond those very dualities (Bettie, 2000).

These constructions of sexuality create a paradoxical dichotomy of mature/immature girls where immaturity is tied to sexual activity and maturity is associated with controlled sexuality, smartness, and education (Hyams, 2006)—painting sexuality as incompatible with educational success. As such, these gendered Latina scripts use ideas of self-control, bodily comportment, and practices of surveillance to regulate dating, mobility, and appearance as strategies to achieve academic success (Hyams, 2006; Garcia, 2012; McWhirter, Valdez, & Caban, 2013). The scripts also put Latina girls in danger of experiencing raced-gendered microaggressions on the basis of sexuality in the classroom (Lopez and Lechuga, 2007). Paradoxically, when girls of color

practice feminine agency, they are seen as violating school sanctioned femininity if they step away from docility, embracing sexuality, and rejecting ‘modest’ norms of beauty culture (Bettie, 2003). They then are penalized for “laying claim to adult status before middle class adults think they should” (Bettie, 2003, p. 61). Latina teachers in Lapayese’s (2013) study found both Latina youth and themselves were hypersexualized within the school context. One teacher reported a male teacher commenting on the size of her rear. Latina youth were sexualized for their dress, their makeup, and bodily movements.

Within schools, the correlations between respectable femininity and idealized womanhood are also closely associated with Whiteness (Garcia, 2009). The Latina body is treated as a problematic object that necessitates surveillance and regulation (Mariscal, Velásquez, Aguero, & Urrieta, 2017; Rodriguez & Monreal, 2017). Based on this review of literature, idealized femininity for Latina girls is, then, sexually available but not sexually autonomous. It is fertile but not a teen mother. It stays within the bounds of their borders—in the home and designated public spaces. In the face of this, Latina girls must navigate the complicated intersections of race, gender, class, and sexuality (Marisglia & Holleran, 1990) to challenge and negotiate traditional race-gendered scripts that attempt to regulate their private and public lives (Faulkner, 2003).

Negotiating Discourses Making Meaning

Hegemony is so much a part of the educational pattern in the United States, that it is no surprise that they have, in many ways, been internalized by Latinxs (Perez Huber, Johnson, & Kohli, 2006). Internalized oppression goes beyond subscribing to stereotypical thinking around one’s group, but rather, its rooted implicit acceptance of White values and supremacy as norms (Perez Huber, 2010). Perez-Huber’s (2010) work with Chicana college students highlights that

internalized oppression is far more complex than ideas of being complicit in the oppressions of your own community. It points to the fact that schools are a crux of racist-sexist-classist-nativist ideologies and it also highlights school's role in the teaching and learning of such ideologies. One such teaching tool is the power of school agents to define and refute the existence of racism in their classrooms (Call-Cummings & Martinez, 2017). This is akin to institutional gaslighting where discourses and practices move to sow doubt in how Latinx understand their own marginalization and resiliency. Yet, Latina students' stories reveal that they do intuit these raced-gendered macroaggressions (Perez Huber & Cueva, 2012) and breed new literacies and pedagogies that help them navigate and negotiate power structures to author identities of resistance and resiliency.

In reframing what pedagogy can mean for women of color, educators must reposition our lens away from the dominant Eurocentric epistemology and examine lived experiences that breed a set of raced-gendered epistemologies that aid students in navigating, surviving, and transforming oppressive power dynamics (Delgado Bernal, 2002). This vision of epistemology opens up the possibility to understanding learning, teaching, and theory as its negotiated and generated through the female flesh (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981; Hurtado, 2003). The research noted above elucidates the multiple worlds and discourses that Latina youth must navigate (eurocentrism, patriarchy, androcentrism, racism), and these discourses, norms, and demands can feel inherently contradictory. A Latina woman must be obedient and respectful of family and cultural norms (Hurtado, 2003) but they must also imagine themselves as individuals with merit in order to succeed in school (Salguero & McCusker, 1996). This cultural straddling (Carter, 2007; Cervantes-Soon & Carrillo, 2016) fosters pedagogies of every life that cultivate resistance, resiliency, *supervivencia/sobrevivencia*, and agency (Delgado Bernal et al., 2006; Villenas,

2001; Cervantes-Soon, 2016; Kasun, 2015). The following pedagogies show how Latina cultivate their critical consciousness that in turn, enables them to author identities that reject binaries, challenge patriarchal structures (Cervantes-Soon, 2017; Urrieta, 2009), and comes to more “holistic notion of success” for themselves (Cervantes-Soon & Carrillo, 2016, p. 289).

Translanguaging Practices as Linguistic Agency

On language, Gloria Anzaldúa wrote, “If you really want to hurt me, talk badly about my language. Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity. I am my language” (1987, p. 81). The legacy of colonization continues to mark the educational experiences of Latina youth. Deficit discourses situate their bodies and knowledge as invalid and even dangerous. In terms of language, scholarship has traced how Spanish has been subtracted from Latinx communities (Valenzuela, 1999; Valencia, 2008) and then re-packaged as a marketable skill for the economy (Cervantes-Soon, 2014). Such practices around language willfully ignores the interconnected nature of one’s sense of self and their language. Yet, in the face of this, Latinx families continue to be committed to maintaining the language practices of the home (Cervantes-Soon, 2014). Beyond language maintenance, however, discursive practices such as Spanglish or Chicano Spanish go beyond the boundaries of standardization, de-humanization of language, and the dichotomization of language created by the project of linguistic purism (Anzaldúa, 1987). While much has been written on the salience of linguistic identity for Latinx peoples and the theorizations of code-switching for bilingual/multi-lingual people (Martinez, 2010), recent scholarship on translanguaging asks educators to shift how we understand the linguistic repertoires of bilingual children. Ofelia Garcia (2009) notes that translanguaging is epistemologically different from code-switching in that code-switching presumes there are two separate languages in the speaker that one switches back and forth between. Translanguaging, on

the other hand, takes the epistemological stance that when two languages are embodied by the speaker, they cease to become two separate autonomous languages. Instead, translanguaging presumes that from the contact of two languages, there emerges one single linguistic repertoire (Wei, 2011). Essentially, two languages have become one form of communication that speakers draw from in order to maximize their communicative potential (2009). In the space of linguistic transformation, the act of going beyond languages (not between) transgresses monolingual and dichotomous ideologies surrounding language (Wei, 2011). The creativity and improvisations of such language practices should be understood as forms of linguistic agency that critically show how bilingual speaker author and position their identities in relation to their discursive practices (Wei, 2011). For Latinx students, then, the act of translanguaging is a spoken embodiment of border spaces and border thinking (Cervantes-Soon & Carrillo, 2016). The meeting of English and Spanish, as Anzaldúa notes, can be painful but it can also prove fruitful with the re-making of language in the image of its speakers: a border hybrid tongue for a border hybrid people.

While much research has focused on how bilingual children use translanguaging in the negotiation of content knowledge (Garcia & Wei, 2014; Palmer, Martinez, Mateus, & Henderson, 2014; Duran & Palmer, 2013), I instead draw from this framework to understand how girls are negotiating power and transgressing racialized-gendered dichotomies through their discursive practices. Doing so allows me to epistemologically situate their hybrid and dynamic bilingualism as an auditory expression of their intersectional, border *mujerista* identities.

Pedagogies of Survival and Resiliency

Moving away from dominant discourses around knowledge and knowledge production entails a reconceptualization of where we locate the production of woman-centered pedagogies. This means we must broaden the scope of the spaces where we consider education and learning

to be taking place and extending it to spaces where ‘informal education’ is enacted (Hernández, 1997). In this sense, Moll et al. (1992) suggest that educators look to students’ funds of knowledge that students carry into formal education spaces. These funds of knowledge provide students with strategies and background knowledge that can be harnessed to link the classroom and the home by building curriculum around the practices and knowledge of the home. Concepts like funds of knowledge, point to the pedagogical processes of Latinx homes. For the young Chicana women in Delgado- Bernal’s (2001) work, these *pedagogies of the home* provided a cultural knowledge base that helps them navigate and survive a hostile education environment. These pedagogies taught them to envision their Spanish as an asset, not a hindrance to their education. Their bilingual/bicultural identities cultivate a perspective that honors their community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2006) and commitment to their collective communities. Similarly, Chang (2017) also draws from a Chicana feminist epistemology to explore how Latinas living in rural American resist traditional and exclusive notions of intelligence and instead locate their intellectualism in their funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992).

Feminist scholars have noted that funds of knowledge and pedagogies of the home are not only racialized but they are also inherently gendered. Latina mothers are identified as one’s “first and lifelong teachers”, and thus knowledge does not just traverse through them but it is engendered *in* them (Elenes et al., 2002, p. 596). As such, *mujerista* pedagogies are rooted in a “womanist sensibility or approach to power, knowledge, and relationships” (Villenas et al., 2006, p.7) that are committed to the interrogation and critique of power (Cervantes-Soon, 2012). They are imbued with contradictions yet subversive in their practice. *Mujerista* pedagogies are developed and enacted by being in *convivencia* with other women. *Convivencia* is a praxis that goes beyond the act of being time together as it is also an embodied space and time that is

created through and creative in its solidarity and sharing (Jasis & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2004). In schools, *convivencia* amongst Latina teachers and Latina adolescents led to the emergence of a *morena* pedagogy that promoted mutual resiliency by developing a sense of belonging through relating to each other's commonalities (Lapayese, 2013). Carrillo (2006) highlights that educative interactions are also found the in *humor casero mujerista* (womanist humor of the home). This joyful appropriation of harmful language is actually a critique of inequitable dynamics, such as gendered labor distributions and expectations. Most importantly, because *convivencia* spaces are authored every day in seemingly ordinary spaces, the value of these pedagogies is located in how they are grounded in spirituality, emotions, and dialogism (Trinidad Galvan, 2006). Consequently, *mujerista* pedagogies are in constant flux because as they are transmitted, the students (of life) internalize its lessons and its methods and then recreate/reinvent them based on their own subjectivities. These pedagogies represent knowledge that is both old and new.

Commitment to community and family is rooted in Latinx practice of good *educación*. As mentioned earlier in this literature review, *educación* is embedded with teachings on morality, ethics, and values (Valdés, 1996). *Una buena educación*, a good education, is grounded in mutual *respeto* (respect), *obligación* (obligation), and *convivencia* (Villenas, 2001; Rodríguez, 2014). The Chicana educators in Urrieta's (2009) work named acts such as childcare to breeding a sense of obligation to others, which, when coupled with the development of their critical consciousness, became the foundation to their commitments as activist educators. The pedagogical exchanges between Latina mothers and daughter is also embedded with complicated gendered expectations. These *mother-daughter pedagogies* (Villenas & Moreno, 2001), on the one hand, communicate restrictive-gendered ideas of daughterhood, motherhood, and

womanhood. On the surface, the idea of being “good” at any of these designations could be read to uphold oppressive patriarchal ideas of a woman’s place, but Villenas and Moreno (2001) also found that mothers’ also taught through subversive *consejos* (narrative advice) that encouraged independence and autonomy *para poder valerse por si misma* [to be able to be self-reliant]. The path to self-reliance was paved by receiving a formal education that would enable one to escape patriarchal power.

Consejos geared towards inspiring academic resiliency often referenced narratives about immigration journeys into the United States. In Carrillo and Rodríguez (2016) piece about constructions of smartness, Maria referenced her mother’s detainment at the border during her first attempt to cross and her second journey through the desert. This Mexican student in North Carolina expressed feeling pain at listening to such a narrative but she saw education as a way to honor her mother’s sacrifices. *Consejos* on sex and sexuality dispel the over-simplified cultural frames around Latina virginities. Garcia’s (2012) analysis of sex talk between mothers and daughters revealed a complicated *mujerista* pedagogy around sex and sexuality. Despite believing their daughters had been victimized and naïve for becoming sexually active, central to their mother pedagogies were *consejos* for their daughters to respect themselves and their bodies by “*cuidandose*” [taking care of themselves]. This code for using protection was a lesson in sexual agency.

Mujerista pedagogies are pedagogies of /for survival. For the girls in Cervantes-Soon’s (2017) ethnographic account of border women, the purpose of their education goes beyond escaping their dystopian worlds. It facilitates their healing and resolve to transform their communities. The young women enacted a pedagogy of *autogestión*—a set of pedagogical processes based on the freedom to create and negotiate their own education to promote redefine

knowledge, and braid (Godínez, 2006) their struggle for survival and hope with critical thought to author their identities. Machado-Casas's (2012) pedagogy of the chameleon is operationalized through fluid performances and practices like *transas*—clandestine, strategic, and subversive maneuvers (Urrieta, 2009)—to resist Latinx homogenization by maintaining their indigenous identity alive (and safe). *Mujerista* pedagogies are discursively tied to transformations of space and identities as they themselves cross the borders of official knowledge and teaching practices (Villenas, 2005). These pedagogical practices also allow women to traverse and subvert these borders through the cultivation of new identities that are rooted in self and collective consciousness (Cervantes-Soon, 2017).

Possibilities of Space: Authoring Identities of Resiliency

Mujerista pedagogical spaces, in many ways, represent figured worlds where new knowledge and new identities are created. Holland et al. (1998) described figured worlds as “socially produced, culturally constituted activities” where people are positioned and ‘tasked’ to perform different subjectivities (p.40-41). These imposed subjectivities are then negotiated in what they call the ‘space of authoring’—which is akin to an internal dialogue where one resists, accepts, and/or redefines those subjectivities. From this negotiation emerges ones’ ‘authored’ identities, which are inherently relational, social, and in constant flux. These pedagogical figured worlds operate within what Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) called the ‘borderlands’. These liminal, third spaces are the home to identity ‘transgressors’ that embody the pain and rupture that characterize a land, a people, that was split in two and is in a ‘constant state of transition’ (p. 25). Women that embody multiple (often contradictory) positionalities enter spaces of authoring as they engage in pedagogical encounters in the borderlands (Villenas, 2006). This body of work informs my study

in that it provides the foundation for understanding girls' border epistemologies, their pedagogies, and identity authoring from a *mujerista*, a womanist, standpoint.

Spaces of *convivencia* and their pedagogies also give way to the emergence of resilient and transformative identities. Activist educators whose own identities were forged in community pedagogical spaces are developing pedagogical spaces of resistance and resiliency by incorporating Youth Participatory Action Research (Akom, Ginwright, & Cammarota, 2008). This approach had students engaging in their own liberatory praxis (Freire, 2000) in which they study their own communities, name the issues that impact them, and work towards addressing those issues (Akom, Ginwright, & Cammarota, 2008). This type of pedagogy creates a powerful space in which Latina youth come nurture a critically conscious identity. From this, students author activist identities (Tijerina Revilla, 2004; Urrieta, 2009). Latina immigrant students in Alvarez Gutierrez's (2017) study of student youth social engagement also show how students resist the surveillance on Latinx students by making themselves more visible by participating demonstrations supporting the DREAM Act. Lapayese (2013) articulations of *morena* pedagogy show that *mujerista* spaces are a project of reclamation that, at its center, link women's stories across generations and move them towards healing. The connections that developed between older Latina women (many of who were not related to the adolescent participants) and middle school Latina girls show how *salas comunitarias* promote identities of resiliency that encouraged girls to name the controlling images that mediated their schooling experience, and move towards crafting spaces and identities of belonging.

Chicanx/Latinx studies courses also create discursive spaces where students can understand and negotiate their multiple identities. For immigrant Latina students, in Cati de los Rios (2013) work on the emergence of *sitios y lenguas* of a high school ethnic studies class, this

space was incredible transformative as it allowed them to confront the shame they felt at being *from (of)* Guatemala and move towards authoring a hybrid identity rooted in the beauty of their home communities. In Carrillo and Rodríguez's (2016) work on racializing smartness in the new Latinx south through the perspective of an immigrant Mexican adolescent revealed how Maria's *supervivencia* is driven by her mother's sacrifice that helped her negotiate the figured world of her funds of knowledge that was imbued her mother's teaching with the whitestream new diaspora space that could not conceive of a smart Mexican girl (Carrillo & Rodríguez, 2017). Maria's performance of smartness aligned itself, in some ways, with dominant discourses of smartness in school; however, her counter narrative elucidates that her smart identity was rooted in her cultural integrity, survival, and a need to resist deficit discourses about her. Though Vetter, Fairbanks, & Ariail (2011) work on Latina adolescent identities, revealed Latina girls can self-authored resilient border crossing identities that claim working class sensibilities, Latinanness, and smartness.

The spaces that make us can sometimes be laced with memories of love and pain. This pain is exacerbated when 'outsiders' construct our neighborhoods, our cities, or our countries as dangerous because of us. This stigma can create a deficit perspective on our own communities. However, Latina women show that it is possible to negotiate the tensions between self and place. These negotiations yield counter-narratives and identities that deeply tied to place but reject discourses that attempt to paint home in broad strokes (Hyams, 2003; Martinez, 2017). Cervantes-Soon's (2017) work with adolescent Juarez³ girls shows how young women author identities *autogestivas* that guide them in resisting victimization in the face of female violence

³ Ciudad Juarez is a major city in the Mexican state of Chihuahua. It borders the El Paso, Texas. This book captures a portrait of how working class girls navigate violence and patriarchal power while crafting narratives of hope and resiliency.

that dominant discourses came to define Ciudad Juarez. Their identities as ‘redirectors’, ‘reinventors’ and ‘redefiners’ are characterized by emancipatory teachings that encourage them to unlearn their silence, transform into women who begin to push back at oppressive structures, and finally, channel that resistance towards intentional acts of agency and activism.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Chicana Critical Ethnography

This study is informed by critical ethnography. Latinx educational research has a long tradition of drawing from critical ethnographic research methods to challenge the Eurocentric practices and curriculums that marginalize Latinx students and their communities (Villenas & Foley, 2011). The shift to critical ethnography in educational research emerged from the critiques of ethnography's colonial roots and its role in the "othering...exploiting and domination of their research subjects" (Villenas, 1996, p. 713). In critical ethnographic work, ethnographers intentionally foreground ideological, theoretical, and emancipatory goals when engaged in the analysis of power relations (Carspecken, 1996; Noblit, Flores, & Murrillo, 2004). Thus, I begin with the responsibility to act a scholar-activist and use my work to name, interrogate, and disrupt injustice (Madison, 2005). As such, critical ethnography requires an analysis of the social practices that (re)produce oppressive conditions and emancipatory practices. Simon and Dippo (1986) argue that the relations of power must be historicized and in a way, humanized. They note:

Power operates not just on people but through them. Power relations are those that structure how everyday life will be lived; that structures how forms are produced and reproduced to limit and constrain, as well as contest and redefine what one is able to be. Within one's social stock of knowledge, what is legitimated and available in a way of particular practices in the domains of body, language, and activity is not arbitrary (p. 197).

At the heart of this ethnography is a critical examination of how power (familial, schooling, community) intersects in these girls' lives. Additionally, this study also unpacks how girls understand, resist, or (re)appropriate power.

In their critiques of schooling and power, Latinx critical ethnographies reimagine pedagogy and its possibilities by bringing to the center Latinx families' funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992). Chicana/Latina feminist scholars have furthered a gendered analysis in this reimagining of pedagogy by focusing on the epistemologies that emerge from Latina women's everyday life experiences (Delgado Bernal et al., 2006). By foregrounding the subjectivities of Latina women, Chicana/Latina critical ethnographers forego identity binaries and instead emphasize hybridity, honoring cultural practices, and bringing forth "the invention of new, hybrid, and creole cultural forms" (Villenas & Foley, 2011, p. 189). This critical ethnography is framed by my own Chicana feminist epistemology and drives the research design, analysis, and discussion of schooling's role in the reinforcement of systemic and power inequities at the intersections of race, gender, class, and immigration.

Researcher Subjectivity: Chicana Feminist Epistemology

Chicana feminist theorists center the seemingly mundane, everyday lived experiences of Latina women to "understand, critique, and challenge systemic oppression and theorize identity, sexuality, the body, resistance, healing, transformation, and empowerment" (Pérez Huber & Cueva, 2012, p. 395). Chicana feminist epistemology provides a framework from which we can begin to understand *mujerista* practices of teaching, learning, and community consciousness. Chicana feminist scholars use research as a call to action for us to elucidate *or create* alternative paradigms to understand our raced-gendered, personal-collective stories. This journey into academic research with our own communities is fraught with contradictions because our paths

lead us to cross borderlands between institutions of power and multiple subjectivities (Anzaldúa, 1987). Arrendondo et al. (2003) liken the experience of living at the center of these multiple, often contradictory, subjectivities as “living and working in an intellectual *glorieta*¹--a “space that centers on the Chicana experience and is a standpoint from which we engage in dialogue” (p. 2). The avenues that surround this *glorieta* represent the paths we take towards the decolonization of power and knowledge. Even though the intellectual *glorieta* can be fast-paced, dangerous to cross, contradictory, and in constant flux, this journey towards decolonization remains grounded in its constant center—our subjectivities—even if our identities transform.

Dolores Delgado Bernal (1998) argues that Chicana women’s unique subjectivities produce a cultural intuition that guides our research process. A reimagining of Strauss and Corbin’s (1990) theoretical sensitivity, Delgado Bernal argues that Chicana researchers draw from four sources to guide their research processes: 1) personal and community experiences, 2) professional experiences, 3) existing literature on the topic, and 4) the analytic research process (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Calderón et al., 2012). These sources of knowledge and inspiration aid me in resisting/transforming pre-ascribed, Western conceptions of “legitimate” and “universal” knowledge. It constitutes a deliberate employment of a Chicana identity in every aspect of the research process. My cultural intuition also plays a major role in how I understand these girls’ subjectivities and how I articulate issues of power present in their lives. Also, as I have grown into my identity as a Chicana feminist researcher, I have shifted the epicenter of my academic commitments away from validity and objectivity. My cultural intuition serves as a moral and analytic compass to my inquiry process that centers this work in a commitment to healing, love, hope, and transformation within the research process.

¹ A traffic roundabout

Tracing My Cultural Intuitions

As a critical ethnographer, I reject the fallacy that I can abandon my ontology and epistemology in the service of becoming a *tabula rasa*—a blank slate through which ‘data’ is objectively processed and written. Instead, I abandon all goals of objectivity and generalizability, and replace them with a commitment to critically self-reflexive practices that begin with “recognizing the limits of my knowledge claims” (Cervantes-Soon, 2014, p. 98). Delgado Bernal (1998) stressed that in the struggle to decolonize academia and produce liberating research, we must interrogate our methods and thinking. My identity as “native ethnographer” (Villenas, 1996) is formed at the intersections of my own marginalization and my “awkward forms of privilege” (Murrillo, 2004, p. 156). My subjectivities as a first generation Chicana/Mexicana daughter from an impoverished but culturally rich borderland are not separate from my privileged identity as citizen and university-sanctioned professional and academic. In the spirit of reflexivity, I take heed of Villenas’s words and move towards “[untangling] the multiplicity of identities played out in the terrains of privilege and power in the ethnographic research” process (1996, p. 729).

I admit that prior to the 2015 American Educational Research Association annual meeting; I had not stopped to reflect on the parallels between my experiences coming of age on the Texas/Mexico border and the girls’ who participated in this study. After explaining the rationale for interpreting a major finding of my dissertation as “surveillance of the flesh”, Dr. Claudia Cervantes-Soon, my dissertation co-chair, revealed that a doctoral candidate from UT-Austin was also working on theorizing surveillance in elementary schools on the border. This person and I grew up in the same border town of Roma, Texas. From this revelation, two questions arose that remained with me for the weeks to come: “Why did we both call whatever

we witnessed ‘surveillance’? And Did Roma have anything to do with it? The answers to my questions arose from reflecting on the surveillance practices that come from living in a town that is known for undocumented immigration and drug trafficking. These surveillances are also enmeshed with a *machismo* driven desire to control women’s sexuality.

Roma is a police state. A large numbers of local police, Texas state troopers, DEA agents, and border patrol occupies it. In fact, their presence is so normalized that it is not uncommon see anyone of those vehicles stationed every quarter of a mile along the highway that runs through town. Because all three of my schools were located a short distance from the banks of the Rio Grande, it was not unusual to see border patrol parked along the edges of our schools. This created a sense of being constantly watched and in danger not from would-be criminals, but from those very agents. For example, even though it was unlawful for police officers to ask for documentation status², my parents trained me at a very young age to recite proof of our legality: “I am an American citizen. I was born in Rio Grande City in 1988. I go to X school. I am in X grade. I am in X extracurricular activity. My dad works in construction. My mom works in department store. Here is my birth certificate.” Indeed, my mother always carried a mini-version of our birth certificates in her purse. In school, these racist-classed-nativist surveillance practices presented themselves in the form of language monitoring inside and outside the classroom and the tracking into Advanced Placement courses. My experiences with gendered surveillance were largely tied to Eurocentric beauty standards and fears of sexual deviance. For example, as the darker-skinned sister with a wider nose, my mother would instruct me to massage the bridge of my nose to make it thinner and my virtue was something to be ardently monitored and protected. These messages were not always overtly communicated—hearing my mother slap and call my

² In 2017, Texas has passed SB 4 which not only allows officers to ask for proof of citizenship/residency, but punishes officers that fail to comply with it.

15-year-old sister a whore for *losing* her virginity was the strongest lesson I received on the matter.

I would be remiss to not also articulate how my education and status as “one of the smart ones” afforded me with a complicated privilege that I carry with me well into adulthood. I was one of those that was tracked into AP classes. My parents supported me when I applied to universities far from home—unlike several of my girl friends who were prohibited from moving away. My mother has often noted that she trusted me because I had proven myself to be a good student and thus, she could trust me to make good choices when I left the home. This complicated privilege is also salient in my position as an ESL teacher at Sitwell Middle School. I am the only Latina teacher in the building and while this has in a way led me to feel isolated at times, my status as a doctoral candidate has afforded me with a perceived authority over issues that impact Latinx students. This authority does not necessarily spur institutional change, though. While I have received many compliments for my “contributions” and have been approached to lead professional developments on cross-cultural competency and ESL methods, misinterpretations of my work with Latinx students have resulted in racial microaggressions and resistance to reflection of one’s practices, especially as they relate to issues of representation. During one of these professional developments, for example, a science teacher from another school defended a science poster that only depicted White males by arguing that these were the only materials available for sale and that the dominance of White males in science is just “historical fact.”

For ‘native ethnographers’ (Villenas, 1996) who conduct ethnographies in their own communities, the experience is fraught with contradictions, as one must contend with the entanglements of power and oppression. On the one hand, I carry with me personal and

community memories of being the “problematic other” who proved herself to be “one of the good ones” through education. This ‘educated good one’ status also affords me with a complicated power in my professional life because while I technically have a seat at the table, the table is still upheld by Eurocentric and nativist ideologies. Further complicating my subjectivities and positionalities in relation to the research process and site, I must also recognize that “power is surveillance” (Cruz, 2016, p. 99) and as such, my role as an agent of the university (Villenas, 1996), I am enacting on my own surveillance within the school. I continuously grappled with fears that my reflections as teacher would overwhelm a story that was meant to be about the students of Sitwell Middle. On the other hand, I also continue to reflect on my own practices and identity as teacher in relation to the girls who participated in this study. I grapple with the responsibilities I feel compelled to honor as a critical pedagogue, Chicana feminist, and activist educator. I continuously reflect of moments when I reproduce the same silence described in Chapter 1. For example, I am torn by my inaction to the “build the wall” chant and my adherence to English language norms even within the group setting with the girls. However, I understand that this critical self-reflection falls in line with what critical ethnography and Chicana feminist epistemologies ask researchers to do: confront and interrogate the power we wield when entering communities.

In line with these reflections, I also acknowledge that my roles as researcher, teacher, and Latina woman become more and more messily entangled as the writing process unfolds. As member of the faculty, I was privy to a different kind of insider knowledge than the rest the other members of the research group. I find myself struggling with the incorporation of my observation data and critical reflexive memos because I understand that my researcher lens was always on. Even though it was known that I was part of a university research team, it remains

unclear to me if my co-workers understood how far my researcher lens extended. Though I remain honest in critiques of the school when speaking to co-workers, I also admit that I have actively obscured portions of my findings.

However, just as I could not disentangle my identities as teacher and researcher, I cannot undo the ties that link the imperatives behind my decision to simultaneously teach and my decision to engage in de-colonial Chicana feminist research. As a Chicana teacher-researcher, the responsibilities I feel to my community create the imperative for this ethnography to not be “designed, but [instead] enacted or produced as a moral activity” (Noblit, Flores, & Murrillo, 2004, p. 24). This work is driven by the urgency to name injustice and move towards liberation for marginalized groups. It is these self-reflexive imperatives that frame this work as an act of resistance and this project as an ethnography *de lucha* (Villenas, 2012). According to Villenas (2012), the “fighting back” nature of Latinx educational ethnographies has paved the way for them to be considered a social movement in it of itself. The complex entanglement of the relationships between myself, the girls at the center of this study, and the school are a “hyphen that must not be ignored or resisted but rather worked” (Cervantes-Soon, 2017, p. 24). Michelle Téllez’s (2005) reflections on the nature of doing research in borderlands ground me in my commitments to engaging in Chicana feminist, critical educational scholarship:

I have had to acknowledge that in some ways my own interests are being served, and that I could very well walk away from the community and not be held responsible for my subsequent actions. Because I see myself reflected in the community and because of my consciousness as a Chicana feminist, I cannot remove myself from the commitment I have... (p. 52).

This project is deeply personal and rooted to a commitment to continue working from this hyphen and the in-between spaces of my multiple subjectivities. The research process is my own spiritual and moral endeavor to help reveal Latina women's agency and power in addition to naming the injustices that marginalize them. In this way, Chicana critical ethnographic process for me is an act of *supervivencia* (Trinidad Galvan, 2011; Urrieta, Mendez, & Rodriguez, 2015). I cope with the race-gendered-classed hostilities and contradictions by looking to my community not as a research site, but as an inspiration for intellectual growth and resiliency. Beyond this, I am also committed to engaging research and pedagogical spaces "committed to the collection and production of knowledge for transformative purposes across physical and symbolic borders" (Cervantes-Soon, 2017, p. 25). In this way, Chicana epistemology pushes me to begin the research process from a stance that recognizes young Latina women's discourses as productive, creative, and filled with power to foster agency and resilient identities. My role within this research process was to identify *how* this happens. The following research questions guided my work:

1. How are Latina girls' experiences and self-construction of identities defined and mediated by school?
2. How do Latina girls navigate systemic oppression and exercise agency in the New Latinx South?
3. What possibilities and discourses arise from liminal spaces like *mujerista encuentros*?

Theoretical Frameworks

Moving forward, this chapter on the methodology of this study continues to draw from Dolores Delgado Bernal's (1998) argument that methods, epistemology, and theory are inextricably interconnected and at times, indistinguishable from one another. Given my own subjectivities as a Chicana educator and researcher, I looked towards Chicana feminist theoretical constructs to inform how I designed the meeting space that girls and I participated in. I draw on Gloria Anzaldúa's theories of borderlands and *la facultad* to explain how the girls come to understand and name injustice and resistance in their lives. Furthermore, I draw on Cherrie Moraga's (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981) theory in the flesh and *testimonio* as theory and method (Cervantes-Soon, 2012) to locate embodied narratives of resiliency, agency, and resistance. Finally, I also look to Holland, Lachiotte, Skinner, and Cain's (1998) sociocultural practice theory of identity to understand how school, home life, and broader communities mediate Latina girls' identities. Additionally, this theory lays the groundwork for recognizing girl discursive practices as forms of agency (Cervantes-Soon, 2017).

Chicana Feminist Theories: Mapping the Borderlands

A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants (Gloria Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 25).

Anzaldúa first locates the borderlands in the physical geography of the U.S.-Mexican border—a space that is marked by the legacy of colonization. Stigmatized by the First world for their difference, the inhabitants long for a home in the Third world who in turn, no longer claims the border subjects as one of their own. The borderlands is created from (and in the site of) the painful collision or “grating” between the first and the third world (Anzaldúa, 1987). The

theorization of the borderlands also transcends physical space. It moves us towards understanding borders as the psychic, emotional, spiritual, and epistemic divides that, through a juxtaposition of unequal power dynamics, dehumanize and make ‘others’ of border people. Bordered subjects are marked by the liminality of being of both world and of neither worlds. They are simultaneously in them and out of them. From this divide, emerges an in-between space akin to what Homi Bhabha (1996) theorized as the ‘third space’—a border culture that is hybrid yet made of contradictions, tangible yet psychic, and constant in its flux. It is through this fluidity that the borderlands third space presents radical possibilities for the negotiation of conflicting forces that turns “ambivalence into something else” (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 101). This something else opens up a new ways of thinking, learning, and teaching that challenges the colonial and androcentric domination (Mignolo, 2000).

Situating Border Thinking in the Borderlands

Border thinking, as Walter Mignolo (2011) articulated, is characterized by an epistemic disobedience that emergence from the body-politics of a person dwelling in the borderlands between the First world and the Third world. As such, border thinking has come to represent the decolonizing knowledge and practices that emerge from subaltern space—the margins of the worlds which we traverse (Mignolo, 2000; Cervantes-Soon & Carrillo, 2016). Border thinking, from a Chicana feminist stance, come to represent subaltern tools through which we can reject the Cartesian understanding of knowledge that splits the body from the mind (Cruz, 2001) and instead move towards nurturing an embodied consciousness rooted in their female border subjectivities (Pérez, 1999; Cervantes-Soon, 2017; Arrendondo et al., 2003; Sandoval, 2000; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1983). For women of color, this new knowledge and narratives emerge from “syncretic form of consciousness [that] is made up of transversions and crossings”

(Sandoval, 1998, p. 352). Because it is born out of the borderlands, this raced-gendered consciousness is the consciousness of a woman not caught in the middle, but instead one that embodies the middle. This consciousness is a ‘mixed breed’ that can and does constantly shift in and out of worlds, of cultures, of languages. This is where subaltern women’s border consciousness emerges: from their bordered subjectivities and everyday processes, practices, and creative survival within these spaces. For young women coming of age in gendered borderlands between the world of the school and the world of their home, as well as the borderlands between broader racialized communities, this vision of consciousness provides a framework through which we can understand how bordered gendered subjectivities are constructed and enacted—especially as they relate to the navigation and negotiation of contradictory ideologies.

La Facultad

Though not presented linearly, rather than being solely understood in terms of ideological spatiality, we are meant to understand the borderlands as a theory of processes (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2000). It is an intuitive methodology that young women can use to form new ways of being, learning, and teaching (Pérez, 1996). Anzaldúa (1987) credits these abilities to transform and adapt with(in) the borderlands to *la facultad*—a “capacity to see in the surface phenomenon the meaning of deeper realities” (p.60). *La facultad* is a type of ‘bio-graphical sensing’—of knowing and sensing the world in relation to our body’s socio-historical locations (Mignolo, 2011). In a sense, *la facultad* allows us to feel, as if through goosebumps, the dark objects beneath the water’s surface—the stories behind the master narratives, the faces of injustice behind the masks of collegiality. This intuition, then, morphs into something more than a *sentido*—a sense. It is a survival strategy that one, sometimes unknowingly, deploys to protect our spiritual and physical selves. As our *facultad* matures, it forces us—excruciating in its

beckoning—to read and write the world around us (Freire, 2000). This state of alertness carries us into an acute awareness that is hard to turn from. It thrusts us into *nepantla*—the in-between space of painful transformation—where there are no fixed ways of being (Anzaldúa, 1987). From here, we hone our ‘perspectives from the cracks’ that create in us epistemologies and strategies that allow us to continue to traverse across borders, across ontologies, and across epistemologies (Keating, 2005). In the borderlands, binaries are undone, contradictions are embodied, and identities are (re)negotiated. This ‘something else’ that emerges is a new *mestiza*—a hybrid, border-crossing subjectivity that is committed to and engaged in political action against oppression (Anzaldúa, 1987).

The theories of the borderlands, border thinking, and *la facultad* provide frameworks through which I can see how the embodied consciousness and women’s emerging identities can be marked by space, interrupt space, and create new spaces. This theory serves an important epistemological and theoretical stance in understand how girls are authoring their identities and how they are navigating systemic oppression. As researchers, looking at women’s processes through these lenses push us to disrupt dualities (Cruz, 2001). In other words, it forces us to de-link our theories and stories from Western macro-narratives (Mignolo, 2011). For Latinas girls in this study, the positions in the gendered borderlands are not painted as separate from the body that gives their agencies and resiliency shape and voice. This concept helps guide how their *facultades* are used to recognize marginalization and understand how it is enacted upon them through the surveillance practices of the school and community.

Re-Membering the Body: Testimonio as Theory

To understand how new theories and *facultad* come can emerge from one’s location in the borderlands, Chicana feminist scholars intentionally situate the body and its lived

experiences as the nexus of *nuevas teorías*—new theories (Anzaldúa, 1987)— to guide our understandings of pedagogies and epistemologies. This push for new theories highlights that subaltern people’s knowledge is not just situated within the socio-cultural and the socio-political, but they are made material through our lived experiences. Furthermore, because our lived-experiences are inextricable from our raced-gendered selves, it stands that our bodies are the very sites of knowledge production. Indeed, Gloria Anzaldúa writes “for silence to transform into speech, sounds, and word, it must first traverse through our female bodies” (1990, p. xxii).

Mainstream research played a key role in the creation of frameworks, policy, and practices “whose interests lie outside [the] social environments” (Cruz, 2001, p. 659) of Latina girls and consequently, this results in frames that not only are “unaffected by the workings of our everyday material realities” (Cruz, 2001, p. 659), but also proliferate the continued marginalization of Latina youth. These disembodied theories—those derived from this separation of the political from the personal—are then treated as objective and valid in its conclusions (Cruz, 2001). Disembodied theory is an intentional avoidance of the realities that women’s bodies are indeed ‘messy texts’ whose performed/lived realities are at times contradictory, angry, and in flux (Cruz, 2001). This messiness only makes it increasingly difficult to neatly categorize “data” into themes that claim generalizability and objectivity (Cruz, 2001; 2006). Western research’s response then, is to either avoid brown female bodies all together or twist and contort them in order to fit their lives within pre-ascribed boxes created by and from hegemonic discourses. This has created another imperative for Chicana feminist researchers—who are in possession of such messy texts—to center women of color’s bodies through recognizing their ‘theories in the flesh’ (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981). In this text,

Moraga (1981) asks us to reimagine the origins and purpose of theory by focusing our theorizations in women's embodied, personal-political, lived experiences. She argues,

“a theory in the flesh means one where the 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” (p. 23).

As noted in chapter 2, Latina women's bodies have been the focus of regulatory discourses and practices that situate their sexual bodies, their speaking tongues, and their intellectual minds as abnormal, if not dangerous. Thus, in addressing questions of intersectionality, identity, and marginalization, Chicana feminist theorists intentionally disrupt Cartesian dualism by locating the body as a conduit for the (re)making of power, identity, and resistance (Cruz, 2001; 2006). Chicana feminist theorization, then, is also a project of re-membering the body and re-membering theory—of stitching bodies back together and reconnecting them with our own narratives. This critical orientation towards theory puts forth the possibility that through looking towards women of color's narratives, we can begin to understand them as more than stories about life. Women's stories *show* how the personal/the body is political and the knowledge and pedagogies the whole being engenders are the very transformative theories that can heal epistemic harm (Cervantes-Soon & Carrillo, 2016; Cervantes-Soon, 2012; 2014).

An essential facet of Chicana feminist thought is the disruption and decolonization of Western paradigms of the locus and practice of knowledge. The locating of knowledge production within women's embodied narratives answers Chicana feminist calls to re-member (to put back together) the body with/within theory. As such, *testimonio* as theory and method (Cervantes-Soon, 2014) provides a foundation through which we (researchers and women) answer Anzaldúa's (2005) “Coyolxauhqui's Imperative” to heal trauma by moving past

fragmenting and fragmented narratives to a project of finding wholeness. In Aztec mythology, the sun god dismembered his sister, Coyolxauhqui and thrust her head into the sky where it became the moon. This myth of Coyolxauhqui has been taken up by Chicana feminist scholars to represent the physical and symbolic violence against women's bodies and stories. In fact, the dismemberment of her body has come to, in many ways, represent women's mind/body/spiritual dismemberment at the hands of the patriarchy and Cartesian dualisms (Vega, 2016).

Beyond the myth itself, though, the narrative behind sculpture of Coyolxauhqui's dismembered body, which was lost for generations after the Spanish colonized Mexico. Its rediscovery adds another dimension to the symbolism of Coyolxauhqui and the many buried narratives of Latina women. However, it's unearthing led to a movement of reclamation in which Coyolxauhqui has come to represent the "possibility of (un)covering, (re)discovering, and (re)membering through [the] telling" women's narratives and the possibilities of creating and nurturing a collective push towards the decolonizing of dominant, whitestream narratives that have attempted to silence women's stories (Alarcón, Cruz, Guardia Jackson, Prieto, & Rodriguez-Arroyo, 2011, p. 376). The female process of unlearning silence and claiming a right to speak to injustice lays the groundwork for the reimagining, reinvention, and recreation of theories, pedagogies, and even literacy practices (Saavedra & Nymark, 2008). If border thinking is epistemological defiance, then *testimonio* is the vehicle through which is it exposed. With this in mind, this study uses *testimonio* to expose, through Latina girls' theory in the flesh, subaltern resistance to discourses of control, subtractive schooling, and an adult hegemony that has positioned youth as *adults-in-progress* (Saavedra, 2011).

While there is no universal definition for *testimonio* (Pérez Huber, 2010), scholars note that its epistemic and performative origins are rooted in Latina American traditions of

storytelling (Saavendra, 2011; Urrieta & Villenas, 2013). Though *testimonios* do not seek to generalize, they bring to the center collective histories, histories of oppression, and personal identity of marginalized peoples (Beverley, 1989). These narratives problematize the Western construct of the individualistic “I” by “[explaining] the world through the vantage point of the oppressed [that are] the product of situated knowledge” (Elenes, 2000, p. 115). These storied “maps of consciousness” (Elenes, 2000, p.115) trace solidarity and collective identities across time, geography, and generations of people in the borderlands and are “embodied invocation[s]” (Cruz, 2012, p. 463) of the confrontations between our consciousness and dominant discourses that maintain inequality (Yúdice, 1992). This ‘dialogic confrontation’ (Beverly, 1989) moves witnesses (listeners) beyond essentialized narratives by calling on us to recognize that embedded within the narrative is a subaltern agency yields a new transformative consciousness (Yúdice, 1992; Latina Feminist Group, 2001).

Testimonios reveal women’s theories in the flesh and the ways bodies materialize new theories, valid knowledge, and consejos for other generations of women (Cervantes-Soon, 2014). These *testimonios* on life and learning, serve as ‘vehicle for reclaiming agency’ and elucidating raced-gendered ways of knowing, teaching, and being (Cervantes-Soon, 2014, p. 374). The Latina Feminist Group (2001) created their own *testimonio* processes using their own narratives in the form of *papelitos guardados* (hidden little papers) to reveal and explore the complexities of their individual and collective Latina identities. Alarcón et al. (2011) use *testimonios* on schooling experiences, patriarchal violence, racism, and sexism as part of larger project and commitment towards enacting social justice and uncovering transformative pedagogies. Similarly, Lindsey Pérez Huber and Berta María Cueva (2012) use *testimonio* as a methodology for Latina college students to name and reflect on the racial microaggressions throughout the

schooling trajectory. Judith Flores and Silvia Garcia (2009) use *testimonios* of life, sexuality, and education to construct and nurture a ‘Latina Space’ at a predominately White institution—the communal sharing of stories link women across lived experiences to building a collective solidarity and resilience. Claudia Cervantes-Soon’s work (2012; 2016; 2017) with subaltern Mexican women show female youth can and do “assert themselves as political subjects” (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012, p.13) and implicate the witness in its call to action (Beverley, 1989) through their narratives of pain, agency and transformation. Their stories exemplify that women can, in a sense, put Coyolxauhqui back together through speaking back to the discourses that split us in the first place. In fact, it is the act of testifying that “allow[s] us to put the scattered pieces together of a painful experience in a new way that generates wisdom and consciousness” (Cervantes-Soon, 2012, p. 374). Youth *testimonios* shed light on how adolescent discourses and narratives are also embedded in systems of power and how they can act upon their world through the power of their stories. As such, for Latina girls, *testimonio* brings the borderlands to the center and shifts authority over knowledge away from Eurocentrism, androcentrism and adult hegemony to their personal experiences—creating a space where they reject objectification and claim a speaking subjecthood (Saavedra, 2011; Cervantes-Soon, 2017; Cruz, 2012). In moving forward, I understand that given the political intentions behind the sharing of a *testimonio*, I recognize that it is neither possible nor sensible to ask young women for something they do not want to share. Instead, I am using the theory of *testimonio* to guide how I came to understand the stories they shared.

Sociocultural Practice Theory of Identity

My framework for studying Latina girls’ identities and agencies mainly draws from Holland et al., (1998) articulations of the sociocultural practice theory of identity. The concepts

of identity and agency extend beyond labeling and one's capacity to act upon our worlds. For this work, I draw from the foundational interpretation of identity as sets of processes that reveal how people

come to understand themselves, how they come to 'figure' who they are through the "worlds" that they participate in, and how they relate to others within and outside the figured worlds" (Urrieta, 2009, p. 28).

Drawing from various schools of thought, including Lev Vygotsky and Mikhail Bakhtin, a sociocultural practice theory of identity proposes that identity forms *in relation to* and *in the midst of* the figured worlds that one inhabits (Holland et al., 1998). Figured worlds are "realm[s] of interpretation in which a particular set of characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are values over others" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 52). Because these figured worlds are constituted within socio-historical memory, they are inherently entrenched in systemic power. As such, identity is not an end product but a *process of becoming* through a negotiation of power and positionality (Urrieta, 2009). Drawing from Bakhtin's concept of dialogism, this state of becoming is situated within a space of self-authoring in which people create and organize their identities by accepting, rejecting, or negotiating how we are positioned within these worlds (Urrieta, 2009). This understanding of identity allows us to "recognize improvisations and innovations as forms of agency that permit individuals to interrupt cultural and situational determinism" (Cervantes-Soon, 2017, p. 8).

Paired with Chicana feminist theories, a sociocultural practice theory of identity offers a theoretical grounding for my analysis of identity and agency of Latina girls coming of age in the New Latinx South. Specifically, it situates *testimonios* and linguistic practices such as translanguaging—the process of accessing different linguistic features of various languages at

once (Garcia, 2009)—as acts of agency that promote the self-authoring of new identities and the creation of new worlds.

These acts and identity processes generate new theories of knowledge and agency. As noted in Chapter 2, this study is grounded in its exploration of *mujerista* pedagogies that emerge from “articulations of teaching and learning, along with ways of knowing—rooted in the diverse and everyday living of Chicanas/Latinas as members of families, communities, and a global society” (Villenas, Godinez, Delgado Bernal, & Elenes, 2006, p. 3). These pedagogies emerge from collective spaces of consciousness and solidarity—through a mutual sharing of time, space, and knowledge. The pedagogies and processes that emerge from moments this *mujerista convivencia* give insight to how identities and agencies are framed by womanist sensibilities to the “[approaches] to power, knowledge, and relationships [that are] rooted in convictions for community uplift” (Villenas et al., 2006, p. 7). As such, the concepts of identity, agency, and figured worlds also help us understand how these *mujerista* pedagogical spaces are authored through an exchange of knowledge and shared practices.

Research Design

Participants

This study was conducted in a middle school located in a rural community of central North Carolina. As aforementioned, this school is at the center of the Latinx diaspora and has experienced a rapid growth in Latinx student population in the last decade. It is important for me to note that it was not my original intention to conduct my research at my site of employment. However, because of my connections to the school and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, I was tapped to serve as the teacher liaison between the university research team and the school. Dr. Michael Dominguez created an afterschool program titled “Avanza” which aimed

to draw on students' funds of knowledge to explore issues of inequity, racism, nativism, and sexism in the Southern context. Within this project, the students selected and directed various research modules meant to explore their cultural identities and experiences in school. In my capacity as teacher and researcher, I identified a need to have a separate space for the girl participants of the program. Late in the fall of 2016, I received permission from Dr. Dominguez and the school principals to create an all-girls club for some of the Avanza girls. This dissertation is based on the ethnographic observations conducted as part of the UNC research team and the girls' club that was officially instituted in January 2017.

The club (here on out referred to as an *encuentro*), *Mujeres Avanzando*, met every Friday morning for the first 40 minutes of the school day. The selection process of my informants was strategic in that I recruited girls that I had witnessed to be already engaging in the interrogation of systems of power in their participation in the Avanza after school program. Officially, our *encuentros* were comprised of four 8th graders, one 7th grader, and myself. Our meetings were not tied to these 40 minutes a day, however. As *confianza* grew, our *convivencia* extended to include impromptu lunch hangouts, quick check-ins in the hallway between classes, and girls relocating to my classroom during the afterschool program. This flexibility in interactions allowed for the emergence of a 6th member. *Alma*, the girl introduced in chapter 1, did not officially participate in the weekly club meetings. However, as a participant of the afterschool program, she inducted into the club through her participation in the impromptu lunch and afterschool meetings. Her membership in our group was solidified when she was invited to create an identity project by the other girls. It is also important to note that I taught four of the six girls spotlighted in this study. I provide more information on the girls in Chapter 4.

Engendering a Mujerista Encuentro Space

My Chicana feminist cultural intuition led me to identify a need for the establishment of a Latina space where girls could freely discuss issues surrounding gender, race, immigration, and schooling. Drawing from Chicana feminist scholars conceptualization of the kitchen table as a site of the creation, nurturing, and teaching of decolonizing knowledge for women, (Elenes, Gonzalez, Bernal, & Villenas, 2001) I sought to engender our own kitchen table within the school *donde podriamos encontrarnos* [where we could find each other] (Soto, Cervantes-Soon, Villarreal, & Campos, 2009). Grounded on ideas of *mujerista* spaces of teaching and learning (Flores & Garcia, 2009) and centered on a pedagogy of *convivencia*—a praxis of relating and living together (Villenas et al., 2006)— this *encuentro* space served to cultivate *sobrevivencia* [survival] (Latina Feminist Group, 2001) through the process of inculcating *confianza* (Rodriguez, 2013). This process of learning to be with another is based on *convivencia*, *respeto*, and *cariño* (care).

Initially conceived with elements of focus group interviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), the girls ended up taking command of the space and guiding most of the conversations through an organic unfolding of girl discourse. Thus, there are instances in the transcripts where the girls jump back and forth between topics such as *telenovelas* and advice on what to do if ICE comes to the door. I believe this organic organization around critical issues allowed for respite from burdens of racism and sexism. The topics of conversation touched on issues regarding familial relationships, romantic relationships, sex and sexuality, and current political issues surrounding the Trump presidency, racism, and immigration. The *encuentro* was also designed an alternative educational space in which these young women where we could organically nurture our Latina literacies and generate new ones in *convivencia* (Villenas, 2005) . To foster this, I also included an analysis of multimodal cultural artifacts (Valdez & Omerbašić, 2015) such as looking at

identity art projects created by high school students and an analysis of the film “Walkout” which depicted the 1968 Chicano student walkouts. They also consulted each other in the analysis of their peer interviews and the design of their peer identity art projects. In an interesting turn, Lilia brought a music video into the group for *me* to analyze. This is a point of analysis in Chapter 4. In essence, the *encuentro* space was grounded on the *freedom to be* their authentic selves (Cervantes-Soon, 2017). In bringing the borderland to the center, we created a *mujerista* kitchen table in a classroom.

Field Notes

Data collection in the form of field notes (Elenes, Gonzalez, Bernal, & Villenas, 2001) began before the official start of our *encuentros*. My goal as an ethnographer as part of a larger research team was to keep detailed notes on the climate of the school and positioning of Latinx students. The field notes would help me answer all three of my research questions in that it provided the necessary information understand the school climate. At the same time, I was also writing reflections of my teaching experience in the school. As the project unfolded, these observations and reflections morphed into one collection of field notes. I sought to describe events in the school, conversations had with teachers and students, and document the physical space of the school. The observation data was divided into two processes: descriptive, detailed, storied accounts of the day and critical reflexive memos on those stories. In these reflexive memos, which were essentially notes on my notes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), I entered into dialogue with the data and myself by intentionally allowing theory and data to interplay as part of the data collection process.

My notes addressed how the relationships between the girls was unfolding as we spent more time together in *convivencia*. They also documented interactions between school

community members (teachers, principals, and other students) and the girls in the study. Because I was not able to formally observe the girls in classroom spaces, scrap pieces of paper ended up being my valuable tools in the documentation of observational data—especially in my documentation of the impromptu meetings by the girls during the lunch hours. I kept detailed notes of participants, conversations, and jotted as many quotes as I could. Most importantly, because this is a critical ethnography, I did not strive to be a silent, detached observer. Many of these field notes detail my own interactions with the girls inside and outside the official meeting space. Throughout the course of data collection, I also discussed many of my findings with Dr. Dominguez, the lead researcher of the Avanza after-school program. My *papelitos guardados* eventually played an integral role in the design and implementation of the *encuentro* meetings as many of the events/moments witnessed in the school formed the foundation of our discussions. Integrating the field notes into the *encuentros* allowed me to see emergent themes and understand how girls were making sense of their lived experiences.

Semi-Structured Interviews

As part of the data collection process, I also conducted semi-structured interviews with the girls (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Interviewing the girls allowed me to get a better sense of how their identities were being mediated and defined by their schooling experiences. Additionally, they also provided insight to how they navigate the schools and communities. The interviews ended up being a hybrid of the guided-interview questions created by the lead researcher and my own field notes and knowledge of the literature. The semi-structured nature of the interview left room for the conversation to explore issues and topics brought up by the respondent and for me to improvise based on what I knew about the participant (Wengraf, 2001). The goals of this interview were to learn about family and community lives outside of school,

unpack their perceptions on living in rural North Carolina, and to gather stories about their lives as young women. The purpose of this interview was to learn about how they interpret their schooling experiences and negotiate their identities in relation to the school world around them. The girls themselves conducted a secondary interview as part of the identity art project. The girls, including myself, randomly selected partners and designed an interview guide. While I guided students in how to construct open-ended questions, the girls were in control of orientation of their interview. The purpose of this interview was to bring to light how girls understand each other and each other's stories. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed in full with the consent of participants. Given the role of importance of Spanish in the nurturing of our space and relationships, transcript data preserves the natural discursive practices of the girls. Translations are provided in brackets.

Identity Art Project

This project integrated visual arts based participatory methods (Leavy, 2009). The participants created two art artifacts throughout the course of our encuentros. The purpose of these projects is to gain insight into how they construct *testimonio* narratives through alternative from for storytelling. Including an identity art project allowed for a different source of data understanding the discourses and practices of the *encuentro* space. For the first project, the girls created an identity collage using texts like magazines and books. Though encouraged to use actual family pictures, the girls decided they did not want to cut up their pictures, as they were very meaningful to them. A broken copy machines prevented me from making them copies they could cut up. The second project was a counter-narrative identity art project in which they would share a story using visual art. The girls had three options for their project: create a self-portrait, interview family member, or interview each other. In the end, the girls decided to interview each

other. Because the number of girls was uneven, I also participated in the interview and art creation process. I turned to art because it provides an opportunity for them to create youth-driven cultural products where they can reflect and critique oppression on their own terms (Akom, Ginwright, & Cammarota, 2008). Artistic representations of self also provide an alternative way for the girls to exercise their voice and have an empowering experience (Leavy, 2009; Luttrell, 2003). “The arts have the capability to evoke emotions, promote reflection, and transform the way people think” (Leavy, 2009, p. 255). Art allowed me, as researcher, to have an alternative entry point of analysis into their voices as expressed through visual representations. Additionally, using art as a median for story telling opened up the possibilities of enacting testimonio through a visual text (Avilés, 2018). This also created the opportunity to see how the girls enacted their own cultural intuitions in the thematic analysis of their peer’s story towards the construction of visual story.

A Note on Language

While all the interview questions used to guide the interviews and the *encuentro* space, a dynamic bilingualism naturally emerged in the space. As such, in order to preserve the integrity of the girls’ discursive practices, any Spanish used has been italicized. Using my own bilingualism, I have translated all Spanish and included it within the quotes in brackets.

Data Analysis

Data analysis cannot be “separated from all other facets and phases of qualitative research” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 192) and as such, analysis was never considered a separate set of tasks in the research process. Thus, data collection and inductive analysis occurred simultaneously in order to discover patterns across the stories produced from our *encuentros*, interviews, art, and observations (Patton, 2005). I analyzed the *encuentro* data and

the field notes concurrently. Doing so allowed me to not only track time and how the stories were unfolding, but it allowed me fill in moments and gestures not captured by the audio recordings. I conducted open coding in which I allowed codes to emerge from the girls' conversations. I broke down, examined, and categorized data using codes that emerged from both the *encuentro* transcripts and my field notes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I conducted a separate analysis for each of the individual interviews and also allowed for themes to emerge. After these rounds of analysis, I compared the codes from the interview data, *encuentros*, and my field notes and was looking to find links across the stories. It was at this stage that I identified surveillance as a prominent theme. As such, surveillance came to the surface, I did another round of coding to identify different types of surveillance. Doing so yielded three major domains: surveillance of citizenship, of academic presence, and of the flesh. Based my understanding of agency as means to challenge prescribed positionality, I then coded for examples in which the girls employed their *facultad* to counter-surveil systems of power. My third round of coding included an analysis of the forms that counter-surveillance took on. This included an in-depth look into the girls' linguistic processes. This is where I have located the emergence of *mujerista* youth pedagogies. Finally, I employed axial coding whereby the "data [was] put back together in new ways... by making connections between categories" (Strauss & Corbin, p. 96).

Potential Limitations

In considering the potential significance of this project, I have identified possible limitations for this study. First, because this project focused on the perspectives of girls, the ethnographic data on Sitwell Middle School as a context is limited to observational data and documentation of conversations/events that I witnessed or participated in. As such, this project contains no interview data with teachers or administrators. A second potential limitation presents

itself in the number participants of this study. Even though throughout the storyline you will find a number of girls' voices come through, the group in focus is comprised of five girls: four 8th graders and one 7th grader. The timing of *encuentro* meetings—which were held during school club time once a week—resulted in a small group of participants. However, given the goals of this project, the size of the group was not a primary concern as our group meetings were meant to foster a sense of intimacy and *confianza* (mutual trust) amongst the five girls and myself. I believe the size of the group worked in favor of us getting to know each other more intimately and provided the space of them to speak more openly.

Along these lines, I am also conscious that in-depth individual interviews were conducted with only three out of the five participants. This was due to scheduling conflicts outside of school hours, the end of the school year, and one student leaving the school district. Some may contend the size and number of interviews conducted as limitation, however, a wealth of narrative data emerged from the *encuentros* which functioned as focus group interviews and an art project in which the girls interviewed each other. Additionally, the performative aspects of *testimonio* leave room for spontaneous storytelling regarding their experiences with school, friends, and family. Many *testimonios* were captured in audio-recordings, girls' writings, and conversations inside and outside of the *encuentro* space. I am also conscious of the perceived limitations in relation to sample size and the highly contextualized Southern background—especially as they relate to the push for generalizability. In part, the impetus for this research was the silencing of young Latina discourses in multiple realms and fields; because of this reality, I admit that generalizability is not a pertinent goal for this project. Finally, my power as teacher at the research site could have impacted participant responses. While the participants were generally very open, there were instances when they withheld information and this could be

attributed to my role as agent of the school in addition to researcher. My role as teacher also prevented me from observing the girls in classes other than social studies, which I co-taught.

Ethical Concerns

In accordance with our IRB, all appropriate procedures to preserve confidentiality and protect the interests of the participants were taken. Participants were given consent and assent forms as part of their inscription to the program and parents were notified of the girls' invitation to participate in the *encuentros*. As detailed above, all interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. Audio files were stored in a password protected drive and computer. All names and identifying information have been changed in the final written product. Any other documents collected like art projects, photographs, and written documents have had identifying information removed. In order to further protect the identity of the school and the girls, all the names in this work are pseudonyms.

PART 2

CHAPTER 4: ENCONTRÁDONOS AROUND OUR ‘KITCHEN’ TABLE

Mujerista Confession

I admitted in Chapter 3, that it was not my original intention to conduct my research at Sitwell Middle School. In fact, as part of my hiring, I had made arrangements to use my Friday mornings to collect data at another high school. However, the “build the wall” chant early in school year, coupled with the anxieties of a first-year teacher, and the isolation I felt as the only Latina teacher, coalesced in a desire to create a space where I and other young women could feel at home and safe from the racist nativism that flowed through our hallways (Perez Huber, Lopez, Malagon, Velez, & Solorzano, 2008). For Chicanx/Latinx scholars, social justice research with our own communities can serve as a coping strategy when working in hostile or alienating environments (Urrieta, Méndez, & Rodríguez, 2015). As my relationships with the Sitwell students evolved, both inside and outside the classroom, I came to understand that Sitwell Middle School *is* my community. I confess that part of my motivation in seeking to collaborate with group of young Latinas was driven by my own *supervivencia* (Trinidad Galván, 2011)—a push for survival that encompasses my “unending resourcefulness, creativity, and resiliency” (Urrieta et al., 2015, p. 1161). I am eternally grateful to the young women that allowed me into their lives and taught me so much about reading the world (Freire, 2000) and speaking unto the world. In order to provide the reader more contexts into how surveillance was understood by the girls and myself, this chapter is meant to offer an introduction to the young women that drove this study and the creation of the *encuentro* space. This chapter is split into two parts: the first

part offers introductory portraits of these the girls. While chapter 5 offers a more in-depth analysis of how the girls author their identities through mobilizing their *mujerista* youth pedagogies, the purpose of these portraits is to provide the reader insight into the girls' background into some of their experiences with school and family. These portraits also serve to note the kind role the each girl took on in the *encuentro* space. The second part of this chapter presents the reader with the tenets of the *encuentro* space. It describes some of the norms and practices that laid the groundwork for engendering a *mujerista* space.

Mujerista Youth of the Study

Nayeli

Nayeli and I developed the closest relationship out of the entire group. She was one of two girls that I did not teach in social studies and I believe this shifted the nature of our relationship. Our interactions during the day were limited to encounters in the public spaces of the school such as the hallways and the cafeteria space. She often sought me out in between classes to tell me how her day was going and it was common practice for us to yell "I love you" across the hallway.

Citing her propensity to speak her mind and having a desire to make her own decisions, Nayeli described herself as rebellious. This nature led to several conflicts with her parents whom even though she acknowledged wanted the best for her, she also felt they often tried to restrict her freedom to make choices. She noted,

It's harder for [my parents] to understand me. *No los escucho* [I don't listen to them].

They could tell me 'Nayeli, don't jump off the bridge or you are going to die'... and then

I am like 'I'm 13, let's go!' *Me gusta* [I like] to live.

Though initially noting that her parents do not understand her and even going as far as to say that she does not identify much with her mother, Nayeli would later come to name a similar rebellious streak in her mother. She revealed that her mother often defended Nayeli from her father who often expected his daughters to fulfill traditional gender roles. Though her mother fulfilled these roles herself, seeing her “defend” her daughters instilled in Nayeli a sensibility that forces her to confront the patriarchal structures that dominate her household. She revealed her thought processes often led to painful questions about her own father. She asked, “Why does the man always have to be right? I question [my father], like ‘why’? He makes me feel so small.” Within her family structure, Nayeli also identified her Tía Juany as a source of *mujerista* knowledge, especially as it relates to the navigation of romantic relationships and female independence. She described her aunt as a woman who was

working and taking care of her kids. That’s twice as hard. And she is trying to go to community college and she likes to help other people. She dances. She communicates. She is a good role model. But my father only sees a divorce.

Although Nayeli implied her father was not happy about the communication that happens between her and her aunt, she continued to revere her aunt’s *sobrevivencia* especially after witnessing her Tía Juany divorce an abusive husband and support her older daughter through severe depression. Later in the year, citing her “bad choices”, Nayeli shared that her parents had prohibited any participation in soccer and Avanza. Though eventually allowed to return to the afterschool program in the last couple of weeks, Nayeli remained under close watch by her mother, who would wait for her at the bottom of the stairs every day. Nayeli told the group her parents had found something on her computer but did not want to share what it was. “All I will say is that its boys. It’s always boys.”

Nayeli often struggled with the responsibilities of being a girl with *papeles* and what that meant for her education. Her comportment in school and her grades left her feeling guilty for not living up to the privilege of citizenship. She confessed,

Like my parents they say, “*si tendría papeles* [if I had papers] I can do this and this and this *y podría trabajar* [and I could work]” so it’s like, that’s true. They could do all of that and if you, who has papers, and I could not achieve that it’s like “wow.”

The burden of the expectations that came along with citizenship often left Nayeli feeling isolated at home and at school. She described feeling ignored and judged by her teachers for “talking too much”—a sentiment captured by Denise in their peer identity art project where she sketched a classroom which depicted a marginalized Nayeli. Yet, these experiences at school and with her parents fed Nayeli’s intuitions and resulted in her being the most performative and outspoken of the girls in the group. I drew sketches of Nayeli’s *testimonio* performances that often depicted her standing with all eyes on her while, she, as Jimena (another participant of the *encuentro*), put it, “went off and preached.” She was especially critical of how boys spoke of their girlfriends while hanging out by the water fountain. “You have boys calling girls ‘my bitch, my bitch’ and nobody be saying anything about it. Not the girls. Not the teachers. Not the other boys and I am like nah, not me. I’ll slap you.” This passion for speaking towards issues of injustice did not have a place in her classes, however. She noted that her teacher’s tended to value “calm” students who did “their work when they are supposed to” and thus, Nayeli believed that she “talked too much” to be seen as a good student.

Lilia

The oldest of her siblings, Lilia’s strong personality commanded attention in a different way than Nayeli. Lilia often flipped the script using what I call *mujerista* litmus tests to assess

my knowledge of issues of importance to her. For instance, she asked what I knew about *retenes* (police checkpoints) before divulging her full understanding of them. Lilia adhered to very traditional notions of student success and was less willing to critique curriculum and teaching practices. She argued that in school, “A’s and B’s...your work is what matters.” Her notions of success revolved around the belief that grades were the most important part of the schooling process. Unlike Maritza, another group member, who said that success means having cultural pride, Lilia believed that, as Latina, ultimately her value was directly tied to grades. Lilia clashed with Maritza on this belief during their joint interview. Maritza’s answer pointed to the importance of culture in her definition of success, while Lilia pushed back by noting that grades are what determine worth in the teacher’s eyes. “You have to show [teachers] that you are good. Grades show that you are actually good.” She believed that, ultimately, students have control over their schooling. She advised that, “They [failing students] need to get a good grade on it and if they don’t, they need to correct [their work].” Though not in ESL, Lilia was one of my students in Mr. Brown’s social studies class. Deemed a ‘middle of the road’ student that was doing ‘fine’, Lilia was sat on the literal on borders of the classroom. Her physical removal from the center of the classroom did not encourage much participation in class discussion and she rarely volunteered her thoughts in whole group discussion. Her small group discussions and journal entries, however, revealed very complex and critically conscious thought processes.

For Lilia, the marginalization of Latinx students was mostly seen in the unequal disciplinary and surveillance practices of the school. Her stories often pointed to being watched in the hallway and questioned for doing simple things like drinking water. In the group, Lilia’s communication style was often aloof and curt but I came to understand that her utterances were loaded with meaning. My biggest lesson in learning on how to *listen* to Lilia came when she

introduced me to a music video by a rapper Kodak Black titled “Tunnel Vision.” The video depicts a black man tilling a field as a White man wearing a Confederate flag stalks him. The climax of the video shows the White man move to fire his gun when suddenly the Black man tackles the White hunter down and a struggle ensues. After a discussion on the possible meanings of the music video, I reciprocated by showing her La Santa Cecilia’s video for “Ice/El Hielo” which depicts an ICE raid. Though she found the song’s bossa nova style humorous at first, Lilia’s giggling transformed into silent tears as she witnessed the ICE raid. Immediately after the music video ended, Lilia turned to her computer and resumed playing “Tunnel Vision” but this time, she fast-forwarded to the fight scene. Though she refused to share why she had such a strong emotional response to “ICE/El Hielo”, she did offer an insight as to why she immediately replayed the fight scene in the rap song. “*I wanted to see someone fight back.*” In that moment, Lilia was using the music video as her language (Vasudevan, 2006) for communicating how paralyzing fears around deportations can be and the importance of not just fighting back, but needing to witness resistance to help her keep going. In a way, watching a Black man choke a white supremacist with an American flag *was her act of resistance.*

Jimena

Jimena was one of my students in Mr. Brown’s social studies class. As our relationship in the *encuentro* evolved, she started transferring many of our discursive practices to the classroom space. After I explained why it bothered me when students whistled at me, interrupted class to say I was pretty, and to ask why I did not have a husband, Jimena started to call me “Ms. Texas” and “Ms. Strong Independent Woman” inside and outside the class. It is important to note that she did not do this to be funny. In fact, I read it as her way of interrupting student’s gender-

normative discourses and I often thanked her for it. These kinds of discursive interruptions to hegemonic norms are a point of discussion in Chapter 5.

Many of Jimena's *consejos* (advice) were directly tied to her experiences with the immigration system and the deportation of her father. For instance, Jimena walked the group through what to do should ICE come to the door by explaining the importance of making sure a warrant has been signed and that if someone is detained, she advised, "You gotta say the words, 'I want a lawyer'." Jimena shared that her mother taught her this lesson when she very young because of her own experiences with the deportation of her father.

I was in the car with my dad when he got deported... he was just talking to me and then all of a sudden the police was there and he's like *escondete abajo de las sillas!*

Escondete! [hide under the seats! Hide!]... I don't know what they were doing to him but I felt the car moving and shaking. I hear a cop say 'there is something in the car, I see something... and the White cop just lifts the seat up and puts the gun to my head

Jimena divulged that the trauma of this experience led to a generally unhappy childhood. Not only had she been held at gunpoint while her father was taken away, her mother had to go back to work to support her family. This led to not spending very much time with her mother when she was young. However, this shift in family dynamics is the very thing that led her to want to succeed academically

Everyone has a story in life. People don't understand me...I am happy person now but when I was little I did not get loved a lot. I really didn't feel happy. I lost my dad and then my mom did not even pay attention to us. She paid attention to her work but now that the years have gone by and my sister is the one that has shown me to love more ... I

am thankful to Evelyn because she has taught me how to love more and I show them I am grateful by doing good [in school].

The baby of the family, Jimena dedicates and credits her academic success to her older sister's support. She revealed that when her sister, Evelyn, got pregnant at a young age, she continued to encourage Jimena to do well in school as a way for her to *valerse por si misma*—be independent (Villenas, 2001). This is why she took great pride in academic accomplishments and her intelligence. When asked to bring an object she feels best represents her, Jimena chose her AVID trophies and revealed to us: “I’m so proud of myself. Last year I did perfect in ELA.” She was aware that sometimes her self-congratulatory nature annoyed her friends; however, she pushed back against the calls for her to be more humble in her demeanor by insisting that not only was she smart, but that all Latinx students were. When I asked Maritza how she showed her intelligence, and when she responded, “I don’t”, Jimena interjected by saying, “On a piece of paper. Not being funny.” Jimena understood that not only did Maritza prefer working on paper rather than on the computer, she functioned from the perspective that Maritza was *indeed* intelligent in ways that the school does not always acknowledge.

Maritza

Maritza inevitably agreed with Jimena's characterization of her learning style. She is the type of student who understands herself very well as a learner. She described herself as a visual and tactile learner that needs to write information down so that she can “really learn it.” She revealed, “I like to work with other people, and talk to them, and watch videos, and to use paper.” For Maritza, the computers assigned by the school district got in the way of that type of learning because instead of aiding her, the computer only served to disconnect Maritza from her education. Sitwell Middle School is a 1:1 school, meaning that from the moment they enter 6th

grade, students are assigned a laptop. In the past couple of years, the school district has pushed teachers to mostly go digital as a way to individualize learning. While there is a plethora of engaging digital resources, a lot of the times, the computer ended up being used as a substitute for teaching. It remains normal to walk into a classroom and see students zoned out looking into a screen. “Group work” often means looking at a Google slideshow together and taking “Cornell Notes”—an AVID strategy for systematically condensing information.

Maritza was very critical of her ELA teacher’s over-reliance on the computer. She described her ELA classroom as a space where the teacher rarely got up from her desk to work with students. Instead, she assigned vocabulary words from a website called “vocabulary.com” for students to learn and review new words. Maritza revealed that the website did not inspire her to put it more than the minimal effort. “I just press random buttons and don’t do anything. When I want to use a word, I just Google it.” In late April, upon noticing she was missing from my social studies class, I was informed that she had been placed in “in-school-suspension” for cursing at her ELA teacher. After school, she told me that a couple of weeks prior to this incident, Maritza and her mother had a meeting with Mrs. Hanson. In this meeting, Maritza shared that she was not doing well in class, in part, because she felt disconnected from the material and the class structure. She revealed that the anger that pushed her to yell profanities at her teacher was rooted in Mrs. Hanson’s refusal to acknowledge the validity of Maritza’s request for a change to the class structure. She explained,

It’s the stuff [Mrs. Hanson] does in class. She never gets up to teach like a regular teacher. She blames it on the school board that they are trying to teach us in a different way with the computer and stuff but she never pays attention when someone needs help

with a question... I would have liked for her to say that she would give me paper instead because it's easier for me.

Maritza did what we as educators want students to do. She advocated for herself and her learning. However, Maritza came to feel shame and remorse over the way she exploded at Mrs. Roberts. That remorse translated to her accepting that Mrs. Hanson was “right” and that it was Maritza who needed to change the way she learned. Over time, Maritza vacillated between this acceptance and feeling immense anger and frustration over Mrs. Hanson’s teaching practices. In the end, she changed her mind on the use of “vocabulary.com” not because she saw it as a valuable tool but because it’s “better than listening to Mrs. Hanson.” She shared the story of computer meeting and outburst a second time in her joint-interview with Lilia. Though she refused to repeat the cursing and was still very embarrassed about it, she allowed herself to be more expressive in describing why she was so frustrated. In the end, though, Maritza had begun to construct a more empowering way to see herself as an intelligent and successful Latina: “To me it means show that we *are* Latinas. To be proud and have pride in our countries and to stand up to protest.” Within this definition, Maritza began to see herself as the intelligent person Jimena made her out to be.

Denise

Denise was the only 7th grader in the group and was noticeably the most reserved of the girls. The other girls’ personalities often dominated the space and it left little room for Denise to contribute. Because of her general shyness around the older girls and my inability to see her throughout the day, our most meaningful conversations in the *encuentro* space happened when we were physically removed from the larger group. I also heavily relied on my conversations with and observations of her in the Avanza afterschool program. Additionally, Denise was the

only student I formally followed up at the start of the new school year because we were unable to meet for our interview at the start of the summer as originally intended.

From the beginning, I made it a point to check in on Denise given the grade and friend gap between her and the other girls. Through our conversation, Denise revealed that she saw purpose in her positioning as a listener within the group. “I just like to sit and listen because what they say is so crazy and I get to hear about 8th grade and the teachers. It makes me less nervous when I know more about it.” To address the problem of girls talking over each other, I created a “question cube” game. This discussion activity involved the use two cubes with question stems. After rolling the cubes, the girls had to create a question for the group based on the stems. The first time we did this discussion activity, the girls were having a hard time settling in and taking it seriously. Jimena and Lilia were teasing each other over not being able to come up with questions. It was Nayeli who was finally able to create a discussion question. After rolling the words “why” and “would”, she asked: “Why would Donald Trump want to build a wall?” The girls entertained this question for a couple of minutes. They talked about Canada not getting a wall, Trump’s racist beliefs against Mexico, and building tunnels under the wall. I do not mean to dismiss the content of this conversation by summarizing it in this manner but I do so to point out that the conversation died down fairly quickly. Nayeli completely derailed the discussion by asking me about my eyebrows and if it hurts to thread them. Lilia was whispering something about El Chapo¹ to Jimena and Maritza. Desperately trying to ground us back in whole group discussion, I said, “let’s just do one more!” Even though it was Maritza’s turn to roll, Denise picked up the cubes from the center of the table and instead of rolling them to get a random outcome, she turned them to the words “Who” and “Might” and she spoke for the first time that

¹ El Chapo is a Mexican drug lord famous for his escapes from police custody

morning: “Who might stop Donald Trump from building the border [wall]?” Even though she did not contribute an answer, Denise was able to re-direct the group with a meaningful and carefully calculated question.

When I spoke to her the following week in the after school program, I asked her what compelled her to ask that question in the way that she did (by manipulating cubes). By calculating the kind of question she wanted to ask, Denise showed that she was not passively listening. In fact, just as she used the 8th grade girl talk as lessons about what’s to come, she used her listening to re-frame the conversation on Donald Trump towards a conversation about action. She revealed, “Everyone was getting so crazy and I already know why he is [building it]. I wanted to know who is doing stuff.”

Alma

Alma is our honorary 6th member and was at one point an Avanza participant. However, when soccer season began in the spring, she stopped being able to join us after school. While she received a personal invitation to the club, she instead opted to join the school’s walking club in order to be with her best friend Erica, who was set to attend a different high school in the fall. Denise described Alma as a “ball of sunshine” to which Lilia added, “a *loud* ball of sunshine.” She proudly considered herself to be *una patriota Hondureña*—a Honduran patriot. The patriot part, however, was just a reference to her allegiance to Honduras but it was also a reference to the American Revolutionary patriots that triggered a movement to achieve the United States’ independence from Britain. This identification was rooted in Alma’s natural inclination to want to push back against oppressive situations through the use of protests. When the student arrived to class wearing the Trump t-shirt, Alma pushed back by calling it an act of racism and demanding the shirt be removed. When that did not happen, Alma left the classroom in protest.

The day after the ‘build the wall chant’ happened, a boy had brought a large Mexican flag to school and even though Alma was not Mexican, she chose to don the flag on her back for a large part of the day as a protest of the prior day’s incident and to show off her cultural pride.

At the end of soccer season, Alma rejoined the Avanza after school program. However, by then, Alma’s friends, (Maritza, Jimena, Nayeli, and Lilia) were relocating to my classroom to work on their identity art projects. She asked Jimena why the group was relocating upstairs. “We are working on art projects. *Debes de venir con nosotras, tenemos cosas extras*. [you should come with us. We have extra supplies].” With this invitation to participate in our group rituals, Alma became a member of our *encuentro*.

Tenets of Our *Encuentro* Space: Establishing our World Through Cultural Artifacts

The hallways can get rather rowdy on Friday mornings so in an effort to make sure we started on time, I would often stand at the doorway to greet the girls’ by mimicking the way my mother would call us back into the house after an afternoon playing: “*Eyt, ya recógete pa’ la casa!*” which technically means “bring yourself home.” The girls laughed as other students looked at me like I was crazy. Walking into the *encuentro* space felt like walking into a family hangout. Even though the room was populated with typical classroom furniture and was very sparsely decorated, the dimmed lights and the Selena music playing in the background created a private and lively ambiance. It was typical for us to break bread together and begin the meeting by *chismeando* (gossiping) about a mysterious teacher nicknamed “Mr. Hottie”, looking at pictures of the latest telenovela stars, and the girls interrogating me about which soap opera stars I found attractive—which then entailed them Googling all these “old guys.”

This brief introduction to a typical start to our Fridays together highlights some of the cultural practices and artifacts that provided the foundation for the development of our time and

space together. *Telenovelas*, music, and even the figure of Mr. Hottie were some of the important cultural artifacts we jig sawed together to start building our world. According to Holland et al. (1998), figured worlds are “evoked, collectively developed, individually learned, and made socially and personally powerful” through the deployment of cultural artifacts (p.61). Urrieta (2009) added that for Chicanxs/Latinxs, cultural artifacts extend beyond physically tangible objects as they can also include linguistic and discursive practices. So, in discussing the following tenets of the *encuentros*, we can understand the bilingualism that came to characterize the space and the philosophy behind In Lak’Ech as cultural artifacts that promote the emergence of a *mujerista* space.

Centering Cultura

In our first *encuentro*, I asked the girls to create a list of things or ideas they would like to center in our group. This exercise yielded a set of cards that Nayeli characterized as “damn good vocabulary.” Words such as Mexico, Spanish music, culture, and paint served as some of the cultural artifacts that created part of the framework for the space (see figure 3). This “damn good vocabulary” highlighted the girls’ intentional desire to populate the space with their own identities and aspect of culture that they valued. They also revealed a desire to create new artifacts that would contribute to the building of our *mujerista encuentro*.

While I had intended to include an art project as part of our activities together, Jimena suggested the word “paint” before I had the opportunity to present the idea. The inspiration for its inclusion was another cultural artifact of the space: an art piece that showcases a poem titled “In Lak’Ech” (see figure 1). This culminating art project became a pivotal mediator in our interactions with each other (Holland et al., 1998). It became the reason girls used to come hang out in my room during lunch and during the afterschool program. Alma’s official entry into our

world was through the creation of her own identity painting. Although she did not participate in the interview process that preceded painting, Alma's finished product fit within the theme the girls' other pieces. When she walked up to the paint supplies, she asked Jimena, "*oye y que debemos de pintar?* [hey, what should we paint]." Jimena responded, "we interviewed each other but you can just paint who you are, like what's important *para ti* [for you]." Noticing that the rest of the girls had included different iterations of the Mexican and Salvadorian flags, Alma painted herself a portrait of the Honduran flag. Thus adding to the growing number of cultural artifacts that represented both the girls and the space.

In one of our initial meetings, we discussed as a group whether we would like to move to another teacher's line dancing club every couple of weeks. Nayeli was excited at the prospect but the other girls were less enthused. Nonetheless, they agreed to go but before we did, Nayeli led impromptu *bachata* dance lesson. I confessed that I considered myself to be an excellent *bachata* dancer when I am not forced to follow a partner. Nayeli began to mime a couple of basic movements as she explained: "they have different types of dance movements, like you don't know who is doing that movement, who's going to do this movement." Jimena, who had earlier said that she was not going to dance, laughed and mimicked Nayeli's hip movements.

"*Tribal?*" she asked as she continued to investigate the kinds of dances I enjoy.

"No, I'm used to dancing like *cumbias* and *tejano*!" I replied while pretending to dance with a partner *norteño* style.

Nayeli smiled, "you're just like my Tía Juany!"

"And my mom!" added Denise.

I believe this is the moment when Jimena, in addition to calling me Ms. Texas and Ms.

Independent, also began to call me "#fave tia", a moniker that wound up in her identity art piece

of my interview. We devoted time to talking about our favorite foods, Spanish musical artists, and about our memories of Mexico. These unofficial icebreakers became some of the most important practices towards building community and finding common ground. They also helped us to get to know each other beyond our labels as teacher and students.

In Lak'Ech: Tu Eres Mi Otro Yo, You Are My Other Me

After settling in for the morning, we officially opened the *encuentro* by reciting “In Lak'Ech”, a poem based on the Mayan precept of community and humanity. The poem is written bilingually and is meant to be read by switching back and forth between Spanish and English. Opening with the line, “*Tu eres mi otro yo*, you are my other me” set the tone for how to communicate in the group. I asked the girls why they thought I had chosen to start our mornings with it. Denise spoke first and in a quiet whispered voice said, “So we can respect ourselves.” Nayeli jumped in and said that to her, the poem and respect means “to keep your dignity and to not lose your self-respect by doing bad things.” Lilia completed the analysis by adding that the poem is a reminder to “treat people how you want to be treated [because] it goes back to you.” This group analysis grounded us in the heart of In Lak'Ech's message: our neighbors are extensions of ourselves and we should be committed to expressing unity, love, respect, and humanity. “In Lak'Ech” was invoked a couple of times to remind each other of our commitments to *respeto* and love. For example, when Lilia called Jimena a dumbass, Jimena countered with “*ey, respétame!*” as she swung her hand to hit Lilia in the shoulder. Lilia picked up a paper copy of In Lak'Ech and responded, “how is it respect if you're hitting people!” The girls then both apologized to each other.



Figure 1: The girls used this painting of In Lak'Ech to recite the poem at the start of our time together. It is one of several cultural artifacts that made up the space.

In Lak'Ech served as our group's reminder to ground ourselves not just in the notions of *respeto*, *confianza* (reciprocal trust), and *cariño* (care) but it was also a principle to guide *why* we should interrogate our worlds (Acosta, 2014). The principle that our neighbors are extensions of our own humanity establishes a more nuanced commitment to empathy towards people who aren't the other, but in fact are our selves. In Lak'Ech was an ongoing lesson for us, though it wasn't always explicitly invoked in the same way Lilia did. One such example of this is when the girls critiqued "people with homeless signs." Nayeli exclaimed, "I'm like you have papers, bro!" Denise agreed and added that her mom often said "How much I would wish to be able to have all those opportunities... yeah, *ellos estuvieran trabajando* [they would be working]." When this came up again a couple of weeks later, Jimena insinuated all homeless people were drug addicts or dealers. Denise again reiterated that her mom often says White homeless people have the ability to go work. The implications behind these conversations point to the naïve belief that homelessness is the consequence of an individual pathology. Invoking the principles of In Lak'Ech and critical pedagogy (Freire, 2000), I spoke to the girls about the reality that a large

majority of homeless people are military veterans who do not have access to appropriate health care and that there is also a rising number of homeless LGBTQ youth who have been kicked out of their homes. Maritza then made the connection to a man from her neighborhood that was arrested and deported for selling drugs. She described to us her father's lesson that even though the man sold drugs, he did it to provide for his family. She continued, "when he got token [sic] his wife was like 'don't take him, don't take him, he doesn't deserve this.' It's so sad." The girls had just equated homelessness with drug dealers in a way that was critical of both. I believe the connection Maritza made here was about the importance of not only having empathy, but also being mindful about histories and backgrounds we do get to see when we just judge and condemn others for not fitting our notions of good, productive people.

Encuentro Languages

In my analysis of the groups' language practices, I specifically coded for the first moment in which Spanish was used without being prompted by the In Lak'Ech poem or me. This moment happened towards the end of the first meeting. Jimena had spotted one of my self-portraits (inspired by Chicana artist Celeste de Luna's "*Tu Cuerpo Es Una Frontera*") in the corner of the white board. Picking it up, she began to analyze it for meaning and the girls' joined her. (Spanish is italicized for clarity.)

Jimena: It's the border...because Texas is on the other side

Alma: *son fresas?*

Denise: And the other side looks like *Mexico*

Jimena: and the *Rio Grande!*.

Lilia: There is blood on it [answering Alma].

Denise: Violence... and you're on both sides

Jimena: You don't have a side

Lilia: Trump wants to build a wall on the river?

Me: He wants to build it on the riverbanks and my home is right there on the edge

Alma: *Tejas!*

Jimena: But he doesn't think right. [mouths *loco* while circling her index finger around her temple]

The conversation briefly turns to talking about the ecological dangers of building the wall on the riverbanks. Then, Nayeli redirects the conversation back to the wall using Spanish.

Alma: *Que te dijo tu abuela de la wall?* [What did your grandmother say about the wall?]

While I spoke Spanish, the practice of bringing in our first languages was mostly through the girls' own organic inclusion of it. I note this because upon reflecting on my own languages, I was both disappointed in myself and proud of the girls for not following a lead I had unintentionally set. However, as Spanish became more prominent in the space and our relationship in the group deepened, my own bilingualism became more present and intentional. They, in many ways, set the tone for *me*.



Figure 2: This painting prompted the organic emergence of Spanish between the girls.

Another example of language's role as a cultural artifact of the *encuentro* was the girls' use of English to mark belonging. During one of the afternoon *encuentros*, Alma, Jimena, and Maritza were discussing Nayeli's relationship with her boyfriend. In Spanish, they talked to Nayeli about how they think her boyfriend does not treat the relationship with respect because Nayeli allows that to be the case. Suddenly, the door opened and it was a group of 6th grade boys looking for Dr. Dominguez. At the drop of a hat, Jimena code-switches to English to yell, "Don't stay here, we are talking about something!" to which Maritza adds, "Yeah, we are talking about y'all, bye!" While these moments might seem small, the context of these conversations laid the groundwork for how and when the girls engaged both of their languages. Spanish acted as free flowing tongue that often entered the space when the girls were discussing issues around culture, immigration, identity, racism, or bringing to the center their pedagogies of the home (Delgado Bernal, 2001). While, in this instance, we saw English acted as a figurative border meant to keep boys out of their girl talk. In contrast, this highlights the intimacy Spanish represents for the

girls. It is used in moments when they are discussing personal issues, while English was used as their border.

Breaking the Rules: Unsanctioned Discussions

Noting that they would like privacy, the girls chose a table in the back of the classroom for our main meeting space. This strategic choice allowed them to see out window of the door but with the lights off, from the outside, it was nearly impossible to see them sitting together. In order to prevent the principals, who have keys to my room and often walked into classrooms unannounced, from interrupting us, I specifically asked for them to not enter our space during our meeting times because I wanted to “continue the mentoring for the Avanza girls during school hours.” Even though the heart of Avanza was an ethnic studies curriculum that paired predominantly White pre-service teachers with Latinx 6th, 7th, and 8th graders, principals and teachers often framed it as a “mentoring program” and a “tutoring program for English language learners.” This was despite the fact that the majority of students were not labeled ELs and there was no systematic mentoring happening. These discourses point to the schools’ framing of Latinx students as “service clients” in need of remediation and guidance by White college students. Avanza was also initially included in the “School Improvement Plan” as a strategy to reduce the amount of disciplinary referrals and In-School and Out of School suspensions. This was eventually removed from the final, publicized plan; however, it was left in the executive summary shared with faculty. Its inclusion highlights the racialized, deficit discourses that frame Latinx students as pathological and in of intervention. Sofia Villenas (2001) identified these paternalistic helping practices and beliefs as acts of benevolent racism. The program’s listing under the disciplinary goals unveiled *who* the school leadership team thought the problem was rather than critically thinking about the disciplinary practices of the school. It is also important to

note that despite the school unofficially framing Avanza as a “tutoring” program, it was not included as a strategy to raise student proficiency. Upon asking Assistant Principal Mr. Williams why the program was categorized as such, he simply said “Wow. I didn’t even catch that!”

I was able to use this ‘mentoring’ angle was part of my *movida* to ensure that I would receive the principal’s approval to host this club. Luis Urrieta (2009) describes a *movida* is a “local action” meant to “carry out a carefully strategized plan” (p. 170). Though I did not anticipate much resistance from school leadership, I wanted to lay the groundwork to keep the group small by making it ‘invitation only’, ensure a measure of privacy, and encourage open dialogue with the girls by limiting who is present in our space. While I did not inform the girls of the entirety of my *movida*, I did assure them that this *encuentro* space was private and thus, we were free to discuss whatever they wished.

Lilia’s contribution to the group was a card with the Trump name encircled and a slash going through it. She clarified that this card was actually a request to talk *about* Trump, not to ban him. The inclusion of this card shows the Lilia’s desire and need to engage in the very discourse that had been discouraged by the school board and school leadership. The girls did not have a problem with the “it.” They were not only willing to talk about serious issues regarding immigration raids, rape culture, and racism, but they were also willing to give it a name and that name was “Trump.” Although we discussed that Trump was not the originator of racism but rather a symptom of the larger disease, the girls’ “read him” and used his speeches and comments as an entry points to the discussion of broader systemic issues.

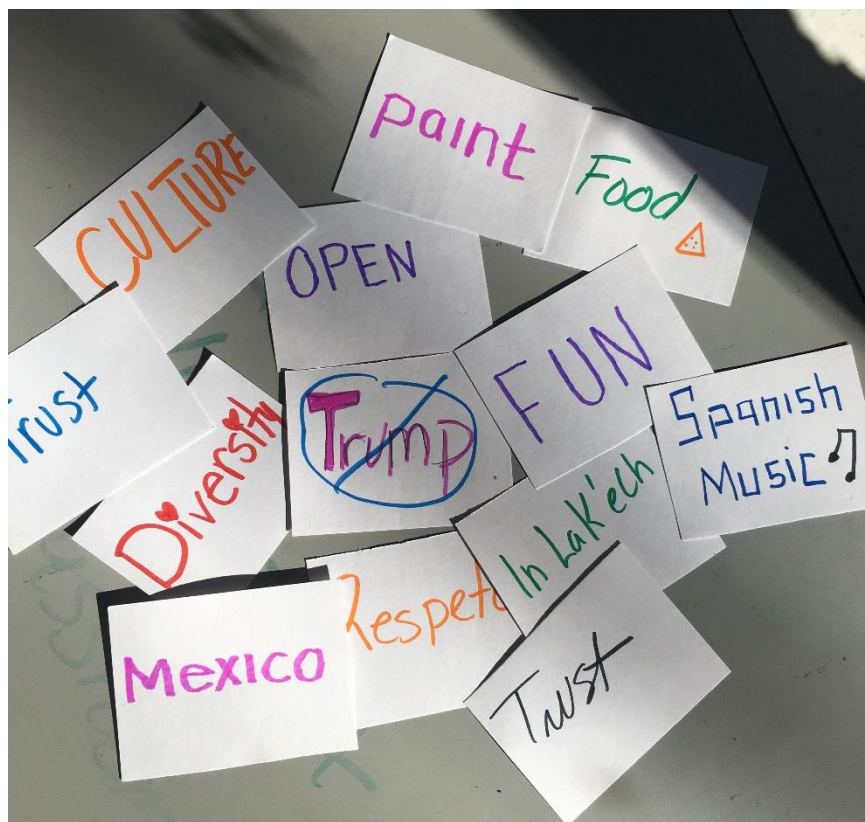


Figure 3: The groups' list of tenets for the encuentro became the guide for many of our activities and conversations.

A few weeks later during one of the girls' impromptu lunch *encuentros*, Lilia asked me why teachers are not allowed to say whom they voted for, "Is it illegal?" she wondered. I explained,

Me: "It's not illegal for anyone to share who they voted for. It's illegal to violate their privacy if they don't want to share."

Lilia: "Then why do teachers say they can't say?"

Me: "Because the school district says that we should not use our position to show bias, preference for anyone."

Lilia: "That's stupid."

Maritza, who was sitting next to Lilia, joined the conversation: “Wait, so can you get in trouble because we talk about Trump?”

Me: “Only *if* they find out.”

Maritza smiled, “Ms. Rodríguez be out here breaking the rules!”

In the exchange above, Maritza and Lilia came to understand our *encuentro* discussions were a kind of violation of the school “rules.” Maritza’s assertion that it was *me* who was breaking rules, not them, shows that, perhaps, she understood that our *confianza* (trust) was not just about me protecting their privacy, but that I actively reciprocated it by showing I cared about them and what they had say enough to break the rules. The reciprocity of *respeto*, *cariño*, and *convivencia* are very pillars on which *confianza* is built (Rodríguez, 2013). By listing his name along with words like “Mexico” and “culture”, the girls were already defying the imposed school norms of silence around issues of racism, immigration, and the Latinx community and were asking me to join them in those unsanctioned conversations.

Positioning Ms. Texas: Passing the Mujerista Litmus Test

Perhaps, in that moment, Maritza and Lilia also understood that I, as a teacher, made a choice to not abide by the implicit rule of silence around these issues. These tenets and subsequent conversations around what teachers were and were not able to talk about, serve as kind of *mujerista* litmus test of my positionality as a teacher and member of the group. Underlying Trump’s inclusion into tenets and even asking me whom I voted for were strategic tests designed by Lilia. During her individual interviews, Lilia often flipped the script by asking me about college, my family, and even my sister’s elopement at 15 years old. Since Lilia mostly communicated through utterances, and at times, even only body language, her casual observations and vocal insertions were reminders to the group and to me that she was always

listening. One such example of her flipping the script was with the “Tunnel Vision” music video mentioned in the first portion of this chapter. During the last couple of minutes of one our mid-March *encuentros*, Lilia opened the Kodak Black music video, which she had found a way to download on to her school computer (a violation of school rules). I was engaged in a conversation with Nayeli about my once-purple hair when Lilia, in a raised voice, queried, “I don’t get it. Are they trying to say stuff about the KKK?” My interest peaked, I abandoned my conversation with Nayeli and asked, “Who?”

Lilia: “Kodak Black or whatever his name is... I don’t get what he’s trying to say though.”

Nayeli: “I think the song’s lit, but the video’s got me confused, no lie.”

Me: “So, he is singing front of the KKK... well, you analyze a music video the same way you analyze a book... you can figure out its meaning”

Lilia: “Yeah but a music video is better... look at what his hat says!”

She pointed at a red cap reminiscent of Donald Trump’s campaign hats, except this one read, “make America hate again.” Thinking I could walk her through an analysis of the music video, I begin to formulate a question on what she thinks the meaning of the hat is but was interrupted every step away.

Me: “So what’s he telling...”

Lilia: [interrupts] “But that guy, look. That’s the KKK.”

Me: “He’s telling us...”

Lilia: “Look, watch this! They’re [the KKK] burning [hung on a cross] and that guy’s working as a slave.”

I was finally able to insert a question during the video's climax when the Black man attacks the White hunter. I asked, "Who in that scene has the power?" In line with her short and direct communication style, she responded, "the Black boy" and quickly redirected my attention back to the screen, "But *look at this part!* He [the White man] gets beat up, that guy's choking him. Look." The end of the music video shows a White blonde little girl steps out of the field and yells, "stop!" Lilia leaned back in her chair, pressed pause, and in a half laugh said, "I don't get that part." My teacher brain kicked into overdrive and I thought, "this is it. I can guide her through this with a *guided question*." I attempted coaxed with, "What do you think that says about children and adults?" and in a self-assured tone, Lilia replied, "that children are smarter." Wanting her to dig deeper, I followed up with my own interpretation: "Or that it's affecting children more than you think?" Lilia cut me off by "*Oooooor*, that children are smarter." By this time, the majority of the group had gone to class so Lilia followed suit by packing up her computer. I thanked her for showing me the music video and asked her if we could continue the conversation the following week.



Figure 4: Lilia used Kodak Black's Tunnel Vision as her language to test the researcher's positionality and as an insight into her subjectivity.

On Friday, a week after the original viewing, I lamented that Lilia was absent that day because I was hoping she would tell me more about the Tunnel Vision video to which Nayeli responded, "Oh yeah. She was really excited to show you. She had told us she wanted... *to see if*

you got it.” This was the moment I came to see that Lilia had been testing me. Despite noting that she did not understand the music video narrative, by repeatedly using the words “Look” and “Watch” while narrating, she was pointing out the parts *she wanted me* to notice because they were important to her. She pointed out the significance of the hat, the gun jamming, the burning KKK, the black man fighting back, and the little girl. Even though she said she did not understand the significance of the little girl at the end, she refused to accept my interpretation of her. Lilia’s “or that children are smarter” is more than a repetition. It was an *insistence* that I recognize the legitimacy of her decoding. More so, besides the cursing and violent imagery depicted in the song, Lilia had also violated one of the great school rules that sanctioned students for accessing blocked websites or materials on school grounds. Technically, I was supposed to write her up the moment I found out she had that music video on her computer and she knew this because she had received write up for computer violations before. Lilia *be out here breaking rules too*. I believe this litmus test was meant to see if I would report or get after her for having that content on her computer. Lilia was testing if she could also trust me to “get it”—meaning, get the value of the video, the meaning of the video, accepting the message that children are smarter and that we need to fight back against injustice.

A Space to Talk Back: “You hear that Donald Trump?”

Though I had explained to the students that their participation in Avanza was part of a research project, the girls did not quite understand why we were recording a lot of our sessions. I explained that the recorder was to help me remember what they said so I can analyze it later for my dissertation. Confused, Nayeli asked what a dissertation was. I explained, “A dissertation is like the length of a book and maybe one day it will turn into an actual book.” Nayeli asked what the book was about and I replied, in earnest, “Hopefully it will be about you.” Jimena was

surprised, “Us? Why us? I’m going to be famous!” to which Nayeli replied, “for real!” They spoke about wanting to keep their real names for the final product so as to aid their rise to fame. I did not end up using their real names because I never received official permission from them.

Around this time, Jimena appointed herself the narrator for the group and the person in charge of making sure the recorder was properly set up. She often picked up the recorder to ask, “Is this thing on?” She said she wanted to make sure I did not forget to turn it on since I needed it for my book. Whenever there was a vote in the group, Jimena would pick up the recorder and narrate “three out of fiveeeeeee” as if she was one of those game show announcers like on the Price is Right or Password. At some point in our meetings, it actually became a running gag. Whenever I received a phone call, she would narrate, “Ms. Rodríguez is on the phone. It sounds like there is someone looking for her; Ms. Rodríguez looks surprised; She’s opening the door” She would even shift the recorder to point towards the person speaking so as to clearly capture their voices. Jimena loved the recorder and loved being recorded.

However, there was a moment when Jimena’s relationship to the recorder shifted from being a device to play with and narrate mundane interactions in the group, to actively using it to make sure her message was being recorded so it could be shared with the world. This shift happened the day after the 2017 national boycott, “A Day Without an Immigrant”, the girls and I were talking about the amount of students absent the day before. I found out that Maritza, Jimena, and Lilia had all participated in the boycott while Denise and Nayeli made the decision with their parents to attend school. I asked the group how they felt at seeing all those people participate across the nation. Jimena and Lilia responded in unison: “good!” while Nayeli responded that it made her feel sad. Surprised, Jimena asked why Nayeli would ever feel sad about the boycott. Nayeli revealed,

It kind of reminded me of my parents and what would happen if the protest didn't work and my parents would get deported. I was just thinking about that and it made me really emotional because I don't want them, anybody, any of their parents to get deported or anyone. Because there's a lot of people that need them... There's already families getting deported.

Jimena listened intently to Nayeli as she spoke about her fears for her parents and her anger at seeing most of her friends missing from school. I turned to Jimena and asked her to share why she felt happy. She repositioned the recorder, clasped her hands together, and laid them together as if she was a news anchor delivering the nightly news. When she cleared her throat, I finally cracked and joked, "Jimena pretending she on the red carpet." She laughed, "I am on the red carpet and okay, I felt happy we were getting together as one and fighting for our rights." Lilia interjected, "I was happy too! Can I go next?" and before I said yes, Jimena shifted the recorder to Lilia. Lilia agreed with Jimena and added, "I felt good because a lot of people were standing up for us and it wasn't just Hispanics. It was also White people and Black people." The conversation continued on about how strange it was to see the school empty and Nayeli defending her choice to come to school. Throughout the process, Jimena kept shifting the recorder back and forth between the speakers.

When I revealed to the girls that nearly 190 Sitwell Middle Latinx students had been out, the girls laughed. "One student" I said "I had one student in my first class." The girls laughed at the thought of me sitting alone with just one student. Jimena picked up the recorder and spoke into it, "Well there you go, Donald Trump. [voice gets louder] There you go Donald Trump! Share that with Donald Trump!" She put the recorder down and let the conversation continue on where they think the protests were going to go next. Nayeli commented that she feared the

protests would turn violent. Jimena mocked Trump's voice, "He is going to be like, 'oh no they are getting violent, not only doing drugs, but violent.'" Denise laughed at Jimena's mocking voice but Jimena switched her tone to a serious one as she shifted forward to place her mouth closer to the recorder,

If I had a chance to confront—if I only had a chance to confront him, I would prove to him how my life has been hard, especially because my dad has been deported so I can relate to that, and saying that Mexicans do drugs—my mom has never done a drug in her life. She has never carried drugs. Neither has her family, neither has my uncles, so that's like a huge family that hasn't done that. It's not only Hispanics that have been bringing drugs but White people. Why doesn't he deport them?

Armed with the knowledge that whatever she said would eventually end up written in this dissertation, she made sure her voice and that of her fellow *mujeres* was clearly captured. The recorder and the dissertation are her voice's avenue to the outside world. While this dissertation will probably never be read by Trump (can he even read?), Jimena was in a way confronting Donald Trump and his racist nativist policies and comments around border security and Mexican immigrants. In moments like this, when she would purposefully reposition the recorder or her head to make sure she was being recorded clearly, Jimena was speaking unto the world.

World in Construction

Lilia's refusal to elaborate on what she meant by a lot of what she said could be read as someone who is not willing to dig deeper or we can understand her as someone who is speaking unto the world in different ways: through testing others and through images on a screen. Nayeli, by contrast, is more rebellious and performative in nature. Maritza's understanding of herself as a learner pushes her to not only recognize a disconnection between her learning needs and the

teacher's practice, but also to also demand better. Alma is not afraid to speak up for herself and others. Denise listens with the purpose to learn and highly values what the other girls had to say about certain topics. Jimena uses her mother and sister's lessons to guide her in her navigation of school and immigration issues. Additionally, her intentional command of the *encuentro* as a space where she could speak directly into the world and draw the listener in to not just her individual *testimonio*, but also the *testimonio* the group is building together. While brief, these snapshots into the young *mujeres* at the center of the study, give us an insight into how they understood themselves in relation to their schooling, families, and each other.

These authentic girl discourses (Cervantes-Soon, 2012), though at times brief and incomplete, grounded our relationships and commitments to each other as Latina women, friends, and allies. Most importantly, these pockets of discourse reveal the emergence of the girls' border thinking (Mignolo, 2000). The girls are pointing to how their knowledge is constructed in and informed by the in-between spaces of their multiple worlds. In turn, we are beginning to see how they began to construct the figured world of the *encuentro*. By looking into how they creatively took up the artifacts offered to them (like the recorder and In Lak'Ech) or created how they created their own tenets for the *encuentro* (Like the litmus test and bilingualism), we can also begin to see how they actively created the space—as opposed to me having created it for them. These cultural artifacts and practices the girls used pointed to the “potential for expanded forms of learning and the development of new knowledge” (Gutiérrez, 2008, p. 152). The creativity involved in playing with their languages, art pieces, and questioning shows that, together, these girls had begun to construct something new. What is emerges is a border space comprised of the borderlands that they already inhabit, a *mujerista* space, that is created and animated by their discursive and pedagogical practices (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-

López, & Tejeda, 1999). These *mujerista* youth pedagogies and literacies are highlighted in the following chapters that unpack the surveillance practices of the school and community. The surveillances of their citizenship, academic presence, and flesh are met with the girls' own facultades and counter-surveillant gaze.

CHAPTER 5: SURVEILLANCE AND COUNTER-SURVEILLANCE IN THE NEW LATINX SOUTH

Intuiting the Panoptic Gaze

One morning, as the girls and I were sitting working on their collage projects, the door suddenly swung open and we turned to find Mr. Williams standing in the doorway, holding a stack of magazines. A very tall man, his body almost covered the entire doorway. The girls imminently stopped their chatter and looked towards the door. Neither he, the girls, nor I spoke for a couple of seconds. Finally, he smiled, said good morning to me and pointed to the stack of magazines. I thanked him for bringing us more materials but noted that we felt we had enough. He stood in the doorway for a split second more before closing the door and leaving again. When our attentions returned to the project, Lilia laughed and said, “He came to give me ISS (in school suspension).” I let out an incredulous laugh accompanied by a stern denial, “Nooo.” Jimena followed up on Lilia’s comment, “Like always” and Maritza agreed, “Like always.”

The moment struck me as odd because, to me, it was clear that Mr. Williams was coming to deliver a stack of magazines because after all, I had put the call out via mass email. The *mujeres*, however, refused to accept that explanation. After the group, I caught up with Lilia by the water fountain and asked why she thought Mr. Williams had come to give her ISS. “I don’t know” she shrugged “he is always looking for me.” I asked if anything happened that we should be concerned about. “Nooo” she laughed, “he is just always looking for me”, she reiterated with a half-smile. Jimena giggled, “*es que eres mala!*” [it’s because you are bad]. Lilia rolled her eyes as she muttered a “whatever” and walked into her science class.

This was neither the first time nor the last time that one of the girls referenced being watched in some form another. Boys, teachers, parents, principals and even I, the researcher, were all watching them in their own ways. This chapter explores how surveillances of their citizenship, student identity, and their flesh intersect to create a schooling climate that is both alienating and hostile. Inherent in these stories, though, is also a narrative about how the *mujeres* make sense and come to understand the narratives crafted about them. Unpacking their understanding of how their bodies are seen, read, and treated lays the groundwork for recognizing how their agencies emerge from these experiences and transform their identities.

Grounding Surveillance in Foucault's Panopticon

While much of the scholarship on surveillance has focused on the criminalization of youth of color through zero tolerance policies (Bartky, 1990) and the increased presence of surveillance technologies (police presence, cameras, metal detectors) in schools (Taylor, 2013; Young, 2017), the lived experiences of these young *mujeres* bring to light how discourses of power discipline marginalized communities. This discipline is often pre-emptive in that groups and actions are targeted for monitoring, resulting in the surveillance of everyday life practices. For many, the very act of existing in a public space, such as a school, is cause for being watched.

This brings forth the question of what is meant by “surveillance” in the context of this study. The Oxford Dictionary defined surveillance as the act of close observation of a suspect (Oxford, 2018). An etymological breakdown of the word further reveals the power and ideological undercurrents inherent to its practice (Pinnow, 2013). The root “sur”—which means “over”—highlights the unequal power dynamics between the watcher that is firmly situated above the watched. In this sense, similar to Pinnow’s (2013) own use of the word in her work with Mexican-origin students, surveillance here does not simply refer to the technologies or

methods of inspection, but rather it is an examination of how power is enacted and reproduced through the gazes placed upon Latina youth. This definition of surveillance draws from Michel Foucault's (1995) theorizations of the panopticon and the use of surveillance as a means of social control. Foucault argues that power is reproduced and enacted on marginalized bodies through disciplinary practices. He builds a theory using Samuel Bentham's design of a panopticon prison as a metaphor. This prison's circular design allows a single watchman stationed at the center to view every prisoner from that centralized location (Madrigal-Garcia & Acevedo-Gil, 2016). This design also limits the subjects' ability to see each other and the watchman. In the study of power, the panopticon refers to a disciplinary power that is constant, all seeing, and seemingly invisible. Perhaps what makes the panopticon incredibly salient in our understandings of the reproduction and reification of power and marginalization is the inevitable emergence of a subjects' "state of consciousness [around their] permanent visibility." While one might never know if they are indeed being watched, we operate as if we are *always* being gazed upon. In this sense, there is no need for official technologies or designated persons to inspect suspected transgressors. All that is needed is the knowledge of the "inspecting gaze... which each individual under its weight will end by interiorizing to the point that... each individual [then exercises] this surveillance over and against himself" (Foucault, 1995, p. 155). The gaze becomes internalized and transforms into a self-surveillance that we use to regulate our own bodies in order to conform to the norms established by the hegemonic gaze (Foucault, 1995). Surveillance is, then, both product of and a tool for reproduction of discourses of power that designate belonging, intelligence, and respectability. In this sense, the panopticon is more than a mechanism to see or observe, but rather it represents sets of ideologies that "sort and arrange social categories and individual persons so that they can be seen and understood" (Simon, 2005, p. 4). It is both a means of

maintaining social structures of gender, race, and class and of constructing master-narratives *about us* (Gabriele, 1998).

As an ideological practice, the gaze is transmitted through people's actions and beliefs, whether that be watching, correcting, or designating belonging. In many ways, surveillance is a metaphorical checkpoint between spaces: marginalized space and spaces imbued with dominant power. Because border subjects are seen as deviant for being the embodiments of clash between first and third world (Anzaldúa, 1987), their multiplicity is something that must be watched and regulated. Just as the physical border is heavily monitored and patrolled, so too are borders of the metaphorical borderlands. Because we are always crossing borders, it stands to reason we are always being watched and patrolled as we do it.

Counter-Surveillance Through La Facultad

These power structures and the rhetoric of surveillance are directed towards the control of the body. Feminist scholars argue that Foucault fails to account for how disciplinary and surveillance practices are experienced at the intersections of race and gender and, thus, embodied by women (Bartky, 1990). An analysis of surveillance through a Chicana feminist lens, then, involves connecting the broader gendered discourses of power with the intimate experiences of it. It also entails recognition that women are not passive objects of the gaze. Lilia's assertion that she is always being watched is not merely an internalization of the gaze, but a naming of it. Mr. William's presence led her to intuit a possible, deeper explanation behind his visitation: he was looking for her because he was always looking for her.

What compelled her to be so sure in her assertion? Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) called this sensing "*la facultad*", an embodied, intuitive sense that arrives without conscious reasoning. This capacity to sense the deeper realities beyond the surface "breaks into one's everyday mode of

perception... and causes a shift in [it]" (p. 61). In that moment, Lilia's perception physically shifted from her project and to the figure in the doorway. Her *facultad* broke through and she named the watching practices of the school and Mr. Williams as the watcher in the tower. There is no way to know now if Mr. William's intention was to come looking for Lilia, but in a way, it does not matter. Lilia's experiences with school officials and other institutional officials outside of the school have engendered an epistemological sensitivity to the gaze. Anzaldúa (1987) states that the people who are likely to be sensitized to these deeper realities are

those who are pushed out of the tribe for being different... those who do not feel psychologically or physically safe in the world... those who are pounced on the most have it the strongest—the females, the homosexuals of all races, the darkskinned, the outcast, the persecuted, the marginalized, the foreign (p. 60).

For the participating girls of this study, their identities as young first generation Latinas, positioned them as problematic, outsider, and hyper-sexualized bodies that warranted unwanted attention and patrolling by school officials, peers, and even their families. Drawing from the *encuentros*, interview data, and observational data, I have identified three domains of surveillance. The first, surveillance of citizenship, refers to how racist nativist discourses about Latinx immigrants create a surveillance system in the form immigration *retenes*, heightened anti-immigrant sentiments amongst the students, and school's silence around these very issues. The second type of surveillance, surveillance of the flesh, refers to the raced-gendered discourses of power that situate the girls' emerging womanhood as inherently dangerous to themselves and others. The third surveillance finding, surveillance of student identity refers to the institutional patrolling (Alvarez-Gutierrez, 2014) practices of school personnel the closely monitor Latina

bodies within the school. This monitoring presents itself through the push for visibility and compliance, the standards driven curriculum, and racialized constructs of intelligence.

Moving forward, I want to highlight that this discussion of surveillance is only possible because the girls were very much aware of it. Through that awareness comes a responsibility to recognize that while the girls were being watched, they were also watching back by engaging in their own forms of counter-surveillance. As such, this chapter also points to moments when the girls deployed their facultades and border thinking (Mignolo, 2000) in order to disrupt the panoptic gaze and discourses of power imposed on them. I characterize this action as “counter-surveillance.” Additionally, though I enumerate three domains of surveillance, I want to make it clear that this by no means signals that these are three different types of surveillance or that they should be seen as independent from each other. I have titled these domains “surveillance of” to be able to discern the discourses of power at play, while also recognizing that for girls in the margins, the experience of surveillance is an intersectional one. Separating them allows me to unpack each one as much as possible. Thus, it is important see these domains as interlocking domains of racism, colonialism, and the patriarchy in order to understand how they all work together to sustain a system built on dominance through subordination.

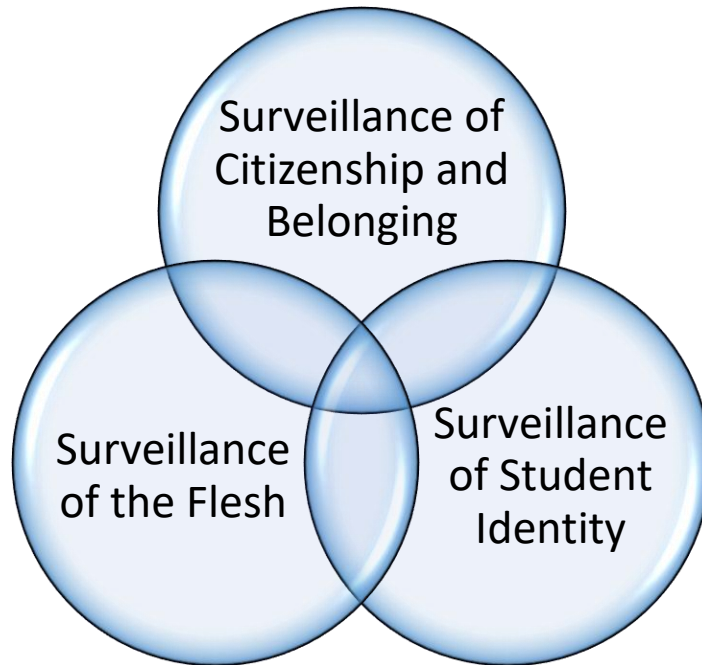


Figure 5: Rather than being seen as three separate forms of surveillance, the three domains of surveillance should be understood as interrelated forms of oppression

Surveillance of Citizenship and Belonging

A Community Under Watch

In Raleigh, there was a ton of police [on the side of the road] and like you would look right there, oh Hispanic, oh Hispanic, Oh Hispanic with police. And they're signing deportation papers. –Jimena

In Chapter 3, I briefly introduced *encuentro* discussions we had after the national boycott, “A Day Without an Immigrant.” Nayeli and Jimena clashed on the feelings towards the day. While Jimena felt proud to see people standing up for immigrant rights, Nayeli noted the day filled her with a sense of melancholy. The prominent thought in her mind was the possibility that the protests would fail to protect her parents, who are undocumented. Despite noting that she also felt good at seeing the people of multiple races come together to take a stance on immigration, Lilia scoffed in her response to Nayeli, “of course it didn’t work”, she exclaimed.

When I spoke of the strangeness and sadness of seeing the empty hallways in the morning, I started to describe how my thoughts naturally landed on how representative this event was of mass deportations that are happening. Lilia interrupted me and finished my statement by saying “that’s how it will be *if*”, but, Nayeli interrupted her by saying, “that’s how it will *be*.” For Nayeli, who had witnessed the empty classrooms first hand and knows people who have been deported, there was no “if.”

During our *encuentros*, the girls often referenced issues regarding the surveillance of their community’s citizenship in the broader public sphere. This type of surveillance, which uses *retenes* (law enforcement checkpoints), falls in line more closely with the more traditional definition of the word—that is, the monitoring of suspected criminals through the use of various law enforcement technologies. Stories of people detained while doing the most mundane things dominated the girls’ descriptions of this surveillance. For example, Jimena’s father was picked up on his way to taking her to Chuck E. Cheese. Maritza also shared the story of a young man who one minute was on his way to the *pulga* [flea market], and the next he was stopped by police at a *reten* and was taken by immigration officials on the spot. I asked the girls if it was common to see *retenes* near the *pulgas*, to which Lilia replied, “They used to park in the front, but then people started going through the back so now they are going to the back too”, pointing to the adaptive nature of these surveillances. Her father also had a close call in one of these *pulga retenes* when he was caught driving with a 10-year-old expired license but the police officer let him go. Denise also shared that her family came across a *reten* near their church on Christmas Eve.

In Sitwell and its neighboring counties, there have been increasing concerns over the use of traffic stops to weed out undocumented immigrants. Rumors of *retenes* near Latinx businesses

and schools dominate the public sphere. In neighboring Durham County, these rumors were made concrete after Durham police department set up a checkpoint near a local school that is 22 percent Latinx. While North Carolina law specifies that checkpoints may only be used where “statistically indicated”, the vagueness of such a statement leaves the practice of them largely to local law enforcement’s discretion (Schultz, 2017). In a public forum hosted by a local Latinx organization, Sitwell County officials vowed to not work with immigration officials in the arrest and detainment of undocumented people and while public declaration offered some relief for the Latinx community, the girls described that their parents still live in fear every day. Denise’s mothers’ strategy is to be as prepared as she possibly can should a stop happen.

My mom... puts her ID out even though its like expired and... she dyes her hair... like yellowish, you know, like *rubio* and she wears her sunglasses. Well, [the police] always thinks she is *güera*, white and they just let her go without even checking. Like we’ve gone through a lot of them and they don’t do anything. My mom says *por eso me pongo los lentes*. [That’s why I put my glasses on.]

Denise and her mother have come to rely on this ritual to get her through traffic stops: expired license on the dashboard, the sunglasses, and maybe even the blonde hair are her ways of exercising as much control over the situation as possible. These driving strategies are evidence of the underlying anxiety that dominates the simple act of leaving the home. Nayeli shared that a simple traffic stop is enough to make her mother break out into anxious, angry tears.

My mom gets hysterical when they stop her to give her a ticket. She starts crying... and it’s kind of hard for me because I just have to stare at her, and I’m like what do I do? What does anybody do?

When I asked the girls if the thought of deportation scared them, Lilia, Jimena, and Nayeli responded a resounding, unified, “no” because they have the protection of citizenship. This “no” however, stands in sharp contrast to the paralysis that Nayeli describes when seeing her mother break down when she gets pulled over for traffic infractions. Unable to comfort or protect her mother from it, all Nayeli can do is plan for the possibility that her parents could one day be deported. She described her parents’ plan to send Nayeli and her sister to live with family members should her parents be deported. They also have written documents that state how and when to sell the family home in order to fund the girls’ education and living expenses. In knowing the steps to take should someone be deported, the girls are also gaining some semblance of control within the broken immigration system. As such, when they talk about these plans, they do so in a very matter of fact way and as a way of giving *consejos* to each other. For example, in talking about what to do should ICE show up in their homes, Jimena repeated the phrase “don’t say anything” to the group twice. She continued, “When you get to the arresting place you have to call—you have to say you want a lawyer. Maybe that will get you free. But *you have to say you want a lawyer.*” Denise added to Jimena’s plan by noting, “you have to call your family members too and you tell them. If you know you’re going to get arrested, you tell them to call you lawyer because sometimes people get taken and their families don’t know.” Maritza’s *consejo* to the group was for them to counter-surveil police by using an app that alerts them to the locations of *retenes*.

My parents have an app that tells you if there’s [a *reten*] nearby... They starting finding apps for it because one time we were coming back from the soccer field, like 12 in the morning, and then there was already police officers there. My parents didn’t know, they

thought there was an accident or something because it had bright lights. But now we use the app and we around places.

Despite apps or the careful calculation of driving rituals, the possibility of deportation remains present for the girls and their families. As such, the girls also spoke of their plans of action should ICE come to their homes or their parents are detained or deported. Jimena revealed her first line of defense to have the appropriate documents ready to show ICE officials.

My mom told us what to do if *la migra* come to the door or if it ever catches—we have a plan. My mom has this special paper, I don't know what it's called... it's a special paper saying that if she gets deported then she can take us [with her]. That's her plan.

Earlier, Lilia had expressed concern and surprise I did not know *reten* was the same as a checkpoint. The girls filled this knowledge gap for me so I can “tell other people.” From this group conversation, I learned the same lessons the girls did. Mainly, the importance of having IDs out even if they are expired, alerting family members to the possibility of arrest, asking for a lawyer as soon as one is arrested, having documentation that shows your wishes to take you children with you should you be deported, and having documentation in place for who your children are going to live with should they stay behind.

Border Thinking Pedagogy of Counter-Surveillance: Stitching Together Educaciones

These plans serve as a counter-surveillance that pushes back on the discourses that frame girls' as either helpless or naïve. Their mothers' *educación* has had to include lessons on how to navigate their civic and familial duties to their families. Villenas and Moreno (2001) note that the surveillance and policing of citizenship “profoundly shapes [the] mothering experiences” of working class Latinas/Chicanas (p. 671). This kind of forethought speaks to the painful realities that mother-daughter pedagogies have to include lessons on how to legally navigate the rising

anti-immigrant sentiments, racist nativist policies, and the legal system. The girls are stitching together the *educaciones* of their individual mothers together to create an *encuentro* pedagogy that is informative and empowering. This *encuentro* pedagogy is born out of the girls' own border thinking, their views from in the in-between, and out of necessity and urgency. The knowledge created here is an amalgam of the multiple worlds they must traverse in their lives. These *consejos* on strategies to navigate immigration issues point to the emergence of a pedagogy of border thinking in the group (Cervantes-Soon & Carrillo, 2016). The lessons behind these *consejos* are also transforming as the girls incorporate the world of the school. When Jimena was sharing the story about the important document they must have should ICE come to their home, Lilia interrupted her by noting that, "Mr. Brown said that is called a warrant." Even though the document Jimena was referring was not a warrant, in this educative exchange, Lilia pulled from the knowledge of the world of the school to situate the lesson Jimena was imparting while reminding the girls that "they can't come in unless they have a warrant." Here Lilia was contextualizing what she learned about the Fifth Amendment within a real-world example of a subject pertinent to them: immigration. These *consejos* and Lilia's social studies knowledge are examples of using straddling as a border thinking pedagogical strategy (Cervantes-Soon & Carrillo, 2016). Except, what Lilia's social studies class failed to account for is that these constitutional rights are not always respected when you are not a U.S. citizen, making the consequences for immigrants much more tenuous, arbitrary, and inhumane. However, there is power in the girls teaching each other how to navigate the power differences between a governmental agency like ICE and themselves. While not necessarily teaching each other how to dismantle racist immigration policies, this border thinking pedagogy does afford the girls with a

set of tools through which they can navigate and resist the immigration system by exercising control where they can.

These lived experiences with community surveillance have contributed to the girls' increased awareness and *facultades* around issues of immigration, citizenship, and race—thus making them more primed to recognize when surveillance of citizenship and their belonging is at play. The following section discusses more discursive forms of surveillance of citizenship through the discussion racist nativist articulations and discourses (Pérez Huber, 2016) in the school .

The Trump Specter

A couple of days after the football team's chant in the 8th grade atrium, several students expressed dissatisfaction with the perceived lack of action from administration. If there were repercussions, they remained largely unknown to us. Alma, who witnessed it first hand, expressed frustration over the administration's failure to take the chant or the t-shirt seriously. She growled, literally:

Es que da un coraje, maestra. Ellos ahí gritando cosas racistas pero claro que no les hacen nada. También traen su playera del viejo ese, el Trump y dicen que es free speech pero el año pasado cuando un niño hispano trajo una playera de El Chapo, hicieron todo un show y lo forzaron cambiarse. Pero estos aquí entran con su Trump y sus racismo y dicen, 'ay ay tenemos que respetar sus derechos.' Pues que es eso, maestra? Y que los mios y los de todos los niños? [It because it makes me angry, teacher. They are there screaming racist things but of course, they aren't going to do anything. They also bring their t-shirt of that man, Trump and they say that it's free speech. But last year when a Hispanic boy brought a t-shirt of El Chapo, they made an entire show and made him

change. But they are there with their Trump and their racism and they say ‘ay ay it’s we have to respect their rights.’ Well what is that, teacher? What about mine and other kids?]

While on one hand, the school deemed an El Chapo t-shirt inappropriate because it, in a way, celebrated drug cartels, the school failed to understand how or why the presence of a Donald Trump t-shirt and a demonstration like “build the wall” would not only cause genuine discomfort to Latinx students, but were, in themselves, acts of symbolic violence. Alma was not defending the Chapo shirt, though; she was testifying to school’s inconsistent application of what they considered a “disruption to student learning”—the official language used to determine dress code violations—to be. She was also challenging what and whose rights the school deemed important enough to protect. The image of Trump and the words “build the wall” were protected by the guise of free speech, or as the Mr. Stone put it, “different opinions.” While the Mr. Stone assured me that he had conversation with each of the students involved and that he talked to them about “bullying and respecting people different groups of people”, the core of the issue, racism, remained unacknowledged. Instead, he used the word ‘bullying’ to describe what was, undoubtedly, an act of racism; he erased the role that race and immigration played in the student’s actions. By using ‘bullying’, he also obscured White supremacy. In the end, Alma’s right to a safe learning environment did not match up to the power of White supremacy and the push for silence.

As the school year progressed, the Trump name and the White supremacy he represents, continued to hang over the school like an ever-watchful specter. His name came to be used as a type of racially coded insult to Latinx students. The days leading up to the election, Alma and her best friend Erica came barreling down the hallways before the first class of the day. As she reached my door, she shouted, “¿Lo vio maestra? ¿Vio lo que pusieron en frente de la escuela?”

[Did you see it, teacher? Did you see what they put in front of the school?]. Confused, I told her that I had no idea what she was talking about. Erica jumped in, “*Es que alguien puso un póster del Trompudo en la entrada de la escuela*” [It’s because someone put a poster of Trompudo (Trump) in the front of the school!] Alma pumped her fist in frustration and told me that all the students riding the bus had seen the sign when the bus drove in that morning. “*Por eso lo pusieron ahí. Para que lo viéramos.*” [That is why they put it there so we can see it.] After class, I walked to the parking lot to see the sign for myself. Across the school sign stood two “Trump/Pence” campaign lawn signs. Their red, white, and blue schemes stood in sharp contrast against the backdrop of the autumn leaves. Their careful placement on the curb across the sign, however, meant that they were technically not on school property, and thus they were perfectly legal. They were staked into the ground in an angled position that created an optical trick that made it seem like the letters followed vehicles as they drove into the school. I understood why Alma felt the sign was posted there for the school community to see. Except for a couple of houses behind the school, there is no prominent residential area near the school. There are no businesses in the area. There is one church across the street but that remains largely empty during the week. While the road the school is on is a busy one, the fact that the sign was posted by the school reveals that the person who placed it there did intend the school community to be its major audience. Additionally, the front parking lot is most frequented by teachers and school buses. The parent-drop off/pick-up is behind the school. Therefore, it stands to reason that the sign was placed there for the teachers and students to see. As previously mentioned, Sitwell Middle has the largest Latinx student middle school population in the district and while it is impossible to know if the person who installed the signs had this statistical reality in mind, in many ways, it does not matter. Alma’s assertion that the sign was placed there for Latinx

students to see brings to light how her *facultad* pushed her to *see* that she, as a young Latina immigrant, is the object of the anti-immigrant and racist gaze that the Trump name has come to equate. To her, it felt like the sign was placed as message to her and other Latinx students. A message that said, “we know you are here.”

Months after the election, the Trump name was now being used as full-blown racial epithet. Maritza described how an opposing soccer team invoked the name to mock the mostly Latina Sitwell soccer team.

Okay, we were playing soccer and then these people were calling Trump, Trump, Trump!

These *blancas* that were on the other team. I got so mad; I was like ‘be quiet’. [The coaches] just stayed there and watched.

Amongst students, the Trump name was now coded language for anti-immigrant sentiments and discourses. Its use evokes images of racist articulations that paint Latinx immigrants as criminals, burdens, and as non-native to the United States. This is where it is important to locate a surveillance of citizenship outside of the legal definitions of the word. Citizenship is not just a legal construct, it is also a concept that is socially constructed and negotiated (Bondy, 2014). Within these examples, a surveillance of citizenship is located in the disciplining of cultural citizenship that is enmeshed in within the “webs of power that link nation-state and civil society. Becoming a citizen depends on how one is constituted as a subject who exercises or submits to power relations” (Ong, 1996, p. 738). The soccer team players had no way of knowing these girls’ documentation statuses yet their ethnicities were enough to designate them as outsiders because as Latinx, there are automatically designated non-natives. The root of this is racist nativism. Racist nativism refers to the “assigning of values to real or imagined difference in order to justify the superiority of the native, who is perceived to be white, over the non-native

who is perceived to be people and immigrants of color” (Pérez Huber, 2010, p. 81). While Trump’s characterizations of Latinxs as immigrant invaders is not new, his calculated manipulation of racist nativist fears of being over-powered by the Brown invader in his successful bid for the presidency did create “a more socially acceptable space for the overt expression of white supremacy” (Perez Huber, 2016, p. 229). Trump is not just a White supremacist espousing hate from the most important political position in the country. He is White supremacy’s response to the changing demographics of the United States. This is why the girls agreed with Nayeli when she argued that situations like the sign, the t-shirts, and the Trump name were not just messages directed at Latinxs but evidence that anti-immigrant sentiment in the school is getting progressively worse. Alma shared,

Sentí como una bola en el estómago cuando lo vi. Coraje también pero esa bola se siente bien feo. [I felt like a ball in my stomach when I saw it. Anger too but that ball feels awful.]

Here was this sign, posted by someone who not only supports Trump’s rhetoric, but also shared it. Trump’s words were (and are) inspiring acts of violence towards Latinxs all across the nation. In line with this trend, North Carolina students reported increased racially motivated harassment and someone spray painted “Build that Wall” in East Carolina University (Clark, 2016). In the triangle region of North Carolina, where Sitwell County is located, someone threw a brick into the window of a local Latinx organization. The people responsible were never caught. This creates an unshakeable sense that Latinxs are being monitored and targeted by those seeking to cause them harm, or at the very least, discomfort. This rising sense amongst the students, however, was not treated with enough urgency. Maritza described,

You can feel it when it happens. You just know when its happening. There was this guy and there was this table we wanted in lunch... They said it quietly but we still heard it. “Don’t let the immigrants go by.” It was around the time Trump was getting elected and stuff. Me, Lilia, and Jimena went to the principal but Mr. Williams didn’t do anything. He said, “you’re not supposed to be fighting for a table.” And we were like “that’s not our point. We are saying that we are getting insulted by another person just because of our race.” It wasn’t the table. And he was like “well you have to figure out a way to share that table.”

Lilia, Jimena, and Maritza walked in my classroom after the incident, and the first thing Lilia said was “Ms. Rodríguez, Mr. Williams said to come to talk to you because people are being racist.” Confused, I asked what they meant. Maritza continued, “I don’t know. It was weird. We went to talk to him because we got called immigrants and he told us to come talk to you.”

Admittedly taken aback, I sat in silence waiting for the girls to give me some indication of what happened. Maritza filled the silence, “But I mean, why talk about it? People aren’t gonna do anything. He didn’t even do anything about except tell us to share [the table] and ignore it.”

Principal Williams’ solution was a system where the girls and the boys traded days using the table but, upon seeing the girls dissatisfied with the outcome, he sent them to me. When I spoke to him later that day, I understood why he sent them my way. Understanding the implications of a statement like, “don’t let the immigrants go by”, he wanted them to have someone to reflect with on what happened—a sentiment I wholeheartedly appreciate. However, when he talked to the students about it and even when he described his solution to me, it became clear why Maritza felt he missed the heart of the problem. The issue and solution became tied to the table, as opposed to having an honest dialogue about the racism at play. Also, if I am being positioned as

someone to talk to about issues regarding racist nativism towards Latinxs, why not send the boys to talk to me too?

This brings back the issue of the school's insistence to reframe racism as problems with sharing, differences of opinion, or even bullying. Even Maritza, who had recently learned about the freedom of speech in her Social Studies class, came to struggle with what that meant for students in school. In the end, she conceded, "Everyone does have a right to say what they want" but also pushed back on the school's inadvertent protection of racist speech—be it verbal or symbolic like in the form of a t-shirt.

In school there are school rules and things like that should not be allowed to be said in school. The school should have gotten people in trouble. Whenever we went to report it, they told us to ignore it and that wasn't gonna do a lot. They should have talked to the parents of the kids... It feels like we got in trouble because we aren't supposed to pay attention to what they were saying.

While the girls were calling out the racism in the school, the school responded by firmly planting the surveillant gaze back on them by monitoring their responses. In Chapter 1, I described Mrs. Moore's indignant surprise at finding Alma and Erica "twerking in the hallway" after asking to leave class to escape the gaze of Trump t-shirt. Her focus on their bodily comportment reveals an underlying desire to discipline student responses to racism. Mrs. Moore's tone implied that she expected a more serious demeanor from the girls and in her description of what she told them in class, she also asked them to "not call anyone names", referring to term "racist." Mr. Williams expected the girls to ignore racist nativist comments and to calmly share the use of a table with a group of boys who would rather them not even be in the country. In response to the football team chant, Mr. Stone expected students to, yes treat each other with respect, a noble request. But, he

also urged students to keep their opinions to themselves in case people around them do not agree. The word opinion was used as substitute for the real issue. To replace it in his words reveals how absurd the statement actually was: “it’s okay for students to have different political opinions, *like racism*, but you might not want to share that *racism* in case someone disagrees.”

Border Thinking Pedagogy of Counter-Surveillance: Naming White Supremacy

Yet the group’s counter-surveillance strategy against the Specter of Trump and the school’s inaction is to direct the gaze back on to the White supremacy that gives a man like Trump power. For example, Jimena shared that she did not fully understand how someone like Trump could have won the presidency, “I don’t see how they voted for him. First he offended women and then he offended special people.” Upon hearing this, Nayeli interjected by counter-surveilling the discourses that erase the role that White supremacy played in electing him. She redirected Jimena by connecting this election to colonization.

Americans have conquered a lot of land and that makes them think they are superior.

That’s why [he got elected]. They conquered Mexico and that’s why the [country] is so big. And so they are afraid that another race is going to take that away from them.

Because they think the United States is the best when there are other places that can sabotage them.

What the principals called a difference in “political opinion”, Nayeli came to understand as an issue rooted in the legacy of colonization and White supremacy. Within the group, she is engaging in a pedagogy of border thinking (Cervantes-Soon & Carrillo, 2016) that asks them to historicize a man like Trump, his beliefs, and the White supremacy that elected him. Her counter-surveillance acts as a *mujerista* border thinking *educación* that is grounded in guiding the girls through an understanding of how this presidency is “shaped by history, power, and

difference” (p. 285). In a way, she is asking the girls to see that this is not something that *just* happened, it is something that not only has been happening, but is also a consequence of White supremacy’s fears of waning power. In a later meeting, Jimena elaborated on this teaching by tracing the roots of racism to understanding how power is embodied and performed by political figures.

It was first Black people and the Mexicans and then Jewish people, and then Afghanistan people. It was dictators that made other people think we are bad people. *Como* [Like] Donald Trump. He is not a dictator *pero el fue el que, los que motivía* [he was the one that], he motivates *blancos a creer que hispanos son malos por que el dice que hacen* [whites to believe that Hispanics are bad because he said they] harass... *que hispanos hacen* [Hispanics do] harassment, *hacen drogas, van a la cárcel. Lastiman a niños* [they do drugs, go to jail, hurt children] and he makes us look bad! It’s because he has power.

In her role as a border thinking pedagogue, Nayeli is harnessing several border thinking pedagogical strategies to construct a holistic message about the role of power and politics in the marginalization of people of color (Cervantes-Soon & Carrillo, 2016). First, Nayeli is modeling to the *encuentro* girls how to straddle the world of the school and their subaltern positions in the borderlands to ground an analysis of the legacy and functions of racism in a similar way to how Lilia used it in her “warrant” reminder. However, Nayeli’s use of it is more embedded within her whole message. By referencing to “dictator”, she is leveraging the language she learned in her social studies class not to characterize Trump, but to situate him within a socio-historical understanding of how inequity is shaped and reproduced by those in power—be it the political power of a single man or the broader social power that elected him. In addition, to enhance her teaching, Nayeli is also deploying her full linguistic repertoire by engaging in an act of

translanguaging. Translanguaging refers to “an act performed by bilinguals accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what is described as autonomous languages in order to achieve communicative potential” (Garcia, 2009, p. 140). Cervantes-Soon and Carrillo (2016) situate translanguaging as a powerful border thinking pedagogy because it not only disrupts the dichotomization and separation of languages but it nurtures border thinking by changing the “locus of enunciation to a border position” that “illuminates and brings into dialogue potentially conflicting language practices and points of view in creative, interdependent, and productive ways” (p. 290). While to the listener (or the reader) it looks like Nayeli is code-switching between two separate languages, the concept of translanguaging asks us to step away seeing bilingualism as two separate languages in one person, and instead move towards an epistemological stance that recognizes the creation of a single repertoire from the contact of multiple tongues (García & Wei, 2014). That is, while code switching presumes there are two hierarchical languages (first and second language) that a speaker switches back and forth from, translanguaging sees it as one single repertoire, a new hybrid tongue through which border subjects speak unto the world. Nayeli’s use of translanguaging, as paired with her cultural straddling, is a guide on how border thinking can, in itself, be a pedagogy through which one can transform the way we understand and name current social realities—like the presidency—from the a border position.

Monitoring the Performance of Citizenship

The girls also spoke of instances in which other students monitored how they performed their citizenship. In being one of the few Latinx students in building during the national boycott “A Day Without an Immigrant”, Nayeli revealed other White students questioned why she was in school that day.

The White kids were asking, ‘why didn’t you stay home?’ I told them that just because other people left the school doesn’t mean I have to. I was like, ‘I don’t support Donald Trump but just because of him I’m not going to go to school, so I still went to school. That’s a priority for me.

On a day when nearly 80 percent of Sitwell Latinx students were boycotting, those like Nayeli found themselves having to defend their decision to be present. In my capacity as teacher, a group of boys shared with me that they found themselves having to endure comments from the same group of boys that led the “build the wall chant” like “look at the immigrant” and “I hope the other immigrants don’t come back.” Statements, they claim, their teacher willfully ignored. This reveals an unintended consequence of the boycott: the outright delight some people felt at seeing all those students gone from their classroom as well as the heightened visibility of those students left behind—creating another layer of alienation as a cause of the disciplinary gaze.

The Latinx students who questioned why Nayeli decided to attend school also fueled this alienation as her presence was met with questions of her allegiance to Latinxs. Nayeli, in turn, pushed back on those students by disciplining their activism by saying that school is a “priority for her” and that she “didn’t want to stay at home and watch TV.” Here we see multiple surveillant gazes coming into contact with each other. Nayeli was surveilled when she attended school and was deemed to have failed to perform as other Latinxs had on that day; meanwhile, Nayeli also engaged in her own form of surveillance by inspecting the students’ who were out and reinscribing discourses that situate youth as incapable of genuinely engaging meaningful activism because of their age (Gordon, 2007). This is why I do not consider Nayeli’s response an act of counter-surveillance. An act of counter-surveillance guided by a *mujerista facultad* entails the disruption of such discourses.

Border Thinking Pedagogy of Counter-Surveillance: Recognizing White Supremacy in the Everyday Life & Seeding Critical Hope

In the encuentro, Nayeli continued to insist that the boycott was not going to have the impact people were hoping. “Has it changed Donald Trump? No, they don’t even care”, she argued. This led Lilia and Jimena to join in on the surveillance of Nayeli’s belonging by questioning her cultural pride. When I asked the girls if they liked anything about being American, Nayeli, “I mean, I wish I wasn’t American like live here, [I want to] have papers, but be from Mexico.” Jimena immediately responded that Nayeli was “not a proud Hispanic.” Lilia added, “yeah, because you came to school on that day, a day without immigrants.” Through their gaze, they disciplined her for failing to perform according to what they deemed a proud member of the Latinx community to be—someone who accepts their American identity and, most importantly, someone who expresses their citizenship through public acts of dissent against injustice (Bondy, 2014). In a separate conversation, Nayeli elaborated what she meant by this statement. She revealed she does not feel connected to North Carolina because the hegemonic constructs of “American” have rejected her.

I was born here but I feel like I don’t belong especially with people mistreating people who are Hispanics. I hate these people. I get so mad... and they check the license of my dad’s and I’m like ‘we aren’t doing anything bad!’ we are just trying to live a better life... they just see us as bad people.

Her relationship to this country is highly defined by its surveillance and discipline of her. The everyday surveillance and disciplinary practices of immigrant communities, communities she is a part of as the daughter of immigrants, have positioned her outside the dominant ideologies of legal and cultural citizenship (Ong, 1996; Bondy, 2014). Nayeli has received the message that her parents, and by extension, her, do not belong in the United States. She has responded to this

positioning by authoring an identity accepts her legal citizenship, but rejects that this is her home. Jimena and Lilia misunderstood the roots of Nayeli's comment. She was, in fact, pointing to how much she values her Mexicanidad. Nayeli has not found a name for this complex identity, as I have. I empathize and see my own Chicana identity formation in Nayeli's seeming contradictions. She wants to be from Mexico, in Mexico, but keep her *papeles* so she can enjoy the privileges of citizenship in the United States, but not live in the United States because it mistreats her. Through internalizing the borderlands, Nayeli's "psychological conflict" is breeding a "dual identity... that is a synergy of two cultures"—a border identity (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 85). She wants to live and be of a border space that allows being all those things, in all those places, at once. But in that moment, the questioning of her commitment to her community by her own Latinx peers only fueled her alienation and hopelessness in the face of institutionalized racism. Finally, it was Denise who was able to engage in an act of counter-surveillance to disrupt both Nayeli's hopelessness and Jimena and Lilia's disciplining of Nayeli. She interrupted Nayeli, something that was out of character for Denise.

[The boycott] showed the people who support him what would happen. You know there are teachers who support him and like, [the boycott] showed them what would happen.

Everybody said class was boring without Hispanics... We always bring all the happiness. By insisting that it was Latinx students that bring joy to campus, Denise was disrupting the hopeless attitude toward their ability to enact real change. She poignantly indicated that the boycott, in many ways, was not meant for Donald Trump. The boycott's true audience was the teachers of Sitwell Middle School. In this act of counter-surveillance, Denise was engaging her border thinking in order to bring to the surface a different reasoning to the boycott, one that goes beyond the specter of Donald Trump. Denise's "new logic... counters the hegemonic

knowledge” (Cervantes-Soon & Carrillo, 2016, p. 285) that obscures the reality that White supremacy exists beyond Trump. Denise was naming a more intimate version of Nayeli’s own lesson into power and colonization: White supremacy exists in their classrooms and in the teachers who voted for him. She was also calling on Nayeli to recognize her own value in the school and her power to enact local change. Nayeli, who has already shown that she understands how power and racism is systemic, has fallen into the trap of feeling helpless in the face of it. Nayeli’s pedagogy of border thinking asked the group to see that White supremacy is systemic, but Denise is asking them to recognize that it is also human and thus enacted in their everyday lives.

Still, it was difficult to convince Nayeli. “*No se, no se que cambio o que hizo*” [I don’t know. I don’t know what changed or what it did.] Again Denise insisted, “We have hope”—a statement that Jimena, who had been listening intently, echoed, “Yeah, we have hope.” Freire (1996) argues hope is critical in the transformation of the world. While functioning on hope alone can be naïve and ineffective, to extract hope from our actions diminishes the possibility to enact change. It was this statement that finally shook Nayeli from her state of hopelessness and she conceded that she had hope too. Through her border thinking, Denise is cultivating not just her own critical hope (Cervantes-Soon & Carrillo, 2016; Duncan Andrade, 2009) but she is also seeding within the *encuentro*.

Surveillance of the Flesh

Racialized Sexism in School

Admittedly, it was in the gendered experiences of the girls where I first located the theme of “surveillance”, though I did not initially name it as such. Boys used to stand in my doorway to whistle and comment on girls’ bodies as they walked by, Nayeli and Alma amongst them.

Teachers and principals were overly concerned with preventing any displays of affection between couples, including hugging. Latina girls were often dress coded for showing too much skin. The *mujeres* shared their mother's *consejos* on preventing sexual violence. Their experiences with surveillance of the flesh revealed the girls were simultaneously framed as vulnerable to men's looks and touch and romantically and sexually deviant (Hyams, 2000). It was clear that there was a gendered element to the surveillance of the girls—one that came from all angles: their parents, the boys, the teachers, the principals, and even themselves.

The *mujeres* often spoke of the how the school disciplined Latina female bodies as opposed to White female bodies. Lilia revealed that her best friend, Ana, had been dress-coded in the cafeteria because her bra strap showed through her shirt. In a moment of counter-surveillance, Lilia spoke on behalf of her friend by pointing out a White student whose “butt was basically hanging out of her shorts.” She asked Mr. Williams why he did not dress code her, to which Mr. Williams replied “I saw her. I’m talking to Ana, not [the other girl.]” In the end, neither girl was written up but Ana did walk away with a reminder to “cover up.” Initially, however, Lilia argued that gender was not as important as race. She argued that most of the problems we see in school are because people are “racist.” Despite this belief, however, Lilia’s *facultad* forced her to sense that Ana was being disciplined not just because of her race but also because of gender. She pointed out another girl in the room who was a breaking “rule”, not a boy. She sensed the comparable example would be a gendered one, because the discipline itself was raced *and* gendered. And again, we see Lilia naming the watcher in the tower. She laughed as she shared that “Mr. Williams knew he had been caught treating students different.”

This treatment in school is a result of the embedded, ever-present controlling objectifying images of Latina girls as hyper-sexualized bodies. Hernandez (2009) argues Latina women’s

bodies are marked by the “representations of Latinas structure social relations in the United States by fashioning an exotic... other in response to the ongoing panic of Latina reproduction and immigration” (p. 69). This anxiety around their sexuality is rooted in fears around reproduction, immigration, and sexual chaos in schools. During one of the *encuentro* lunches, the girls were working on their paintings in the hallway while a large group of boys were playing videogames in my room. I received a phone call from one Nayeli’s teachers asking if she was in my room. When I confirmed she was in the hallway working, the teacher asked, “is the boyfriend is there too? We noticed they were both missing from the cafeteria and we just gotta make sure they aren’t in a corner somewhere.” I confirmed that both her and her boyfriend were well within my sight and we not even sitting with each other. This eased the teacher’s “concern.” When Nayeli saw me hang up the phone, she instinctively knew the phone call was about her. She cried out, “I told them I was coming here to work on my painting! These teachers be racist! You got White kids kissing each other in the hallway but they never say anything or they don’t see it because they are too busy calling Ms. Rodriguez looking for me!” I told Jimena that the teacher just wanted to make sure. I explained that it also makes me uncomfortable to enact surveillance on student affection but that it’s the rules that we as teachers, also have to follow. In a moment that I am still reflecting on, Nayeli counter-surveilled me by noting that affection “is normal! You make it weird!” The moment de-centered me as a teacher. I was revealed to be the watcher in the tower even though, as a Chicana feminist, I am aware of the underlying patriarchal discourses behind these disciplinary practices. Yet, I also participate in the surveillance of the girls’ flesh. I remembered all those moments when in my efforts to ease tensions when disciplining students for showing affection, I chose to *stare* at them. I thought it was funny. It made *me* feel better because we all let out uncomfortable laughs about it later. I had never

stopped to consider how violating that was. Nayeli's border thinking counter-surveillance launched me into a full-blown state of nepantla that I am still negotiating.

Alma also pointed out the racialized differences in how Latina girls get disciplined for engaging in inappropriate contact or for dress code violations. She shared to the group that the faculty treats Latina girls differently because they believe Latinas, "*nada mas existen para provocar y las niñas blancas son inocentes*." [they only exist to provoke and the White girls are innocent.] Alma is pointing to that dual conceptions of womanhood based on race have positioned White women as possessing idealized femininity: pure, non-deviant, and not sexually dangerous. Latina women, on the other hand, have been sexually objectified through images of the sexually available exotic other and thus, sexually dangerous (Hurtado, 1989). By pointing out the racialized dichotomization of innocence and sexual provocation, Alma has also named another watcher in the tower: racialized sexism.

Parental Surveillance: Between Protection and Control

Yet, surveillance of the flesh is made more complicated because when it's coming from the home, it is underpinned by parental desires to protect and control their daughter's sexuality. In fact, it was an interaction I had with Nayeli that led me to recognize the discourses and gazes I was documenting as forms of surveillance. I was walking to my final class of the day when I noticed Nayeli and Ms. Stevens arguing in the hallway. Concerned, I approached Nayeli who, in a moment of despair, revealed that she is "dumb because she keeps making the same mistakes over and over again." I hugged her before she walked away to go to her last class. Immediately after the interaction was over, Ms. Stevens approached me and asked, "what did she tell you?" I noted that I did not gather much information, except that she was upset.

Well, did she tell you what she did? She was caught hugging her boyfriend. *Again*. I told them to separate and she gave me little attitude so I told her I was going to call her father. I was taken aback by how quickly the situation had escalated over a hug, which under school rules is deemed “inappropriate contact for couples.” I was also taken aback by the fact Ms. Stevens had been watching my interaction with Nayeli in the first place. I cut off the conversation and made my way to class. As the students were working on a quiz, I could not shake the image of Nayeli crying over her “mistake” of hugging her boyfriend. I excused myself and pulled Nayeli from class. I asked her if she wanted to talk and that’s when she let out a flood of emotions and anxieties over the surveillance that is placed on her female body both at home and school.

It’s like I can’t stop myself. I keep doing the same thing over and over again. And now I can’t be in soccer. I am always being watched. My mom waits for me at the bottom of the stairs when school is out. She just sits there watching to see if I come down with him. I can’t do anything. My father said *que este era el tiempo mas bonito de mi vida pero* [this is the most beautiful time of my life but] it doesn’t feel like. Sometimes I feel like I do not have a future.

For Nayeli, the intimacy of the surveillance of her flesh is incredibly violating. When the surveillance on the school intersects with the surveillance of the home, the violation is enough to obscure any possible future for her. Her racially marked womanhood is perceived as a threat in school and her parents perceive it as threat to herself.

This surveillance of her flesh is the result of a complicated matrix of the patriarchy, race, control, and protection. On the one hand, the school is responding to the anxieties around a Brown female sexual body. The stereotypes of the hypersexual Latina female and the perpetual

pregnant teenager hover over the school and the girls. The school must do its part to control *inappropriate* contact because it violates “sanctity” of the learning space. Teachers use phrases like “leave room for Jesus” and “you come to school to learn”—a statement that reveals that romance or sexuality are the antithetical to academics. On the home side, her parents surveil Nayeli’s developing womanhood because they are afraid her body will be violated by force or through a mistake she makes i.e. she will permit the violation. These constructions both deny the existence of any agency and do nothing to educate on sexual safety. In an interesting turn, this interaction is what also led me to realize that my relationship with the girls was being surveilled too. Ms. Stevens had not just been watching Nayeli from afar. She was also watching me. She wanted to know what Nayeli said, not out of concern for her emotional state, but out of concern for how the situation had been characterized *by her to me*. However, Nayeli’s distress was not about Ms. Stevens. It was about how the matrix of surveillance.

In talking about parental surveillance with the group, the girls often characterized it as their ways of protecting them. Denise mentioned that her dating restrictions reflected her parents’ desire to prevent teenage pregnancy, especially before the *quinceñera*—her 15th birthday. She shared,

[My Mom] said its because you have to wait after your *quinceñera* because in my family in Mexico, there started being a lot of girls who like get married or they have a kid before their *quinceñera*. And I am like, “mom I am not going to do that.”

Maritza added that the age designation makes sense because her parents say that a girl is not mature until they reach the age of 15. Indeed, the *quinceñera* acts as threshold for womanhood. It involves a series of initiation rites for young Latinas including: a religious ceremony where they commit themselves to god, they receive *la última muñeca* [their last doll] a signifier of

transitional period between womanhood and childhood, and finally, the parents replace girlish slippers with high heel, solidifying the parents' role ushering her into adulthood. Still, Nayeli rejected the idea that age 15 is marker of maturity, signaling that she believed the age to be an arbitrary number. Instead, she redirected the conversation around dating restrictions to young *mujeres'* education into the dangers of sexual violence. This brought to the surface the fact that a large part of their frame of references for sexuality is rooted in the patriarchy, fear, violence, and dominance. Jimena shared that her father would share these lessons by telling her news stories about violence.

He talks about documentaries of police things, *como que secuestran a niñas y me dice que nunca deje la puerta abierta* [of girls that are kidnapped and he tells me to never leave the door open] and I am like I never do! He doesn't *nunca me deja poner faldas hasta aquí* [never lets me wear skirts up to here].

To which Denise added that girls could also prevent the violence upon their bodies by wearing loose clothing. The patriarchal specter of violence against women loomed over the girl's sexual education. They agreed that some men are dangerous and Jimena even went as far to say that her parents' teachings sometimes made her afraid of men. But the girls were mindful of the roots of this education and this surveillance as they sensed that *mother's know* "because they have been through it before", as Maritza pointed out. She revealed that after her grandfather kicked her mother's boyfriend out when she was a teenager, she had to "start sleeping with my grandma... to get away from her dad, my grandpa." This story, which initially began as a humorous story about an overprotective father, then morphed into an education about implied abuse. At least, this was connection Nayeli made when she followed up her Maritza's story with the story of her mother's alcoholic father who would "mistreat" her mother.

Sometimes she just talks to me about that and she is like, you have to be lucky because in Mexico, *que despiertan en la mañana y necesitan buscar carro para poder trabajar y las mujeres, las esposas las maltratan y les pegan*. [they wake up in the morning, they look for a car to take them to work, and women, the wives are mistreated. They are beaten]. Its like so be careful who you get with.

Women's stories about abuse serve as a guide not only for parental surveillance, but as a rationale for the surveillance. These stories about violence against women in Mexico is juxtaposed with the girls' lives here, implying that life is better here because girls have a choice in who "they get with." Yet, Nayeli characterized her parents' surveillance of her flesh as a *jaula*, a cage that keeps her bound for her protection. This cage, in a way, extends to the school not only through the teachers' surveillance practices but also through the *mujeres* in the group. Because the girls were neighbors, they also knew each other's family life fairly well. The girls knew, to an extent, of the surveillance that she was under at home. This knowledge led the girls to surveil Nayeli within the group too. One morning, as the bell rang, Nayeli and Lilia walked out of the *encuentro* without telling us where they were going. Jimena made a joke about me needing to keep Lilia and Nayeli on leashes in order to control their mobility because "Nayeli was probably with Alberto" (her boyfriend). When Lilia walked in the room, Jimena instructed her to close the door in order to lock Nayeli out. She turned to me and said,

She has to learn her lesson. Her parents even said she couldn't do that anymore. Because they found out a lot of stuff and then her parents are really angry. I live in her neighborhood, and I've been her friend since elementary school, like pre-K. Her parents are really strict now that they found out a lot of stuff.

In this moment, the girls used the knowledge they had of Nayeli's home life in order to surveil and discipline her for "probably going to see her boyfriend." The parents' lessons had in morphed into lessons on how the girls should surveil other women and themselves. Denise's reminder to wear loose clothing was an internalization of the message that women have control over the violence that is enacted on them. Maritza also commented that she hates women who wear short skirts because they "look gross." The implication behind that statement could be that the woman looks gross because she looks "sexually available." The perceived sexual availability of women was key in Jimena's mother's lesson to her brother and to her. Jimena noted that her mom knows she is "actually decent" because unlike her brother, she is focused on her grades. She noted his brother's lack of attention was because

he has a girlfriend. And my mom's like you know *girls can be tricky, they can get you away*. Because my sister like she had a boyfriend and he was doing drugs and all that stuff, and that's what got her pregnant and she was only 15 years old.

Jimena's story about her mother's *consejo* is tricky because first she notes that its women who are tricky and can thus be the demise of men. Yet, her sister's example proves the opposite. It's the boy's actions that are framed as problematic, and her sister as the vulnerable one who got pregnant "by drugs." This story exemplifies the limiting two frames that exist for Latina women: the sexual deviants who a danger to men and the one who is vulnerable to the dangers of men. There is little room for agency.

However, it is through the actions of girls that we see their agentic counter-surveillance form. Girls like Nayeli highly value experiential knowledge and are open to learning from their mistakes. But, she feels like her controlled environment does not allow for that knowledge to emerge in the way she envisions. Yet, Nayeli is discounting the fact that these experiences with

control and stories about patriarchal violence is engendering in a her a counter-surveillant knowledge that not only dispels myths of her female vulnerability, but also rejects the problematic male gazes. I have not included the girls' stories about the male gaze in the school because when they spoke about these issues, it was within an act of counter-surveillance. Through their actions, they were showing that they understood that patriarchal objectification of Latina women was the root of the surveillance of their flesh, not their womanhood.

Border Thinking Pedagogy of Counter-Surveillance: Repertoires of Dignity

As mentioned in her introductory portrait, Nayeli is both very performative when she talks and very critical of “*los niños que tratan a las niñas* [the boys who treat girls] like objects.” In *Avanza*, she counter-surveiled discourses that attempted to erase Hillary Clinton's gender when discussing the reasons she lost. She poignantly called out the boys in the group who were solely focused on issues of racism by saying that “Men are afraid of strong women.” Nayeli, in response to the intersecting domains of surveillance, had crafted an identity as a “strong woman.” She also mentioned in the group that she was bothered by boys' preoccupation with the bodies. She condemned language like “thick” in reference to women's behinds, and words like “bitch”, which she counter-surveiled by reminding us that “we are not animals.”

During lunch, a large group of students had gathered in my room to hang out. Nayeli was sitting with a group of girls in the back of the room when I suddenly heard her call out, “See its things like that! Boys always be looking!” Intrigued by the conversation, I approached the girls and asked what they were talking about. Jimena mentioned that they had just seen one of the boys openly “look at another girl's ass.” In that moment, Nayeli exploded. She stood up in front of the table and began to testify a.k.a. preach.

Nayeli: *Necesitas tener un trasero, necesitas tener chichis!* [You got have an ass. You have to have breasts] Everything! We have standards too! We want a man that can obtain us. That can go to college. That can pay!

Crowd of girls: Preach girl! Preach girl!

Upon hearing the roar of girls clapping and encouraging Nayeli, a boy who was sitting across the room said, “Oh this I gotta hear!” He grabbed a chair and his chocolate milk and sat at the table and said, “I’m here to hear you preach. I’m learning.”

Nayeli: We want you to go Harvard! We want that but we don’t ask for it like they do. They ask for our appearance. They don’t care what’s inside. *Las niñas ya ne’citaban* [the girls, they need], they feel they need to grow breasts or ass. *Niñas* [girls] are starting to care how other people look at them *y empiezan a ponerse* [they start to wear] makeup. I mean it’s not bad to feel good about yourself and feel like ‘daaaamn I look fine’ but at the same time, *a la vez* [at the same time], if its for someone else...

Me: At what age do you feel boys started looking at you like that?

Girls: Sixth grade! Sixth grade!

Boy: In my defense, I never do that.

Nayeli: *Nombre!* [nah man] We are not calling every boy *que si eres* [if you are], all of them are this. *Hay unos niños que si te respetan* [there are some boys that do respect you] and are nice and caring. *Pero no, hay otros niños* most in this generation [that don’t].

Even though all the girls have been using *testimonio* as part of their border thinking pedagogies of counter-surveillance, these moments, as I have witnessed them, have been mostly in relation to each other in the *encuentro* space or the *Avanza* space. This is the first time outside members and specifically, a male student, had been drawn in by the pedagogy embedded in her *testimonio*

performance. Nayeli's *testimonio* sounds like she is preaching and in the context of church, to preach is to teach. Another border thinking pedagogy strategy that Nayeli employed was her translanguaging border tongue. She experiences these things not just as a woman, but a Latina woman. Her use of her full repertoire reflects her identity and how her experiences are at the intersections of her race, her age, and her ethnicity. In this moment, she was counter-surveilling the boys in the space and they were all Latinos. It was a carefully calculated message that not only reflected her intersectional identity, but also implicated the boys around her in her *testimonio*. Her strategy was successful in that she did draw one of these boys in and she took the opportunity to double down on her critique, not skirt around it. Her full border consciousness was leveraged to construct a condemnation of objectification and a demand for respect. The boy showed up to lunch the rest of the week and sat with the girls he could "continue learning." That's the power of Nayeli's *testimonio*—her content and her form.

Jimena's *educación* around her protecting her body was key in her moment of counter-surveillance against Mr. Davidson, one of the principals of the school who is often characterized as "the one that likes to watch the most." During a lunch session, my room was filled with not just *encuentro* girls, but about 25 Latinx students that had chosen to come hang out in my room. Hearing the noise and seeing the students spilling out into hallway right outside my door, Mr. Davidson came into check what all the chaos was about. I explained that we were just hanging out and chatting about life. I was standing with Jimena and another student when Mr. Davidson put his arm around Jimena. She stepped back, signaling that she did not want to be hugged. He questioned why she did that, noting that he "had hugged her before" and so he tried again. Jimena stepped further back and in a calm tone, she said: "Don't touch me. No you haven't hugged me before." Sensing defeat and noticeably embarrassed, Mr. Davidson walked away to

join a group of boys who began to play with his tie. I decided in that moment not to intervene because I saw Jimena standing up for herself and claiming her right not to be touched. On this, Jimena would later share why she was so steadfast in her responses to Mr. Davidson:

“I am not comfortable with [Mr. Davidson]. He is one of those people that watches you to make a mistake. He expects me to say something, like a bad word or something like ‘bitch leave me alone’ to get me in trouble but I take it the other way and be like ‘don’t touch me’ because first of all you’re not supposed to be touching anybody and like if I don’t want you to touch me then you shouldn’t don’t touch me. Yeah, My mom says ‘*que nadie te toque ni like para abrazarte o nada mija*’ [nobody should be touching you or anything. Not even for a hug, mija]. If you are not comfortable or like I don’t want no guy to touch me, my mom taught me to respect your own body. *Si no puedes respetar tu propio cuerpo, no puedes respetar a nadie*. [if you can’t respect your own body, you can’t respect anyone].

Jimena’s *facultad*, driven by her mother’s *consejos* about touching, protection, and respect transformed into an act of counter-surveillance that demanded respect from Mr. Davidson. Here, her border thinking reveals Nayeli’s negotiation and straddling in action. She recognizes Mr. Davidson’s position of power in relation to her. So, she also understands that if she approaches it more aggressively, it was her who was going to bear the brunt of the discipline. So instead, she strategically remained calm, but firm. Her actions were driven by her mother’s *mujerista* teachings and *consejos* about protection and respect. In centering these teachings, that when her full repertoire, her translanguaging tongue emerged. Together, her English and Spanish created a border thinking repertoire of dignity. In this *testimonio*, Jimena is also imparting her *consejo* to the *mujeres*. She echoed the teachings of In Lak’Ech when she said “If *you* don’t respect your

own body, you can't respect anyone." This is her personal subjectivity, her border epistemology coming through. She did not just implicate us. She was teaching *us* what respecting our bodies sounds like and looks like.

Surveillance of Student Identity

Familias Patrolling Papers: Intersections of Citizenship and Student Performance

In line with the *educación* practices documented by other scholars (Delgado Bernal, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999; Villenas, 2001; Villenas & Moreno, 2001), the girls also shared that the differences between their parents' home countries and the opportunities they had here provided a lot of the motivation for wanting to achieve academically. In their communication with their mothers, they had built a shared understanding of how potentially liberating an education can be for Latina women. While these stories serve as sources of inspiration for the girls, they also reveal how parents' engaged in their own surveillance practices in the intersections of citizenship and the girls' student identities and performance.

Denise's mother lamented that she had to clean houses, a backbreaking job that takes her away from her daughters for long periods of time. Jimena also noted that seeing her mother take charge of the household after her father was deported was both inspiring and isolating because amount of work she had to do. Thus, the girls came to understand that receiving an education is not just about getting a paycheck; it is about being able to create a life where they can have the freedom to be with their families or the freedom to be on their own. Maritza characterize this desire her "freedom to do what I want, when I want, how I want." Jimena shared that after her father was deported, her mother had to start working "all the time" to just make ends meet. Her mother described to her the importance of achieving so she does not have to work like her.

My mom wants me to go to college and be what I want to be. I can do that more easily than her because I have papers. That way I don't have to work the way she does. She just has to work so much. I love my mom. She is perfect for me.

Early in her schooling career, Jimena did not perform in school as well as she and her mother would have liked. She described herself as a “troublemaker” because she often spoke out of turn without raising her hand. This finally led to her being punished by the teacher when she was put in a room by herself so she could learn to raise her hand. After this punishment, her mother talked to her about the importance of raising her hand and learning “to be quiet.” Jimena took this lesson to heart for the sake of her grades. However, she counter-surveilled her mother, and by extension her teacher, by rejecting the idea that “good students” are the ones that are quiet.

If I have an opinion, I will give it. Sometimes people aren't going to give you a turn and you got to go with the flow. But, sometimes you gotta decide for yourself, “when it's right, I'll do it” I wouldn't keep my own self back.

Even though it was Jimena's mother who advised her daughter to be quiet in class, she noted that she learned the importance of “deciding for herself” from her. She shared with the group that when her sister got pregnant, Jimena's mother, “drove them to his house, sat him down and said ‘you will take care of this baby and you will take care of my daughter.’ And he did! She even got him to quit drugs and go to work!” Jimena and the other girls laughed as she recounted the story of seeing the man cower at her sight of her mother. While Jimena's mother attempted to teach her the importance of being quiet, her actions represented a kind of embodied subversive *consejo* (Villenas & Moreno, 2001)—one that taught her the power of her voice.

The idea of documentation is an important underlying push for success for the girls. Jimena casually mentioned it in her rationale for wanting to go to college. In unpacking the

importance of citizenship to these girls, one must look towards how pedagogies of the home and *consejos* around school shaped the girls' own perceptions into the responsibilities and privileges of their citizenship (Moreno, 2008). In this case, these responsibilities were very much tied to their abilities to achieve educational success. Lilia referred to the sacrifices her mother made in coming to the United States in order to afford her future children educational opportunities she never had. So for Lilia, her statement that "grades show you are good" does not just speak to an adherence to traditional notions of educational success, but it also shows how she has authored a hybrid identity that values individualized meritocracy in a way that emphasizes the value she places on contributing to the family unit. She wanted to show her family that she was *good*. She revealed, very casually, that her dreams of attending college were part of her responsibility as a daughter with papers. "Well duh its for them and me too. I can go [to college] and they can't so it's also for them."

Denise also mentioned a desire to take care of her family and in the end, "not needing anyone to pay her bills." However, hearing her mother lament, "*si yo tendría papeles yo estuviera trabajando*" [if I had papers, I would be working] added another dimension to Denise's educational responsibilities: she has take advantage of the fact she has *papeles*. She revealed that her mother would often put an immense amount of pressure on her to do well in school by engaging surveillance practices within the home.

My mom compares me to my sister a lot. Like a lot. When I was little I used to do bad in school, well not bad, but not as good like my sister. My mom would sit me down and watch me work until I got it and I started getting A's. But then she started to compare who had the higher A. I hated it.

Denise, in the end accepted the burdens her mother placed on her because, not only was it her responsibility as a daughter, but it was also her responsibility as someone with the privilege of citizenship. Implicit in her mother's critiques of homelessness is a correlation between homelessness, laziness, and the squandering of *papeles*. Denise has papers and her mother does not. For Denise, this taught her that to not achieve educationally meant a waste of an opportunity, a waste of a citizenship, and a failure to honor her mother's sacrifices. So in order to ensure success, her mother began to surveil Denise's education (and by extension, her citizenship) by sitting her down and watching her work.

Lilia, Denise, and Jimena were able to negotiate this pressure fairly well because they were doing well in school. All three girls were part of the AVID program and they noted receiving affirmations of their pathways to college. Nayeli, however, was more critical of the teaching and surveillance practices of the teachers. In her interview with Denise, Nayeli shared that she often feels ignored, criticized, and hated by her teachers for talking too much. Now, while at first listen, the idea of being ignored can point the absence of the gaze, but the disciplining of her talking reveals the teachers' propensity to sanction loud girls that go against the schooling norms that Jimena's teacher also tried to sell to her: We give you permission to speak and the more quiet you are, the better. In a moment of counter-surveillance, she pushed back against the school's adherence to performance standards that defined good learning for them.

Their standards are actually just about sitting and learning for 8 hours the same stuff they taught us last year. And they are repeating and repeating and repeating. There are four subjects that we have to know. Those are the basics. But I want to have more! It's the

same thing... and that's why kids don't take school seriously. I mean if its something that makes me think more, then I want to know more. But we don't get to want to know more. Nayeli believes the purpose of her education is intellectual curiosity and community building. In an earlier statement, she said that because school is a place where "different people from different background come together", Sitwell should let them "talk more"—showing that she privileges dialogic, student centered learning rather over the top-down banking method (Freire, 2000). However, this view of education ultimately does not fit within the standards set forth by school, which hover over her ready to discipline her. This created an epistemic disconnect between Nayeli, her schooling, and her teachers that inevitably contributed to her failing some classes. This failure to "do good in school" then created a tension between her and her parents because she felt she was failing to live up to their expectations for her as a Mexicana with papers. Nayeli described her *papeles* as her greatest social and educational advantage, but also her greatest burden. Her academic shortcomings created an internal struggle in how Nayeli understood herself in relation to her family, her schooling, her citizenship, and her racial identity. Much to the girls' surprise, Nayeli shared her father does not want her to spent as much time with Latinxs.

It's not that he has something against Hispanics. It's just he doesn't want me to get involved with them por que hay *papás que no les importa su educación* [there are parents who don't care about their education] or they are going to lead me to the bad direction. *Por que hay muchos hispanos* [there are a lot of Hispanics] that don't graduate and don't go to college... *tienen papeles* [they have papers i.e. citizenship] so it's like 'what's the problem?' I feel guilty then, because when I see my grades I'm like 'oh my god, what type of daughter am I?... It makes them feel really bad because... they had high

expectations. Like my parents they say “If I had papers, I would do this, this, and this” so its like, that’s true. They could do all of that and if ... I could not achieve that its like “wow, I had papers and I still could not achieve what they wanted to do” and then its like “you’re nothing” and I feel if I don’t achieve that, its shameful. *Por que yo tenia la oportunidad y yo naci aqui. Yo soy citizen. A mi me dieron* [because I had the opportunity and I was born here. I am a citizen. I got the] resources to actually go to school

Her parents’ surveillance of her citizenship through her academics reveals how these practices de-center the student. As aforementioned, Nayeli is constructing an identity that rejects her American-ness because it rejects her family but her father insists that she befriend White students because they are good role models for her in ways that Latinx students are not. His surveillance feeds the discourses that have “become a vehicle of cultural domination whereby whites fit the prototype of good citizen” (Murillo, 2002, p. 220). This also highlights how immigrant parents’ surveillance practices can reinforce deficit frames of non-immigrant Latinx youth. For example, Garcia (2012) describes that within Latinx families, girls often receive messages that equate Americanization with the development of lose moral behaviors that inevitably detract from sacrifices parents made in coming to the United States. This construct not only inevitably leaves him out of the equation of “good role models”, but it also leaves Nayeli outside of the construct of a “good citizen” which in her minds translates to “a good daughter.”

Border Thinking Pedagogy of Counter-Surveillance: Rejecting Hegemonic Notions of Educational Success

The implied correlation between academic failures, laziness, and loose morality create a complicated and tenuous position for Nayeli, who is caught in the middle between wanting to achieve, but also wanting to redefine what an education can mean to her.

Si no tienes education, te trantan como basura. [If you don't have an education, they treat you like trash.] Society says you have to be popular and you have to go to Harvard... *para que personas te* [so people can] appreciate you. And people are too hard on themselves to where they think yes. If I have this, and this, and this, I will do all of this and I will be happy. *Pero eso no es la verdad* [but that is not the truth] of happiness.

In this moment of counter-surveillance, Nayeli is formulating a definition of education that goes beyond neo-liberal, merit based notions of success. In another example of border thinking pedagogy, she is urging her audience to reframe not only how we treat those that do not achieve educationally, but also urges us question what has been sold as the marker to success i.e. Harvard. While achieving education for Latina girls does create a type of liberation from gender restrictions (Camarota, 2004), the surveillance matrix of academic standards, behavioral standards, and citizenship standards has created an isolating educational journey for Nayeli. Here, she again uses her full linguistic repertoire, her translanguaging border tongue, to ground her and her audience in the depth of her analysis and critique of notions of educational success. She uses her English to reiterate the discourses of educational success (popularity, Harvard) while she uses her Spanish to reject that that is indeed the truth of happiness. Her whole message, however, reveals her border thinking around redefining success around ideas of happiness, dialogue, and community in order to create an alternative lens. In a transformative re-direction of the gaze, Nayeli rejects the achievement standards set forth by her school and her own father to frame how she has come to understand her father's value as an intelligent being.

But I mean my dad, he did not go to college or anything, but he is a really good mechanic and he can fix anything. And when he talks, he is not an ignorant person. He is a really

good person. He talks with dignity and proudness. When he says something, he says it so wisely.

The girls' *testimonios* on the intersections of the surveillance of their academic performances and citizenship reveal the complex and at times contradictory notions of education and citizenship as avenues for freedom and as zones to discipline and limit. While on the one hand, academics serve as ways to honor their parents' sacrifices in not only immigrating to the United States, but also enduring the fear and systemic oppression that comes from being undocumented. On the other hand, in the lives of adolescent girls, failure to perform under hegemonic notions of success (i.e. grades) can also lead to a heightened surveillance of their studenthood and by extension the ways they perform their citizenship. Yet, Denise's story reveals that while she resents her mother's surveillance practices, she does not wholly reject them and thus, does not counter-surveil them. She notes, "I mean the comparing kind of makes me want to have better grades. When I had elementary school, I had bad grades and them like comparing for me it kind of gave me motivation to try to better." Lilia and Nayeli agreed with Denise on this point, noting that the surveillance and comparison would push them to better. On the other hand, Nayeli's *testimonio* reveals that when one continuously "fails" to achieve according to pre-ascribed standards, even parental *consejos* that are meant to promote achievement can inadvertently ascribe shame and inferiority. The resulting epistemic dissonance is discombobulating. However, the girls' stories also reveal their border thinking strategies towards the negotiation of these surveillance practices. Counter-surveillance can yield transformation when the girls begin to derive their own meanings about education as Nayeli did. Her *testimonio* is provocative in that even in her despair about her grades and an active push to improve them, she does not buy into

the myth that schooling, at least the way its set up, is not the end all be all in defining success and happiness. Harvard is not the marker. Dignity and pride are.

Institutional Patrolling: Monitoring Latinx Sounds

Language also became a center of the girls' surveillance in the school. For one of her Avanza projects, Denise participated in a walking ethnography of the school where she mapped the locations of Spanish in public spaces. When she returned to the library, her map showed three instances of Spanish in the 7th and 8th grade halls, none in the 6th grade, and 8 bilingual posters on bullying and harassment across the library. I asked her what she thought about her findings and she divulged that she thought it was “weird because there are a lot of people who speak Spanish here. Even some are still learning English. There should be more but those posters are a lot I guess.” Her initial shocked expression that there were not more Spanish artifacts in the school's hallways is representative of her *facultad* signaling to her that there is something inherently wrong in that. However, she eventually came to rationalize that perhaps those 8 posters were “a lot” and thus enough. Denise has come to expect and accept the marginal status of the language within the school. In another language-oriented activity, Denise's objective was to find people in the school who could speak Spanish. If they could, they would give them a simple math problem in the language to see if they could solve it. If they could not, the girls were to offer to teach the person words that could help them solve the problem or any phrases of the teacher's choosing. When the group returned, they shared two teachers knew enough Spanish to complete the math problem and that they had an opportunity to teach a seventh grade ELA teacher Spanish. I asked them what they decided to teach her and Denise revealed that, in a moment of interest convergence (Alemán & Alemán, 2010) the teacher shared she wanted to learn a couple of disciplinary phrases. Denise laughed as she explained she taught the teacher

how to say things like “Be quiet” and “I am going to call your mother.” While Denise thought it was funny, the moment struck me as odd. I asked her why she thought her teacher did ask to learn a greeting or a word she could use in class, to which Denise just shrugged her shoulders, “well you know, I guess it’s just funny. Some kids are crazy.”

The bullying posters and the teachers’ request to learn disciplinary phrases point to the ways Sitwell Middle has used Spanish to surveil Latinx students. The most prominent display of Spanish is a set of poorly translated prints that remind students that bullying is wrong and that they need to report it. While I do not disagree that schools should work towards addressing bullying issues, the fact is that the context in which Spanish is most present also speaks to its marginal status within the school. It is not a positive integration of the language. It is not a celebration of its speakers. It is not even displayed in a location that would ensure all students would see it. It is a warning system meant to surveil student interactions. The framework of raciolinguistics—an understanding of how racial ideologies construct language perceptions and its use—allows us to situate these representations of Spanish within the racial hierarchies of the American schooling system (Flores & Rosa, 2015). I situated the inclusion of Spanish in the 7th grade teacher’s classroom as an example of interest convergence because its formal inclusion in the classroom was only possible if it stood to benefit the teacher in a way. For this 7th grade teacher, the only use for the Spanish language she could think of was control—as opposed to a way to build positive relationships or to educate. The positioning of Spanish as a tool to surveil comportment inevitably reinforces the positioning of the Spanish speaker as deviant. The use of one’s native language by those in power has roots in the legacy of colonization. In historicizing language ideologies, Rosa and Flores (2017) found that the encouragement of the maintenance of native languages served to further a colonial agenda of domination, not cultural sustainment.

Within the school, Spanish is used to enhance the school officials' surveillance of students, and thus is cements Latinx students' subjugation and marginalization within the institution.

There are also examples when the language itself was surveilled. On occasion, my own bilingualism has been leveraged to enact surveillance on the students' use of Spanish. One morning, Mrs. Moore approached me because she was concerned about a word she kept hearing the *mujeres* use. She believed it "might be something bad." She said, "I need to know what it means so I can talk to them if I need to." The word she kept hearing was "Ñoño", which is a character in the very famous Mexican show, *El Chavo del Ocho*. I showed her a picture of him and we both shared a laugh about her misunderstanding. When I told her she could have just asked the girls, she conceded that she could have but she also wanted to "make sure." The word "Ñoño" caused enough concern for her to approach me because she assumed that it *was* something bad. Using me to "make sure" points to her belief that there was a possibility the girls would have been dishonest in their answer. Only I, a teacher, could *really* confirm the meaning for her. Additionally, her assumption that the word "Ñoño" was something inappropriate points how language use can be seen as suspicious, and marked for surveillance. Spanish is treated as the language of deviance because it is spoken by people who have been racialized *as* deviants. The devaluation of Spanish is rooted in the colonial ideologies that uphold the dominance and purported superiority of English (Rosa & Flores, 2017; Valenzuela, 1999). The anxieties around the *true* meaning of a word are also tied to the underlying racist nativism that situates any language that is not English as the language of the *encroaching chaotic other* (Murillo, 2002; Pérez Huber, 2010). As people, they represent a danger to established order *because they are different*. The sound of "Ñoño" threatened Mrs. Moore's control over her classroom and only through understanding what it meant could she regain control and correct behavior should she

need to. Nayeli also shed light on these anxieties by noting that bilingualism was often treated with suspicion as opposed to something positive because there were fears that the language is being used to covertly talk about “bad stuff.”

I think that they feel like we are talking about them or they want to know what a student says to understand. But, most of the times when they use their Spanish and English, they think its bad or just ignore it...

While Nayeli empathizes with the teachers’ anxieties around not knowing if something is being said *about us* in *front of us*, her border thinking reveals an intuition that recognizes that it is not just Spanish that is treated with suspicion, but acts of translanguaging. According to a framework of raciolinguistic ideologies, practices that are celebrated and privileged for White students, Latinx students are deemed suspicious for or at times, even sanctioned for (Flores & Rosa, 2015). For example, White students might be celebrated for simultaneously deploying multiple languages in order to maximize communicative potential, but in Latinx students, using both languages at once is looked at with suspicion. The “specter of semilinguism” hovers of Latinx students in the United States in that bilingual students are constructed as deficit in ways implicitly related to the intersections of their race and languages (Flores, 2017). Mixing two languages violates notions of language purism (Garcia, 2009) and audibly marks people as border subjects—a positionality that is already surveilled for its inherent failure to fit within existing dichotomized paradigms (Anzaldúa, 1987). In the surveillance and disciplining of border subjects, their “wild tongues” becomes zones for contestation and silencing (Anzaldúa, 1987). Consequently, schooling has played a key role in the correction of the “problem of language” by using practices and curriculum that not only subtracts native languages, but also stigmatizes them (Valenzuela, 1999). In the fall, the girls had shared that, in a possible moment

of benevolent racism (Villenas, 2001), Mrs. Moore had approached several Latinx students in her ELA class, pen and paper in hand, to ask: “Do you need help with English?” Maritza shared that the question made her feel strange and hyper-visible within the classroom.

She asked in front of *everyone* (emphasized) I mean, I understand why she wants to ask Alma and Erica. They just got here a couple of years ago. But, like can’t she hear me speaking? [laughs]

Jimena and Lilia laughed as they shared that they had also been asked. Lilia added, “it was weird because she mostly asked Hispanics, like we could tell.” I situate this a possible instance of racist nativism because Maritza noted that Mrs. Moore also approached “some” White students and thus, Mrs. Moore’s question could have been related to English the subject, not English the language. However, just as it did not matter whether Mr. Williams was looking for Lilia that morning in the *encuentro*, it does not matter what Mrs. Moore meant by her question. What matters to Maritza is that felt she was being surveiled because of her language because she is Salvadorean and she understands the role that language plays in the monitoring and disciplining of brown bodies. Her sensitivity to language surveillance indicates that she understands that this question impacts her in a way that would not impact a white student. Maritza is aware of the linguistic reality that Latinx students are surveiled for their language practices and thus, her *facultad* signaled that something could be possibly off with this question *because* as it made her feel hyper-visible in ways that a White student could not understand. Additionally, Mrs. Moore phrased her question as “do you need help with English?” not “what have you struggled with in ELA in the past?” This also shows that she did not stop to consider how this question would impact her Latinx students, and would inadvertently be read as an act of surveillance—one that also invited the surveillance of Maritza’s peers.

The girls' self-consciousness around language was not limited to just the Spanish language, as a side-comment made by Jimena signaled that bilingualism has also been internalized as a learning obstacle. The *mujeres* were discussing their parents' surveillance of their student identity when Nayeli mentioned that if she were to have "bad grade in ELA" her father would "be like, reading is so easy!" Maritza immediately noted that Nayeli's father "does not understand." Jimena jumped in the conversation and clarified what makes something like reading difficult. "It's not just all about reading. It's not *about* reading. It's about the vocab and everything. I mean like I get it, it's just about the teacher." Jimena is highlighting that in her ELA classes, reading does not play as much as a central role as rotary vocabulary learning. Additionally, the process of reading and reading comprehension is interconnected with the teacher's practices. Maritza, Lilia, and Jimena all had a contentious relationship with their new ELA teacher, Mrs. Hanson, who replaced Mrs. Moore after she left the school. On several occasions, they critiqued Mrs. Hanson's emphasis on vocabulary learning through websites like vocabulary.com. I agreed with Jimena in that reading is a lot more difficult than people think when Jimena interrupted me and added, "especially if you're bilingual"—revealing that she had come to see bilingualism as a barrier rather than an asset to their reading. Alma echoed this sentiment in a later conversation: "English is different. Everything is in English *y se que lo tiene que ser. Empiezo a pensar en español y luego me entra el ingles.*" [I know that it has to be. I start to think in Spanish and then English comes in.] Alma, who had been in the United States for four years, was often frustrated by perceived limitations of having a brain that starts thinking in one language and then gets interrupted by another. She often groaned in frustration and slammed her computer on the table whenever she had a writing assignment. By limiting Alma to English only, when her brain was naturally beginning to translanguage, we (her teachers) were cutting her

language repertoire in half and limiting not just what she had to say about the content but limiting what she could *do with* language (Garcia, 2009). I also participated in the surveillance of Alma's languages in the classroom space. While I did not limit her to only English, I would often hover over her writing in an effort to "help her." Even though I did not mean any harm and was still formulating my own best practices as an ESL teacher, my continuous "editing rounds" did more to exasperate her frustration than ease it. I finally let go of this practice when Alma counter-surveilled me by reminding me that there are "*otros niños que también necesitan ayuda*" [there are other kids that also need your help]. Though mindful and kind in her delivery, Alma was asking me to give her space. It was her lifting of the veil that led me to understand that not only was I surveilling her, but I was limiting her abilities to practice language on her own and limiting what she could *do with* it.

Despite the embedded deficit messages around Spanish and bilingualism, the girls have also come to understand that bilingualism can yield some financial gains in the future. In one of our final afternoon hangouts, the girls were openly asked if Dr. Dominguez and I get paid to do Avanza. I explained that it was part of both of our jobs as "university people" though I did share that both the school district and the university were giving me a couple of hundred dollars for being their teacher liaison. Maritza looked up from her painting and said, "yeah, you get extra [money] because you're bilingual." I conceded that perhaps I was seen as a good candidate because I was bilingual, but that I don't necessarily get paid extra for it—the person that did this job was going to be paid the same regardless if they were Spanish speaking or not. Maritza and Jimena were noticeably surprised and asked if teachers get paid extra for speaking Spanish. I responded that in North Carolina, to my knowledge, they do not. "At least, I don't. That's for sure." In my own act of counter-surveillance, I revealed that someone does not necessarily have

to be bilingual to teach a subject like ESL. Again, Maritza and Jimena were shocked that, for me, bilingualism did not necessarily yield the financial gains that they envisioned. The discourse of the “bilingual advantage” has been used to convince students that their bilingualism matters because it gives them an advantage in the job market (Callahan & Gándara, 2014). While I do not deny that bilingualism can be an asset in the job market, the discursive commodification of language “moves away altogether from modern ideologies of language, culture, and identity, to treat language instead as a technical skill” (Heller & Duchêne, 2012 as cited in Rosa & Flores, 2017, p. 18). The girls are sold the hope that they have a linguistic advantage in the market and thus are encouraged to maintain their native tongues. However, the practices and discourses around language in the school do nothing to promote bilingualism or biliteracy. Instead, they are surveilled for incorporating Spanish and translanguaging into their learning spaces.

Institutional Patrolling: Monitoring “Intelligence”

The positioning of Latinx intelligences such as translanguaging as suspicious also serves to reinforce definitions of intelligence that leaves Latinx students out of them. Nayeli, Maritza, and Denise have come to internalize discourses such as “Latinxs are not smart because they are not White.” When she was in 7th grade (the time of the study), Denise had already shared that to her, White students come across smart because they “answer all the questions” in class even though she personally believed “a lot of them are actually stupid.” When Denise entered 8th grade, I noticed she was quiet in her social studies classroom and she rarely volunteered to share her thoughts in whole group. Her and friend pointed out that the reason they do not volunteer more discussion points in class is because the teacher mostly calls on the same “White kids over and over again.” I told her I would speak to the teacher and that we will create more opportunities for everyone to be able to share their thoughts. While she seemed open to the idea,

she engaged in a covert act of counter-surveillance by seemingly surveilling herself. She noted the problem is that Latinxs students “don’t say smart things the way the White kids do.” Even though Denise embraces her academic success, she stops herself joining class discussions because her point of reference is a Latinx one, a border one. When she says that they don’t say smart things the way White kids do, she is not saying that Latinxs are unintelligent. Instead, through her counter-surveillance, she is revealing that what the school has taken up as smart is noticeably White. In a discussion about advanced classes in Sitwell, Nayeli spoke about witnessing Latinx kids like her ex-boyfriend “acting white.” When I asked her to clarify what she meant by that, Maritza quickly answered, “to be smart.” I asked Maritza to elaborate what she meant. She continued, “for white people, I notice that most white people act like they’re smart. That’s how they have a lot of money.” Nayeli added, “*tienen* 3-D printers for their project, they have resources” to which Maritza tacked on, “[they] basically have money.” Wealth has come to dominate the cultural construction of smartness (Hatt, 2016). This is because schools have historically valued and centered White forms of cultural capital in ways that obscured the sources of Latinx community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005). Their abilities to straddle multiple worlds or create new tongues are not recognized as valid intelligences. In her introductory portrait in Chapter 4, I shared a story in which Maritza had had a meeting with Mrs. Hanson, the new ELA teacher, to advocate for the inclusion of assignments that do not rely on the computer as much. Maritza revealed that as a learner, she valued and benefited from discussions and tactile experiences—reading vocabulary words from a computer and typing an essay into a Google doc did not serve her learning needs. In fact, in my capacity as teacher, I have noticed that Latinx students tend to prefer writing responses on paper before they type it into the computer. Alma shared that “she thinks better on paper.” However, this stage of writing and thinking is not built

into the teacher's lesson plans and consequently, many assignments have been left incomplete. For these working class girls, smartness is not just equated with Whiteness, but it also closely interconnected with social class, and, as Nayeli points out, immigration status.

Sometimes the teachers they pay and give attention to other races. Do you understand? Its like when they know you are Hispanic, its like the automatically know you are bad. Do you know what I mean? Its like, for them, if one person ruins it, everyone is everyone. Everyone from that race is like that. And white students, *los maestros* [the teachers] they think they are all *los mismos* [the same] too, but all good. Maybe *por que son su raza* [because they are their race]. But maybe for them, its like we are uneducated people because our parents weren't born here.

In this moment, Nayeli is pointing to the fact that she feels like Latinx students are surveiled more because they are deemed bad. According to Hatt (2012), smartness is also interconnected with conceptions of "good behavior" and the ability for students to control their bodies and their mouths. Jimena also hinted at this when she characterized herself as a troublemaker because she had not learned to raise her hand to speak in class. She also noted that someone like Lilia is not seen as smart because she "laughs a lot." In her introductory portrait, I noted Nayeli believed her teachers hated her because she talked too much. Sitwell Middle has a bulletin board where they recognize individual students for exercising the "Key to Success." Throughout the year, I noticed the students awarded the "self-control" and "grit" recognitions were overwhelmingly Latinx. Implicit here is a monitoring of Latina girl presence in class, specifically a close monitoring of their disruptive voices. The trope of the loud Latina is a stereotype that continues to dominate current imaginings of Latina girls and women (Scharrer & Ramasubramanian, 2015). For girls like Lilia, Nayeli, and Jimena, their voices are augmented not because they are necessarily loud,

but because they belong to brown girls—brown girls who must be surveiled and disciplined for speaking out of turn or speaking *too loudly*.

For Nayeli, this is on par to with why Latinx are seen as uneducated—because they are seen as “bad.” A good Latinx, a smart Latinx, is one that exercises self-control by following rules and showing perseverance. Their perceived deviance obscures their intelligences because ultimately, they are the children of immigrants and thus, uneducated. This highlights the fact that smartness is indeed constructed through how students are positioned in relation to the valued norms which the girls revealed are: reading like a White kid, talking like a White kid, having money like a White kid, and being a “native” like a White kid.

Border Thinking Pedagogy of Counter-Surveillance: Disrupting Conceptions of “Smart” Spaces

In a conversation about advanced placement classes, I asked the girls if they would want to be in a class like that. Jimena noted she would because “she wants to be known as smart”, highlighting discourses that equates advanced placement with smartness and regular track as average. It is also well known to the girls that advanced placement classes tend to be overwhelmingly White (Hatt, 2016). In their work in racializing smartness, scholars like Beth Hatt (2007; 2012; 2016) and Juan Carrillo (2013; 2016; Carrillo & Rodriguez, 2016) work towards uncovering how social constructions of Whiteness have shaped constructions of smartness. According to Hatt (2016), whiteness and smartness have been historically linked together. Historically, testing is imbued with racist nativist legacies such as the valuing of Whitestreamed cultural capitals (Leonardo, 2007) and the construction of Spanish speakers as intellectually inferior (Valencia, 2008) and thus, spaces they occupy are also “dumb” spaces. In a complicated act of counter-surveillance, Nayeli characterized classes that have a high concentration of Latinx students are “Hispanic people’s classes that means *que son los menos*”

[that they are the dumb ones.] Annoyed at Nayeli for naming the underlying implications of such a statement, Jimena yelled for her to stop it “with her drama.” “It’s not drama” Nayeli pushed back,

“It’s true. The classes that only have Hispanic students that’s when they assume, if you’re Hispanic that [you’re dumb]... and a White person goes there, they are like ‘oh yeah. You’re screwed. You’re with dumb people.’”

I call this a complicated act of counter-surveillance because in my initial analysis of it, I thought Nayeli was revealing her internalized oppression and in a way, she might be. However, in revising the transcripts and audio, it was Jimena’s insistence that Nayeli “stop it with her drama” that made me realize that Jimena was feeling called out. So, I reframed the way I was reading Nayeli’s words and realized that Nayeli was not saying Latinxs are dumb. In fact, her tone revealed that she was in fact mocking Jimena. In doing so, she revealed the discourses that majority White spaces like advanced placement as smart spaces and regular Latinx classes as dumb in comparison. She was pushing back on Jimena for saying being in advanced placement classes are what would make people know that she is smart.

Border Thinking Pedagogy of Counter-Surveillance: Drawing on Identity to Resist Deficit Perspectives and Subtractive Schooling

When Nayeli and Maritza characterized smartness as “acting White”, Jimena immediately rejected it. She interjected, “not White because I am smart and I don’t act White.” This was a really important claim for Jimena to make because she mentioned several times that she was a “proud Hispanic.” I noticed Jimena start to do something really interesting with her language and accent to emphasize her Mexican-ness. When the girls were working on their identity projects, Jimena commented on Lilia’s project by noting, “what the heck a *jalapeeeeeño? Parece greeeeeen beaaaaan.*” Adding the extra letters to the words jalapeño and

green bean are my way of emphasizing the emergence of a Chicano accent that is characterized by the sustaining the vowel sounds. In the word green bean, she also rolled her “r” as if it was a Spanish word. I noted in my field notes that her accent reminded me of home. Jimena did this in her social studies class too. Alma opened an inquiry as to why I was not yet married. She refused to accept my responses and my claims that I was not interested in being married at this time in my life. I became more flustered and irritated as Alma continued the subject, “*Ay maestra, por que? Que no quiere casarse, con un vestido...* [Ay teacher, why not? Don’t you want to get married, with a dress...].” Jimena interrupted her, “She is a strong independent *mujeeer*.” Jimena’s counter-surveillance was layered with cultural signifiers: she deployed her translanguaging repertoire and she played with her accent in the word “mujer.” These border thinking strategies helped her interrupt discourses about women, who reach a certain age (*clears throat* late 20s), and are not married. She was also interrupting discourses that designate marriage as a desirable milestone for all women by situating independence as strength. She also used her Spanish to emphasize both her and my identities as Mexican women and she used her accent to play up her identity as a Latina. These moments, though they might seem small, are important in Jimena’s positioning of herself as someone who is secure in her identity as an intelligent young Mexican woman—a strong intelligent Mexican *mujeeerrrr*.

Nayeli had shared her ex-boyfriend had been attempting to pass as Italian to White peers. Nayeli noted that she was disturbed by this, and that, in addition to his cheating, it played a key role in her decision to end the relationship. She revealed to me, “I don’t understand why anyone would do that. Why would you pretend something you’re not? I love being Hispanic. It’s who I am.” Despite being accused of not being a “proud Hispanic” Nayeli was firm in her identity and firm in her love for herself to the point where she outwardly rejected someone who was rejecting

himself. In her interview with Denise, Nayeli again reiterated her love for herself. She shared that she thinks, “Being Latina is the bomb because there is a lot of culture that brings people together.” This was not only the first I heard any of the girls use a word other than Hispanic, but it also highlighted Nayeli’s identity authoring in action. I will not take credit for such a shift in language, as even though I was the primary user of the word in the group, but it was a noticeable shift for her.

Maritza also drew on her border identity through translanguaging to reject Mrs. Hanson’s subtractive schooling. In her first telling of story in which she cursed at Mrs. Hanson, Maritza was vacillating back and forth between accepting that she was in the wrong and condemning Mrs. Hanson for not listening to her after the meeting with her mother. In our final interview, Maritza was still noticeably frustrated that the school year ended with her in the same place as she was before that meeting. Though she noted she still deeply regretted cursing at her teacher, she re-told the story with a passion that she had not used the first time I spoke to her about it.

Nos da [She gives us] 100 words thinking we are going to learn them and I say this is pointless... My mom and I had a meeting *donde le dije que* [where I told her] I learn better with paper. *Y nos dijo que* [and she told us] the school board says we have to learn in different ways, with the computer... *Me hace enojar*. [It makes me angry] They said they will listen to our opinions but they never do... I feel bad *pero estaban bien enojada* [but I was so angry].

An analysis Maritza’s translanguaging practices reveals how she is drawing from her English tongue to situate the context: this is what happened, this is what she said. She then specifically draws on her Spanish tongue to reject Mrs. Hanson’s subtractive practices. It is the tongue in which she expresses her anger (*me hace enojar*). Mrs. Hanson and the school board privileged

building technology literacy over Maritza's own learning. Despite her regret around how she handled the situation, Maritza's frustration reveals her *facultad* has led her to recognize that she was being robbed of *something* in her education. She refused to accept that the computer had to be central to her learning. She rejected rotary vocabulary learning. Her border tongue has constructed a message of condemnation against subtractive schooling practices that de-center the student in their own learning.

Institutional Patrolling: Bodies "Out of Place"

Maritza's refusal to *do work* in the way according to Mrs. Hanson's standards led to an even closer monitoring of her behavior in class. She revealed,

Mrs. Hanson watches me. I don't like her. She is always trying to see if I am doing my work. Usually I am like "this is pointless" and she is like "well you are supposed to do the work" and I ignore her sometimes... but she is always watching me because I give her attitude about the computer. I am the one that always gets in trouble in that class.

Maritza's rejection of Mrs. Hanson's vocabulary.com exercises was treated as a general attitude problem as opposed to a real critique of classroom practices. As her relationship with Mrs. Hanson increasingly deteriorated due to her surveillance practices and refusal to shift instructional practices, Maritza and Lilia started devising ways to leave the classroom. In Sitwell, it is common practice for students to go work in the atriums or hallways. Seeing this, the girls noted that nearly everyday, they would ask if they could work in the hallway but Mrs. Hanson would often tell the girls she needed them in the room because she wanted to work with them in small group.

Me, Lilia, and Jimena waited and Mrs. Hanson would have groups that she worked with but we were never in those groups. And one day me and Lilia went up to Mrs. Hanson

and asked “why are you like this? Why are you telling us that we can’t go outside?” Mrs. Hanson is like “oh you can actually. I just never let you.”

In a display of her power, she told the girls that they technically could leave class but they can’t do so because she did not allow. The reason: they are too loud. The surveillance of their volumes resulted in a desire to keep the girls in the classroom, which only exasperated their sense that they were not wanted in the classroom. Their evidence was that they were never actually asked to join Mrs. Hanson’s small group. Yet, they were not allowed in the hallway either because they would be away from the vigilant eye of the teacher who *needed* to watch them at all times. Maritza, Lilia, and Jimena were stuck in a room that did not want them solely as a measure to ensure surveillance.

Even in those moments when the girls would make it out in the hallways, Lilia noted being under constant watch by the principals and teachers. For her, the simple act of walking down the hallway was enough to raise the suspicions of the principals and teachers.

One time we went to the 6th grade hall way and Ms. Brooks was like “what are you girls doing over here! You’re trying to skip class. You’re already late!” And we weren’t even late to our class. Ana was trying to tell Ms. Green that she was going to be attending Avanza that day instead of the other afterschool program.

This is where my insider knowledge as teacher in relation to the girls and the research project is complicated. In a way, I understood why Ms. Brooks would assume the girls were skipping. The truth is, Ana (also an Avanza participant) had been caught skipping in the 6th grade hall before and she had also been discovered cutting herself in the restrooms. She was already under a particular kind of surveillance by the teachers and principals in order to curve this behavior. Lilia, her best friend, also became caught up in the specialized matrix of surveillance of Ana.

However, the immediacy of the teacher's response in thinking the girls were skipping *is* problematic. There was no kindness or concern behind Ms. Brook's surveillance, just a push to discipline the girls for being "out of place." In fact, "out of place" was the official term used to describe students who were "caught" outside of class. This term and Ms. Brooks' reaction exasperates the isolation of a student who already feels disconnected from class and herself. She finds herself not wanting to be in class but she is not meant to be in the hallways either. So where is a girl like Ana supposed to go if everywhere feels like "out of place"? The girls ended up being removed from their classes and placed in ISS for the incident. As a consequence, this incident would mark Lilia's future experiences in the hallways of Sitwell. For her, the surveillance was mostly around the water fountain, which was located right outside her classes. Hovering around a bit longer than deemed acceptable led her to be accused of wanting to skip class. In fact, after I approached her at the water fountain to ask her why she thought Mr. Williams was looking for her, I was commended by a teacher who had been watching her (and me) for "taking care of that."

At a point in the year, the Avanza space also came under surveillance because teachers were concerned that students were being "allowed to roam the halls." The Avanza team was instructed to monitor the students more closely by making sure we waited for them by the door and ushered them into the library as soon as we saw them coming down the hall. We were told to not let them go to the restroom until the buses had departed so as to avoid "confusion" as to who was supposed to be where. Even though the students were accompanied by the UNC "amigos" during their excursions, the students' presence in the hallway was deemed disruptive and suspicious so the research team was asked to walk the halls too so as to monitor *everyone*. The students were told they could not go to the cafeteria snack machines because there was another

program being hosted there. Then, they were *caught* eating snacks that could have only come from the faculty machines in the library. I too was chastised for this. There were several instances when Mr. Williams would walk into the library and just watch. Even if he was there out of curiosity for the program, he rarely tried to participate in the students' discussions and he almost never asked what the students were doing exactly. He just stood by a bookcase, arms folded over it, and watched. If he did make contact, it was only with me. When school staff saw how much "freedom" we afforded students, we were asked to immediately restrict it through surveillance practices. As a teacher, it felt incredibly strange implementing some of the requests they made because I did not necessarily believe in them. I trusted my students and the school was asking me not to.

Border Thinking Pedagogy of Counter-Surveillance: Claiming Space through Visibility

The surveillance of the location of the girls' bodies within the school reveals the school's underlying discourse that not only were the girls not trustworthy, but they were also not naturally entitled to space within the school—a fact that was made clear to Lilia, Maritza, and Jimena in Mrs. Hanson's ELA classroom. The girls shared their request to work outside had, yet again, been denied. During the class, Mrs. Hanson requested the girls move from the table they were using. According to the girls, there were plenty of tables open for teacher use, yet "Mrs. Hanson wanted *our* table. So we told her, 'I would prefer not to move'." Mrs. Hanson replied

that it wasn't her problem. That it was *her* table. But it's not her table. It's the school's table. There were other tables that were available but she didn't want those. She wanted *our* table, the one we were using.

Maritza poignantly addresses the fact that the table *does not* belong to the teacher because technically the furniture belongs to the school. Should Maritza break anything, she would owe

the school, not Mrs. Hanson. Maritza laid claim to it because it was her that was using it, not Mrs. Hanson. Yet, Mrs. Hanson believes the desk is hers because she is the teacher and this is *her* classroom—a space that, through reminding the girls they can leave only at her behest, she operates as if she has complete power over. Mrs. Hanson believes the classroom is hers because she is the teacher and they are the students. Teachers own space. Students rent it (McKinney, 2004) and Maritza and Lilia were being evicted. In a moment that Maritza would characterize as a “protest”, the girls turned Mrs. Hanson’s power on its head by tilting the table over and blocking Mrs. Hanson from reaching her desk. The act would later become characterized as them “flipping it” but Maritza made it clear that it was not a flip, “just a tilt, we didn’t throw it across the room or anything.” On her protest she said

She just looked at us. Lilia did it first and it looked like we were doing a protest. I knew that we weren’t supposed to do it in school. The teacher’s always say that if you want to protest, for you to go somewhere else. “Not on my time.” But I don’t think that’s right.

Students should protest if something is wrong.

In their act of counter-surveillance, the girls were claiming a right to space in the classroom by imitating the disciplinary gaze placed upon them. Mrs. Hanson engaged in surveillance practices that limited the girls’ mobility so the girls limited hers by blocking her desk. By situating it as a protest, Maritza is revealing her border thinking: she acknowledged the teacher was looking at her, she revealed the discourses that attempt to discourage students political statements (“not on my time”), and so she leveraged her hyper-visibility to make a statement to the teacher and the class: I have a right to claim space within this classroom and students have a right to protest.

Another example of counter-surveillance by claiming space through visibility is a set of signs that Lilia and Ana posted across the entrance of the school during *Avanza*. That afternoon,

the girls had been discussing how the principals disproportionally discipline Latinx students and how they saw this as evidence of their racism—a fact inadvertently confirmed by the principals themselves when they listed Avanza’s “mentoring of Hispanic students” as a strategy to reduce the rates of In School and Out of School suspensions. In a moment of defiance to the “don’t roam the halls unsupervised during Avanza” rule, the girls disappeared for a couple of minutes and came back with a stack of white paper. In bright pink marker, they scribed “Viva México *Mi Compa!*” They found tape and posted the papers in several key places throughout the entrance of the school: outside the glass door students use to come in every morning, inside the glass door for anyone standing in the entry way, on a trashcan at the entrance of the 6th grade hall, and on the staircase that led to the 7th and 8th grade halls. Through these sheets of paper, the girls were claiming space to be Mexican and exist within the school—a counter-surveillant act towards the principals who seek to regulate the mobility of their bodies and those that subscribe to the racist nativist beliefs. This action falls within Freire’s (2000) notions of critical consciousness and praxis—action and reflection to change their worlds. They interrupted the discourses that situate their Mexican-ness as something to be monitored and regulated and instead, redirected the gaze towards a celebration of their identities.

Conclusion

These moments when they faced and named the surveillance enacted on them highlight how Latina girls’ brown bodies and that of their families are mark them as “illegitimate citizens in schools and society” regardless of their legal status (Moreno, 2008, p. 56). These surveillances are compounded in the moments when their racialized, gendered, and student identities intersect. On *la facultad*, Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) wrote that:

We lose something in this mode of initiation, something is taken from us: our innocence, our unknowing ways, our safe and easy ignorance. There is a prejudice and fear of the dark, chthonic (underworld), material such as depression, illness, death, and the violations that can bring on this break. Confronting anything that tears the fabric of our everyday mode of consciousness and that thrusts us into a less literal and more psychic sense of reality increases awareness and *la facultad*.

Though the experience of surveillance is no doubt violent and traumatic, the girls are not only formulating stronger *facultades*, but also they are entering border spaces of consciousness that are compelling them to redirect the gazes thrust upon them. There is agency in naming the dominant discourses of power. Naming is a step towards their denouncement. Denouncement is a step towards transformation. It is through this experiential knowledge that the girls are creating new tongues, border tongues that not only disrupt dichotomization, but also planting the seeds of resilient identities. It is through their denouncements and these lived experiences that they are creating new knowledge, new forms of being, teaching, reading, and speaking unto the worlds. In understanding the wealth of knowledge being produced by the *encuentros* between these young women (and myself), I begin to understand that if there is a pedagogy that imbued in the space, then there are practices that are animating it. This is where I have located the emergence of *mujerista youth pedagogies*. The last chapter of this dissertation concludes the story of the *encuentro* by looking towards the possibilities for learning that these girls have organically created in the space.

CHAPTER 6: INTERSECTIONAL SURVEILLANCE MATRIX AND IMPLICATIONS FOR LITERACY THEORIZATIONS

A Reflection on Finding an “End”

Knowing how to start this “ending” has been the most difficult part of this journey because in my ways, this story does not have a definite end. Yes, the girls have moved on to high school and after they left, Avanza and the *encuentros* also came to an end. Yet, as I wrote these stories, I could still hear their voices with such clarity and I am still learning from them. In unpacking their discourses and looking intently at how they use their border tongues, I was pushed to reframe how I understand by own border tongue and my translanguaging. There was always an aspect of me that felt my Spanish was incomplete because it was mixed tongue. However, seeing what *they did with* their border tongues is transforming the way I envision my own as a complete one. I thank them for returning me to the linguistic identity work that put me on this path to academia. Additionally, my work with these young women happened simultaneously with my first year of teaching and while I had taught before, I had never identified as a teacher. My identity as a teacher is being authored *in relation to them*. Consequently, because identity is an ongoing process rather than a product, it is difficult for me to find an “end.” So, it is with this on-going reflection on pedagogy, literacies, and identity that I begin to write an end that is geared towards naming the possibilities presented by the girls. This chapter offers a discussion on how these surveillance practices converge to form an intersectional surveillance matrix that the girls negotiate and respond to. The girls’ discourses

point to the emergence of a set of *mujerista* youth literacy practices through which they respond to and reject this very matrix.

Intersectional Surveillance Matrix

In this study, I have presented an insight into how Latina girls come to understand the complex, interlocking domains of surveillance in their lives. I mentioned at the start of Chapter 5 that although I enumerate three surveillances within this chapter, they are in fact meant to be understood in relation to each other because surveillance of citizenship, the flesh, and student identity are entangled together. The intersections of these surveillance domains attempt to create a controlled environment, a matrix, in which the girls are expected to conform to the roles and expectations set forth by those in power. For example, the girls' surveillance of their citizenship collided with the surveillance of their flesh and student identity through the inspection and disciplining of school performance as a duty to live up to the privileges of citizenship status. The girls internalized the discourses of what makes a good Latina citizenship by, in turn, surveilling people who experience homelessness whom they read as people who have no excuse for their perceived educational "failures". However, the intimate experiences of the same type of surveillance also led to someone like Nayeli to understand her struggles in school as not just evidence of her failure to live up to her *papeles* but also her failure to be a good daughter to her parents because her own parents are undocumented. Another point of intersection between the surveillances was Jimena's experiences with Mr. Davidson, the assistant principal who had placed his arm around her. While students are disciplined for engaging in physical contact with their significant others, Mr. Davidson's actions reveal that there is a sense that the expectations of "respectability" do not apply to him or his interactions with students. While the situation could have ended with him accepting that Jimena did not want him to hug her, he instead insisted that

he should be allowed to do so because he had supposedly done so before. This entitlement to Jimena's personal space is underpinned by a dangerous assumption that Jimena's youth, her ethnicity, her femininity, and position as a student all intersect to make her subordinate to Mr. Davidson's entitlement as a White, male assistant principal. For these girls, their brown skin and their other's voice converges in a racially marked womanhood and epistemology that can be perceived as a threat to not just the people around her and herself, but a threat to how power is organized and understood within this androcentric and Eurocentric, White supremacist social order. Thus, these surveillance practices work as an *intersectional surveillance matrix* that enables the White supremacist and patriarchal project to subjugate and control through a demand for docile Latina bodies that do not hug, do not speak back, and do not publically exist until the dominant powers permit them to. If the permission does come, like Mr. Davidson's implied permission to hug, it is done on the terms of those in power. In schools, students are encouraged to advocate for themselves with caveat that they do within the bounds created by the adults in the building. Similarly, Maritza's self-advocacy for instruction to reflect her learning processes was met with resistance from Mrs. Hanson because of the perceptions on her comportment. Maritza's outburst became an example of her defiance in the face of the teacher's power rather than an entry point to understanding how deeply her frustration ran. Maritza transgressed norms around politeness, female propriety, and student decency. Similarly, Nayeli's revelation that her father would prefer her to develop friendships with more White people were also layered with not just notions of the performances of good citizenship and student identity, was also underpinned by the need to control her Latina womanhood by proliferating deficit frames about Latino males. She revealed that he did not approve of her boyfriend because of his parents' divorce which, to him, signals poor family relations. She also noted that he did like that he helped his father cut

grass because that “job is below.” This perceived inferiority, however, should not be understood as separately from the anxieties around her female body. Nayeli, like the other girls, often spoke of parental fears around sex and pregnancy. In fact, her mother’s presence at the bottom of the stairs at the end of the school day was to monitor her academics, but to inspect her female performance around Latino boys. Her father’s push for her to have more White friends is not just motivated by a hope for a successful educational trajectory, but it was another tool to surveil, inspect, and surveil her romantic relationships and sexuality.

However, just as race, gender, immigration, language, and class intersect in how the girls experience this surveillance matrix, Latina girls also draw from these very intersections to navigate, negotiate, and reject hegemonic and deficit discourses that drive the panoptic gaze. The girls’ *testimonios* also revealed how they *responded* to these surveillances. Their counter-surveillances reveal how the matrix does not have to be a fixed environment for them. Indeed, one of the most important factors in the unpacking of how the intersectional surveillance matrix was enacted in these girls’ lives was coming to *see* how they *saw* the surveillance. Their *facultades*, their pedagogies of the home, their education in school, and their border thinking all informed their embodied intuitions. It is these foundations that gave them the capacity—the agency—to redirect the gaze, name the tower and its watchers, and through that, disrupt dominant discourses. Because these girls are border subjects whose lives are situated in the in-between and they are also experts in crossing borders, they are uniquely, exquisitely, and critically attuned to reading the world. This is at the heart of the concept of *la facultad* (Anzaldúa, 1987) and *la facultad* itself is at the very core of *mujerista* knowledge (Cervantes-Soon, 2017; Delgado Bernal, Elenes, Godinez, & Villenas, 2006; Latina Feminist Group, 2001). Thus, the dialogic nature of counter-surveillance is revealed: *la facultad* is always shifting

because experiential knowledge is always being created and the more they redirect the gaze, the more experiential knowledge they gain and the stronger their *facultades* become, which in the end, also strengthens their counter-surveillant disruptions. They are always in conversation with the world. This is why, for these girls, surveillance and counter-surveillance are meant to be understood in relation to each other. When writing, it became increasingly difficult to extrapolate their counter-surveillances from the surveillance matrix enacted on them. Indeed, that is why chapter 5 is longer than intended. Originally, counter-surveillance was going to be a separate chapter but in a last minute decision, I reorganized the structure to reflect the fact that the girls were in constant dialogue with the dominant discourses. In coming to see this, I began envision surveillance and counter-surveillance as two opposing forces that are coming into contact and each side is propelled by power of the hegemonic gaze and the *mujerista* counter-surveillant gaze. When these two forces meet, there is *something* happening, there is something being *transformed and (re)created*. These stories about life and learning offer insight to how the girls were making sense of the discourses of power around them. They also revealed how their border thinking and border identities were emerging from these negotiations.

It is in the contact between the two forces where I first located the *mujerista* youth pedagogies embedded in the girls' *testimonios*. These pedagogies offered teachings on understanding smartness through theirs eyes, demanding dignity in the face of patriarchy, understanding the role of colonization in today's political sphere, and the importance of centering hope in our push to enact local change. Through the enactment of these pedagogies, the *mujeres* are authoring identities that refuse to be objects of the panoptic gaze; instead, their identities of resistance and resiliency are built on the agency and power of fearlessly looking the gaze straight in its panoptic eye. Through these pedagogies, they have unveiled its names, its

faces, and its words. This is the power of a *mujerista* counter-surveillance. These pedagogies filled the figured world of the *encuentro* and also allowed it to exist outside the confines of the classroom because these pedagogies are carried and communicated by the body, not by texts in a classroom. In locating the possibilities for this work, a question emerged for me—a question of form and practice in relation to pedagogy. In creating these pedagogies, the girls were pulling their knowledge from the ways they read their worlds. Drawing from Freire’s critical literacy (2000), I came to understand that if there are *mujerista* border thinking pedagogies, then there are *mujerista* youth literacies that are animating them.

Possibilities for Literacies and Pedagogies from a Mujerista Youth Lens

Situating Literacies: Read the World, Read the Word, Speak Unto the World

Just as *mujerista* pedagogies ask us to step away from rigid, dichotomized notions of epistemology and knowledge, then we must do the same for the literacy. New Literacy Studies offer an entry point into the understanding of why these young women’s practices should be constituted as literacies. This paradigm situates literacies as socially constructed, mediated, and defined practices (Street, 1997; Perry 2012). Drawing from Paulo Freire’s (2000) articulations of critical literacy, the idea of reading the world and the word, positions questioning, disrupting, and transformation as central to the production of liberating knowledge. Understanding literacy in such a way, asks educators to go beyond the leveraging and teaching of discrete skills and instead move towards nurturing practices “through which all of can read and write more equitable selves and worlds” (Gee, 2000, p. 414). Thus, central to this shift in literacy are understandings that literacy practices are ways people act upon the world and that literacies are expressions of their own humanity.

The girls' *testimonios*, linguistic repertoires, and even their art creations are saturated with hybrid, *mujerista* literacy practices (Saavedra, 2011; Cruz, 2012). The forms in which they are constructing their narratives are not neutral, nor are they inconsequential. These *mujeres* are responding to Gloria Anzaldúa's call for the creation of *nuevas teorías*, new theories for framing what we witness in the world and how we respond to the world. The crux of the *mujeres*' border thinking pedagogies are *mujerista* youth literacies. Their forms of reading the world, reading the word, and speaking upon the world push us to continue to re-envision literacies as embodied practices. Literacies are deeply connected to the authoring of resilient identities as they reveal the "simultaneous processes of continuous becoming of ourselves" (García & Wei, 2014, p. 8). They are the expressions that reveal *how* new identities are being authored through the "deployment of tools that mediate...the use of students' complete linguistic and sociocultural repertoires" (Lizárraga & Gutiérrez, 2018, p. 39). In order to best exemplify what I mean by this, I would like to present two examples from the *encuentro* meetings: the girls' identity art projects and their translanguaging practices.

Cultural Intuition as Border Thinking Literacy

While I did not incorporate an analysis of the girls' identities art projects in the findings portion of this dissertation, I would like to use them here as an example of embodied literacies in action in the *encuentro*. As aforementioned, the girls participated in an identity art project where they interviewed another member in the group. The girls used the audio recordings and their written notes to analyze the narrative shared with them by their partner. For their analysis, I wanted to be mindful of not over-managing the analytic process so, initially; they were left to their own devices. However, when a couple of the girls struggled with piecing together a narrative, I sat down with them and asked them to share the part of the story that most impacted

them. The girls were able to recount moments from the story that struck them. Denise mentioned Nayeli feeling ostracized in the classroom. Maritza focused on the story of Lilia buying ice cream with her cousin on her last trip Mexico. I advised them to follow their intuitions and to let their partner's stories guide the constructing a visual representation of the narrative. In a way, I was asking the girls to follow and use the cultural intuitions they were expressing when they pinpointed moments they felt were significant. I told them those stories were important because they felt it so. Delgado Bernal (1998) defined cultural intuition as an intentional leveraging of Chicana identity in the interpretive processes of Chicana feminist research. It is in the intersections of border thinking and identity that I locate the possibility for cultural intuition to be situated as literacy and its deployment as a literacy practice. In recounting their partners' narratives, the girls were deploying and leveraging their cultural intuitions in locating the heart of the stories. They used the images, and the analysis conjured, to guide the design of the art piece. Denise and Maritza ended up creating the most symbolic pieces out of the group.

Maritza's piece on Lilia's story, for example, featured an ice cream cone with each scoop representing the Mexican flag colors. This was a reference to Lilia's story about the last time she visited Mexico, she and her cousin were able to walk the town freely in a way she does not get to in Sitwell. The cousins ended up eating an ice cream cone whose flavor is lost to memory. Yet, grasping a real sense of place and time, Maritza showed that she understood the story was more than just a story about an ice cream cone. It was an important memory that tied Lilia back to the freedom she felt in Mexico and the last time she saw her extended family. The ice cones represented that memory beautifully by including the colors of the flag and the words, "see uncle again" in the corner of the canvas. The piece was also peppered with other cultural references that Lilia had not included in her story, but Maritza understood were important to her identity.

For example, she also included the *Chapulín Colorado* logo on the cone, a reference to a Mexican TV show. Around the cone, she included musical references to American rappers and American clothing stores. By constructing the visual in the way that she did, Maritza was showing she understood that Lilia's Mexican identity was central to her being and that Lilia's American experiences also frame her Mexican identity. Maritza was able to intuit this, understand this, because of her own identity as a Salvadorian-American girl. Lilia's piece on Maritza also features the Salvadorian flag in a more literal sense than Maritza's but they were linked by the centrality of their ethnic identities.

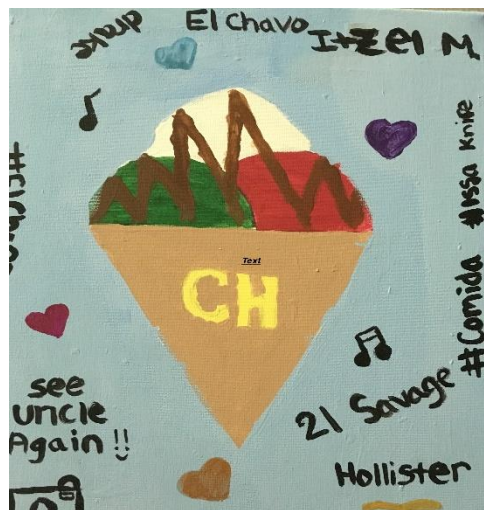


Figure 8: Maritza's identity art piece based on Lilia's testimonio where she told stories about visiting her uncle and cousin in Mexico.

Denise's piece on Nayeli's story was also incredibly insightful. Denise drew directly from her cultural intuition to create the visual *testimonio* that juxtaposed Nayeli's experiences in school and her cultural identity. In their interview, Nayeli shared a story of feeling ignored and hated in class because she talks too much at the start of their 15-minute interview. Then, Nayeli talked about her boyfriend, her family, and even her favorite food. Towards the end, Denise asked Nayeli what she likes about being Latina to which Nayeli replied that it was "the bomb." In creating her visual, Denise split the canvas in half and on one side she drew a classroom scene

where the teacher was ignoring Nayeli. In her interview, Nayeli did not describe the space of the classroom but Denise used her own experiences and knowledge of Sitwell to fill image with references to the schools' Growth Mindset ideologies, as well as its push to maintain order through rules. She made the growth mindset sign bright red, and put it above the stick figure that represents Nayeli, or it could represent any student that is struggling, really. She used the color scheme of the Mexican flag in the classroom space too. There are no green chalkboards in Sitwell. She did not clarify if the classroom colors were meant to hint at Nayeli's Mexican identity. This is my own cultural intuition acting as literacy in my analysis of the painting, but I felt it was worth noting. On the other half of the canvas, Denise drew a bomb with the Mexican flag painted into it to represent Nayeli's explosive Mexican identity. She explained the juxtaposition of these two images by noting that:

This kind of represents that kind of teacher that don't really pay attention to her while she is trying to learn sometimes. And then on this side, I put that *even though* that happens, she still thinks that being a Latina is the bomb. So I drew a bomb.

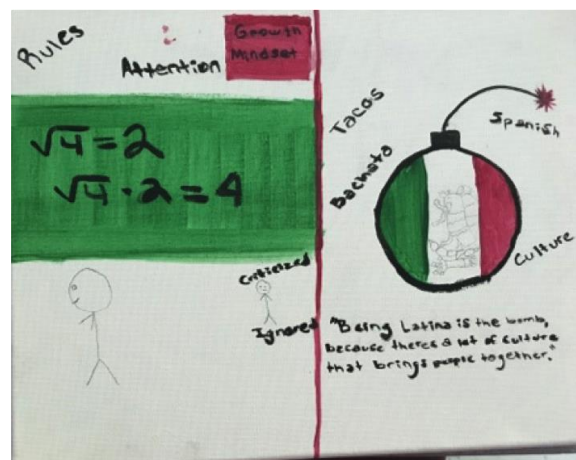


Figure 8 Denise juxtaposed a subtractive schooling space with symbols of Nayeli's Mexican identity.

It is important to note that when Nayeli told these stories, they were not connected to each other. Nayeli never clarified in the interview that the teacher treated her as such because she was Mexican. She did not tell these stories back to back. She did not describe what the classroom looked like. Yet, Denise was able to derive a deeper meaning behind Nayeli's story and behind her comment that "being Latina is the bomb." Through cultural intuition in reading Nayeli's interview, she saw a link between these two stories and created an art piece that not only represented that link but also represented the contrast between the sentiments. This is Denise reading the world and the word through her own border thinking and cultural intuition to create something new, a new way for her to understand and talk about the school and her friend through art. While this art project was not meant to be a youth action participatory research, the girls' analysis processes and final products signal a critical understanding of the issues that frame with communities and the identities that emerge from them. Future research with Chicana women and youth should continue to address the questions of how can cultural intuition transform the way we understand literacy for youth, especially as they engage in different forms of action research.

Translanguaging: Reading and Speaking Unto the World Dynamically

In my discussions of the pedagogies of counter-surveillance, I included an analysis of the girls' linguistic repertoires. Through the dynamic use of their bilingualism, we saw how the girls straddled worlds, negotiated meaning, and constructed repertoires of dignity and strength through the use of their border tongues. The concept of translanguaging moves us away from static, dichotomized views of language and instead asks us to "look at how human beings use their linguistic knowledge holistically to function as language users and social actors" (García & Wei, 2014, p. 32). Translanguaging provides an internal look—a humanized look—into the entanglement of linguistic repertoires in the borderlands and the possibilities of new knowledge

that arise from new tongues. Languages are not just being entangled with each other, however. They also become enmeshed with the girls' *mujersista* pedagogies and epistemologies. The girls' *testimonio* forms reveal how they used translanguaging to communicate their rejection of dominant discourses by using each of their languages to emphasize a point. As you may remember, Nayeli's repertoire in her discussion of education and happiness used her languages to reveal the multiple sources of knowledge that led her to construct her whole message.

Si no tienes education, te trantan como basura [if you don't have education, they treat you like trash]. Society says you have to be popular and you have to go to Harvard... *para que personas te* [so people can] appreciate you. And people are too hard on themselves to where they think yes. If I have this, and this, and this, I will do all of this and I will be happy. *Pero eso no es la verdad de* [but that is not the truth of] happiness

In this statement, Nayeli is using her Spanish language to signal that for Latinxs like her, education has been a marker for how they are treated. She hears how her family is constructed through the racist nativist discourses so she uses the language of the family to describe it. She uses her English language to signal what society values. The American meritocracy being communicated in it's the hegemonic tongue, English. Her *testimonio* repertoires provide a more nuanced view into the discursive practices of bilingual children. Jimena's interaction with Mr. Davidson's insistence on putting her arm around her also reveals how she engaged her *mujerista* youth literacies to "read" the multiple power texts embodied by Mr. Davidson and his actions.

He expects me to say something, like a bad word or something like 'bitch leave me alone' to get me in trouble but I take it the other way and be like "don't touch me" because first of all you're not supposed to be touching anybody and like if I don't want you to touch me then you shouldn't don't touch me. Yeah, My mom says '*que nadie te*

toque ni like para abrazarte o nada mija’ [nobody should be touching you or anything.

Not even for a hug, mija].

Her decision not to curse and her calm rejection of contact highlights how she understood her position in relation to Mr. Davidson’s power: she was the one that stood to be punished should she react in an outwardly defiant way. Yet, she refused to accept the position she had been placed in. Her negotiation process points to how she drew from her mother’s pedagogies and her *facultad* to see his actions as inappropriate. This reading of power is an active engagement of her *mujerista* youth literacies. In her reflection on the moment, her thought process is narrated in her translanguaging border tongue. By doing so, she is emphasizing how her educación from the third world is coming into contact with the subordinate positioning purported by Mr. Davidson. Her translanguaging repertoire points to the emergence of Jimena’s own *mujerista* epistemology when she switched out her mother’s voice and into her own when she told me “*si no puedes respetar tu propio cuerpo, no puedes respetar a nadie*” [if you can’t respect your own body, you can’t respect anyone]. At the heart of her decision making process were sets of knowledge that pushed her to the power at play, resist White patriarchal dominance, and also create her own pedagogy on respect that she communicated to me. She was *teaching me* how and why respect for one’s own body can be enacted.

Mujerista Youth Literacies

The way translanguaging and bilingualism was taken up by the girls points to a need to expand our notions of biliteracy (Cervantes-Soon, *in progress*), which the field has taken up as the ability to read and write in two languages (García, Bartlett, & Kleifgen, 2006). Nayeli’s and Jimena’s biliteracy in the above example reveals how they are reading the world and the word in a new tongue to create a new discourse. What these girls have shown they can do with language

in disrupting the surveillance practices of the school, community, and their families reveals a complexity to bilingualism as it relates to their youth literacies. Thus the question that has arisen for me in the last days of this writing process is how can what they *do* with language continue to inform how we understand literacy, biliteracy, and linguistic agency. These examples of how translanguaging is enacted in the negotiation of power, resistance of the intersectional surveillance matrix, and the authoring of resilient identities points to the importance of conceiving of translanguaging as an embodied literacy practice. For *mujerista* youth, translanguaging goes beyond disrupting language dichotomies. Their translanguaging also points to how they transgress racial-gendered norms around women speaking unto the world. Not only are they responding back to power discourses around them, they are doing so in critically reflexive and transformative ways. An understanding of language, its processes, and the underlying ideologies that frame it is key to building and nurturing critical literacy. Freire and Macedo (1987) argue that “language is packed with ideology and for this reason, it has to be given prominence in any radical pedagogy that proposes to provide space for students’ emancipation” (p. 128). Additionally, Gloria Anzaldúa valiantly declared that we are our languages. Our border thinking forms part of that language. In many ways, cultural intuition is about asking ourselves what we see from our positions in the borderlands. What is it that we already know about the world, about the word, that we can use to guide our analysis of new “texts”? And if we take translanguaging as an understanding about how we speak unto the world, together we can envision the transformative power of young women’s spaces. The living space of the *encuentro* is a new world with its own sets of discourses, pedagogies, and literacies like cultural intuition and translanguaging. This realization made me see that what emerged was

indeed our own *a sitio y lengua*—a decolonizing space and discourse (Perez, 1998) where the girls could claim space, author new identities, and resist dominance.

From a critical *mujerista* standpoint, the embodied pedagogies and literacies demonstrated by the young women of this study point towards new directions in the fields of literacy, biliteracy, translanguaging, and Chicana feminist youth studies. Additionally research should continue in these fields towards the creation and/or nurturing of border spaces for young women. Doing so entails an examination of their lives through their eyes, a critical examination of their authentic girl discourses (Cervantes-Soon, 2012), and a conscious effort to dispel the adult hegemony (Saavedra, 2011) that dominates how society views youth. Additionally, while it is important to work towards an equitable world where surveillance is not used as a tool to discipline and dominate, in the meantime, there is power in learning and teaching others how to counter-surveil the world around them. Let these pedagogies and literacies guide others on how to do that for themselves because the most valuable lesson these *mujeres* have imparted on us is when being watched, there is power and agency in watching back. Beyond that, speaking back is a step towards our liberation from those very inequitable power dynamics.

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