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UMI
INTER-MEDIANDO IDENTIDADES: MEDIATING IDENTITIES IN THE EXPLORATION OF LATINA CHILDREN'S LITERATURE THROUGH DRAMA

DISSertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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2000

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Theories on multicultural education call for pedagogical strategies that invite students to engage in a critical inquiry of the meaning and implications of living in a diverse and pluralistic society (Nieto, 1996; Banks, 1995). However, the development of pedagogical practices that serve the purposes of multicultural education is a complex undertaking.

Among the historically under and misrepresented groups within the school curriculum is the Latino/a community. In order to better understand the complexities of Latino/a community and identity in the classrooms, the curriculum has to be perceived in a "transformative approach" where like Banks (1994) suggested "[t]he structure of the curriculum is changed to enable students to view concepts, issues, events, and themes from the perspective of diverse ethnic and cultural groups" (p. 25). This qualitative study had two major purposes. First is to provide a better understanding of the way a Puerto Rican/Latina participant/researcher presents and studies literature written by Latinas with fifth graders. Second, it also looks at how students engage in the process of critically studying, interpreting and mediating literature written by Latinas.
The first part of this study analyzed and situated the book *Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado* (1993) by Chicana writer Gloria Anzaldúa using Latina feminist literary theories to connect this piece of literature for children to the larger field of Latina literary criticism. This framework provided me as a researcher, with a better understanding of the complexity of identities, meanings and locations of being Latina and how these are portrayed by Latina authors of children's literature.

The second part of this study explores fifth grade children's responses to *Friends from the Other Side/Amigos del otro lado* (1993) by Gloria Anzaldúa. The purpose of this classroom study was to understand how I, as a Puerto Rican/Latina participant/researcher facilitated the book and studied how the students and I locate, inter-related and mediated our identities within this representation of Latina literature. Drama in education strategies were used as the main tool to engage in a critical and creative reflection of some of the aspects and meanings of being Latina and how we relate and make meaning of those aspects.
A los Medina
To the Medina family
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Yo

Naci Puertorriqueña
en la colonia de Puerto Rico
Allí aprendí a leer y a escribir
en la contradicción de nuestro status
“El inglés te llevara a donde tu quieres
pero el español es quien tu eres”
¿Es entonces este escrito es una muestra de lo que yo misma resisto?
¿O es quizas es una muestra de lo que yo soy?
¿O de lo que estoy en proceso de ser?

1I was born Puerto Rican
In the colony of Puerto Rico
Over there I learned to read and write
in the contradiction of our status
“English will take you where you want to go?
But Spanish is who you are”
Is this work a demonstration of what I resist?
Or is it maybe a demonstration of who I am?
Or what I am in the process of becoming?
Statement of the Problem

Somos mas que una fiesta\textsuperscript{2}: Critical aspects of multicultural education

Theories on multicultural education call for pedagogical strategies that invite students to engage in a critical inquiry into the meaning and implications of living in a diverse and pluralistic society (Nieto, 1996; Banks, 1995). However, the development of pedagogical practices that serve the purposes of multicultural education is a complex undertaking. According to Sonia Nieto (1996) "[r]eality is often presented in schools as static, finished, and flat. . . [To be] participants in a democratic society, students need to understand the complexity of the world and of the many perspectives involved" (p. 319). The task is to engage, both teachers and students, in understanding the multiple perspectives and contradictions that involve living in a diverse society and that examine our relationship and stances to the multiplicity of perspectives in society.

There are two significant aspects at the core of theories of multicultural education and critical pedagogy that could help educators understand the importance of critically examining the relationship between participants of a society and how those relate to the larger society its ideologies and beliefs. These are the ways we perceive knowledge and culture.

First, knowledge and reality are socially constructed and schools play a significant role in their construction. Schools have been used as centers for dominant cultural reproduction in which groups such as women, people of color and economically disadvantaged people have been marginalized and hardly

\textsuperscript{2} We are more than a "fiesta".
integrated into the curriculum (Freire, 1994; Apple, 1993; Lankshear and McLaren, 1993; Macedo, 1994; Giroux, 1988). According to Lankshear & McLaren (1993): “The rich possibilities for taking the histories, memories, and struggles of marginal groups as a basis for working toward understanding daily life, its demands, and its shortfalls in democratic terms are simply denied if not made invisible” (p. 18). In order to provide our students with a broader perspective on the society that we live in, the voices of those groups left out have to be incorporated and represented in the curriculum. However, the idea of representation has to be approached critically. A curriculum that incorporates aspects of marginalized groups without critically examining the socio-political reality of those groups does not provide a fair representation. Like Lankshear & McLaren pointed out: “[t]he answer is not simply to take the voices and meaning of Others as givens, to be celebrated naively and accepted as educational knowledge in their own right. They have to be worked responsibly and critically” (p. 18-19). In order to work from a critical and multicultural perspective educators have to become aware that knowledge is dynamic and constructed and that we all from our specific epistemological locations subjectively influence the process of knowing. The notion of the “neutral curriculum” and the “neutral teacher” has to be deconstructed to openly examine the ideologies that teachers and students bring to the classroom and how those relate to the larger society.

The second important aspect of a critical multicultural perspective, is the notion that culture is in constant development, is not a finished product and as part of living in, or belonging to, a cultural group we influence its production.
According to Freire (1994): “As man [and woman] relate[s] to the world by responding to the challenges of the environment, they begin to dynamize, to master, and to humanize reality. They add to it something of their own making, by giving temporal meaning to geographic space, by creating culture” (p.5). The creation of culture is not a homogenous passive process; as members of a society we influence the development of multiple cultures. Then it becomes problematic for example when groups are excluded from the core curriculum and the students' perceptions of culture becomes static and narrow having as a result the development of a mono cultural perspective as opposed to a multicultural perspective.

This notion of a homogenous common “American culture” is presented by people such as E.D. Hirsch (1987) where he argued “We should teach children current mainstream culture” (p. 28). He elaborates on the meaning of mainstream culture by recognizing that it is influenced by many other cultures that he situates at the “periphery of literate culture” (p. 29). Those cultures at the periphery enter and exit the mainstream culture but there is always a core culture that stays and this is the one that we should teach our children. The following citation captures the essence of Hirsch’s argument:

The flux in mainstream culture is obvious to all. But stability, not change, is the chief characteristic of cultural literacy. Although historical and technical terms may follow the ebb and flow of events, the more stable elements of our national vocabulary, like George Washington, the tooth
fairy, the Gettysburg Address, Hamlet, and the Declaration of Independence, have persisted for a long time. These stable elements of the national vocabulary are at the core of cultural literacy, and for that reason are the most important contents of schooling. (p. 29)

Looking at ED Hirsch’s definition of what it means to learn and to be literate through “cultural literacy” is an example that shows how literacy and knowledge is not an empty exercise and it has many implications related to issues of power, culture and identity. A non-inclusive curriculum has been used by dominant groups to assimilate, marginalized and classify as inferior those whose cultural or ethnic backgrounds are different.

The larger questions that frame this study are grounded in the recognition that there are voices, histories and perspectives that have been excluded from the curriculum. This exclusion limits the students’ knowledge and understanding of a broad portrayal of the society they live in. For those whose stories are not represented such inclusion is even more problematic because their stories become marginalized and apparently unimportant. Through this study and as an ongoing set of questions that frame my work as a scholar in education I questioned:

- What are the implications of a lack of representation and knowledge for those whose cultural experiences are different and distant from the "canon" or mainstream?
- What are the consequences of limiting knowledge to a set of specific experiences considered “the most important” for all children? How does
that limited knowledge impact the ways we interact in discriminatory and prejudiced ways as members of a diverse society?

- How can educators develop pedagogies that explore the process, tensions and possibilities of bringing marginalized perspectives to the curriculum?

A critical approach to literacy and learning constitutes a counterpart and a reaction from those who see the need to redefine literacy from a broader and more inclusive perspective. Ira Shor (1987) defined critical literacy as a process that:

[Invites teachers and students to problematize all subjects of study, that is, to understand existing knowledge as a historical product deeply invested with the values of those who develop such knowledge. A critically literate person does not stay at the empirical level of memorizing data, or at the impressionistic level of dominant myths in society, but goes beneath the surface to understand the origin, structure, and consequences of any body of knowledge, technical process, or object under study. (p. 24)

It is within this definition of critical literacy that I locate this study. Learning is an activity that is situated within a social, political and cultural context. Our locations and perceptions of the world are at the center of learning and more specifically of learning to read and write.
Literacy is not an empty skill. As we learn to read words, we are learning to read about our world and the world of others (Freire, 1995/1970). The notion of reading the word through the world is grounded in Paulo Freire's theories of literacy. According to Freire (1995/1970 & 1994/1969) literacy is a critical process in which the learner and the teacher/facilitator understand and become conscious of their reality at the same time that learning to read and write takes place. This process is what he called “concientization”. To become multicultural is to become critically conscious of the multiple social realities that work within this society. It involves an effort to incorporate groups that have been traditionally excluded from the curriculum.

Purpose of the study

Among the historically under and misrepresented groups is the Latino/a community. There is a lack of representation, understanding, and exploration of the complexity and meanings of a “common latinidad” (Alegria, 1991). Within the umbrella term Latina/o there are aspects of gender identities, multiple cultures, multiple ethnicities and multiple perspectives that sometimes work in harmony and solidarity but that also are contested and in tension. In order to better understand the complexities of Latino/a community and identity in classroom settings, the curriculum has to be perceived in a “transformative approach” where as Banks suggests (1994) “[t]he structure of the curriculum is changed to enable students to view concepts, issues, events, and themes from the perspective of diverse ethnic and cultural groups” (p. 25).
This study had two major purposes. First is to provide a better understanding of the way a Puerto Rican/Latina participant/researcher presents and studies literature written by Latinas with fifth graders. Second, it also looks at how students engage in the process of critically studying, interpreting and mediating literature written by Latinas.

In the first part of this study I analyze and situate the book *Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado* (1993) by Chicana writer Gloria Anzaldúa using Latina feminist literary theories to connect this piece of literature for children to the larger field of Latina literary criticism. This literary framework provided me as a researcher, with a better understanding of the complexity of identities, meanings and locations of being Latina and how these are portrayed by Latina authors of children’s literature.

The second part of this study explores fifth grade children’s responses to *Friends from the Other Side/Amigos del otro lado* (1993) by Gloria Anzaldúa. The purpose of this classroom study was to understand how I, as a Puerto Rican/Latina participant/researcher not only facilitated the students’ reading and interpretation of the book but also studied how the students and I locate, interrelated and mediated our identities within this representation of Latina literature. Drama in education strategies were used as the main pedagogical tool to engage in a critical and creative reflection of some of the aspects and meanings of being Latina and how we relate and make meaning of those aspects.
Research questions

Throughout this study I aimed to look at the following specific questions:

- What is the potential of using a Latina literary framework to study and analyze Latina children's literature? Does this framework help the reader situate and interpret the literature in a manner that is congruent with the complexities Latina writers explored in their literature?

- What does it mean to read this literature while at the same time negotiating the author's and readers' own cultural identities? How, for example, do I as a Puerto Rican/Latina participant researcher present and interpret the students readings of Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado? Where do I position myself in the mediation of this text? Do I, as Puerto Rican, present myself as an insider in the Latino/a culture but as an outsider of the Mexican-American culture?

- What is the impact of Latina literary analysis on my presentation of the text? How does this framework impact the students' responses? Where do the students position themselves in relationship to the story?

- If as Soter and Rogers (1997) suggest "[r]eaders resist texts and readings, as well as real implied authors, because of their cultural memberships and various identity positions" (p. 3), how do we create spaces to mediate these cultural identity positions?

- Which pedagogical tools work as facilitators of this mediation? What is the potential of the arts, in this case drama, in the exploration of texts that
are distant from the students' cultural and ethnic locations? How does drama provide a space for a critical understanding of issues of democracy, immigration, citizenship, and discrimination? Do students' ideologies and opinions become transparent through the drama? Is drama a space to actively revisit and re-construct ideologies?

Sonia Nieto (1996) points out the significance of process and participation in the development of a multicultural perspective. She believes that "[n]o one ever stops becoming a multicultural person, and knowledge is never complete" (p. 317). Dillard and Ford (1996) stated that to become multicultural is a recursive process of self-and social construction. This study explored both of these ideas as I introduced a text written by Chicana/Latina writer Gloria Anzaldúa and documented how through our shared teaching and learning, the students engaged in a critical multicultural experience. The students and I examined and re-examined the implications and interactions of our ideologies at the same time that we acknowledged that we are active participants in a democratic society.

Definition of terms

Latina/o – The umbrella term specifically refers to people of Latin American and Caribbean heritage (ex. Puerto Ricans, Cuban Americans, Mexican Americans/Chicanos/as). I preferred to use this term as opposed to Hispanic because it embraces the African and Indigenous heritage that characterizes Latin American and Caribbean communities. However it is important to point out that
while this term involves a sense of solidarity among Latinos/as like many other umbrella terms, it fails to portray the complexities of Latinos/as as a heterogeneous group.

Latina - Refers to woman with Latin American heritage. While it is a term in Spanish it is used by Latinas in the US to reaffirm and make explicit a gender identity.

Latino – Refers to males with Latin American heritage.

Chicano/a - The term Chicana/o was born out of the sons and daughters of Mexican Americans in the 60’s as a way to give new meaning to their identity (López, 1993). It is widely used among academics to refer to Mexican Americans such as in the case of academic programs named Chicano studies and Chicana/o literary movement.

Chicana/Latina or Puerto Rican/Latina – I used this combination of terms in order to show a common ethnic heritage as Latinas but also recognizing the individuality and complexity of each specific nationality background. I am for example Puerto Rican/Latina and the author of the book Gloria Anzaldúa is Chicana/Latina.
In the next chapter I lay out the literature framework for this study. Theories related to critical literacy, multicultural children's literature, Latina literary theories and drama as a pedagogical tool are explored to provide the theoretical context for the classroom study.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Poets and artists are visionaries. They are dreamers who weave stories out of their dreams, which are reflective of their times, but which most people do not, cannot, or refuse to see...The woman writer cannot fail to be aware of the possible consequences of her cultural interpretations and her claims as feminist, both within her own culture and within the dominant one in which her works are received. (Castillo, 1991, p. 175)

The reproduction of power through literacy

Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1995/1970) was one of the most influential voices in the development of a critical examination of the meaning and implications of becoming literate. According to Freire educational systems and as a result literacy programs are structured and designed by those who are in power to maintain the “status quo” and to preserve the marginalization of those who are not part of it. Through what he called the “banking model” of education, the process of learning is an empty a/critical process where the learner is perceived as an object of education receiving information as opposed to a subject of education critically constructing knowledge. In order to disrupt this model Freire argued for an educational model that moves the learner to the
center of the process making learners the subject of their own education. Learners, (both teacher and students) should engage in critical dialogue that looks at the ways society is structured and the role we all as citizens play within it. Through the development of literacy programs where society is studied critically, teachers and students develop a level of social consciousness or "concientization" (Freire, 1994/1969) where together they critically read "the world".

The notion of "concientization" or lack of it plays a crucial role in the United States educational system. The curriculum that frames the educational system works as a form of marginalization leaving out multiple perspectives that are not considered to be "valuable knowledge". What traditionally has been perceived as a "neutral" curriculum and common knowledge is according to Macedo, (1994) a form of dominant ideology that celebrates Western supremacy and that leaves out "other cultural narratives along the lines of race, ethnicity, language and gender" (p. 37).

One way in which knowledge is constructed from narrow points of view is through the use of texts that offer limited perspectives. According to Apple (1993) classroom texts: "signify through their content and form particular constructions of reality, particular ways of selecting and organizing that vast universe of possible knowledge" (p.198). In order to open up and bring an array of perspectives that help understand society the curriculum has to include texts that portray other stories and social realities. However, it is important to clarify that it is not about substituting one perspective with another. The dialogic learning
process of critically examining reality and our places within it becomes more challenging when the tensions and possibilities are explored through inclusion and not exclusion, but inclusion based on equal and balanced representation. The combination of texts and pedagogies that allow for a more critical dialogue in the classroom have the potential of providing learners with a broader understanding of the ways citizens actively or passively participate and influence the development of what we claim to be a democratic society.

¿Donde estamos las latinas?³: The potential of multicultural children's literature

Children's literature has become a powerful medium for educators to teach multiculturally (Harris, 1997; Beaty, 1997; Sims-Bishop, 1997; Schon 1997a and 1997b, 1997c). Furthermore the broadness of definitions of multicultural literature makes it difficult to count what is and is not available. For the purpose of this study I relied on Bishop's definition of multicultural literature in order to be specific about what is considered multicultural children's literature within the parameters of this study:

[M]ulticultural literature should be defined in a comprehensive and inclusive manner; that is, it should include books that reflect the racial, ethnic, and social diversity that is characteristic of our pluralistic society and of the world... I believe that race—or color—is one of the most—divisive issues in this society, and that, until recently, the absence of such

³ Where are we Latinas?
literature has constituted one of the most glaring omissions in the canon of children's literature. (p. 3).

Given this definition, a major concern in relation to multicultural children's literature is that we are not yet at a point in which multicultural children's literature is integrated, explored and studied at all levels and from multiple perspectives within the classroom (Rogers & Soter, 1997). The selection and study of a multicultural book mostly depends on the perceptions, purposes and definitions of those who choose it. Rudine Sims Bishop (1997) pointed that:

[A] teacher who views literature about people of color as a vehicle for sensitizing other children to the inequities in our society may be led to choose different teaching books and employ different teaching strategies than the teacher who wants merely to 'expose' children to literature about people different from themselves (p.4).

Literature written by and about Latinas/os in the USA is part of the spectrum of multicultural children's literature. It provides teachers with a variety of options and perspectives to teach about aspects of Latinos/as identity that range from food and celebrations to more critical and political perspectives on the relationship of Latinos to US society and social history. However, the literature available has increased in the last several years but not at a pace that reflects the rapid growth of the Latino/a population in the United States. For the purpose
of this study, I limit the definition of Latino/a children's literature to those texts written by Latino/a authors in the United States that speak about the realities, experiences, complexities and traditions of being Latino/a in the US and the multiple communities involved.

More important than the volume of literature published is the quality of these books and how they represent the complexities of identities within the Latino/a community (Nieto, 1997; Barrera & Garza, 1997). In the literature available for children, one can find a collection of texts that expose the reader to the heterogeneous characteristics of Latina/o identity. Among the authors that are considered ground breakers of the Latino/a literature available for children who add to the multiplicity of perspectives are Gary Soto (1992, 1995), Rudolfo Anaya (1997), Victor Martínez (1996), on the experiences of growing up Mexican American. Nicholas Mohr (1989, 1990), Judith Ortíz Cofer (1995), and Alma Flor Ada⁴ (1993); write about growing up Nuyorican⁵ from a woman's perspective. Lulu Delacre celebrates multiple aspects of the Puerto Rican (1993) and Latin American culture (1996). Sandra Cisneros (1994) and Gloria Anzaldúa (1993, 1996) write on being Chicanas/Mexican Americans. Carmen Lomas Garza's (1996) art books portray Mexican American cultural icons, Pat Mora (1996) writes poetry for young children and Juan Felipe Herrera (1995) writes about the migrant experience. Altogether these texts are a composition of the

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⁴ Alma Flor Ada is a Cuban American writer but her books often focus on other Latino/a groups.
⁵ Puerto Ricans born on the mainland are often known as Nuyoricans or Puerto Ricans. Authors use both but there is no agreement as to which one is the "most appropriate" to use.
Latina/o voices that bring a deeper meaning to the experience of being Latino/a in the US.

One significant and unique standpoint within the Latina/o writers community is the experience of writing as Latinas from a woman's perspective. The field of children's literature has been influenced on a small scale by the creation of children's literature written by Latinas sharing their voices, visions and experiences. Their work has the potential of becoming extremely valuable for teachers and children to understand the uniqueness of being a woman within the Latino community.

However, there is an absence of studies that look at the significance of adult author's interpretation of a Latina perspective for young readers. Most of the research has studied Latino/a children's literature as a broad category similar to survey articles. One of the leading scholars and researchers is Isabel Schon (1997a, 1997b, 1997c) who has focused on making accessible the literature written in Spanish by and about Latinos/as in the USA. Her frequent publications in the Multicultural Review provide educators with the latest resources regarding literature written in Spanish.

Gottlieb Crowell (1998) explored the consequences of poor Latino/a representation in Young Adult literature and suggests a list of books and resources that facilitate the selection of Latino/a children's literature with more accurate portrayals of the Latino/a culture. Barry's article (1998) Talking about books: Celebrating linguistic diversity argues that: "Given that language and

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6 Latina -female/Latino-male
culture are inextricably bound through multifaceted connections, something is quite naturally lost when an author represents the experiences of a protagonist in a language that is not indigenous to the culture of that protagonist” (p. 228). He analyzed a selection of books looking at how linguistic authenticity influences the accuracy of cultural representations in those texts. The article explored notions such as code switching and dual language texts.

Other studies focus on literature written from a specific Latino nationality. Sonia Nieto for example is one of the most significant scholars in the field of Puerto Rican children’s literature. Her analyses have been published in journals such as Rethinking Schools (1993), Interracial books for children bulletin (1983) and chapters of books such as Using multiethnic literature in the K-8 classroom (1997) and Images and Identities: The Puerto Rican in two world contexts (1987) that provide an overview of contemporary multicultural literature. Nieto’s research focuses on how the multiple aspects of being a Puerto Rican living in the USA are portrayed by different authors. Other significant researchers in the field of Latino/a children’s literature include Rosalinda Barrera and Oralia Garza de Cortés. Their research focuses on the study of books that portray the Mexican American experience (Barrera & Garza de Cortés, 1997; Garza de Cortés 1995). A more specific study is Ramirez & Smardo-Dowd, (1997). This is a content analysis of the portrayal of Mexican-American females in realistic picture books from K-3.

These studies focus more on the criteria for selecting and evaluating Latino/a children’s literature and point out stereotypes and misconceptions
related to Latinos/as portrayal. However new literary and pedagogical approaches to study and facilitate Latina children's literature will help integrate and mediate this body of literature in the classroom.

¿Qué tenemos que añadir las Latinas al salón de clases?7: Contemporary realistic fiction in the development of critical literacy

One way to bring those perspectives left out from the curriculum is through the exploration of contemporary realistic fiction with children. Tyson (1998) defines as one component of contemporary realistic fiction: "picture books that are fictionalized narratives based on significant social events" (p. 156). The potential of this literature relies on the ways in which the texts portrays an aspect of society through the characters' life, usually children, bringing up contemporary social issues or event through a personal story.

In a study with African American males in fifth grade Tyson (1998) studied their responses to a variety of contemporary realistic fiction. Through this study Tyson looked at different aspects of how the students' responses to the literature connect to their lives, how their interpretations of the texts helped them perceived the way society is structured and their roles as active agents of change:

The connections the boys made to contemporary realistic fiction about social issues and the ways they transgressed the boundaries of childhood as they initiated or enacted social action became synonymous with empowerment and liberation of their own lives. (p.157)

7 What Latinas have to add to the classroom?
In terms of Latina/o contemporary realistic fiction for children there is a lack of research that looks at the possibilities this literature provides in studying social issues relevant to the Latino/a community. A book such as Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado (1993) has the potential of engaging a community of readers in a critical examination of aspects of the reality people live in the US/Mexican border community. Furthermore as critical readers it is possible to see how as participants of this society we have been denied access to this reality and as a consequence full participation in a democratic society. Rosalinda Barrera (1992) argues that in order to develop a contemporary literature-based literacy instruction we must:

…not only recognize the plurality of cultures that exists in a complex society, it must also recognize that cultures involve relations of power, reflected in patterns of dominance and subordination. In other words, the cultural is also political and multiple meanings expressed by different individuals and peoples within a culturally diverse society will be contested. (p. 237)

Those relationships of dominance and subordination are explored by Latina writers and provide multiple possibilities within the classroom. One possible approach is to study this literature with students as a feminist literary text.
Nosotras tenemos voz propia\textsuperscript{8}: Latinas children's literature as feminist literary work

One way to approach Latina children's literature is to locate and analyze it from a Latina feminist point of view. After all, some of the most important Latina writers have published books for children and young adults, the best examples of which might include Gloria Anzaldúa's \textit{Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado}, (1993) and \textit{Prietita and the ghost woman} (1996); Nicholasa Mohr's \textit{Nilda} (1986), \textit{Felita}, (1990) and \textit{Going home}, (1989); Pat Mora's poetry book, \textit{Confetti} (1996); Judith Ortiz Cofer, \textit{An island like you: Stories from El Barrio} (1995) and Sandra Cisneros' \textit{The house on Mango Street} (1983). In all of these texts, the stories are told from a Latina perspective that is, they deal with the reality of being a woman within specific cultural locations while also relating themselves to the larger Latino/a community.

It has been argued that the perspectives that Latina authors bring to literature are different from those of mainstream and even Latino/male writers (Anzaldúa 1987; Herrera-Sobek and Viramontes 1996; McKenna 1997; Flores 1993; Quintana 1996; Hernandez 1997). Latina writers have become an important and committed voice that brings the uniqueness of their experiences to the field:

As women's voices begin to be heard, the political and social struggle must alter to accommodate their view. Women's literature gives renewed

\textsuperscript{8} We have our own voices.
force to Chicano/a [Latino/a] literature and begins to direct a vital dialogue within Chicano [Latino] politics as well (McKenna, p. 22).

Latinas problematize the notion that we Latinas/os are a homogenous group; they recognize that each author writes from a unique experience resulting in a deeper reflection of our Latina identity. They “address the question of the politics of multiple identities from a position that seeks to integrate ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, and language” (Torres, 1996, p. 128).

These experiences, often contested, are represented through images and metaphors that reflect the tensions and the complexity of having multiple identities. This multiplicity of identities is often described through the metaphor of the “border”. The border becomes a space where Latinas explore, according to McKenna (1997) "an aspect of their critical subjectivity in which they position themselves, usually with images of bridges or other locators of liminal space” (1997, p. 117). The border is a physical and metaphorical image that Latinas use to explore their experiences negotiating multiple aspects of their identity such as languages (Spanish and English), cultures (US and Latino), religion (Christian and Indigenous) and gender. The notion of the border or the Borderland is theorized and explored in depth by Chicana writer Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) in her book Borderland/La Frontera. According to critic Tabuenca (1998) the border in Anzaldúa’s literature is:
[A] metaphor in which the border space as a geopolitical region converges with discourses of ethnicity, class, gender/sex, and sexual preference. [It is] the emergence of a new border conscience and identity which allows for multiple and fragmentary subject. (p. 238)

An aspect of the border exploration involves the creation of texts that can be called critical fictions in which "the writers consider the relationship between imaginative writing and the political and social institutions that shape the writer's daily experience" (Mariani, 1991, p. ix). Especially noteworthy is the Chicana and Puerto Rican feminist literary movement which has worked towards a creation of their own theoretical constructs where as Herrera-Sobek (1996) argues, "political and social oppression are primary vectors structuring many of their works" (p. 3.). Among the most significant authors in the Chicana tradition are Ana Castillo (1991), Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), Cherie Moraga (1983), Lorna Dee Cervantes (1991), Sandra Cisneros (1994), and Pat Mora (1993). Among the Puerto Rican/Nuyorican tradition are Nicholasa Mohr (1994), Sandra María Esteves (1995), Esmeralda Santiago (1998), Aurora Levins Morales (1998), and Judith Ortiz Cofer (1991). The uniqueness of these voices deserve a separate framework to explore the literature. Yarbro-Bejarano (1996) affirms that:

[The existence of a Chicana feminist literary criticism implies the existence, first of all, of a tradition or body of texts by Chicana writers,
which in turn implies the existence of a community of Chicanas and ideally of a Chicana feminist political movement" (p. 213).

In terms of the Puerto Rican/Nuyorican feminist writer's experience, poet Sandra Maria Esteves (1987) points out that, "the literature of the Puerto Rican woman in the United States today is an aggressive political expression, an affirmation on behalf of the rights of all people" (p. 175). Latina authors are writing from their unique and specific locations but their work definitely connects them to the larger US society.

Yo escribo sobre mi vida⁹: An overview of themes and characteristics of Latina feminist literature

Latina literature is considered a literary tradition that has its own set of themes and characteristics. Children's literature written by Latinas must be included as part of this body of literature. While authors (for both adults and children) have their own style and qualities as individual writers, when the literature is read as a collection, a series of themes and characteristics arise to connect this body of literature. It is important to clarify however, that it is problematic to create and describe a set of lineal characteristics for the literature written by Latinas. This lineal approach can suggest a hierarchy of themes that does not work to analyze the literature. For example, it is questionable to talk first about the role of gender and to then describe the role of race and ethnicity in

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⁹ I write about my life
literature written by Latinas. Rebolledo (1990) talks about the critic's failure trying to borrow from Western forms of literary analysis to create static categories for complex texts. In order to break down this contradiction, as I write about Latina literature in this section I decided to include excerpts from the work of Latina authors to give the reader a better sense of the complexities of themes and the criteria for being considered Latina feminist literature.

**Autobiography, identity and marginalization**

I am what I am
Rosario Morales

I am what I am a U.S. American I haven't wanted to say it because if I did you'd take away the Puerto Rican but now I say go to hell I am what I am and you can't take it away with all the words and sneers at your command I am what I am I am Puerto Rican I am U.S. American I am New York Manhattan and the Bronx I am what I am I'm not hiding under no stoop behind no curtain I am what I am (1981, p. 14)

Latinas have been a marginalized and unrecognized group as an artistic movement (Moraga and Anzaldúa 1981; Hernández 1997; Castillo 1991). As opposed to Latino writers who write about their experiences of mediating their identity in the larger US community (Rodriguez, 1993; Thomas, 1991; Laviera, 1992) Latina experiences were seen as unimportant because they “belong to the house” and that was not seen as a significant or intellectual location. Also the responsibilities that their roles as women imposed on them kept them from full participation in artistic movements. Carmen Dolores Hernandez (1997) in analyzing the role of women in the Puerto Rican literary tradition pointed out that:
Whereas young males were constantly exposed to violence in the streets of the ghetto, women's lives were subject to another kind of oppression. They were doubly invisible, both because they came from a segment of society that had been marginalized by poverty and ignorance and also because their roles were circumscribed to the home by male dominance within their community. (p. 10)

Latinas then speak about their personal experiences and explore how those shape their identity in terms of gender, race, class and culture. Their works are often autobiographical translating their personal stories into fictional works. Examples are *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987) by Gloria Anzaldúa and more recently Aurora Levins Morales' (1998) *Remedios: Stories of earth and iron from the history of Puertorriqueñas*. But the use of fiction does not lessen the social reality that the authors are portraying. On the contrary, by using multiple genres, the authors position their literary work in a complex genre where as Torres (1997) states: “the construction of a ‘subject’ suddenly has become antitheoretical and problematic according to the dictates of current critical theory” (p. 129). The genre itself becomes another exploration in which the representation of their identities becomes clearer, disrupting traditional lineal ways associated with a male Western writing tradition. Alvina Quintana (1996), in analyzing the role of Chicanas in the Chicano literary movement, stated:
The Chicano power movement's failure to critically examine the patriarchal consciousness of the dominant system led to internal power disputes and to the creation of a cultural nationalism that duplicated the very hierarchical structures it opposed. Chicana women were thus quickly transformed into the subordinate class within Chicano nationalistic literature. (p. 19)

As a result of their subordination as women, Latina literature moves between the glorification and disruption of their roles. They navigate against and within their roles as Latinas, mothers, daughters, feminists, lesbians, and heterosexuals. In the anthology This bridge called my back: Writings by radical women of color (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981) these themes go across many of the Latina selections. Not only are Latinas working within and against the meanings of womanhood in their identity formation, but their cultural locations are also complex and contested. The notion of *las *mestizas is central to much of the literature written by Latinas. The word mestizaje describes and honors the complexity of Latinos/as Indigenous, African and Spanish heritage as part of our identity. Latina writers used the notion of *mestizas to describe their complex and multiplicity of identities not only limited to ethnicity but to gender and how those are used as a form of marginalization from mainstream culture:
Una lucha de fronteras/A struggle of Borders
Gloria Anzaldúa

Because I, a mestiza,
continually walk out of one culture
and into another,
because I am in all cultures at the same time,
alma entre dos mundos, tres, cuatro,
me zumba la cabeza lo contradictorio.
Estoy norteada por todas las voces que me hablan
Simultáneamente (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 76)

Latinas acknowledge the influence of their Mexican, Puerto Rican or other
Latin American heritage but also recognize that their experiences in the USA
make them unique and different from Latinos living in Latin America. The result
is a hybrid and complex identity that Gloria Anzaldúa called the new Mestiza.

Sandra Maria Esteves’ (1995) poem Here is an example of an expression of
mestizaje:

Here
Sandra Maria Esteves

I am two parts a person
boricua/spic
past and present
alive and oppressed
given a cultural beauty
... and robbed of a cultural identity. (p. 3)
Re-naming language: Spanglish as a form of expression

Linguistic Terrorism
Gloria Anzaldúa

Deslenguadas. Somos las del español diferente. We are your linguistic nightmare, your linguistic aberration, your linguistic mestizaje, the subject of your burla. Because we speak with tongues of fire we are culturally crucified. Racially, culturally, and linguistically somos huérfanos—we speak an orphan tongue. (Anzaldúa, 1987, p.58)

Spanglish, or the mix and code switching between Spanish and English has become “a resistance to a norm or standard imposed by two ‘uncontaminated’ groups” (Hernández, 1997, p. 8). By using “non-standard” English and “non-standard” Spanish, Latinas transform languages into a form relevant to their cultural locations. Even though Spanglish can be found in the work of both Latino and Latina authors, it has to be considered and discussed as a key characteristic to understand the literature written by Latinas:

As mestizas, we must now take a critical look at language, all our languages and patois combinations, with the understanding that, explicitly or implicitly, language is the vehicle by which we not only represent ourselves but perceive ourselves in the world. (Castillo, 1991, p. 167)

Spirituality

Mother nature, healers, curanderas, are part of the spiritual aspects of Latina writers. These traditions are inherited from the Indigenous and African influences in the Latino/a culture. They constitute another theme that goes across their writing and that has been used creatively as part of the Latina
subjectivity. Spirituality becomes a political move from Latinas to disrupt Western notions of religion, positioning them in a new exploration in terms of who they are. Medina (1998) perceives the role of spirituality in Latina writers as a way to: “supplant patriarchal religion with their own cultural knowledge, sensibilities and a sense of justice” (p. 189).

Medina describes four important aspects in which spirituality plays a crucial role in Latina writers. She argues that Latinas spirituality is a way to disrupt the patriarchal Eurocentrism of the church. Latina spirituality is a form of decolonization of the spirit enabling women to heal and be healed. It is a form of liberation and self-determination that has a direct effect on their politics. And last it is a way to find a connection within to one’s sense of a more complete person. Spirituality then is a space of reaffirmation where past heritage and present influences are both honored and disrupted.

Breaking the traditional literary space in the classroom with “literatura feminista”: **Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado** as an example

The picture book **Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado** (1993) by Chicana writer Gloria Anzaldúa is a text that captures many aspects of the Latinas literary tradition and it also critically examines those as they relate to the life and culture of Latinas. The book is intended for upper elementary grades (3-5) children but the reading and interpretation of the book varies depending on the readers’ maturity. Interpretations could go from a story about friendship to the
exploration of more complex social issues such as discrimination, immigration, democracy, and citizenship among others.

In *Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado*, a story based on Anzaldúa's memories of people crossing the Mexican/US border, Joaquín a young boy who recently crossed the Mexican/US border with his mom, meets Prietita a girl that lives in the US border community. Joaquín and his mom came undocumented to the US to get established and build a better life. In Joaquín's first encounter with the boys from the community he is mocked. The boys call Joaquín *mojado/wetback* and refuse to play with him. Prietita, confronts the boys and defends Joaquín and Prietita and Joaquín become good friends. One day while Prietita and Joaquín are playing together, *la migra/the border patrol*, looking for undocumented people, drives around the border community. Pritetita takes Joaquín and his mom to the *curandera's/herb woman's* house to hide. When the police knock on the neighbor's doors everybody lies to the police, telling them that they haven't seen any undocumented people around.

This is the basic plot of the story. In conjunction with the Illustrator's images the story has multiple sub-texts. The reader is presented with a series of themes such as the role of Prietita as a woman s/hero, the conflict of power and identity inside the Mexican community, the spiritual and political role of the *curandera/herb woman*, the ethical dilemma of hiding Joaquín and his mom from the border patrol and finally the autobiographical aspect of this text. All together these themes embrace realistic and critical aspects about the Chicano/a community.
The book portrays a reality critically moving beyond a naïve stereotype of a complex ethnic group and an aspect of the social realities that Latinos/as live in the United States. *Friends from the Other side/Amigos del otro lado* is a work of literature that has tremendous potential in the classroom because it brings a different perspective to subjects such as social studies and English. However, literature that portrays and explores critical aspects of Latinos/as are often left out from the curriculum. The marginalization of this literature is often perceived as a form of power by dominant ideologies that do not allow for experiences of oppression to be valid and important forms of knowledge (Apple, 1993). In order to disrupt this form of marginalization, educators have to understand that Latinas through their literature for children are searching for a space to approach younger audiences to develop an expanded level of consciousness about their lives and experiences.

The potential of culturally relevant pedagogies in diverse classrooms

The multiple meanings, interpretations and relationships explored through the reading and mediation of contemporary realistic fiction implies that even when a reader does not perceive him or herself as a direct member of the community represented in the text we are all participants of a larger community within the United States. To know the reality lived by other members of this society and our relationship with those is part of our responsibility as citizens. However, the readers' level of identification and interpretation with issues represented in contemporary realistic fiction may vary and are influenced by the
teacher and student's life experiences and social relationships (gender, race and class) within and outside of the classroom (home, community and popular culture) (Enciso, 1997). Literacy researchers have attempted to explore and define the socio-cultural nature of reader's position from multiple perspectives. For example the readers are perceived as having a cross-cultural experience (Soter & Rogers, 1997) where the reader learns about "the other", others describe it with metaphors such as "mirrors and windows" (Galda, 1997) where we see a reflection of ourselves in the text or a window to know about "others". More recently, influenced by theories of cultural studies, Rogers (1998) argues that:

A final challenge in negotiating children's responses to literature will be to capture the complexities of their lived experiences, their private, and social performances, and their play with and resistance to the demands of particular ways of reading and particular kind of stories. (p.143)

I would argue that the study and exploration of the multiple experiences that influence responses to contemporary realistic fiction are complex. Those will involve the fact that as participants of this society, readers will always mirror their awareness or lack of it, participation and stances, in relationship to the issues presented in the text. It is always a mirror no matter the reader stance but those relationships between the text and the reader are especially significant for those
who live in marginalized conditions and see aspects of their identity within the
text.

One powerful particular stance related to reading contemporary realistic
literature, is when the reader identifies him/herself with aspects of the texts. The
reflections and interpretations of the text can become what Ladson-Billings
(1994) defines as culturally relevant experience where: “cultural relevance
moves beyond language to include other aspects of student culture in order to
maintain it and to transcend the negative effects of the dominant culture” (p. 17).
This notion of cultural relevance is a challenge but nevertheless worth exploring
when working in diverse classrooms. The level of engagement and interpretation
for example, of a Latina student reading literature about Latinos/as involves a
deeper examination of aspects of her own identity that traditionally are left out of
the dominant curriculum, opening up a space that moves beyond awareness into
reaffirmation. While a Latina reader will also bring her own perceptions of
gender, class and race and some of those can differ from the text read there are
those places where reaffirmation will occur.

The term culturally relevant is complex and involves many aspects of
education. While not all of them play a role in this study there is another aspect
of it that is significant. According to Ladson-Billings (1995) an important aspect
of a culturally relevant teaching is that:

Not only must teachers encourage academic success and cultural
competence they must help students recognize, understand, and critique
current social inequities. This notion presumes that teachers themselves recognize social inequities and their causes. (p. 176-177)

Through contemporary realistic fiction teachers and students identify and relate themselves to the issues and culture presented and critically examine aspects of society as they relate to them and to other members. The challenge then is to develop pedagogies that facilitate this process between the text, the teacher/facilitator, and the students. It is through the ways in which the negotiation of the multiple perspectives that takes place in the classroom, especially in diverse settings, that readers can engage in a critical dialogue about society, their places within it and at least start developing an awareness that will transform their participation in social issues.

Drama, identidad y cultura: Negotiating culture and identities through drama in the classrooms

All texts are cultural representations, but when a text is introduced to a class with the main purpose of developing a multicultural perspective, the cultural dimensions both of the text and the readers move to the center of the exploration. The text then has to be negotiated, taking into account the relationship between the culture presented and the reader's culture. The potential of multicultural children's literature is not only in the text itself, but also in the possibilities it provides through a negotiation of text's culture and the reader's culture to critically broaden their understanding of living in a diverse society and their places within it. It brings an opportunity to locate themselves
and to see their relation to the text’s culture, teachers’ culture and peers’ culture (Enciso, 1997). The negotiations that Enciso talks about can happen in many different ways but dialogue constitutes the way in which we as readers relate our interpretations and negotiations of the text to a larger group. These encounters are dynamic and as we talk through and listen to the experiences of others with the text we reaffirm or negotiate our interpretations but at the same time new meanings and perspectives are acquired. Davies and Harré (1990) explored the notion of positioning as “the discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines” (p. 48). There are interactive positioning in which one person positions another and reflective positioning where one positions oneself. But both interactive and reflective positioning are influenced by our lived histories making this process a very complex negotiation of multiple identities and positionalities. When a text is brought to the classroom with the purpose of developing an understanding of a new perspective, in this case Latinas, teachers have to look for strategies that facilitate interactive and reflective positioning and the connection to the students lived histories.

Maxine Greene (1988) has stated that “[Art] has the capacity to enable persons to hear and to see what they would not ordinarily hear and see, to offer visions of consonance and dissonance that are unfamiliar and indeed abnormal, to disclose the incomplete profiles of the world” (p. 128-129). Using art forms to explore texts moves us from linear interpretations to more complex levels of
reading that open up spaces for the exploration of multiple perspectives and positionalities.

Drama is one of the art forms that provides spaces in the classroom to explore texts that involve, as part of the interpretation, the mediation of multiple identities. Drama in education strategies are a learning mode where the students explore through improvisations an event. It is a powerful tool for literature interpretation. Through drama, students are engaged in a "make believe world" that works parallel to the world created in the text and the reader's own world. Cecily O'Neill (1985) points out that "A conscious and reflective attitude is likely to develop in drama because of the dynamic relationship between reality and pretense" (p. 160). The mediation between the world in the text and the participant's own world becomes active in the drama, resulting in an understanding of a variety of perspectives and interpretations of both the participants and the textual world. The strategies available open spaces for a form of engagement that is different than traditional approaches to reader response studies that only examine students' discussions of texts. Some of the strategies are:

In-role – In role playing the participants in the drama adopt the role of one of the characters or persons related to the story. The role taken could be a character from the story or an outside role of a character that does not exist but that adds another perspective or dimension to the interpretation
of the text. When participants take on a role the interactions are explored in a form of improvisation.

Writing in role – When writing in role the participants of the drama are ask to write a document as if they were a character. The document can be for example a personal reflection on an event in a diary, a letter to another character, a public statement such as a government document.

Tableau – Tableaux are frozen images like statues or photographs. Through the creation of tableaus a specific moment or event is explored in depth often metaphorically. Tableaus involve limited or any amount of dialogue from those in the image, it has the potential of allowing a “free” interpretation of the event from those looking at it.

Hot seating – Hot seating is a strategy where usually one person or a small group take on a role and the rest of the participants ask questions related to an event. It is a direct form of inquiry or a way to give and obtain different opinions on an issue.

All of these drama strategies help move the story into a different level. When readers, through role playing, become participants in a story, the events of the story come alive, allowing for exploration that can exceed the boundaries of the text itself. In this opened space, participants often explore events that follow
or even precede the text itself, gaining new perspectives, often from the perspective of an outsider producing distance from their own interpretations. "[In] drama and reading [there] is the constant layering of self upon self that occurs in the interpretation of character. Actors and readers shift back and forth between multiple selves-between self and character, other actors, characters, and audience members" (Wolf and Enciso, 1994).

Drama in education has the potential for students and teachers to actively examine their ideologies in relationship to contemporary realistic fiction. Through the drama multiple perspectives are explored in relation to social issues, providing the participants with a space to critically analyze and develop an awareness as part of a community and society. The chapter that follows frames the methodology for the research study of a group of fifth graders exploring the book *Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado* (1993) as an example of contemporary realistic fiction and the students' responses through drama.
CHAPTER 3

EPISTEMOLOGY, CURRICULUM DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

Throwing caution to the wind, rechazamos esas falsas imágenes, we refute those false images, quebramos los falsos espejos para descubrir las desconocidas sombras, we brake the false mirrors in order to discover the unfamiliar shadows, the inner faces, las caras por dentro. To make face is to have face-dignity and self-respect. (Anzaldúa, 1990, p. xxvii)

Reconociendo mi voz: Towards an understanding and implications of using a Latina feminist epistemology

In order to design this project, as a researcher, I recognized the influence and commitment to new research tendencies in the social sciences that are exploring the development of gender, racially and culturally based theories and epistemologies. These new perspectives on looking at research established that research involves issues of power that have to be considered and discussed as part of a study design (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Rosaldo, 1993). Epistemology, or the ways of knowing reality and ways of perceiving the world work in accordance with our gender, cultural and ethnic experiences. However, the
history of research has been dominated by White-European-male views of the world that create interpretations of a society that apparently lives “in some universal sense, above culture or history” (Scheurich & Young, 1997, p. 8). In order to disrupt this monolithic conception of the world Stanfield, (1993) argues that it “requires more than reconsidering concepts and methodologies...we must begin to create new epistemologies to ground our theories and test them through methodological applications” (p. 14).

African American scholars (Stanfield, 1993; Hill-Collins 1991; Dillard, 2000) and Latina/o scholars (Anzaldúa, 1990; Behar, 1993; Delgado, 1998) are disrupting Western notions of theorizing while looking for new theories and epistemologies that will as Anzaldúa said: “will point out ways to maneuver between our particular experiences and the necessity of forming our own categories and theoretical models for the patterns we uncover” (Anzaldúa, 1990 p.xxv). In the development of a Black feminist epistemology, Patricia Hill Collins (1990) talks about an epistemology grounded in Black women’s experiences, including her own. To look at the complexity of Black women’s experiences and develop the notion of Black feminist epistemology, she relies on Afrocentric theories and feminist theories. Hill-Collins argues that there are places of similarities between both feminist and Afrocentric theories in terms that both are “epistemologies of subordinate groups”. This connection provides a space to explore the complexities of being a Black woman:
While an Afrocentric feminist epistemology reflects elements of 
epistemologies used by African-Americans and women as groups, it also 
paradoxically demonstrate features that may be unique to Black women. 
On certain dimensions Black women may more closely resemble Black 
men; on others, white women; and on still others Black women may stand 
apart from both groups. (p. 207)

Similarly, Latinas find themselves within and outside Latino and feminist 
theories. This paradoxical position pushes Latinas to look for new ways of 
perceiving, interpreting and theorizing reality in a more congruent manner that 
works in accordance with the experiences lived as part of a culture and gender. 
However, there are very few works available that explicitly talk about a Latina 
feminist epistemology and I perceive two reasons for this. First, is the problem 
with the homogenization of Latinas/os as one group. At the same time that the 
term Latina is used to embrace and empower, it also involves many differences 
and tensions embedded within the Latina/o community that arise as we begin to 
define ourselves. The second reason for the lack of work on Latina feminist 
epistemology is that the Latina feminist movement is relatively recent and it is 
only recently that has been validated by the mainstream academia. However, as 
the Latina feminist movement becomes stronger and solid, Latinas are 
questioning and disrupting those processes of validation from the mainstream 
and claiming their authenticity from their borders.
Among those exploring Latinas ways of knowing, interpreting and perceiving reality taking into account culture, ethnicity and gender is Latina/Chicana critic Rebolledo (1990). In her work on literary criticism she has stated that one of the problems Latina/Chicana critics face is the appropriation of discourses of European and mainstream theoreticians and critics to analyze works that are grounded in experiences that are not included within the mainstream experiences and theories. In order to disrupt this contradiction she suggested Latinas have to theorize from within.

Also Gloria Anzaldúa one of the first Latina/Chicana feminists to explore the ways Latinas perceive reality and how this informs our theories uses the term *mestizaje theories* to refer to the creation of “new categories for those of us left out or pushed out of the existing ones” (1990, p. xvi). *Mestizaje theories* provide a space to acknowledge voices that have been marginalized from the mainstream, honoring and validating them. Using the term *mestizaje* embraces the diversity within the Latino/a community honoring our African, Indian and Spanish ancestors. The Latinos/as *mestizaje* looks to disrupt the notion of Latinos/as as homogeneous, making visible the complexity of our ethnic, cultural and gender epistemological locations.

In addition to Anzaldúa, Cuban/Latina ethnographer Ruth Behar (1995) is exploring the notion of writing culture from a Latina perspective allowing her voice and own story to become part of her work. She confessed that: “I had to engage with the most profound predicaments I had ever faced as an anthropologist when I brought struggles from home into my ethnography,
Translated Woman" (1995, p. 23). Like Black feminists, Latinas are looking back and within their cultural, ethnic and gender reality to get a deeper meaning of how Latinas perceive the world and how that informs their work as writers, critics and researchers within other disciplines.

In the process of developing a research design and methodology for my classroom study, I model this work after those Latina critics and theoreticians as I and openly looked at my cultural and gender locations. This openness impacted my study in multiple ways because of the conscious effort of using Latina literature to develop a culturally relevant theoretical framework that supports and sustains my methods and interpretation of the data.

**Latina feminist epistemology and education**

Those unique ways of perceiving reality have to be incorporated into our scholarly work and research in education. In exploring the notion of an endarkened feminist epistemology and its importance to our research in education Dillard (2000) said:

[!]t seems reasonable to assume that the educational research community might be ready to examine more culturally indigenous ways of knowing research in the academy. In this way, such voices are provided legitimization, not of their existence, but as analytic, conceptual, and representational tools that explicate deep meanings of the very bases of
educational research, its ontologies, epistemologies, pedagogies, and its ethical concerns. (p. 1)

Latinas in the field of education need to look at their cultural, ethnic and gender epistemological locations in order to perceive how those influence our research on teaching and pedagogy. Through the conscious and critical examination of our ways of knowing and sharing knowledge, Latinas in education have the possibilities of understanding very complex relationships between teaching both Latino/a and other people children.

Recently scholar Dolores Delgado (1998) explores a Chicana feminist epistemology in educational research. Her research methodology was grounded in the notion that “what becomes crucial in a Chicana feminist epistemology goes beyond quantitative versus qualitative methods, and lies instead in the methodology employed and in whose experiences and realities are accepted as the foundations of knowledge” (p.558). She moved to the center of her research methodology her “cultural intuition” to shift the lenses from where to make interpretations of herself and of those involved as participants in her study. She argues that:

[A] Chicana epistemology must be concerned with the knowledge about Chicanas—about who generates an understanding of their experiences, and how this knowledge is legitimized or not legitimized. It questions objectivity, a universal foundation of knowledge, and the Western
dichotomies of mind versus body, subject versus object, objective truth
versus subjective emotion, and male versus female. (p. 560)

Becoming ideologically open in research in education has a direct impact
on the ways I presented mine and interpreted other people’s experiences. I used
as the “foundation of knowledge” my interpretation of my own cultural intuition as
a Puerto Rican woman. Furthermore it has an impact on the ways I teach and
create pedagogies that work in accordance with who I am and where I come
from. However, the process of creating and researching those pedagogies,
especially in diverse classrooms, involves the mediation of multiple perspectives,
tensions and resistance to new forms of presenting and interpreting knowledge.
The shift of perspectives within the classroom/research site brings up unheard
stories and experiences between participants and researcher that demands a
critical dialogue among those involved. Those stories that historically have been
marginalized, if explored in depth, move to the center of the research on teaching
and learning, becoming a liberating but nevertheless tense process that
questions privilege, marginalization and inequities.

To develop pedagogies relevant to the study of the Latino/a experience
through children’s literature I, relied on my “cultural intuition” as a Puerto Rican
woman much as Delgado suggests. The move of my cultural intuition to the
center is based on my cultural and gender experiences, as opposed to some
universal experience and truth that impacts the ways the data is shaped.
However, the results and impact of using my cultural intuition are very complex
given that this research project took place in a multiethnic classroom. I became a subjective researcher interpreting my own narrative and the narratives constructed by non-Latino/a participants (except one student) about Latinos/as.

The importance of listening to my story: Narratives and epistemology

One way to explore individual and collective epistemological locations in research in teaching is to critically examine the narratives constructed within the classroom and how my experiences as a Latina participant researcher influenced my interpretation of the classroom events. Through narratives, the construction of stories we fashion, and the relationships we developed with others, we can also empower or silence voices within these stories. (Dyson & Genishi, 1994).

Looking at my narratives in the classroom and how they relate to the students' narratives provides me with a self-reflective space where I am able to see the beginnings of the process of theorizing mine and the students' experiences. This is the process of looking at what Fine (1994) calls: "how we are in relation with the contexts we study and with our informants, understanding that we are multiple in those relation" (p.72).

The complexities of interpreting and theorizing narratives in a diverse setting are many, such as whose story gets told and from which perspective. Nevertheless it is a process worth exploring, given the changing demographic reality we face in US schools. As Brunner (1994) points out:
As we each theorize our lives and understand theories against our lives, I perceive we write/ read/ voice/ think and continually revise narratives and even meta-narratives of the gendered, raced and classed identities our cultural positionings form and through which we forge new identities.

(p.18).

The interpretation and theorizing of mine and the participants’ narratives is only one way of looking at the classroom experience. I also recognize the limitations of looking at stories from a very specific context. The limitations of an "examination of our beginnings may not necessarily take into account the various pushes and pulls of society or the ways in which we come to see ourselves with and against different social communities, positions, and relations of power” (Bruner, 1994, p.19). The development of an identity is a dynamic and complex process and looking at it from a specific context leaves out many important aspects that could result in an oversimplification and lineal interpretation of my own and the participants’ narratives. Furthermore I believed that the participants’ responses were shaped by the model I created and influenced by my cultural intuition as a Puerto Rican woman.

In the next section I explain the curriculum and strategies designed for the study of Latina children’s literature and the research design and methodology used to collect the data for this study.
Curriculum Design

Latina Children's Literature as a literary text: The text and the interpreter

The first part of devising the pedagogical strategies to explore the book *Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado* consisted of a literary analysis of the book using as a framework Latina literary theories. Thus, in the process of selecting the text to study in the classroom I used as the criteria for selection a text written by a Latina author who write both for adults and children's audiences. I looked at several purposes in using this analytic framework. First, I wanted a better understanding of how Latina children's literature fits within the larger field of Latina literature. Second, I was interested in how the themes, agendas and styles of Latina writers translate to the children's literature. Third, I was interested in how my interpretation of the book from a Latina literary framework influenced the ways in which I present and mediate the text in the classroom. Fourth, I wanted to look at how as a Puerto Rican participant/researcher, I consider myself within and outside the Latina community as I live and work in the USA.

Latina children's literature in the classroom: The text, the mediator and the readers

In the second part of the research, I designed lessons to explore *Friends from the Other Side/Amigos del Otro Lado* with a group of fifth graders using drama in education strategies. The primary focus of this portion of the study was
to look at how my Puerto Rican/Latina identity and the previous analysis of Latina literature influenced my role as a teacher of Latina children’s literature. I studied the students’ mediation of identities, cultural locations and positionalities as readers in the exploration of a text from a specific culture, using drama as the pedagogical strategy. Through a series of lessons, the students and I engaged in various forms of interpreting the book. There were a total of five lesson plans focusing on the exploration of Friends from the other side using drama. A brief description of each lesson plan is provided below. (See appendix for detailed lesson plans):

Lesson plan #1

The study began with an activity where we collectively defined the word “culture” and how each individual student defined their own culture. This activity worked as an autobiographical piece to help me know the students’ cultural location and help them see mine. As a form of focus group interview, I asked the students a series of question to inquire about their knowledge of Latino culture. I discussed with them general facts such as geographical information, language and ethnic differences within the Latino cultural group. This activity set up the framework for the introduction to the Latino/a literature.

Lesson plan #2:

The second lesson plan was developed with the purpose of exploring different drama activities with the students such as tableau and working in role.
Because some of the students did not have any previous experiences working with drama, I set up this lesson plan as an icebreaker and introduction to some of the drama strategies. For this activity I chose to work with a Dominican legend called the Laughing Skull in the book Golden Tales: Myth and Legends from Latin America (Delacre, 1996).

Lesson plan #3

The third lesson plan focuses on the book Friends from the other Side/Amigos del otro lado. I typed the author's introduction to the book on an overhead and read it aloud to the students. We had a dialogue about the information the author, Gloria Anzaldúa, gave us as information we needed to become aware of prior to reading the story. Given the degree of autobiographical information Anzaldúa provides in the introduction, it facilitated the students' understanding of the story and the notion of reading realistic fiction. It also helped to relate the text to the author's cultural autobiography like we completed on the previous section.

That same day, I read aloud the first part of the story where Prietita, a girl from the US side of the border community met Joaquín, a boy that recently crossed the border from Mexico with his mom and lived undocumented in the border community. After Prietita and Joaquín met, Joaquín had an encounter with the Chicano/Mexican American boys. The boys make fun of Joaquín calling him a mojadito/wetback.
After reading the first part of the story the students created a tableau or frozen image of the moment Joaquín and his mom crossed the border and then wrote in role about Joaquín’s first encounter with the Chicano boys. Finally, the students wrote in their journal an evaluation of the activities we did.

Lesson plan #4:

During the fourth day we worked on the second part of the book, when la migra/border patrol goes to the community looking for “illegals” and Prietita and la curandera/herb woman hide Joaquín and his mom from them. I read the second part of the book and asked the students to create a “news program” where they took on the role of reporters and book characters to retell the event from both an insider and outsider perspective. This activity was followed by a “hot seating” activity where different roles related to the story were presented to the students. They were required to take on those roles and give their opinion on a critical issue within the story: If Joaquín and his mom should be sent back to Mexico. At the end of this activity, the students evaluated the lesson in their journals.

Lesson plan #5:

The fifth day was the concluding day. We talked about the characters’ dreams and aspirations. I asked them to create that dream and to present it to the class. They moved the book event to the future exploring the different
possibilities they saw with each character of the story. The session ended with the students' evaluation of the whole five day process.

The curriculum design was one aspect of this study. In the next section I delineate the specifics of the research design and methods of data collection throughout the study.

Research Design

This study is grounded in a qualitative interpretive research approach (Erickson 1986) with an exploratory and descriptive purpose (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The study is participatory (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994) where in the role of a participant researcher, I looked at my presentation and the students' responses to the book by Chicana writer Gloria Anzaldúa, *Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado*. Permission to conduct this study from the Office of Research and Risks Protection was requested and granted.

Methods of data collection

The methods of data collection for this study are qualitative. According to Marshall & Rossman (1999) qualitative methodology:

Entails immersion in the everyday life of the setting chosen for study, values and seeks to discover participants' perspectives on their worlds, views inquiry as an interactive process between the researcher and the participants, is
both descriptive and analytic, and relies on people's words and observable behavior as the primary data (p. 7-8).

This research study aimed to look at mine and the students' interactions and responses to Latina literature. A qualitative design worked as a set of tools to obtain the most appropriate data given the kind of questions that guided this study. The following section describes the series of methods that I chose to collect the data for the study.

**Observations and Field Notes**

The study began with a period of observations of the classroom (Merriam, 1988). These observations or "the systematic noting and recording of events, behaviors, and artifacts (objects) in the social setting chosen for study" (p. 107) allowed me to understand and get some familiarity of the classroom routines, culture and dynamics. Field notes are "concrete descriptions of what has been observed" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 107) and were taken through out the observation process in order to record and reflect on what was happening in the classroom. The process of taking field notes improved as I gained trust and familiarity with Ms. Smith and the students. The first set of field notes seemed more of a straight forward re-telling of the classroom events. The later field notes while still a straight recount, involved a higher level of reflection from myself as a researcher.
The field notes focused on the classroom dynamics and interactions among the students and Ms. Smith. I looked at how the gender and racial relationships worked in the classroom. I also focused on the use of multicultural literature in the classroom, specifically the ways in which the teacher presented and explored multicultural literature and the ways in which the students responded to those texts. Finally, I looked at the curriculum contents to see how my study worked within and against the “traditional” curriculum. Special focus was given to social studies where a student teacher was doing a unit on democracy and the constitution. I was interested in looking at how the presentation of the constitution may have worked as a parallel unit to my study.

At the end of each day, I shared my field notes with Ms. Smith and we dialogued about some of the main points that I recorded. We both benefited from sharing the field notes. On the one hand, it worked for me as a form of member check confirming my interpretation of the classroom events. On the other hand it worked for Ms. Smith as a way to see herself as a reflective practitioner (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1992) allowing her a space to critically look at her pedagogies and classroom interactions. Ms. Smith seemed to enjoy this space to talk about her teaching styles, while at the same time, I benefited from her comments and reactions.

Videos, audiotapes and photographs

Video and audiotape of my interventions as a teacher/facilitator were taken. Those videos were used to take field notes and do observations of my
teaching. Because drama constituted a major part of the book explorations, the videos helped me analyze aspects of the drama that otherwise would have been lost. The audiotapes were transcribed to get a deeper analysis of the students’ responses to the book. Only those sections where I worked as a facilitator were audio and videotaped.

I also took photographs of the students’ tableaus in order to capture the frozen images they created. The photographs, videos and audiotapes were only used for the purpose of data analysis.

*Reflective journals*

There were two sets of reflections during the study. The first set is what I called “reflective lesson plans” where in the process of devising the lesson plans for my study, I wrote reflections on my thoughts and rationale for the decisions I was making. Later on, I analyzed those in relationship to what happened in the classroom.

The other sets of reflective journals were taken after every visit to the classroom or at any other moment where I was reflecting on the research study. Especially significant were those written at the final stages of the data collection process because they allowed me to start making sense and analyzing some of the classroom events.
Focus Group Interview

An initial semi-structured focus group interview was conducted with the students to get a general sense of the students’ familiarity about Latino culture and literature. This interview was exploratory (Fontana & Frey, 1994) and like Marshall & Rossman (1999) point out it helped me: “create a supportive environment, asking focused questions, to encourage discussion and the expression of differing opinions and points of views” (p. 114). This type of interview allowed me to develop an informal dialogue where the students responded in a more natural way than an individual structured interview. At the same time that the students shared their knowledge on Latino culture I was able to present them with new aspects and to negotiate their ideas with mine.

Students journals and art work

Documents such as the students’ journals and artwork were collected. Each student kept a personal journal where they wrote responses to the classroom activities and in role drama activities. For example on one occasion the students’ took on the role of different characters from the book and wrote the character’s thoughts on one of the book’s episodes.

Final interviews/evaluations from students and teacher

Final exit interviews were conducted with five students and Ms. Smith. I selected those five students based on their high level of engagement through out the study. The purpose of these interviews was to get a deeper understanding of
the impact and effectiveness of the study from the students and Ms. Smith. The sets of questions were developed based on the preliminary analysis of the data. These interviews also worked as a form of member check where the students and the teacher responded to some of the categories I had created throughout the preliminary analysis.

**Timeline**

I spent approximately four months in the classroom. The data collection started with observations and field notes in order to gain familiarity with the classroom dynamics and culture. After a month of observations, I started my role as a participant researcher working with the students and Ms. Smith on the exploration of the book *Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado*. This process went for five sessions. The last phase of the study focused on exit interviews and more observations and field notes. During this last phase, I also collaborated with the teacher and the students in organizing the students' graduation performance and as a reading group facilitator.
### Table 3.1: Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Research Phases</th>
<th>Research Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/14/99 – 3/11/99</td>
<td>Beginning fieldwork</td>
<td>Weekly visits to the school. Observations and field notes were taken during this period on the classroom everyday activities and routines. Reflective journals were also kept. I also assisted Ms. Smith on different classroom tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/18/99 – 5/6/99</td>
<td>Interventions as participant researcher Exploring Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado</td>
<td>Sessions facilitator Video and audio taped, field notes and reflective journals were kept throughout this phase.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Data Analysis

According to Marshall and Rossman (1995), "[d]ata analysis is the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data." (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 111). In qualitative research, the data are analyzed at different stages throughout the study. The first set of themes and categories were developed while I was working as a participant researcher. Through the reflective journals, I started making sense of some of the patterns that I was seeing in the classroom study.
After the final interviews and observations, the transcribed audiotapes were analyzed in conjunction with the videotapes. Hand color-coding was used to develop a preliminary set of categories. Later on, NUD*IST software was used to code and extend the previous categories.

Throughout the analysis, I attempted to examine the narratives constructed around my presentation and my explorations of Latino/a culture and more specifically through the intersection with the text *Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado*. I gave a special focus to the narratives that I constructed as a participant researcher facilitating the literature. Borrowing from recent forms of data analysis by feminist researchers (Lather, 1991) challenging the narratives of realism and naturalistic ethnography, I analyzed and interpreted the data knowing that:

"We are, as we have always been, in the moment of inscription, wherein writers create their own situated versions of the worlds studied. Accordingly the social text becomes a stage, or a site where power and knowledge are presented. (Denzin, 1994, p. 510)

I also followed the responses and narratives constructed by Kathy (the only Puerto Rican/Latina student in the classroom) to look for those places where the text and my teaching connected with her experiences and cultural locations. This analysis is a form of a case study grounded in some aspects of the notion of culturally relevant pedagogies and research (Ladson-Billings, 1995) where the
cultural aspects of the research “helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspective that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate” (p. 467).

Writing the data

The data was written using a narrative style. According to Marshall & Rossman (1999) “Life histories and narrative inquiry are methods that gather, analyze, and interpret the stories people tell about their lives. They assume that people live ‘storied lives’ and that telling and retelling one’s story helps one understand and create a sense of self” (p. 120). Narratives as a form of data analysis and representation worked as the tool to show the ways in which I interpret my participation in the classroom and how it influenced the students responses. I constructed two narratives that showed the major themes and categories explored throughout the analysis. Within those narratives are multiple sub-categories or stories that are interconnected to the major themes. The two narratives are:

Narrative 1: Ideología, texto y currículo: The story of a Puerto Rican/Latina participant researcher mediating Latina children’s literature

The first narrative focuses on the analysis of my role as a teacher/facilitator or a narrative of the self (Richardson, 1994). It exposed two critical aspects of my teaching. First how the literary analysis of Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado influenced the ways I taught and presented a text from the Latina literary tradition and how my identity as a Latina teacher/facilitator...
played throughout my teaching and pedagogies. Second I looked at the students' mediations of my presentation of the text within that Latina literary framework. Through the students' responses I wanted to inquire into the ways in which they perceived, interpreted and responded to the text, my presentation of it and their realities. I represented my voice throughout the narrative as "yo"\(^{10}\) and italics as an attempt to emphasize my subjective voice and ideologies.

**Narrative 2: Culturally relevant pedagogies: A case study**

The second narrative is a script constructed from a case study of the only Puerto Rican/Latina student in the classroom (Kathy). The purpose of the case study was to look for those places where the student Kathy found connections to the text and to myself as a Latina teacher. The significance of doing this case study relies on pointing to Kathy's responses to a learning experience that related to her and her family's Puerto Rican/Latina identity. Given that she was the only Latina student, there are rare spaces in the curriculum and the classroom that consider her ethnic identity.

In order to represent the data, I constructed 4 pieces that worked as a form of ethnographic drama (Richardson, 1994) that attempted to find a "a way of shaping an experience without losing the experience...it can reconstruct the 'sense' of an event from multiple 'as lived' perspectives; and it can give voice to what is unspoken but present..." (p. 522). The first piece is a poem entitled, *Did you come from the other side?*, and explores those moments where Kathy, the

\(^{10}\)
text and I talked about our ethnic background as Latinas and those places where we come from. The second piece is a bilingual text called English and español: The complexity of Language and Identity and it deals with those moments Kathy engaged in talking about aspects of being bilingual and related those to her experiences. I translated the text into Spanish as a way to concretely represent the complexity of being bilingual and the issues discussed in the classroom. The third piece is a script called: Esta es la historia de... Critical conversations among Latinas captured those moments where within the classroom context Kathy and I discuss issues of difference within ethnic groups and immigrants citizenship through the interpretation of Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado. The fourth piece, Changing perspectives: Women reading about women, is a form of monologue where Kathy explored her connections to books with strong female character.

Issues of validity and trustworthiness

Given that this study uses a post-positivist approach, validity and trustworthiness were achieved within these frameworks. Some of the forms of validity include:

**Triangulation**

In order to achieve validity trustworthiness on this study multiple forms of triangulation were used such as data triangulation -- students art and written work, classroom transcripts and video tapes. Also methodological triangulation --

---

11 This is the story of...
observations, field notes, reflective journals, focus group interview, exit interviews, video and audio tape of the classroom.

**Face Validity**

My meetings with Ms. Smith worked as a form of *face validity* or *members checks* (Lather, 1986) where we discussed my notes, reflections and interpretation of the classroom events.

**Catalytic Validity**

According to Lather (1986) catalytic validity is achieved by the degree to which the research process engaged the participants in a critical reflection that will push them into some form of social action. The immediate impact of the students' social actions are hard to measure. However throughout the data I can see those places where a shift in understanding issues such as immigration, labor, bilingualism, community solidarity and difference were interpreted from a critical perspective.

**Setting Description**

**The school and community**

The study took place in a Mid-West Urban Academy and Professional Development elementary school. Both the Urban Academy and the professional development programs have been developed through a partnership with a local college of education from a higher education institution with the goal of implementing a group of new initiatives for the school renewal both at the administrative and curriculum level. The initiatives include among others an after
school program, looping, a wellness program, parents program, technology instruction and uniforms. Through the professional development program, teachers are involved in multiple activities to reflect and develop their teaching skills. As a result of the partnership with the university administrators, teachers and students are accustomed to constantly having visitors and outside collaborators in the school.

The school is part of a community that is rapidly changing from a predominantly White to a more ethnically diverse community. The community is now predominately African American and White with a rapidly growing Latino population. The school reflects the community population and its rapid changes. It is a fairly small school where administrators, teachers and students seems to all know each other. In order to promote this sense of community, special activities are developed some examples include students from different grades are being grouped to spend time together with teachers other than their homeroom teacher, all school activities in the gym, and the development of school wide thematic units.

The students' work covers the school hallways. Much of this work involves messages related to peace and tolerance within the school community. It was clear to me that within the school, an agenda towards tolerance is at the center of its goals. Given the latest violent events in US schools, there is currently a dress code and an intensified campaign towards the development of a violence-free environment.
The students

The study took place in a fifth grade classroom. The classroom population consisted of 27 students, 14 boys and 13 girls. Twelve students were African American, one Latina/Puerto Rican, one Asian American, twelve White students and one Ghanaian who joined the classroom during the last week of the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>Males</td>
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Table 3.2: Gender

<table>
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<td>African Americans</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>White European</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghanaian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3: Ethnicity

The teacher, Ms. Smith is White and came to teach at the school after several years teaching at the Chicago Public School system. The social dynamics between Ms. Smith and the students were structured but informal. On several occasions, Ms. Smith mentioned the importance of giving fifth graders some kind of flexibility and independence given that they will be going to middle school the next year.
Ms. Smith assigned class work throughout the day, all of which was due at the end of that day. She made the students responsible for working independently on their tasks and provided spaces throughout the day for them to accomplish that work. During the time that I was in the classroom, I witnessed many moments of negotiation between the students and Ms. Smith. They negotiated with her assignments, free time and different classroom activities. Ms. Smith provided a safe space for the students to voice their concerns and feelings in terms of classroom dynamics and processes.

The students also had the option of choosing their seats and the chair arrangement according to the type of activities they were involved. Because this study involved the students' active participation through drama, we arranged the chairs in a rectangle with a rug at the center as the performance space. My preference was a circle but given that the classroom was small for 27 students, a circle was too uncomfortable. The classroom has a small computer station with three computers. Bookshelves, two rocking chairs and a "director chair" for Ms. Smith took up the rest of the space. Ms. Smith had her desk full of papers and students' work even though she barely worked there. She used a smaller table at one of the end of the rectangle to teach and do her daily work.

The teacher

An important aspect of this study was my relationship with Ms. Smith and her openness to allow me to do my research project in her classroom. Her teaching philosophies and beliefs provided me with a supportive space to
develop the study without major problems. Ms. Smith believes in active learning and the development of critical thinking. She was very aware of her limitations as a teacher and was constantly looking for people and resources to support and improve her teaching. Throughout the duration of the study, Ms. Smith had a social studies student teacher, a science resource teacher doing a unit on biodiversity, a Jewish male teaching about the Holocaust and myself doing my research study on Latino/a children's literature. While these resource people worked in the classroom, Ms. Smith was always present and part of the activities and discussions. She sometimes took the role of the teacher with the resource person, but she also took the role of the learner and joined the students in that role. The students seemed to be used to the constant presence of visitors and to her shift in roles from teacher to learner. This role switching allows the students to perceive Ms. Smith in a more humane position where she shows the complexity of constantly being engaged in a learning process. However, Ms. Smith was always there to monitor and facilitate the presence of an outsider with the students. After all those are her students and she is responsible for the activities in which her students engage.

In terms of cultural diversity Ms. Smith was also well aware and critical of her limitations as a White teacher in a diverse classroom. On multiple occasions, Ms. Smith and I talked about issues of privilege, racism, marginalization and culturally relevant pedagogies and how those related to her classroom. Ms. Smith believed that her White identity posed a big limitation in fully understanding and educating students of color. She was not afraid of talking about White
privilege and how that translated into her classroom. She also showed her ideologies and beliefs on several occasions. For example on one occasion, the social studies student teacher was teaching the concept of democracy and the constitution and she questioned his conservative and idealistic perceptions and definitions of democracy. She pushed the student teacher to present democracy as an imperfect process within this society.

Her critical awareness of her identity as a White teacher facilitated my entrance to the classroom. She looked at me as more of a resource person with something to share with her and the students than as a researcher. She pushed me to move beyond the position of a researcher to collectively create a learning environment where it happens to be a research project.

_Literature in the classroom_

The reading curriculum included a basal book with a combination of authors, genres and skills to be covered by fifth graders. The only representation of Latinas/os in the reading curriculum was included in the basal book, a chapter called "Friendship" from Nicholasa Mohr's book _Felita_ (1990/1979). Other than this chapter, no other Latino/a book was included in the basal book or the literature in the classroom.

At the time of this research study, the students were reading a selection of books in reading circles. The students chose from the following books: _Catherine Called Birdy_ (1994), _The Family Under the Bridge_., _Anne Frank: The Diary the Diary of a Young Girl_ (1967), and _Fast Sam, Cool Clyde and Stuff_ (1975). They
read the books individually and met weekly in small reading discussions, groups with Ms. Smith. Other than group discussions there were no other forms of literature interpretation, mediation or exploration.

Ms. Smith's areas of specialization are science and math. While she is interested in developing a community of readers in her classroom, she is also aware this is not her area of expertise. Many times she relied on the librarian and outside resource people for reading.

*Position of the researcher*

*Gaining entrance*

The primary reason for choosing this school was my previous involvement as the drama teacher in the after school program. Having had previous experience working in that setting provided me with some familiarity with the school culture and the students. Most of the girls in the classroom had worked with me two years before in the after school program. However, at the moment of going into the classroom I did not know most of the students or the teacher. Ms. Smith was extremely supportive of my project and the possibilities in terms of reading and creativity but it took me some time to feel ready for my participation. This factor made it harder for me to get started and to gain the students' trust.

*The Participant Researcher: Positioning myself within the study*

One of the biggest challenges designing and conducting this study was to define the dual role I played as a researcher and a teacher in a classroom where I was an outsider. Within that outsider role I looked at the interactions between
the students' and my active participation as teacher. However that participation was influenced and limited by my position as an outsider of the classroom. The challenge then was to find a proper definition within the qualitative research tradition that better describes my participation without oversimplifying or misconceptualizing the role I assumed in the classroom and its impact on the study.

In order to approach this issue in this section I examine two important definitions that helped me clarify the way I defined my role as a participant researcher. It was after reflecting on the definitions of the two terms participant observer (Atkinson & Hammersley 1994,) and practitioner researcher (Anderson, Herr & Nihlen, 1994) that I was able to perceive and define my role in this study. I perceived my role as an outsider teacher/researcher between a participant observer and a practitioner researcher.

In the field of qualitative research in the social sciences the role of the researcher has been explored, constructed and deconstructed from multiple perspectives according to the research needs and the epistemological and paradigmatic assumptions that ground the researchers' work. Those definitions go from a positivist, objective/neutral observer working under the notion that “there is a reality out there to be studied, captured, and understood.” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994 p.5) to the post-positivist role of the participant observer where the researcher participates as an observer immersed in the field with various degrees of participation but “without” altering the basic dynamics of the field under study Atkinson & Hammersley (1994). Also researchers' roles are defined
from a more critical perspective and active participation where the researcher is perceived as a form of emancipator or liberator working with marginalized and oppressed community. Those kind of participations are more related to participatory action research (Reason, 1994) and feminist research (Fine, 1994) among others all within the critical theory paradigm. Within this critical paradigm there are also those researchers who are insiders to the field or community and develop research on issues relevant to their communities (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Walsh, 1991).

Those multiple definitions of a researcher role, while very helpful and necessary, need to be redefined in accordance with the specifics of the study and the set of questions to be explored. Furthermore, the notion of looking for established definitions that fit and describe our work in social sciences is at times problematic and narrows the complexities involved in studying human interactions. In the case of this research study terminology needs to be redefined to better understand the dynamics of a classroom based project where I took the role of an outsider, teacher, researcher and study my own practices and how those relate to the students in the classroom.

One possible way to perceive my role in this study was a participant observer. Atkinson & Hammersley (1994) defined participant observer as: “observation carried out when the researcher is playing an established participant role in the scene of study” (p. 248). Judging by this definition I could position myself as a participant observer because I did play an established participant role in the classroom however the term does not fully describe the complexity of
the work that I was doing studying my own practices in the classroom. Even more explicit and problematic is the definition given by Schwandt (1997) in the book of terms *Qualitative Inquiry: A dictionary of terms* where the participant observer:

Always maintains some respectful distance from those studied—cultivating empathy but never sympathy, rapport but never friendship, familiarity but never full identification. This critical distance is required for creating an objective account of what is being studied. (p. 111)

This definition limits even more the description of my participation in the classroom, especially because I would not make a claim neither would I argue for an objective account of the classroom events and my pedagogies. Schwandt's (1997) perception of the need of distance in order to achieve objectivity seems inadequate and problematic to the study. This pseudo-active role of being involved in observation and minimal interactions seems too positivist to me. The term then imposes a series of limitations to define my positionalities as researcher and teacher in this study. While one aspect of this study involved observations and field notes in order to get some familiarity (as an outsider) with the classroom community the main aspects of the research project involved my active participation as a teacher and the subjective analysis of my interactions with the students.
The term practitioner researcher became useful to help me clarify my role within the classroom. Summarizing Anderson, Herr & Nihlen's (1994) some of the aspects of a practitioner researcher include: An insider practitioner that uses its own site, the practitioner researcher wishes to address a particular situation and is oriented to some form of action. It is value laden and it "must explore both the ways in which schools are themselves political and the functions that school serve in a broader sociopolitical context" (p. 36).

I was not an insider in the classroom but I was an active participant in the classroom examining the impact of my practices and its sociopolitical implications to the field of literacy. While I recognize that the term practitioner researcher does not describe my role within this research study I did play the role of a form of practitioner exploring my own practices through the exploration of Latina children's literature through drama.

I situate my researcher role in this study in between a participant observer and a practitioner researcher. I then describe my role as a participant researcher involved in a study as a teacher/practitioner and as a researcher. Throughout this study I examined my practices designing a curriculum that studied Latina children's literature and my participation in the classroom to present and mediate that curriculum within a fifth grade classroom. My participation altered the dynamics of the classroom in a way that I cannot observe and study from a distant position. In addition it also involved the inclusion of Latina literature in the classroom, a body of literature that is too often left out in the mainstream curriculum (as it was in this setting) and how the inclusion of the Latinos/as social...
reality became a political move towards the disruption of the traditional curriculum.

*What this classroom had to offer me?*

The ethnic and gender diversity in this classroom offered me the opportunity and the challenge of presenting literature representative of the Latino/a community and studying how multiple perspectives come together in one classroom to make sense of the experiences in *Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado*. The US-Mexican border was a distant experience for most of the students and it posed the challenge for me, as the literature facilitator and researcher, of avoiding the creation of stereotypes and generalizations of a community experience. The classroom also provided me the opportunity of being one of the few or the first Latina teachers that the students had. The presentation of myself and my cultural experiences and even my English meant a whole new experience for them as learners and for me as participant researcher.

*What I had to offer to the classroom*

The experiences of the Latino/a community in the US were almost invisible within the classroom curriculum at this school. Through this research project, I provided the students with a different literacy experience. The classroom discussions on issues of immigration, equity, language, and identity involved the examination of the students’ and my positions as active participants in this society and the consequences of choosing to know (or not) the realities
that other people live in this society. As a community of learners, we engaged in an exploration that involved bringing unheard voices and reality to the center of the classroom and trying to understand and negotiate a perspective different from our own.

In the next chapter I lay out the analysis of the data exploring different aspects of how the curriculum designed and the methodology worked together. The connections and intersections between a Latina feminist epistemology, the curriculum and a qualitative research methodology are all at the center on the following analysis.
CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

Listos para comenzar: Introduction

This chapter is divided in two narratives. The purpose of choosing this format is to look at aspects of the data from different perspectives allowing a deeper understanding of the research project. The first narrative is the analysis of one of the major questions that guided the research project. The focus is on my analysis of my subjectivities, locations and positionalities as a Puerto Rican/Latina teacher presenting and mediating aspects of the Latino/a culture through a text within a fifth grade classroom. I studied first the relationship between the text *Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado* and myself as a reader/interpreter, and then critically examined my presentation of aspects of the Latino culture and *Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado* with the students. In order to show how the relationship between the text and myself as facilitator influenced the students' interpretations, I analyze first my voice in the classroom and then move to analyze a drama event where the students
negotiate theirs, mine and the text positionalities. Through this narrative, I aim to connect how studying and situating the book and my ideologies within a Latina feminist literary tradition influenced my presentation of the text and aspects of the Latino/a identity and how those influenced the students' responses to the text. Becoming openly ideological about my subjectivities and positionalities as a participant/researcher helped me better understand the tensions and complexities of teaching about issues of Latinos/as identity and diversity in the classroom.

The second narrative analysis is Kathy's story. As the only Puerto Rican/Latina student in the classroom, this project became a space for her to engage in a literacy experience that was culturally relevant to her. Through her story, I looked at the ways in which culturally relevant pedagogies provide a space for her to connect, reaffirm, be proud and become open about her Puerto Rican identity.

Throughout both narratives I included footnotes of the teacher, Ms. Smith. These footnotes are running record of her reactions, comments and reflections of what was happening during the exploration of *Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado*. The reason for including her voice in footnotes versus as part of the main text was that while she was present in the classroom during all the sessions, she tried to stay outside of my interactions with the students. However there were several occasions that she gave her opinion, or reaction to an issue or tried to help me clarify my point. The significance of including her voice is to provide the reader some perspective on Ms. Smith's ideology, as the students'
teacher and the ways that she impacts the students' life influenced by her own epistemologies and perceptions of reality.

Narrative I. Ideología, texto y currículo: The story of a Puerto Rican participant/researcher mediating Latina children's literature

Palmer (1998) suggests in his book *The Courage to Teach* that "we teach who we are". This is one of the main aspects of my research project. Throughout this study I examined, among other things, how the author's and my own agendas are all embedded in the presentation and exploration of a text from a Latina feminist tradition. By becoming an openly ideological researcher (Lather, 1986; Fine, 1994) I was able to critically examine the role of a Puerto Rican/Latina\(^1\), participant/researcher presenting a text written by a Chicana/Latina author in a multiracial fifth grade classroom.

In the process of reflecting on my research project and analyzing the data, I confronted myself with questions such as: If we teach who we are then, what happens when who we are [teachers] are mostly White, and a Puerto Rican/Latina participant/researcher wants to share an aspect or a story related to her culture? Do teachers of color have a space and a story to share in multiracial classrooms, even when there is only one student from your own culture? What happens when we don't hear *la Chicana, la Boricua/Puertorriqueña, la Dominicana, o cualquier Latina? Que pasa* when we try to bring those voices to

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\(^1\) The term Latina involves multiple nationalities within it. To avoid generalizations and show the complexities with this term I used the [nationality]/Latina. For example, I describe myself as a Puerto Rican/Latina and Gloria Anzaldúa as a Chicana/Latina.
the classroom but their stories do not sound like the mainstream voices from other classroom texts? Or even worse they contradict or raise issues that subvert traditional ideologies? Que pasa when there is only one short story about your culture included in the whole curriculum?

Because *Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado* worked to some extent in isolation within the rest of the curriculum (specifically in terms of the Latina/o representation in the classroom\(^{13}\)) I felt that there were many tensions involved in the process of presenting the book. By looking at *Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado* through theories on critical literacy (Apple 1993, Giroux 1992, Macedo, 1994), I was able to understand better the way the school curriculum still gives greater importance to those stories and literary texts from mainstream groups and the tensions embedded in bringing stories that speak about other experiences. Unfortunately, even with the integration of literature-based curriculums and the push for a multicultural perspective in schools, the Eurocentric and American mainstream experience dominates the curriculum and are the experiences that represent, and the majority of teachers can relate to (Macedo, 1994). If we teach who we are and as educators we want to either disrupt and decolonize our pedagogical practices from dominant ideologies (Giroux & McLaren, 1994) and/or find new ways to interpret texts in the classroom, then we have to bring to the classroom people and literature who can tell stories from another perspective.

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\(^{13}\) In the fifth grade classroom the only text representative of Latinos/as was one chapter included in the reading textbook called Thanksgiving from *Felita* (1990) by Nicholasa Mohr.
In my attempt to open a space for *Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado*, I felt that I was either going against the grain or teaching an inappropriate subject in the classroom, bringing in issues such as Latino/a immigration and feminism. I reflected on this issue along my researcher journals:

In a time where we recently witness one of the most violent events in a school (Colorado) I question myself about my research project. I'm in the process of reflecting that we can not have dialogues about race and differences without experiencing the tension ourselves. For example a major concern right now for me is what does the parents think of having this kind of discussion [immigration rights and laws] in the classrooms? How much am I risking myself by opening a dialogue that lots of parents don't think is relevant or pertinent to have in classroom? Is the classroom just a space to develop skills and cognitive learning or is it our responsibility as teachers to engage in an exploration about [human] relationships? I guess my problem right now is that I am not exploring oppression lived in the past. I am not studying "history". I am exploring oppression as it is in the present. I don't think *Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado* and Felita are loaded [with more complex] issues than *The Diary of Ann Frank* [just to mentioned an example] but there is a tendency to understand that knowing [history] is about the past and not about the present? Is it because we are responsible for the present? Why can we talk about slavery and holocaust in the classroom
and I get so anxious when discussing Mexican's immigration or Puerto Rican's discrimination? What is my responsibility as a teacher/Puerto Rican/social justice advocate in the classroom?

The other aspect of my concern right now is my responsibility to engage in a dialogue of possibilities with my students. If we don’t move beyond understanding the hatred and the tensions between racial groups what are we really accomplishing? We cannot leave students “in the violence”. In my opinion that is what the media does and that is why they have such a hard time moving beyond the violence. They understand violence as the only medium to problem solving. But how do they get to explore the possibilities? Do we as adults know what the possibilities are? This is my big question right now. I have no doubts that they understood the situation in the Mexican/US border. Actually their explorations through the hot seating, map of emotions and some of the dreams show that they at least got the opportunity to think that this border crossing is about individual human beings. [Reflective Journal 5/12: p. 1-2]

Freire's (1994/1969) idea to “enter the historical critically” (p. 16) is what I explored in the above reflective journal. Through the presentation and mediation of Friends form the Other Side/Amigos del otro lado the classroom becomes a space where the present situation of many Mexican immigrants is studied critically as part of this society's historical process. The result of the lack of
representation of Mexicans within the curriculum pushed them out of the “official history” and reality that are considered valid and relevant knowledge within the classroom. The curriculum marginalization results in the denial of Mexican immigration as part of this society’s history.

Throughout my journal I am also trying to position the text, Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado in relationship with other literature in the classroom and critically examine the implications of bringing Latina literature into the classroom. The author, the book, and my political and cultural locations were both working in tension because Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado represented an untold story in the classrooms. Furthermore, I perceived throughout the data that the aspects of the Chicana feminist literary framework that I used to analyze the book were the places where I saw the biggest tensions and possibilities in facilitating and exploring the text. The tensions and possibilities came out of the relationship between the literary analysis and the multiple negotiations of locations in the classroom. Within the data analysis I was able to identify three levels of negotiation taking place. While I recognize that there are probably more, I am going to limit the analysis to the three major levels of negotiation that I perceived happening. 1) The first level of negotiation relates to the author’s Chicana feminist ideologies and how those locations are represented throughout the text. It is significant to make this connection to understand the author’s political intentions and to interpret the text within the larger society context. 2) The second level of negotiation happens within my role as interpreter and mediator of the text and my epistemological locations as a
Puerto Rican woman, influenced by Latina feminist literary theories and ideologies. As a reader and then as the facilitator, my analysis, interpretation, presentation and mediation of the text are influenced by my life experiences as a Puerto Rican/Latina woman and the Latina feminist literary theories that frame my examination and study of Latina literature. 3) The third level of negotiation happens during my presentation of the text to students and their role as interpreters. This is a complex set of negotiations given the students' multiple epistemological locations and how those come into play within the text discussion. Through the drama the students interpret the text using as a frame their own life experiences, the experiences lived by the characters in the text and my presentation of it based on my life experiences also.

*Selecting Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado*

Choosing the book *Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado* involved a complex process for me at a personal and intellectual level. The selection of the book involved a reflective and critical analysis of my ideologies and how the book represents those ideologies. The decision in using *Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado* grew out of the recognition of a Latina feminist literary tradition and my choice of using this framework to look at Latina children's literature. To understand and situate where the choice of this text comes from is fundamental to the analysis and interpretation of this classroom research project. In this section, I analyze the text using a Latina literary
framework (as it was discussed in the literature review) and look at how that framework influenced my presentation of the text and the classroom project.

By interpreting and analyzing *Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado* through a Latina literary framework those aspects and characteristic of this literary framework situate themselves as the main focus in my presentation of the text. While the book itself moves those aspects of Latina writers to the center, I would argue that my subjective location of the text influenced the way I presented the text to the classroom. I also connected my personal experiences as Puerto Rican/Latina with the text, becoming openly ideological in negotiating my locations, ideologies and cultural perspectives with the text and as result with the students. However, becoming openly ideological does not necessarily mean that I created an open space or objective framework for the students to respond. It is possible that my own ideologies and interpretation of the text limited or narrowly framed the students' responses. As a facilitator I am consciously choosing one specific lens to interpret the literature leaving out other possible readings from other literary perspectives.

Gloria Anzaldúa, as I already mentioned represents one of the most influential voices in the development and understanding of a Latina feminist literary theory and epistemology. Those theoretical and epistemological locations influenced the ways in which she writes for children. As l/yo read, analyzed and mediated the text l/yo identified a number of themes and characteristics that make the text a representation of a Latina feminist literary tradition and that I bring to the center of the classroom through the interpretation
of the text. The most relevant themes or aspects among others are: 1) the autobiographical text or a text that represents a lived experience by the author and the community that she grew up; 2) a bilingual text that is written in non-standard English and non-standard Spanish; 3) the feminist ideologies or the representation of woman as s/heroes; 4) inside/outside community oppressions; 5) issues of immigration; 6) spirituality; and 7) community activism and solidarity.

Anzaldúa introduces the text to the reader with the following personal note:

I grew up in South Texas, close to the Mexican-US border. When I was a young girl, I saw many woman and children who had crossed to this side to get work because there was none in Mexico. Many of them got wet while crossing the river, so some people on this side who didn’t like them call them “wetbacks” or “mojados”. This is the story of Prietita, a brave young Mexican American girl, and her new friend Joaquin, a Mexican boy from the other side of the river.

| I grew up in South Texas, close to the Mexican-US border. When I was a young girl, I saw many woman and children who had crossed to this side to get work because there was none in Mexico. Many of them got wet while crossing the river, so some people on this side who didn’t like them call them “wetbacks” or “mojados”. This is the story of Prietita, a brave young Mexican American girl, and her new friend Joaquin, a Mexican boy from the other side of the river. | Yo crecí en el sur de Texas, cerca de la frontera entre México y los Estados Unidos. Cuando era niña, vi a muchas mujeres y niños que habían cruzado hasta este lado para conseguir trabajo, ya que en México no había. Muchos se mojaban al cruzar el río, por lo que algunos de este lado se burlaban de ellos y les llamaban “mojados”. Este es la historia de Prietita, una muchacha mexicanoamericana, y su amigo nuevo Joaquin, un muchacho mexicano del otro lado del río. Gloria Anzaldúa (p.#1) |

Table 1: Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado author’s note

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Yo: Her name is Gloria Anzaldúa and she wrote us, the readers, a note so we can better understand what we are reading. Sometimes authors write notes to the readers so we can better understand the message that they are trying to convey on their books. She gives us very important information. She said: "I grew up in south Texas, close to the Rio Grande river which is the Mexican/US border". Do you remember that we talked about the Mexican/US border? There is a river in that border. "When I was a young girl..." the author is speaking to us. "When I was a young girl I saw many women and children who had cross to this side to get work because there was none in Mexico".

"This is the story of Prietita" and this is Prietita one of the main characters. "A brave young Mexican American girl and her new friend Joaquin, a Mexican boy from the other side of the river". [Transcript 3-25.47-59 p.# 2]

Through the introduction, Anzaldúa points out several aspects of her experiences as Chicana/Latina, living in a border community. Through her writing the reader becomes aware of how Anzaldúa's life and her Chicana/Latina consciousness work as a frame for the text to provide the reader with a space to situate the literature. Through her voice, Prietita's voice, she shares a story that represents some aspects of living in the US-Mexican border. Furthermore, by naming the protagonist Prietita, described as a "brave young Mexican American woman" (p.#1) Anzaldúa gives the character the nickname her own family called
her. While I do not think Anzaldúa's intention is to claim a voice that speaks as every Chicana/Latina, she does acknowledge that retelling her story constitutes part of a collective experience of living in the border and an "act of resistance" (hooks, 1991) to name a history of marginalization.

Furthermore the introduction became a very powerful tool because it provided me, as the text facilitator, with a framework to present the book in the context of Chicanas and Latinas narratives. Through that personal note Anzaldúa provides the possibility to readers, teachers and facilitators to find a strong space to situate this literature from a "genuine" place. I (represented as yo) personally used the introduction to present and locate Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado and the author, Gloria Anzaldúa in relationship to me and to the class. In order to focus on this section, I typed the introduction both in English and Spanish on an overhead and discussed it with the students. In my reflections, before and after my lesson plan for that day I explored the potential of the introduction in helping me facilitate the book:

I think the introduction of the book provides a lot of information to locate the story in terms of the geographical place but also it established that even though the story is fiction it is based on an experience of the author, an important aspect of critical fictions. [Lesson plan #3: p#1]

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14 See for example her narrative essay La Prieta in This Bridge Called my Back (1983) where she tells her birth story and her relationship with her mother. Her family called her La Prieta because she has the darkest skin color among them.
I like the idea of the overhead with Gloria Anzaldúa's introduction to the book. That piece of information was very helpful in order to put the book in context. The discussion about differences between Mexican and Mexican Americans was important to set up the framework to read the book. Also Anzaldúa is very explicit in explaining what is border crossing and the economic reasons for people to cross the border. The students have many responses to this situation. Some of them haven't think of it but other did.

One student asked me if they were immigrants because they cross the border and I say yes. Ms. Smith explained to them that many Mexicans that crossed the border are illegals. As a result of that comment another student told me that he thought a lot of drugs dealers and thieves came from Mexico and crossed the border to robbed and sell drugs[here in the US]. I explained to him that there are certain groups that the media [I used the word TV] focus only in the negative aspects. That there are a lot of honest Mexicans that crossed the border. [Reflective journal 3-25: p.#1].

In my reading of the introduction to the students I gave special attention to the autobiographical aspects of the book, in order to locate the author's life experiences of living in the US-Mexican border within the book. I pointed out and clarified that the author was writing that note to us, the readers and that she is talking about her experiences in the border community in South Texas. There
are certain aspects of her experience that she wants us to know in order to better understand and interpret the book.

Among those aspects of her identity that she wants to share with the reader and that needed to be highlighted is the complex notion of being bilingual. Latinas disrupt the notion of English only and/or Spanish only in their texts. The creation of a bilingual text in *Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado* (a bilingual non-standard English and non-standard Spanish), Gloria Anzaldúa makes a political statement and shares an important aspect of Chicana/o identity with the readers. The political statement relates to the recognition of a bi-cultural identity that has been traditionally marginalized within this society. Furthermore, through the presentation of the bilingual aspect of the text the author’s ideologies and mine come to the center of the classroom discussion:

**Yo:** This is the book that we are going to be working with today and tomorrow and it's call *Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado* and the book is in written in two languages, Spanish and English. This is a piece that I typed from the book. This part is in English and the lower part is in Spanish and is the same thing. This is what is called a bilingual book because is in two languages. This over here is a note from the author. The author of this book is Gloria Anzaldúa.

**Yo:** So why do you think the author wanted to write the book in Spanish and English?
Charles: So people can understand...

George: People who are Spanish.

Yo: She can speak Spanish and her name is Gloria Anzaldúa and she is Mexican American. She is bilingual she speaks both and for her is very important that people who speaks English has access to the book and people who can not understand English can also read it in Spanish.

Kate: Do you still speak Spanish?

Yo: Yes, all the time with my parents. But on the phone, here I don't get to speak that much Spanish. My days are pretty much 99% English. Then when my parents call I go blah, blah, blah in Spanish. And it takes a lot of effort to have a full day speaking English.

Kathy: My mom speaks English very good and Spanish very good.

Yo: Yeah, I think that we all have the ability to speak more than one language and to speak it really well and ... because I'm learning English that does not means that I have to forget my Spanish. We can all speak many languages. I know people who can speak French, English and
Spanish and all well. That is an ability that all human beings have. Do you want to hear the text in Spanish?

Chorus: Yeah

Yo: Have you ever been in a store? Like I can understand English and Spanish but then someone Asian comes in and they are speaking Japanese or Chinese and I'm wondering what they said.

Charles: It's like if you are in the same city ... it's strange.

Yo: It's strange and if you go to another country like China and they are speaking Chinese and all of the sudden you start speaking English everybody is going to feel the same way about you speaking English.

Kathy: I cannot speak in Spanish but I can understand it. [Transcript 3/25: p# 2-5]^{15}

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^{15} Ms. Smith: Even when we talk about the different cultures in here there were so many differences and so many different levels to the children and who they are that they bring into the classroom. That's part of who they are culturally but part of who they are as a human. And so I think that is a very compound issue for the kids here. Because they have to get along and respect differences at many different levels. Not just that somebody could be speaking different languages which we are finding more and more students that are bilingual. Not only that or a person may have a different skin color or a different religion but also that some people like to talk more and other don't. Some people are shy and some people aren't and all the different personalities. I think is a lot more complicated to get along socially because you don't really have... your common ground is that you are American but being an American what does that mean? It's so diverse and I think there is a fight to finding your identity. It is not just finding who I am among my peers and we all look the same. It's finding who you are among peers that don't
The economics and the poverty portrayal was also in tension when I presented the book. While I understand that this is a reality of the border community, I was running the risk of creating a stereotype of all Mexicans as poor and undocumented. I would argue that Anzaldúa's choice of telling a story lived by many Mexicans through Prietita and Joaquin's voices allows for the reader to understand that this is one story and one specific aspect of the Mexican community. However, beyond the author's intentions, the responsibility for the tone and attitude towards the presentation and the mediation of the book and the issues involved, relies on the teacher or facilitator. If the book is presented with pity and feelings of being sorry, the students' responses are going to be different than if the book is presented examining critically our awareness and relationship to a social reality within this society that we claim to be democratic. In this case, as the mediator, it became important that the students understand that people who cross the US-Mexican border often come without privileges and including also without the right of having a job. When an "opportunity" for a job arrives, it is often under inhuman conditions for the immigrants but extremely beneficial to the US economy.

Yo: [When Prietita and Joaquin get to the jacal] This where they live.
You have to remember that when people come and cross the border from look like you, that don't think like you, that come from different backgrounds and yet you have in common that we are all in this classroom. [Interview p. 1-2]
Mexico they don't bring anything. There is a lot of poor people. They live in this house with dirt floor. [Lesson plan 3-25: p.#7]

As a result of my comment a student named Charlie remembers that he has seen somewhere that Mexicans work as farm workers. We talked about the spread of Mexicans farm workers in the US. We talked about farm workers in Ohio, Indiana and California. I also point out that they constitute an important part of the labor force within the US and the reality of children like themselves as farm workers. This conversation was supported the next day by looking at the book Voices from the Field: Children of migrant farmworkers tell their stories (Atkin, 1993)

Charlie: [I saw a place] I don't know where it is but they pick up food.

Yo: Yes, a lot of them are farm workers. There are lot of Mexican Farm workers here in Ohio. I think in Toledo. They go across the United States depending on what's the season for and they will go and pick up the food and the vegetables that we eat. There's a lot of them in California.

John: There is a lot in Indiana. My grandmother lives there.

Yo: I have a book that I'll share with you called Voices From the Field and a lot of children also are farm workers. They don't go to schools because they need to work to give the family food. They don't go to school.
Sometimes we have to think of what does it means to go to schools and how lucky we are that we come to school. They have to wake every morning and work like adults. [Transcript 3-25: p# 7]

The notion of the border/la frontera is multifold through this story. While it is a concrete historical place, it also works as a metaphor of multiplicity and complexity that is part of the Chicana/Latina experience and explored by Chicana/Latina feminist writers. Throughout the story, the borderland is presented as a place of complex identities that explores the dynamics involved in binaries such as Chicano-US mainstream identity, English-Spanish language, insider-outsider. The borderland is also a place to celebrate aspects of Chicana/Latina identity such as the elevation of Chicanas as sheroes, spirituality and social activism.

In the book Anzaldúa positions Joaquín and his mom as outsiders/insiders within the Chicano community too. The first events in the book are more Joaquín and his mom as outsiders than as insiders. When Prietita first met Joaquín, her first response is to point out the differences in the way he speaks Spanish differently than her own. This illustrates that even within ethnic groups there are multiple differences and complex relationships. She presents the Chicana/o culture as heterogeneous and complex:

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16 Ms. Smith: You read that story where that child faces coming over the border. We all faced in very weird ways trying to break within our borders of our own cultures. And it was interesting because when they read that story part of me wanted to think that they cannot relate to that story. I am going to have to help them understand this. And, in a weird way, they related very well because they are very much like the boy in their own way. OK maybe they haven't come over
“Did you come from the other side? You know from Mexico?” asked Prietita, having noticed that his Spanish was different from hers.

“Yes,” answered Joaquin keeping his head down, a chunk of limp blue-black hair falling over his forehead and his face. (p. #2)

Even more critical is Joaquín’s first encounter with the boys from the Chicano community, one of exclusion and discrimination. He got called “wetback/mojado” (p.#6), a derogatory term used to make reference to Latinos/as that crossed the US-Mexican border through the Río Grande river and get wet. As opposed to a portrayal of solidarity within the boys, Anzaldúa presents the tensions and the hierarchies of oppression that are part of getting access to a new community. The notion of insider and outsider have multiple dimensions in the borderland and are representative of a theme largely discussed by Chicana feminist authors.

Through the boys act of exclusion and discrimination, Anzaldúa elevates Prietita’s character to a shero. The moment the boys start making fun of Joaquin, calling him mojadito/wetback, Prietita speaks up and defends Joaquin:

Hey, man why don’t you go back where you belong? We don’t want any more mojados here,” said another boy.

border patrols and trying to knock them back but they are struggling dealing with coming into the classroom which is over a border from what their parents live with. [Interview p. 2-3]
Prietita felt her body go stiff. She had known Teté and his friends all her life. Sometimes she even liked Teté, but now she was angry at him. She felt pulled between her new friend and her old friends.

When one of the boys bent and picked up a rock, Prietita ran in front of Joaquín.

What’s the matter with you guys? How brave you are, a bunch of machos against one small boy. You should be ashamed of yourselves!"

“What is it to you? Who asked you to butt in, Prietita? said Teté.

“Shhu, Teté, let’s go,” said another, pulling his arm. The boys walked away, taking their time acting as thought they had chosen to leave. (p. 7-8)

As opposed to a more passive role that has traditionally stereotyped Latinas, Anzaldúa disrupts this stereotype to present a girl with an active voice acting towards Joaquín’s justice. While Joaquín’s first encounters create an atmosphere of exclusion, Prietita’s act represents one of inclusion, activism and justice. Prietita as a shero is a way to transgress and show that Latinas have a voice within our communities. Prietita, using Anzaldúa’s nickname, confront the boys in her community in an act to protect her new friend that came from the other side (Mexico).

Anzaldúa contrasts the role of the boys as "machos" with Prietita and the herb woman as sheroes. To define the word machos in the class was another challenge. While it is an aspect of Latino male’s identity, I would argue all men
carry some form of "machoness," expressed according to the cultural and social realities they live. The word machos has been used as a way to stereotype Latinos. I was not sure of how to explain it without falling into a stereotype:

I read aloud the first part of the book and stopped to make sure to discuss some of the events in the book. One part that was hard for me to explain was when Prietita call the boys "machos". I am looking forward to transcribe the tape because I am not sure if I was clear enough. As teachers we have a tendency to go over things that we are uncertain or find difficult to explain and give quick and shaky explanations. I feel I did that. I said it means man but what I didn't say is that it means the masculine in animals. That is the relationship, we call man "machos" when they behave in kind of "savage" ways that look more like the behavior of the male animals than human beings. See that was what I was supposed to say. I think I say something about man behaving with an attitude or pretending that they are stronger than anybody else. This book is way too complex and I hope I am not oversimplifying it as I teach it.

[Reflective journal 3-25:p.#2]

This is how I presented it:

Yo: [When Prietita called the boys machos I stopped to explained] Have you ever heard the word machos?
Chorus: No

Yo: It's a word that is use in Spanish to ... it means men but we call "macho" men that think that they are really strong and acting out like the guys are acting out here. Trying to make fun of the boy and [ ] to the neighborhood. That's why she told them "what do you think? You think that you are all machos who can make fun of this boy?" [Transcript 3-25: p.#5]

Prietita's actions as a shero are not limited to protecting Joaquin from the neighborhood boys. Later in the story, Prietita and la curandera hide Joaquin and his mom from la migra/border patrol, becoming "protectors of the people" in the Chicano/a community. Their acts are taken against a representation of an oppressive institution such as the la migra/border patrol. To protect undocumented immigrants from the government represents an illegal action and it involves a risk. The book provides the reader with "the other side" of the story, focusing on the actions taken by two Chicanas members of the border community. The author challenges the reader to critically examine why those actions were taken and the kind of choices that marginalized members of the society make in order to protect themselves from authorities who exercise power in the name of democracy. Through the story the students and I were challenged
to an exploration of “the other side” of the history that many times is silenced or unknown.

Prietita’s subversive act is supported by the author’s choice of sending Prietita to la curandera’s house. The Curandera/herb women represent an icon that Chicana writers have used as a way to acquire a voice that embraces non-western spirituality. According to Medina (1998) in her essay, Los espíritus siguen hablando: Chicana Spiritualities “[T]hey [Chicanas] have learned to supplant patriarchal religion with their own cultural knowledge, sensibilities, and a sense of justice [italics added]” (p. 189). As opposed to a representation of non-western spirituality as weird or exotic, Anzaldúa presents the role of la curandera as a respectful, nurturing but active voice within the community. La curandera represents a tradition of woman working for their communities grounded on a holistic approach that involves faith, wellness, and tradition.

Chicana writers use spiritual icons such as la curandera to reaffirm aspects of their Chicana identities but also to disrupt the hegemony of Western religions. Like many other acts of reaffirmation, they acknowledge their Catholic upbringing as part of their colonized identity and also move to their indigenous roots as an act of de-colonization. In the reading of Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado, I was posed with the challenge of explaining the role and significance of la curandera/herb woman. For this definition I relied on Carmen Lomas Garza (1990) book Family pictures/Cuadros de familia. Her definition and representation was a way to help the students visualize la
curandera/herb woman's role. In this case, the Puerto Rican student, Kathy knew what it was and helped me define it:

Yo: [While reading I mentioned the herb woman] Have you heard of an herb woman? [Kathy raises her hand] Yes Kathy, do you want to tell us what it is?

Kathy: Is kind of a medicine woman.

Yo: Yeah, you know that when we get sick we go to the doctor. Well, Mexicans also go to the doctor but they have their herb woman and they make their home made medicines prepare with herbs to help people when they are sick. [Transcript 3-25: p.#4]

Yo: This book is call Family Pictures/Cuadros de Familia and is all pictures that this artist, Carmen Lomas Garza draw about Mexican American families. And here is one picture about the herb woman or the healer, like she called it here. Let me read what she said about it because I think is very interesting the way she describes it. She said:

Yo: [Reading from the book Family Pictures/Cuadros de familia] This is a scene at a neighbor's house. The lady in bed was very sick with the flu. She has already been to a regular doctor and have gotten prescription drugs for her chest cold but she has also ask a healer la curandera to do a
final cleansing or healing for this flu. So the curandera came over and did a cleansing using branches from the rue tree. She also burned copal incense in a coffee can at the foot of the bed. Curanderas know a lot about healing. They are very highly respected. [Transcript 3/26: p # 1]

Two issues were important to be conscious of as I presented aspects of the Mexican American culture, particularly in presenting aspects of Chicano/a spirituality. One was that I had to be always aware that I am not Mexican American and that imposed limitations to my understanding, interpretations and presentation of the text. While as a Puerto Rican, I have some cultural connections such as language, I tried to resist the role of the “insider”. Second, was the difficulty in presenting a culture that is not represented in the classroom community and even less in the curriculum. This was particularly important when presenting Non-Western spiritual icons that are so distant to most of these students’ reality. A vague definition of la curandera could work against the author’s attempt to portray her as an image of support and empowerment within her community. This was an issue that I reflected on my researcher journal:

When Prietita talks about the curandera/herb woman. Kathy, the Puerto Rican girl was the only student to know what it was. She was very accurate in her response. I think she said something like "she is a person that cures people with herbs". I also try to elaborate by saying that Mexicans go to the doctor but that the curandera is someone with a
special knowledge on the curative aspects of herbs and that they also rely
on her when people get ill. As a result of this moment I decided to bring
my big book of Carmen Lomas Garza's Family Pictures/Cuadros de
familia. I want to talk to them about the spiritual aspect of the curandera.
In that book she explained who the curandera is. I am finding very
interesting that in order to explore Friend's From the Other Side I have to
rely on other children's literature written by Latinas. [Reflective Journal 3-
25: p.#2]

Actually, the next day I brought the big book Family pictures/Cuadros de
familia (1990) to share with the students her [the author's] definition and
illustrations. I found that book and Voices from the field extremely helpful
in the process of making ourselves familiar to the Mexican American
culture. I believe now that teaching about an ethnic group that is under
represented in a classroom is extremely difficult. To avoid stereotypes
and generalizations is almost impossible but I found that by using multiple
books/resources supported me in presenting a more honest portrayal. By
saying this I am not saying that my project was free of stereotypes. I think
is important to go to those places where I felt that I was validating a
 stereotype. [Preliminary Analysis 3/25: p#5-6]

Another important aspect that I had to present and that was extremely
difficult for me to define was the notion of "wetbacks" or "mojados". I explained
that this is a derogatory term to call Mexicans who crossed the border through the Rio Grande.

**Yo:** A lot of people cross the border through the Rio Grande to come to the US because there was no work for people in Mexico. "Many of them got wet while crossing the river" so some people on this side who didn't like them and called them wetbacks or mojados. Wetbacks or mojados, let me write this down [I write the words on the chalkboard] So people who didn't like this people who crossed the river they call them wetback or "mojados".

**Yo:** We are going to have this words wetback and "mojado" in our mind because they are going to come up in the story. Also know the difference between Mexican and Mexican American and also be conscious that this story takes place in the border between the US and Mexico. [Transcript 3/25: p#2]

Often in the school setting, words that are derogatory to one group are prohibited from discussion to avoid encouraging the use of those words among students. This was the case in the word "nigger" or as the students called it, the "N" word. However, it was not the case of the word "spiks" or "wetbacks". Because the Mexican and/or Latino/a community was almost invisible in the school, those words had no personal meanings or referents within the
community. Nevertheless, it was not the case for me as a Latina participant/researcher. I found myself questioning the appropriateness of the word within the classroom setting. I explained the word to the students but there was no reaction in terms of using a text with such a derogatory word.

Similar to the mediation and presentation of words and images such as “machos” “spiks” and la cuanndera I had to also be aware that by bringing up the difference between Mexicans and Mexican American, I was establishing a binary and oppositional relationship within the Mexican community. In my opinion, throughout her work Anzaldúa (1987, 1990, 1993) suggested that within groups there are differences and oppressive relationships. This is a major theme in terms of Chicana feminist literary work. Chicanas express their feelings and critiques towards their voices that have been silenced within the Chicano movement. But this is a very complex issue to discuss with fifth graders without oversimplifying it:

I was impressed by the amount of dialogue as a result of the introduction to the book. We also discuss the difference between Mexicans and Mexican Americans. They pretty much knew the difference but I wanted to have clear that in the story there is a conflict between Mexicans and Mexican Americans. Some of them asked me why Mexican Americans discriminate against Mexicans if they are from the same culture. I am not sure if my response was appropriate but I told them that within cultural groups there are conflicts and tensions. [Reflective Journal 3-25: p#2]
Notice Kathy's comment on why they don't get along if "they are the same".

Kathy: I don't know why the boys [ make fun] of Joaquín because he is Mexican but they are both Mexicans.

Yo: That is a very important point because they are all Mexicans that doesn't mean that in this story they get along. There are differences within a group. Sometimes we feel that we are better people than other people who are in a situation that is not as fortunate as ours. [Transcript 3/25: p.#6]

In the analysis I realized that my concern is related to a larger problem. If that is the only representation of the Mexican culture that they are going to deal with, what kind of images am I promoting? The problem was not with the text itself as much as it is the lack Mexican representation in the overall curriculum.

Another aspect that I discussed as important in terms of Chicana writers is the exploration of the tensions and marginalizations within the larger US society. In Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado, this tension is reflected in the confrontation between la migra/border patrol and the Mexican community represented by the herb woman and Prietita hiding Joaquín and his mom from the la migra. The tensions in this aspect of the text have to do with bringing to the students an ethical and legal issue that is problematic for several reasons. First, as the facilitator I am not "objective" about the marginalized reality that
many Latino/a immigrants live in the US. An important aspect of choosing this book for my research project had to do with my commitment to develop an awareness about issues related to Latino/a immigrants rights. I believe that the school system's choice of leaving this aspect of social studies outside of the curriculum supports the ideology that denies knowledge to citizens as a way to preserve the status quo.\(^\text{17}\)

Second, the author Gloria Anzaldúa is also not trying to be objective about the representation of her community. If both the author and I are openly ideological and have our own agendas about the issues embedded in Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado then how do I allow students to create their own interpretations, perspectives, and ideologies into the dialogue?

One effective way to open a space for a more critical dialogue about some of the issues presented in the book was to use drama strategies\(^\text{18}\). While I did not analyze every drama and creative activity that we did, it is important to this study to show at least one moment where the drama allowed a negotiation of the author's, the students' and my positionailities in relation to the text. I chose to focus on the moment where la migra/border patrol come into the Chicano/a community. I relied on a drama strategy where I asked the students to create a

\(^{17}\) Ms. Smith: This boy in this story is crossing the border. He is not a legal alien but you got to think of the conditions in which he lives and to think that not everyone crosses because is a criminal or to sell drugs. A lot of people cross over because of the situation in which...they are trying to find something better. He is not doing anything illegal. They are coming over through the border and we will find out to do what... [transcript 3-25, p 6-7]

\(^{18}\) Ms. Smith: I think that the drama was great because it took it out of my hands and out it in theirs. It was a nice way of helping them getting inside of the character without having to open themselves up. I think it was good for some kids that wanted to talk through that character. For other people I think it's good because it got them into other shoes and they never have the chance to do that. I got to sit back. I wasn't lecturing. [Interview p. 4]
news report where they have to report on the event of la migra/border patrol looking for undocumented immigrants. This section illustrates the way that, after I presented the text to the students they began negotiating through drama their interpretations and the intersections of the text culture, my culture, and their own culture and those to the larger society. Because each person in the classroom has his/her own cultural location, it would be impossible for me as a researcher to show how all the perspectives come together through the drama. This is especially true in terms of the students, as they worked in small groups as a diverse community of interpreters negotiating each participant's interpretation in order to agree on how to represent those in one scene.

Group #1: Robert, John, George, Andre

John (news reporter): Hello ladies and gentleman welcome to channel five where news comes first. Today we are going to interview people from the other side. Today we are going to interview the lady of...how I say...the lady...that had all this minerals and herbs...I don't know...

Student [from the audience]: The herb woman.

John (news reporter): So you are the herb lady aren't you?

George (herb woman): Yes, I am.
John (news reporter): How did you help these people that came from Mexico, crossing the border?

George (herb woman): I'm afraid I can't tell you that because if other...people can come and arrest me.

John (news reporter): Ok Andre take it over. I don't know what to say about this herb woman. [long silence]

Andre (news reporter): I don't know what to say.

John (news reporter): I can't get in contact with Andre so let's go on to the little boy. How did you got to escape through the border without the border patrol seeing you?

George (Joaquín): [George changes role to Joaquín] I was standing there right in front of the bridge and...[John stands up and takes now into the role of the border patrol and stops the show]

John (border patrol): There you are!!!

[George (Joaquín) stands up from his chair and run. John (border patrol) follows him]
John (border patrol): Where did he go? [John takes a seat in the interviewee chair]

Robert (camera man): [in the role of the cameraperson notifies someone outside of the set that the border patrol is there] The border patrol is here!!! Who are you?

John (border patrol): Who are you man?

Robert (camera man): I'm the cameraman. You are in my studio man!!! Get out!!!

John (border patrol): I can't do that.

Robert (camera man): Oh really, really...Get out [Robert puts his arm up like he is going to hit the border patrol] Get out, get out ... [Robert hits the border patrol with a stick and the border patrol leaves the studio]

John (border patrol): I'll get you later. [the border patrol leaves]

[Robert (camera man) takes George (Joaquín) by his arm and moves him to the interviewee chair]
Yo: Ok [at this point the scene seems too violent and I'm afraid that they are out of control or that they have lost sense of where they are going with the scene. Robert/camera man picks up the camera and John/news reporter comes back to his interviewer role]

Robert (camera man): We are back from commercials at 5,4,3,2,1.

John: Ok we are done.

Yo: What you think of this one? [the group is all excited about presenting their scenes and this is one of the comments that I was able to catch from the audio tape while everybody was talking at the same time]

Student: It looked like Jerry Springer. [Transcript 3/26: p. #6]

In this scene John, a young White male, takes into the role of the news anchor and his first statement is “welcome to channel six where news comes first”. This is an advertisement slogan for one of the local news programs in the city. John creates a familiar framework, not only to him but all of us in the classroom. Immediately he introduces the persons to be interviewed as the people from the other side, using Anzaldúa's image/title on the book. The students use this notion or phrase of “the other side” in several occasions pointing to the other side as a concrete place that is connected in some ways to
US citizens. The news anchor introduces the first person to be interviewed, the herb woman. He has difficulties remembering who she is. He called her "the lady that has all this minerals and herbs" which is his interpretation of the character. One student from the audience jumps in to tell him the she is the herb woman and he then called her the herb lady. It is interesting the way he changed her from woman to lady, which may be seen as a more "traditional" way of naming a "respectable" woman in US society.

The mediations between the text world, the students' world, the larger society are all playing a part in John's introduction to the news show. The drama allowed him to bring the unfamiliar with the familiar. By bringing both together he is creating and showing [the audience] his meanings and interpretations of the text and how it relates to his perceptions of the world. He is positioning himself in relation to the text by negotiating his location with the text location.

The second part of the script is the interview with George/la curandera. George, a young African American male, is one of the students with the deepest engagement in the drama. When he takes on his role, he goes into a deep exploration of the character, but also of aspects of himself. John/the interviewer asked George/the herb woman to explain how she helped people who crossed the border. George/herb woman response was what I called the activist and community protector voice. By telling the news anchor: "I'm afraid I can't tell you that because if other...people can come and arrest me," George shows his understanding of solidarity, complexity and risks involved in protecting
undocumented immigrants. Through his statement, he is protecting not only the herb woman but also the community that he/she is representing.

This specific event is significant because it challenges the lineal dialogue where I as a teacher could take the role of the "expert", point out the solidarity or tell them the risks and consequences involved in this kind of actions. The drama allowed George a critical and reflective space that showed the tensions and risks involved in taking that kind of action. He is not only positioning the herb woman but he also transgresses to another reflective space that brings a level of socio political consciousness. I suggest that this ability to develop such a consciousness is related to George's own set of experiences and values as a young African American male dealing daily with mediating aspects of his African American identity within this society. In his interview he talked about what he learned from the story and the drama and how it relates to his life:

George: I learned like how to react to certain people. I learned not to be afraid of people that I have never seen before and never to be mean to certain people cause some people are messing and are mean to you. That kind of doesn't give you a reason not to be mean back to them.

Yo: Well that is a difficult situation. Some people are mean to you and what are you supposed to do.
George: Like if two people are getting... ganging up on me and they are talking about me it kind of gets me frustrated because I don't know what to do.

Yo: What do you usually try to do?

George: Just try to leave them alone and walk away but they keep following me.

Yo: Yeah that is a difficult situation. Joaquin also has that...he probably wasn't just left alone after that day. Probably the kids went back and tease them some more. I think this a very difficult discussion to have.

George: Just don't pay attention to them. (Interview: p#5)

Drama is perceived sometimes by the students as an entertaining activity within the classroom. When students engage in-role usually they elaborate those roles and push the drama further among other reasons because of the enjoyment of the creative space. In this case George challenges John in the role of the interviewer/news anchor by protecting the herb woman and not allowing the drama to move forward. As opposed to a "fun" interview, and as a consequence a "fun" dramatic moment, the news anchor was left without possibilities, not allowing for the event to become public or to progress. The news anchor
reaction was then "I don't know what to say about this herb woman" and they moved on to the next interview.

In the third section of this drama there is a shift in roles. Within the roles change I noticed a pattern began to emerge related to how the students' racial identity determined the roles played. George, who is African American, shifted into roles that represented the Mexican perspective, from the herb woman to Joaquín. While John, who is White, took the roles of those who represent a position of privilege (the news anchor and the border patrol).

On this scene John as the border patrol gets into the TV set to trap Joaquin and his mom. They run around the classroom and Joaquin and his mom manage to hide from the border patrol who is left in the TV set asking himself where they went. Robert, a young African American male, as the cameraman intervenes and challenges the patrol authority by telling him to get out of the studio. Then Robert/camera man hits the patrol and kicks him out.

There are various important aspects within this dramatic moment. First, is the students' perception of a news program. When I devised the activity the main purpose of it was to put the students in a distant role that provided them a space to look at the text from a critical perspective:

I thought of giving each person one of the characters to interview to listen to each side of the story. It should be interesting to hear how the students deal with la curandera, for example, if she was the one that hide them and
can not make the event public. What would she tell the reporters? Maybe she tells the reporters that she hide them? [Lesson plan #4: p 1]

I am thinking more of a professional "objective" or less sensationalist news cast. That is not what happened. The students perceptions of a news show is more related to a Jerry Springer type of show. In this kind of sensationalist show, there are no boundaries. Everything is allowed in the show including the violence that the students represented and explored in their scenes. As a consequence, the violence and aggression moved to the center of the scene as opposed to the more critical analysis. The mediation of identities becomes even more complex when their interpretations of the media come to play a key role in their interpretation of the text.

My concern with this scene is that while the drama provided an open space for the students to create a deep and complex representation of the text and aspects of popular culture, the high level of violence put me in a difficult position as a teacher and mediator. For them the violence is normalized and I was not sure if by allowing that kind of violence in the classroom I was supporting the normalization of it or providing a moment of critical reflection. I understand that their drama representations are their interpretations of the kind of problem solution we provide to children in this society. If violence [especially media] is what we have established as the choice and solution, their ways to mediate their
own and others lives are going to be based on what they recognize as the only solution.¹⁹

There are two aspects of "exploring the other side" that disrupt traditional discourses in the classroom. Traditionally classrooms are oriented towards "objective" and "neutral" discourses where there is no space for either violence or emotional attachment²⁰. Both aspects of this research project became central to the exploration of a Latina/o social reality. When the students are presented with narratives that represent some form of oppression (in this case a text written by a Chicana/Latina feminist writer) it is hard to approach it without emotion or maybe even violence. Drama, in the context of this research project, becomes a pedagogical tool that facilitated the mediation of the violence and emotions in the classroom. The load of violence and emotions that the text provoked in the students' interpretations are channeled and mediated through the drama. Drama provided the students with the freedom to let emotions out but also a safe framework to ground their interpretations²¹.

¹⁹ Ms. Smith: Maybe that's because they are dealing with a lot of violence and we talked about it. I'm wondering, even sitting here as I'm here talking to you, thinking that maybe they needed to know what was like to do that hitting, to be that person. Because they really want to say that but they know is wrong to say but if they can do it through the drama they can feel it and they can say it and get it out of their system. And they can feel it and they can say it and get it out of their system and they get a chance to sit back and think: "Why is it that I wanted to be guardian and hit that person?" Let's face it we all get angry and if we can say “I'm just acting like a bad guy”. Sometimes is good to get inside the bad guy because there is that side of us. The dark side. [Interview p. 4]

²⁰ Ms. Smith: You can't allow feelings to run the classroom. I got to be intellectual. We are here to learn. We are here to grow and to learn something. For example you deal with slavery and they feel guilty. I think White teachers' struggle more with that than White kids. I think it is because as adults we know more. We experienced more and we know how tragic…just know where and how people can really get hurt. [Interview p. 8]

²¹ It was like the drama gave them safety. They could hide behind the drama and it's ok if you say the wrong thing because you can always use the excuse that “I'm in character”. I think that when you deal with this kind of issues people are scare they will say something that doesn't sound right. I think the drama gave them a chance. [Interview p. 4]
From my perspective, the arts in general (and drama in particular) were useful in exploring *Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado*. Drama provided an alternative/non-traditional pedagogy to explore a text that is at the margin of the mainstream curriculum. Drama pushed the students to explore aspects of what Maxine Greene (1997) calls the "social imagination" and also the disruption of what bell hooks (1991) calls our "colonized imagination". However, the drama would not move the students to the exploration of a social imagination and to disrupt our colonized imaginations by itself. It is in the overall context that I provided as a Puerto Rican/Latina mediator and the contents of *Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado* that moved the Chicana/Latina voice and perspective to the center of the exploration. The result of the selection of text, my role as an openly ideological mediator and the drama is that voices that have been historically silenced or left out from the curriculum acquire an empowering place in the classroom. The students are engaged in an exploration of a representation of a Latina critical feminist perspective. The social reality provided through the characters in *Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado* open a discussion that is actively explored through the drama. The students have the opportunity to perceive a different perspective than those presented in the mainstream curriculum.
Throughout the research project, I paid special attention to Kathy, a Puerto Rican student in the classroom. Kathy is first generation born in the US mainland. Her mom was born in Puerto Rico and moved to Florida, where Kathy was born. She grew up speaking Spanish and struggled for many years to learn English in mainstream classrooms. She gets reading and math tutoring and has managed to improve her English and as a consequence her school performance greatly. She has an overall C (2.5) GPA and keeps improving.

In several informal conversations, Ms. Smith talked about how my presence, the book and the issues discussed in the classroom influenced Kathy. Specifically Ms. Smith mentioned how Kathy openly starts talking about her mom and aspects of her Puerto Rican identity in ways that she did not before. Kathy is the only Latina/Puerto Rican student in the classroom and her responses and interventions throughout the research project are related to herself and to her mom. To have a Puerto Rican teacher moving issues relevant to her identity to the center of the classroom discussion opened up a space for Kathy to share aspects of her Puerto Rican identity that the mainstream curriculum seemed not to provide. The reading experience became relevant to Kathy's culture, identity and reality. Furthermore, I understand that along with Kathy's interpretations of the issues and readings, I was reaffirming and redefining aspects of my identity and the reading and mediation of *Friends from the other side/ Amigos del otro lado*. 
This section is an attempt to analyze how Kathy, author Gloria Anzaldúa and myself interact in exploring issues related to our Latina identity. I have constructed four creative writing pieces using data from the classroom discussion and interview transcripts. I also used Kathy's in role drama\textsuperscript{22} participation to show Kathy's interactions with the text and included excerpts from the book \textit{Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado} to connect how the author's voice framed our discussions and interactions. The first piece "Did you come from the other side?" is a poem and explores those moments where Kathy, Anzaldúa and I position ourselves in terms of our ethnic identity. The second piece "English and Español: The complexity of language and identity" is a bilingual text that shows the complexities of being bilingual in this society and how Kathy, the text and I make sense of the issue. The third piece "Esta es la historia de\textsuperscript{23} . . .: Critical conversations among Latinas" is a short story that creatively re-constructs critical conversations that happened on issues of difference and discrimination. One of the interesting aspects of this short story is that I played with the idea of concretely personifying Gloria Anzaldúa as part of the classroom interactions. Finally, the fourth piece "Changing perspectives: Mujeres leyendo sobre mujeres\textsuperscript{24}" was created as a monologue of Kathy's reflections on reading books with women characters.

\textsuperscript{22} In-role is a drama in education strategy where the participants take the role of a character(s). The participants in-role speak, act, write and reflect as one of the characters.

\textsuperscript{23} This is the story of . . .

\textsuperscript{24} women reading about women
Did you come from the other side?
(a poem)

Estamos buscando un espacio
We are searching for a space
para hablar
to talk
Para compartir quienes somos
to share who we are

What is the meaning of being Latino and Latina?
What is a Mexican immigrant?
Where we come from and which are those things that describe ourselves?
Did you come from the other side?
What comes to your mind when you hear the word Hispanics?
Do you know where Latinos or Hispanics come from?

I am from Puerto Rico
My mom was born in Puerto Rico
I was born in Florida
I'm “from the other side”
Puerto Rico
I'm a mother and we are trying to cross the border
I think of my mom

Brave
Anzaldúa/Friend from the other side: “Did you come from the other side? You know, from Mexico?” asked Prietita having noticed that his Spanish was different from hers. (p.2)

“¿Viniste del otro lado? Tú sabes, de México,” le preguntó Prietita, quien ya había notado que su español era distinto al suyo.

Yo: I will write Spanish because that is the language that I talk but I can also write English because now English is part of who I am and is part of my culture.

Yo voy a escribir español porque ese es el idioma que yo hablo pero también puedo escribir inglés porque ahora es parte de quién yo soy y parte de mi cultura.

Kathy: English, Spanish because I know a little bit of Spanish and my mom speaks Spanish.

Inglés, español porque yo sé un poco de español y mi mamá habla español.

Yo: and my first language is Spanish and my second language is English that I have learned in here while I go to school. I think those are things that describe myself.

Y mi primer idioma es español y mi segundo idioma es inglés que aprendí aquí en la escuela. Yo creo que esas son cosas que me describen.

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25 Anzaldúa/Friends from the other side represents excerpts from the book. Yo/I – is my voice from the transcripts presenting and mediating Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado.
Kathy: See I put ..............................................................English over here (outside).
Vez yo puse inglés aquí (afuera).

Spanish is really important to me
because I'm going to Puerto Rico.
(she puts it at the center)
Español es bien importante para mí
porque yo voy para Puerto Rico.
(lo coloca en el centro)

Yo: She can speak Spanish and
her name is Gloria Anzalduá
and she is Mexican American.
She speaks mostly English but
she also knows a lot of Spanish.
She is bilingual.
She speaks both and for her is very important
that people who speaks English has access
to the book and people who can not understand
English can read it in Spanish.

Ella puede hablar español
y su nombre es Gloria Anzalduá
y ella es mexicanoamericana.
Ella habla la mayoría inglés
pero también habla mucho español.
Ella es bilingüe.
Ella habla ambos
y para ella es importante que las
personas que habla inglés tengan acceso al libro
y las personas que no pueden hablar
ingles lo puedan leer en español.
Anzaldúa/Friends from the other side:
When I was a young girl
I saw many woman and children
who had crossed to this side
to get work because there was none in Mexico.
Many of them got wet while crossing the river,
so some people on this side who didn't like them call them
"wetbacks" or "mojados".

Kathy: When other people are
different they make fun of them.

Yo: Yes that's part of it.
When we don't understand
each other because we are different
sometimes people makes fun of the other.
Like if I sometimes I go to a place and people
listen to my accent and they don't understand
the effort that I am making trying to speak English
people can make fun of me.
Kathy: It's hard to speak two languages.

Es difícil hablar dos idiomas.

Yo: Does anyone speak two languages here?

¿Hay alguien aquí que hable dos idiomas?

Kathy: I can speak Spanish.
My mom speaks English very good
and Spanish very good.

Yo puedo hablar español.
Mi mamá habla inglés muy bien
y español muy bien.

Yo: Is it important for you to keep your...
to not forget Spanish?

¿Es importante para ti que mantengas…
que no olvides el español?

Kathy: Yes, because my mom says is
important because like if we go to Puerto Rico
and she wants me to [have] Spanish
in my heart.
She wants me to read more about Spanish people.
She is trying to help me read Spanish books
so I can understand it much better.

Si, mi mamá dice que es bien importante
porque si voy a Puerto Rico
y ella quiere que lleve el español
en mi corazón.
Ella quiere que lea mas sobre gente Hispana.
Ella está tratando de que yo lea libros en español
para que lo pueda entender mucho mejor.

Yo: Is it important for you?

¿Es importante para ti?

Kathy: Yes.

Sí
Yo: Yeah, I think that we all have the ability to speak more than one language and to speak it really well and ... because I'm learning English that does not mean that I have to forget my Spanish. We can all speak many languages. I know people who can speak French, English and Spanish and all well. That's an ability that all human beings have. Do you want to hear the text in Spanish?

Si, yo creo que todos tenemos la habilidad de hablar más de un idioma y de hablarnos bien... Porque yo estoy aprendiendo inglés no significa que tenga que olvidarme de mi español. Todos podemos hablar muchos idiomas. Yo conozco personas que pueden hablar francés, español e inglés y todos bien. Esa es una habilidad que todos los seres humanos tenemos. ¿Quieren escuchar el texto en español?

Kathy: I can not speak in Spanish but I can understand it.

Yo no puedo hablar español pero puedo entenderlo.
Esta es la historia de... Critical conversations among Latinas

*Estas es la historia de...* three Latinas in the classroom, Gloria Anzaldúa, Kathy and I. We got together to retell and discuss what happened to Prietita in *Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado.*

This is the story of Prietita, a brave young Mexican American girl, and her new friend Joaquín, a Mexican boy from the other side of the river:

I am Prietita. I'm Mexico American. Today was an exciting (exciting) [day]. Today I meant (met) a boy name Joaquin his Mexico well (he is Mexican as well). I hered (heard) a nass (mess) it was Tete and Joaquin. Tete was telling to go where he came from.

“Look at the mojadito, look at the wetback!”... “Hey man why didn’t you go back where you belong? We don’t want any more mojados here”.

I run over there Tete was about to throw (throw) a rock at him but I got in front of Joaquin. Then Tete went home. Then I went to Joaquin house and meant (met) Joaquin's [mom]. I was so happy to ment (meet) her. I don’t know why the boys make fun of Joaquin um...because they are the same Mexican um they are both Mexicans.

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26 This is the story of...
That is a very important point because they are all Mexicans that doesn't mean that in this story they get along. There are differences within a group. Sometimes we feel that we are better people than other people who are in a situation that is not as fortunate as ours.

And she didn't want to lose her friend because he will be on jail and it wouldn't be fair...the rights to Joaquin, the patrol shouldn't come.

Like you said we have a Mexican American border patrol looking for the Mexican mother and Mexican illegals. We have to think that is the way it happens. This is a very realistic story. He is a Mexican border patrol because people have to work and we all find different jobs. In order for this Mexican American man to survive he decided to work in the border patrol. It is a very difficult situation maybe for the border patrol to see that people who are coming from Mexico looking for a better way of life and they have to trap because they are illegal.

When they entered the herb woman’s house they saw she was already drawing the curtains. “Joaquin,” she said, “you and your mother go hide under the bed and don’t make a sound.”

If I get caught then I get caught…
The herb woman is a person that probably the whole community knows about. Is kind of a medicine woman. You know that when we get sick we go to the doctor. Well, Mexicans also go to the doctor but they have their herb woman and they make their home made medicines prepare with herbs. To help people when they are sick. She was nice enough to let the boy and the mom hide under the bed and teach the girls, I can't say that name. Prietita to teach her how to heal the boy. That was nice enough from her to do that.

Changing perspectives: Kathy's reading on women
(Kathy’s monologue)

All the books that [I] read keep talking about man, not woman that much. It feels [books with strong woman characters] like they are trying to say something to me about writing something about woman. It was a good a book [Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado]. I liked it...I like the part when they went across the...Prietita try to save the boy.

[Through the drama] I felt like I was in the book like [I] was trying to save that boy and hmm I felt like it's a very...it's just like if I'm in the book. I can imagine what she is thinking of and what she wants to do. Prietita acts like she wants help a friend and those two other girls [from other books she read] are trying to do the same. Catherine [Catherine Called Birdy] is trying...because her father is trying to sell her of and getting married to a soldier that she doesn't even know. I think they are the same because they are talking about boys and how they get in fights, how they do stuff. They are still talking about woman.
In the first poem "Did you come from the other side?" I captured those moments where Kathy, Anzaldúa and I position ourselves in terms of ethnic background. Kathy reaffirms her puertoriqueñidad as it connects to her mom's identity. When I asked the class where are those places Latino/as come from she is the first one to answer Puerto Rico. She also responds to the questions does anyone knows any Latinos by saying her mom. However, she also clarifies that her mom was the one born in Puerto Rico and that she was born in Florida. Like Kathy's examples mine also relate to my puertoriqueñidad. Through the poem I attempted to illustrate how I used my cultural locations as an example for Kathy to define hers.

Kathy and my interactions with the book Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado help us position ourselves in terms of our Latina identities. In the first encounter between Prietita and Joaquín she asked him if he comes from the other side meaning Mexico. This statement in the book makes concrete the border crossing and the characters' positionalities. Joaquín represents a Mexican that recently immigrates to the US and Prietita represents a Mexican American living within the US border community. In almost the same way that Kathy and I positioned ourselves. While in very different realities and circumstances Joaquín and I recently crossed a border from Mexico and Puerto Rico respectively and Prietita and Kathy represent those first generations born and raised in the US mainland.

Through Kathy's drama interventions she was able to interpret the characters and the situations in which they are involved. The drama became an
active way for her to negotiate and give voice to her opinion in terms of the issues in the book. As the news anchor she describe the mother, la curandera/herb woman and Prietita as brave persons. Kathy’s responses are not far from the authors and my intentions of representing Latina characters as sheroes. The book and my ideologies comes to the surface through Kathy’s drama interventions.

English and Spanish language was another connection between Kathy, the text and I as it is shown through the second piece “English and Español: The complexity of language and identity”. Language in the US society is extremely related to issues of difference and discrimination. The script set the complexities and multiple layers in dealing with issues of language. First Anzaldúa through the book establishes differences in speaking a language. In this case Spanish becomes complex and heterogeneous when she points out that Prietita’s Spanish is different than Joaquin’s. Then I/Yo positioned my self as a Spanish speaker but recognizing that English is a new aspect of my identity and I want to honor that aspect of myself. I wanted to show the students that language is dynamic and in transformation and plays a key role in the ways we define culture.

Kathy first established that she could speak a little of Spanish and that her mom can speak both Spanish and English. Later on she reaffirms the importance of Spanish and gives it a higher place in terms of defining aspects of her culture. At the beginning of the research project I asked the students to write down words that define aspects of their culture. Then I asked them to glue those in a large piece of paper with the word “culture” at the center. I asked them to
put the words according to significance, the most important closer to the word “culture” and the least significant towards the edges of the paper further from the word “culture”. Interestingly Kathy puts the word “Spanish” towards the center closer to the word culture and “English” further from the word culture. She explains that it is because she might be going to Puerto Rico and she wants to be able to speak Spanish well. It called my attention to the notion that for a student who never spoke Spanish with me nor talked about her identity in the classroom, to openly have such an act of reaffirmation was important. Furthermore she makes that connection to home literacy through her mom encouragement to keep her Spanish. Within the regular school literacy context, Kathy’s mom seems invisible and as a result Kathy never talks about her. The opposite happens throughout the research project where she reaffirms and gives voice to her mom through many of our conversations.

The dialogues about the complexities of language and how it impacts Kathy’s and my life is influenced by bringing a text, *Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado*, that is bilingual and written in non-standard Spanish, and non-standard English. The text pushed our conversation to talk about why the author chose to write a bilingual text, the difficulties of learning a second language and the discrimination lived by non native English speakers. We, Kathy and I, had to learned English as a second language in the context of being successful in school. For me in my graduate studies and for her in the context of primary education.
The short story "Esta es la historia de...Critical conversations among Latinas" was the most challenging to write and the most complex to analyze. In this short story I tried to capture those moments where within the classroom context Kathy and I discuss issues of difference as they relate to differences within ethnic groups and immigrants citizenship through the interpretation of Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado. I constructed the story using excerpts from the book, Kathy's in role drama retelling the story and my explanation and interpretation of the book in the classroom.

The first part of the short story is Gloria Anzaldúa introducing the main character Prietita and how she stood up for her new friend Joaquín, an undocumented immigrant. Kathy's writing in Prietita's role follows that part. Kathy in the role of Prietita retells how Joaquín was mocked by the boys in the border community and how she stood up for him. The last part of the story consists of my interventions as the teacher interpreting the story with the students.

Kathy's personal interventions combined with her roles through the drama are reflections on difference and justice especially through Prietita's role. Through Prietita, Kathy talks about a brave girl who stood up and protected Joaquín from the authorities, understanding the consequences of that act. Furthermore she starts talking about Joaquín's rights and Prietita and la curandera/herb woman's risk of going to jail. The personal event is interpreted by Kathy within the larger social context, moving her imagination towards a social and empowering exploration.
This last short script is intended to be read as a monologue where Kathy explored her connections to books with strong female character. Her ability to connect a book such as Karen Cushman's (1994) *Catherine called Birdy* with *Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado* shows her critical understanding of books where female gender is explored. *Catherine called Birdy*, is a historical fiction set in the medieval times and Catherine as the daughter of a minor baron struggles with the idea of an arranged marriage. Kathy feels that in both books the characters are talking to her from a strong woman perspective. However the plots of each book are extremely different especially in terms of cultural and historical time locations. In terms of exploring gender in *Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado* the strong female perspectives are experienced at a deeper level through the drama. The characters' situations are imagined and acted out connecting the physical and the reflective interpretation.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

[It is through [a] critical process of discovery and empowerment that teachers and students move into solidarity across the terrain of cultural differences to arrive at the knowledge that hidden in the complexity of these differences are many ways to be human, and many ways to struggle for a world in which we can all be free. (Darder, 1997, p. 350)

This last chapter summarizes the major conclusions of this study and their implications in the areas of multicultural children’s literature, Latina epistemologies, drama and to the larger field of literacy. In order to develop this series of implications I will revisit the original set of questions that frame the study:

• What is the potential of using a Latina literary framework to study and analyze Latina children’s literature? Does this framework help the reader situate and interpret the literature in a manner that is congruent with the complexities Latina writers explored in their literature?
What does it mean to read this literature while at the same time negotiating the author's and reader's own cultural identities? How, for example, do I as a Puerto Rican/Latina participant researcher present and interpret the students readings of *Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado*? Where do I position myself in the mediation of this text? Do I, as Puerto Rican, present myself as an insider in the Latino/a culture but as an outsider of the Mexican-American culture? What is the impact of Latina literary analysis on my presentation of the text? How does this framework impact the students’ responses? Where do the students position themselves in relationship to the story?

If like Soter and Rogers (1997) suggested “[r]eaders resist texts and readings, as well as real implied authors, because of their cultural memberships and various identity positions” (p. 3) how do we create spaces to mediate these cultural identity positions?

Which pedagogical tools work as facilitators of this mediation? What is the power of the arts, in this case drama, in the exploration of texts that are distant from our cultural and ethnic locations?

**Implications for the field of Latino/a children’s literature**

The first set of implications of this study are related to the literary analysis of *Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado* (1993) by Chicana writer Gloria Anzaldúa. This study showed how using Latina literary theories provided a “genuine” framework to situate the book and facilitate it. The themes and
characteristics that were delineated as significant to the book within the context of Latina literary theories grounded my teaching ideologies and pedagogies in the classroom and impacted the way I presented and mediated the book. As opposed to presenting and mediating the book as an isolated piece of literature, using Latina literary theories provided a relevant and solid location to develop pedagogies that critically examined aspects of the reality lived by Latinas/os living in the US/Mexican border communities and how those are portrayed by Latina authors such as Gloria Anzaldúa. Among the most significant aspects is that Latina literary theories helped me frame the classroom exploration of *Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado* from within the following criteria:

1) The autobiographical text or a text that represents a lived experience by the author and the community in which she grew up.

2) A bilingual text that is written in non-standard English and non-standard Spanish.

3) The feminist ideologies or the representation of woman as s/heroes.

4) Inside/outside community oppressions.

5) Issues of immigration

6) The role of spirituality in Latina's life.

7) Community activism and solidarity.

Using Latina literary theories to analyze *Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado* was a form of decolonization from mainstream literary
theories to claim and engage in an analysis that is culturally congruent with the literature, the author experiences, and style. The act of decolonization provided new ways of reading, presenting and interpreting Latina literature in the classroom like Rogers suggested: “to turn literature teaching as a means toward understanding difference, perhaps even to change attitudes toward others and to work toward social justice, is to reach toward transformative models of reading and schooling.” (p. 143)

Latina and Latino literary theories and their relationship to children’s literature is an area that needs further exploration and that has the potential of providing teachers with deeper understanding of the themes, style and issues Latina/o writers explore throughout the literature. In order to acknowledge and honor Latina/o children’s literature as a body of literature with its own aesthetic and cultural value, it has to be studied within a theoretical framework that is relevant to the literature. For me throughout this study, as a facilitator of Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado with elementary school students, I found in Latina literary theories a powerful framework that influenced my teaching, and helped present and facilitate the literature.

The literary analysis also brought to the surface the complexity of identity mediations that happen between texts and readers, a complexity that also needs further hotel. Throughout the data, it was shown those places where for example I reaffirm aspects of my own identity at the same time I learned more about how to better analyze and relate to the literature as a reader. On one level for me as a Puerto Rican/Latina reader, but as an outsider of the US/Mexican border
community, Latina literary theories provided me with a place to see the gaps and connections between the text and my own identity. The literary analysis also framed the students’ responses to the book and the mediation of their identities with the events presented by Anzaldúa. Among the mediations that were framed through the literary analysis were:

- The political choice for Latinas of creating a bilingual book and how the students and I discussed our beliefs towards this particular issue.
- The creation of texts that portray a social reality through a story or narrative. In the case of *Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado* issues of immigration and citizenship.
- The presentation of Latinas as heroines. This particularly impacted the girls in the classroom. The girls interviewed all talked about their identification with powerful women characters.
- Honoring spirituality through the role of the curandera/herb woman. The students’ interpretations of la curandera/herb woman did not represent her as exotic.
- The presentation of heterogeneous communities that sometimes work in solidarity but other times in tension and contest. The students questioned and interpreted the complexities of identities within one ethnic group. As opposed to a “generic” interpretation of a culture the students begin to perceive human beings interactions as complex.
This study focuses only on the book *Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado*. In order to look at the potential of the framework used in this study further research is needed that studies other Latina/o literary texts for young audiences. The field of Latina/o children's literature and educators will benefit from deeper explorations and analysis of how to mediate multicultural literature and how to incorporate it in the classroom.

Implications for an understanding of Latina epistemologies and research

Throughout this study I claimed to be “openly ideological” in my role as a Puerto Rican/Latina participant researcher and looked at how my epistemological locations influenced the ways I conducted this study and interpreted the data. The notion of the “neutral” researcher and the “neutral” teacher were both disrupted. Like Dillard (2000) proposed more “culturally indigenous ways of knowing research in the academy” were explored by first, using Latina literary theories to frame my pedagogies and also relying and bringing my “cultural intuition” and experiences as Latina woman to the center of the study (Delgado, 1998). The data shows those places where I am using a combination of the Latina literary framework and my own experiences to facilitate the text *Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado* (Anzaldúa, 1993). The ways I presented and facilitated themes such as spirituality, multiple levels of oppression and the role of Latinas as sheroes were explored relying on the previous literary analysis and my own experiences.
The data also shows that themes such as language were presented and mediated not only relying on the literary analysis and my own personal experiences but also in the role and complexities of being bilingual participant/researcher teaching mostly monolingual students and one Puerto Rican student.

These levels of the students’ involvement varied throughout the study but one significant experience was Kathy’s responses and connection into a culturally relevant learning experience (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The openness from where I presented and reaffirm my Puerto Rican identity influenced Kathy’s in a way where she begins bringing aspects of her Puerto Rican identity forward.

Theorists on culturally relevant pedagogies explore a significant aspect of teaching through the development of pedagogies where students of color can see themselves and reaffirm their identities. These theories worked as an effective frame to interpret and better comprehend Kathy’s experiences in the classroom. However, as a result of Kathy’s experience in the study a set of new questions arises in relationship to culturally relevant teaching and pedagogies which deserve further study. How can educators develop inclusive pedagogies for those that represent a “minority” in a multiracial classroom? How does this lack of cultural engagement affect the students’ identity? What kind of knowledge and preparation demands from teacher education programs help pre-service teachers understand multiracial classrooms in dynamic ways?
Implications of students responses to literature through drama

The data also shows how the students' responses to *Friends from the other side/Amigos del otro lado* were influenced by the way the author's ideologies and my role as facilitator came together. The text was presented in a manner that brings up and focuses on the social, economic and political reality that Mexicans live in the US/Mexican border community. Moving beyond the theme of friendship, the students explored critical issues such as immigration, citizenship, violence and power. The reading experience became a form of critical literacy where the students explored a form of literary interpretation while examining their positionalities and relationships as members of this society. The students create interpretations that are based on their personal experiences and opinions while also critically examining and questioning the way laws and society gets structured and its implications to different individuals. The students start examining their ideologies and constructing new and more critical ones.

Those critical interpretations were constructed throughout the multiple roles that the students explored through the drama. The drama allowed the students to interpret the book reflecting on their own positionalities (reflective positions) and negotiate the book, myself and their classmates positions (interactive positions) (Davie & Harré, 1990). Through this negotiation of reflective and interactive positionings, the students used their imaginations to enter into a creative space where like Maxine Greene (1995) states:
[W]hat may seem to us a totally alien world in the person of another, we are called upon to use our imaginations to enter into that world, to discover how it looks and feels from the vantage point of the person whose world it is" (p. 4).

Through the drama, the participants of this study actively entered the text world and explore it from multiple points of view. The interactions throughout the drama became extremely complex. As opposed to a distant and detached reflection of what happened to the characters (the other), the students examined larger social implications of the events while constructing their discourses and opinions. Theories that perceived the potential of multicultural children's literature as a dichotomy of mirrors (where readers reading about their own culture see aspects of their identity in the text) and windows (where readers from a culture outside of the text, learned from a new culture) (Galda, 1998) get disrupted and are perceived as more complex interactions between text and reader. Using drama as a pedagogical tool became a very complex process where the students are examining their roles as participants in this society and how that relates to other members of it. The distance suggested in the image of window is transformed through the drama into a mirror where we all reflect in our participation and awareness as members of this society.

Furthermore the data demonstrate how the drama is a space where the social forces that construct the students' ideologies become visible and influence the students' responses to contemporary realistic fiction. The data suggested for
example the influence of popular culture in framing students’ interpretation.
Through the creation of a “talk show” the power of the media as a form of
socialization and as a model for developing responses became transparent. It is
important to question and carefully study this kind of drama format because it
poses a challenge to the facilitator in terms of what is allowed in the classroom
as a legitimate or proper form of response. However, it is through tools like
drama that literacy educators can clearly perceive the potential of allowing
students to frame their reading interpretations, grounded in a familiar way to
examine the multiple social influences that frame their responses.

The same could be said about the violent contents of the dramatic events.
Children’s creative imaginations are loaded with violent images that were
expressed through the drama. I was posed with the challenge of either
censoring that creative expression that is a reflection of our society or opening a
safe space where the students representations become authentic or both.

This area of studying the social construction of students interpretation and
mediation of a text is under study by literacy researchers such as Enciso (1997)
and Lewis (1997), but has not been yet explored in relationship to Latino/a
children’s literature. This study provides the seeds for the beginning of a bigger
study on socio-cultural and socio-political influences in students responses to
Latino/a children’s literature.
Implications to the larger field of literacy and multicultural education

Throughout the study was the ongoing problem of the lack of representation of Latino/a contribution in the school curriculum and in the literacy research field in terms of inclusion of Latino/a children's literature. The potential of Latino/a children's literature not only relies in the development of an awareness of the social reality Latinos/as live as part of this society, what Freire called conscientization (1995/1970). It is also in the opportunity that literature written by Latinos/as provides, in terms of a literary experience where the aesthetics of the literature demands new forms of reading and interpreting.

I conclude from this study that Latinos/as invisibility, and lack of representation in the school curriculum is a form of marginalization that limits what counts as legitimate knowledge. The impact of this marginalization not only affects Latino/a students and their identification with the curriculum but limits every student's right to know the multiple realities that members of this society live. In a time where the Latino/a population is the fastest growing population in the United States, teachers and teacher educators are posed with this challenging question: Is the school curriculum outdated and irrelevant when it does not include contemporary perspectives and multiple realities? I believe in the creation of a democratic space where we all have the right and the responsibility to know in order to make informed decisions that affect ourselves and other citizens in this society. Hopefully through the creation of teacher education programs that prepare teachers to critically look at new forms of
reading and interpreting literature in more culturally relevant forms, we could begin seeing some change.

Finally as a Puerto Rican/Latina I reaffirm my commitment to my community and to continue studying and looking for effective ways of exploring powerful tools such as drama that allow schools to become spaces where “concientización” and critical dialogues are encouraged in order to achieve equity.

Going back to the statement of the problem: To teach multiculturally is not teaching generic celebrations and traditions. To teach multiculturally is to critically examine the lives and experiences of those groups that traditionally have been excluded from the core curriculum. Like Banks (1994) suggested the curriculum has to be approached in a transformative way to develop the teacher and student's critical consciousness.
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**CHILDREN'S BOOKS CITED**


APPENDIX A

Reflective lesson Plan #1
Exploring and discussing the meaning of being Latino/a

Focus group interview

Materials:
Video Camera
Video Tapes
Tapes (2)
Tape Recorders (2)
Journals
Map

Reflection: The purpose of this session is to get a sense of the student's knowledge on Latino/a culture. Part of the discussion will focus on where Latinos come from, the difference between Hispanic and Latinos.

I. A. Initial Focus Group Interview Questions
The first part of the focus group is to explore the “where we come from?”. The idea is to explore the variety of places that we were born and how we got here. The discussion then, should move to the map exploring the notion of border crossing. Topics to be explore.

1. Were you all born in Ohio? If not where?
2. Was your family born in Ohio? If not where?

II. Defining Culture
What is the meaning of the word culture? Things we do, things we believe, things that make us the same and things that make us different.

Reflection: I developed this activity thinking on Paulo Freire's notion of reading the word through the world. I want to explore their definitions and signifiers and go back to throughout the drama. In order to mediate our identities with other peoples we have to define some aspects of ours. Is kind of an autobiographical definition of culture.
1. In Groups – What words come to your mind when you think of yourself and your culture? Create a diagram with the words. Hang it on the wall.

I. B. What do you think the word Latinos/Hispanics means? What comes to your mind when you hear these words?

1. Which groups are included? Show in the map what is considered Latin America and the Caribbean. Latinos/as came to this country from different places in Latin America and the Caribbean. Which are some of the Latin American countries that you remember from working in the map.

2. Do you know which languages are spoken in Latin American countries? Most of the Latinos/as that came from Latin America speak Spanish and had to learn English in the USA.

3. Why are we here? Who’s an immigrant and who’s not?

4. How we got here?

5. The Puerto Rican Case – moving back and forward

6. The Mexican case – Crossing the border (Read example from Voices From the Field p. 36)

Journal Writing

III Read Golden Tales – Exploring Latin American folktales –

Note: Ms. Smith asked me to explore different genres through Latino children’s literature. One of the genres that she is interested in is mystery. Latin American myths, legends and folktales are full of mystery and suspense. The book Golden Tales will be the book to be explored. Two reasons for choosing the book. The first one is that the stories were compiled and retold by a Latina writer and illustrator (Lulu Delacre). Second, the illustrations, including maps, move the text to another level.

A copy of the book was given to Ms. Smith. She will be exploring other stories is the book with the students.

A. Read aloud

IV. Drama – La caravela buriona/The Laughing Skull

Witness – In small groups. One person is the investigator and the other two are the soldiers. The two soldiers are telling the story to the
investigator and the investigator is free to interrupt the storyteller at any
time to ask him or her details that will add to the story being told.

Meeting with the investigators – What kind of information did you
gathered? Listen to the summaries.

Who is this person/skull – The skull is a person that lived in the Dominican
Republic a long time ago. Who was this person? Where he/she came
from and what happen to her/him? Write a diary

Tableau – Solve the mystery and show it in a tableau

V. Journal Writing
APPENDIX B

Reflective Lesson Plan #2:  
The Laughing Skull (continuation)

A. Investigators
The first part of the lesson will be a discussion of the different jobs of an investigator. The guiding questions will be:

What is an investigator’s job
How do they gathered evidence? What counts as evidence?

We will discussed how as readers we assume the role of investigators when reading mystery. As we read and become more intrigue about the mystery we start putting pieces together on order to solve the mystery.

B. In role
Reflection: Last night I read all the students journals about who is the person in the skull. I grouped their responses (ex. The skull was a person that had problems with the law, a person that lived in the castle, a joke, etc) I used their responses as reports from the investigators.

In the role of investigators we discussed all the reports and now they have to show me evidence.

C. Tableau
Show in a frozen image of evidence that shows or proved the skull is the person that you think it is.

D. Finish reading the story – final reflections, exploring stories and legends from other cultures

E. Journal writing – evaluation of the drama and definition of culture
APPENDIX C

Reflective Lesson Plan #3
Friends From the Other Side

Reflection: In this session I will like to explore and discussed with the student’s differences and tensions among cultures. We already discussed the definitions of culture and multiculture but what happens when all those different groups come together? Is it always easy to get along and to negotiate our differences?

A. Discussion: Differences and tensions among cultures.
   For this discussion I will like to go back to the words mural that we created. Discussed how different and similar we all are in the classroom culture.

   Guiding questions:
   What makes us the same?
   What makes us different?
   Is it always easy to deal with differences? Why yes or not?

B. Introduction to Friends From the Other Side

Reflection: I think the introduction of the book provides a lot of information in terms of locating the story in terms of place but also it established that even though the story is fiction is based on an experience of the author an important aspect of critical fictions.

   The author's note: (overhead)
   "I grew up in South Texas, close to the Mexican-US border. When I was a young girl, I saw many woman and children who had crossed to this side to get work because there was none in Mexico. Many of them got wet while crossing the river, so some people on this side who didn't like them call them "wetbacks" or "mojados."

   "This is the story of Prietita, a brave young Mexican American girl, and her new friend Joaquín, A Mexican boy from the other side of the river." (p. #1)
Notions to discuss:

The author's experiences.

Mexican-US border (work, the Rio Grande & wet backs/mojados)

Difference between Mexican and Mexican Americans/Chicanos/as

Reflection:
I'm not sure if I should read the story in English and Spanish. I think something is missing if I don't read the text in Spanish. It's one aspect of the experience of being Latino/a. Maybe I should ask the teacher to read the part in English and I can read the part in Spanish.

C. Read the first part of the story – The first day

Reflection:
I decided to divide the story in two parts. In this book there are two major events that should be each discussed in depth. First is the moment in which Joaquin was mock by the Chicano boys. Second is the event where La migra comes looking for Joaquin and his mom. To read the story all at once will be too much information especially because after the focus group on the Latino/a experience I got the feeling that the students have very little knowledge about it.

D. Tableau – The moment Joaquin and his mom crossed the border.
Discuss tableau including characters thoughts.

Reflection: Process drama vs. a series of activities. I have been debating if I should give the drama a frame, like is usually done in process drama or if I should explore a series of drama activities. It is important for me to first explore the drama from within and then take into more distant roles to critically reflect the story. I thought of giving the students the role of film makers that have to do a documentary on the experience of Mexican immigrants but to give them a distant role to then move them to the center of the story seem a little confusing for me. I prefer to have them get first an understanding of the issues discussed in the book from within and then move them to the outside to reflect from another perspective.

Reflection: It is very important for me that the students understand that people cross a concrete border from Mexico to the USA. Through the creation of tableau we can explore the concrete actions and discussed our interpretations of the moment.

E. Journal Writing – Divide the group in two roles:
1. Joaquin – The students that take into this role will write a journal the night after the encounter with the other boys.
2. The boys that mocked him – The same from the boys perspective.

3. Prietita

F. Choral reading
Exchange journals and choose one line that is important or significant. Do a choral reading of this lines.

G. Final reflection
APPENDIX D

Reflective Lesson Plan #4
Friends From the Other Side
La migra comes

A. Read the second part of the book

B. Television News

Reflection: I thought of giving each person one of the characters to interview to listen to each side of the story. It should be interesting to hear how the students deal with la curandera, for example, if she was the one that hide them and can not make the event public. What would she tell the reporters? Maybe she tells the reporters that she hide them?

Divide the class into groups. Each of them will present a TV news reporting on what happen with la migra/border patrol. Interviews with the neighbors and the border patrol.

C. Dealing with the conflict/Hot seat the Chicano patrol and La curandera 

Reflection: Should I play both of this characters? Maybe looking for an advice from the group on what should I do(police & curandera)? I am thinking about the Latina feminist epistemology and my teaching. I will get a rich piece of data if I analyze the ways that I explore those two characters. I am little concern about preaching or giving them a lecture about the issue of border crossing within my role-playing. My Latina subjectivity will influence the ways I present the Chicano patrol and la curandera.

I will take the role of the Chicano police and then la curandera. The students will interrogate both of them in order to know more about who they are and what they think about people crossing the border and been illegals. Why they think that Joaquin and his mom should stay or go?

Reflection: I want to deal with the issue of assuming a position because as citizens in this society we make choices and we support agendas and ideologies. Our choices and opinions influence ands have an impact on the bigger decisions

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regarding issues like immigration. I feel that in Ohio the people's choice is not to know and for some people not knowing frees them from the responsibility of assuming a position. If we build an opinion and acquire an active voice then we become involved and active participants in this society. If the students know nothing about the Mexican reality and they feel distant from it they won't feel any responsibility towards the Latino/a community.

There are several questions that came to my mind as I planned my lessons. First, how do we ask students to take into a Chicano/a role when they have no or very little information to build the role? Is it here that the mediation of identities happens? As I devised the drama I realized that it is going to be a challenge to ask the students to move the story in any direction or to explore the event itself. I am also concerned with issues of gender. When the ethnic aspect has not been explored how do we add a gender issues on top? The book provides a woman perspective but I'm not sure it will come up so easy to discuss in the classroom. The role of the healer/la curandera is the one that I will like to explore. She represents a cultural icon that tells a lot about the role of a woman in the Chicano community.
APPENDIX E

Reflective Lesson Plan
Felita

5/13/99

Reflection: Through Felita I will like to go more in depth in an exploration of the notion of border crossing as a situation that we all experience. In the story Felita and her family experienced a similar set of experiences than the ones that Joaquin lived in friends From the Other Side. The difference relies in that Joaquín’s border crossing is physical, from Mexico to the USA. In Felita’s case the border in crosses from one neighborhood to the other. I would like to talk to the kids about how many times we have to cross borders in our lives and the situations that we have to confront as a result of the cross. In both cases violence and aggression are use as forms of demonstrating that the “aliens” are not welcomed on the communities that they are attempting to integrate. In this lesson I want to explore our positions in terms of crossing borders and how the stories help us see those and to explore other possibilities in terms of solving conflicts and promoting acceptance of differences.

I. Guiding Questions:

1. What is the problem between Felita and Gigi?

2. How do you think Felita dealt with the problem?

3. In the chapter is call “Trouble” where Felita’s family moves from their neighborhood. What in your opinion is the trouble/problem?

4. Is this problem similar in some ways to the conflict to Friends from the Other Side? How yes/no? Compare map of emotions to Friends of the Other Side.

5. Are Felita and her family crossing some kind of border? How?

II. Conflict Resolution:
In groups create a web of the possible solutions to the problems on the story and present them to the classroom. (Write conflict resolution in the center).
Choose one of your suggestions and enact the in a short play.

III. Dialogue about possibilities:
Why do we always think of violence as a way to treat other people?
How do we move beyond the violence?