

RE-ARTICULATING TRAINING PRACTICES: VALUING THE ETHNIC VOICE IN  
WRITING CENTER TUTOR TRAINING  
THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of  
Texas State University-San Marcos  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of ARTS

by

Gina Guzman, B.A.

San Marcos, Texas  
May 2009

RE-ARTICULATING TRAINING PRACTICES: VALUING THE ETHNIC VOICE IN  
WRITING CENTER TUTOR TRAINING

Committee Members Approved:

---

Jaime Armin Mejía, Chair

---

Rebecca Jackson

---

Nancy Wilson

Approved:

---

J. Michael Willoughby  
Dean of the Graduate College

COPYRIGHT

by

Gina Guzman

2009

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my parents.

Para mi mami y papi; sin ellos, yo no estaria aquí escribiendo esta historia. For the late-night words of encouragement, limitless optimism, and for your dispensing of immeasurable ganas y poder, I thank you both from the bottom of my heart.

Y tu también, Hermana, Gracias.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge all the support from my committee members for providing me with insurmountable guidance and support, both on the clock and off. Each committee member played an integral part in encouraging the completion of my research.

I would like to thank other faculty and staff members at the department of English who took the time to ask me about my writing process and providing only hopeful and positive gestures which encouraged my efforts to complete my research.

Most importantly, *mí*l gracias a Dr. Mejía and Dr. Pimentel for catching me when I was falling out of motivation midway in pursuit of my course work.

This manuscript was submitted on April 10, 2009

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	IV
CHAPTER	
I.    THE SIGNIFICANCE OF VALUING THE ETHNIC VOICE IN WRITING CENTER TUTOR TRAINING .....	1
II.   LOCATING MEXICAN AMERICAN AND CHICANA/O STUDENTS IN WRITING CENTER TUTOR TRAINING.....	15
III.  RECONSTRUCTING THE CHICANA/O IDENTITY .....	27
IV.   A POWERFUL RELEASE: EXPLORING CULTURAL SENSITIVITY IN TUTOR TRAINING.....	40
V.    ASKING GOOD QUESTIONS: MEETING THE NEEDS OF MEXICAN AMERICAN AND CHICANA/O STUDENT WRITERS.....	51
WORKS CITED AND WORKS CONSULTED .....	62

# CHAPTER I

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF VALUING THE ETHNIC VOICE IN WRITING CENTER TUTOR TRAINING

The growth of my interest in writing center tutor training is but one part of a quest for a cultural studies approach in writing center theory and practice which I am lucky to pursue in higher education. Since I come from a low income family and am a first-generation college graduate, I am planting the seeds of a cultural studies approach in writing center tutor training that a future Mexican American and Chicana/o community can build upon and embrace as it pursues an interest in writing center tutor training. Before I articulate the role tutors play in assisting Mexican American and Chicana/o students with writing, I will provide a short overview of my personal background of my experience in academia which grounds my research question.<sup>1</sup> Also, by researching my question, I seek to clarify shortcomings in writing center tutor training research, while expanding the field of rhetoric and composition studies as it relates to serving Mexican American and Chicana/o students with writing.

The borderlands between the United States and Mexico is the place of my upbringing and the site of my cultural experience while growing up in the United States. While living in the borderlands, I saw how race plays a major factor in distinguishing one's social class, language, and cultural identity. At a very early age, my parents decided to speak only English in the household in order to aid my linguistic transition in grade school. So due to my English fluency, I was accepted into an English-only class setting

in public school. During my adolescent identity development, I defined my cultural identity as “American.” Although I was growing up “American,” my overall linguistic experience was in both English and Spanish. I was still trying to make heads or tails of the linguistic disjuncture between the school’s English-only experience and the dual linguistic cultural experience outside of school. So one day, I asked my grandmother in Spanish, “¿Grandma, eres americana?” And she would respond, “Yo soy ciudadana Americana, pero tambien soy mexicana.” I remember my grandmother telling me how she took the oral citizenship test and how she blanked out when the official asked her, “What are the colors of the American flag?” Later, as a teenager, I found that my curiosity about my identity grew stronger, so my question to my grandma was more self-reflexive. So I asked my grandma, “¿Qué soy yo?” My grandma replied, “Tú eres americana mexicana.” Because of my struggle with identity while living in the borderlands, I developed a critical consciousness which nourished a quest for analyzing the theories undergirding the epistemology tied to language practice in higher education.

During my senior year as an undergraduate, two Mexican American professors provided me with the cultural depth and breadth I needed to find my Chicana identity within the academic world. I was beginning to interpret the various discourses and the position I held as a Chicana within academic discourse. The two professors’ course reading materials spoke about *mí gente*’s history and their academic contributions which guided my understanding that the cost of being an “American” meant the erasure of the community of Mexican American people in America’s history. These two professors, however, provided an incomplete explanation of my cultural experiences growing up in the borderlands, which Jaime Armin Mejía describes in “Arts of the U.S.-Mexican



Contact Zone,” as a form of “internal colonialism” (172). Mejía applies a theoretical approach for examining the cultures of the borderlands. As Mejía says, “But in the Southwest, the colonizers have not left; they remain and in many parts continue their colonial domination, especially through exclusionary practices in educational institutions like English departments” (172). So, by examining the English-only practice at my home, I find that my parents equated English proficiency with academic success, so they consequently suppressed my Spanish proficiency as a survival tactic in an intolerant monolingual educational system.

My postcolonial experience growing up in the borderlands can be described as being what the late Gloria Anzaldúa calls “linguistic terrorism” (80). Though the conservative educational system did not allow me to develop my dual linguistic skills, my dual linguistic bicultural experience is an ingredient both separate from and yet a part of my identity in higher education. So during the later part of my primary and secondary educational experience, my culture, when I was growing up in the United States, was not represented; thus, my worldview remained subordinate to the educational system. Luckily, those two Mexican American undergraduate professors provided culturally relevant course reading materials which gave breath to my Chicana identity and strengthened my critical thinking—an ability to interpret discourses. Hence, if I had not received a foundation to support my cultural experience in the academy, my confidence in writing would have suffered and my interest in literature would not have endured. Through my new cultural awareness, I was motivated to pursue a Master of Arts degree in Literature.

I then chose to apply to graduate school at institutions that met two criteria. First, the institution had to be close to home, and second, the institution had to have a Mexican American or Chicana/o faculty that I could work with to continue nurturing my budding critical consciousness in a Master's program. Before my switch to pursue a Master of Arts degree in rhetoric and composition, I had a Chicano professor ask me about my cultural experience living in the borderlands. During a conversation, he asked me, "So, what are you?" I answered in terror, "I am American." Though I embrace my American culture as well as Mexican American culture, I am a product of a homogenizing educational system, and my bicultural identity is clandestino—underground—in the eyes of the academy. So in fear of his reaction as an academic authority figure, I chose to silence my ethnic identity just as my parents did during my childhood.

Luckily, my professor, intrigued by my answer, encouraged me to write about my cultural experiences growing up on the borderlands, but—because of my linguistic terrorism—I resisted. Once I began encountering more academics of color, both in person and in texts, I felt safe to express my cultural perspectives in academic conversations. I grew from my linguistic terrorism a view of the academic setting as a place to create an interest in the academy that was my own (Anzaldúa 75-86). Just as Mexican American and Chicana/o academics and other academics of color encourage others about what to do in their academic work, I intend to use a cultural approach to create a bridge between conservative writing center publications and Mexican American and Chicana/o cultural perspectives on writing. These perspectives will hopefully broaden the field of Rhetoric and Composition Studies as well as the field of tutor training, to better assist Mexican American and Chicana/o students with their writing.

My research question began taking shape when I took a course entitled Writing Center Research, and I became discouraged over shortcomings which I saw in writing center publication which inadequately addressed Mexican American and Chicana/o students' needs with writing. Such misunderstandings reflect a modernist perspective of identity construction, as it simplifies the complexity involved in the identity construction of Mexican American and Chicana/o students (Mejía 180). For example, in many writing center publications, I began to notice a recurring theme, the erasure of Mexican Americans' and Chicanas'/os' historical, social, and cultural experience in relation to writing.

I asked myself why the majority of writing center publications did not make clear distinctions among students along racial and ethnic lines? The majority of writing center publications conflates Mexican American and Chicana/o students' issues with writing with those of ESL or second-language learners' issues with writing. Because the majority of writing center publications does not make clear the distinction between Mexican, Mexican American and Chicana/o student groups and their individual needs with writing, writing center theory and practice fail to meet Mexican American and Chicana/o students' particular needs with college writing.

The need for specifying a student group's specific linguistic and cultural practices is crucial to creating more concrete research advancements when it relates to Mexican American and Chicana/o students' needs with writing. For example, the cultural context of what happens in college English classrooms in Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) provides the premise for creating a writing center which has a tutorial approach culturally sensitive to students seeking help with their academic writing. I must acknowledge the

pedagogical tension observed by scholars in the field of composition studies relative to the changing student population in higher education. Based on a report by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES 2008-078), Hispanics make up 11% of the national enrollment of degree-offering postsecondary institutions (Hussar and Bailey 66). Furthermore, Engle and Tinto state, “Overall, the baccalaureate degree attainment rate for low-income, first-generation students after six years was only 11 percent compared to 55 percent for their most advantaged peers” (13). Both Hussar and Bailey’s and Engle and Tinto’s studies (which I will discuss next) provide relatively current statistical data of the current political climate of the increase of minority populations seeking higher education.

Hispanics, however, make up “42% of the 1.3 million students enrolled at HSIs,” a number which will continue to grow as the minority population continues to increase (Kirklighter et al., 17). The statistics show the growing presence of Hispanic students, whether first-generational students or not, but in relation to my argument, what percentage of Hispanics are Mexican American and Chicana/o students? I am here highlighting the racial blurring which occurs with the racial identity term “Hispanic” to demonstrate how Mexican American and Chicana/o students manifest themselves unclearly in several publications attempting to address educators’ concerns over in assisting underprivileged students.

In another example of studies addressing the influx of minority populations seeking higher education, The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education sponsored by the Council for Opportunity in Education published *Moving Beyond Access: College Success for Low-Income, First-Generation Students* by Jennifer Engle and Vincent Tinto. This report examines issues affecting the educational

opportunities of particular student groups by providing data from the U.S. Department of Education based on degree attainment rates of low-income and first-generation student groups. They also expose the barriers underprivileged student groups face in the pursuit of a baccalaureate and suggest various avenues for increasing the retention rates of underprivileged students (3).

Ultimately, Engle and Tinto desire to inform practitioners and policy makers about these barriers so as to make curricular changes to better serve low-income, first-generation students. As Engle and Tinto state, “We discuss the barriers that low-income, first-generation students face to achieving success in college, as well as the strategies that colleges and universities can pursue to address these barriers and improve these students’ chances of earning degrees” (6). However, first-generation, low-income Mexican American and Chicana/o students who pursue higher education are met with a culturally insensitive educational system that does not meet their particular cultural needs to successfully attain a degree.

Engle and Tinto’s report informs my study which seeks to clarify the distinctions between racial and ethnic groups which inform educators about particular student groups that Mexican American and Chicana/o students encompass. Furthermore, Engle and Tinto’s report supports my theorizing a tutorial approach culturally sensitive to Mexican American and Chicana/o students improving their chances of meeting academic expectations with writing when they seek help at a writing center. Engle and Tinto define low-income, first-generation student groups as demographically older, female, disabled, students with minority backgrounds, non-native English speakers, having dependent children, having earned a high school equivalency diploma, and students who are

financially independent from their parents (8). Engle and Tinto emphasize the need for institutional faculty and staff to apply a broader range of pedagogical skills to better engage low-income, first-generation students (26). In my study, I attempt to provide a cultural context of the Mexican American and Chicana/o student groups' community so as to construct a culturally sensitive tutorial approach that will account for their needs, particularly with writing.

Another example of a recent publication addressing issues of Mexican American and Chicana/o students struggling in higher education is *Teaching Writing with Latino/a Students: Lessons Learned at Hispanic-Serving Institutions*, co-edited by Cristina Kirklighter, Diana Cardenas, and Susan Wolff Murphy. This collection of essays shows the pedagogical tension the increase of Mexican American and Chicana/o students seeking higher education and soon becoming the nation's future middle class causes in the classroom. In the Forward to *Teaching Writing with Latino/a Students*, Michelle Hall Kells articulates the need for the field of composition studies to examine the kind of academic discourse taught in higher education, specifically in comparison to the discourses produced by the student population of HSIs (vii). Kells acknowledges the range of rhetorical skills students at HSIs have as a resource when applying different pedagogies to develop students' literacy skills (ix).

Kells is resourceful in recognizing the Mexican American and Chicana/o student populations' rhetorical skills and implementing them for pedagogical change, which Engles and Tino's report suggests in the conclusion of their report. Yet Kells confirms a struggle that is creating a literacy battle in the classroom; as she says, "In the past ten years, composition studies has seen the growing representation of 'frontline' teachers as

well as nationally recognized scholars interrogating notions of academic discourse and approaches to writing instruction as these relate to historically unrepresented student groups” (vii). The questioning of academic discourses by pedagogical approaches, though, has been ever present in academia with the ever-changing political climate in American society.

The history of rhetoric and composition studies provides an understanding of the influence institutions have had on teaching writing, thus exposing the ideological structures which place a strain on educators who are facing the changing social, economic, and political climate in the composition classroom (Berlin 5). In *Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1900-1985*, James A. Berlin legitimizes rhetoric and composition studies as a field of study. He recognizes the pedagogical, theoretical, and political forces influencing both theory and practice in the teaching of writing in American colleges in the twentieth century. Even though one could argue against Berlin’s sweeping history of rhetoric and composition studies, Berlin’s approach positions composition courses as an essential facet of higher education because, as he states, “Literacy has always and everywhere been the center of the educational enterprise” (1). Undoubtedly, literacy is tied to learning, and institutions use particular literacy practices to mark a student’s intellectual ability to produce knowledge. So in reference to my research question, educators must understand the particular literacy skills and culture their Mexican American and Chicana/o students bring to the tutorial session in order to tap into the critical thinking skills needed for succeeding in higher education.

More broadly, Mexican American and Chicana/o students’ literacy practices and rhetorical skills are marginalized by the mainstream’s creation of knowledge, which in

*Good Intentions: Writing Center Work for Postmodern Times*, Nancy M. Grimm

describes as not valuing any other literacy practices that are not mainstream (45). Like Berlin, J. Elspeth Stuckey in *The Violence of Literacy* (1991) also articulates how literacy is tied to social class and ideology, which, when left unexamined, can sustain a system of power by using the definition of literacy as a weapon against those not favored by the system and which is set up to keep a new middle class from succeeding in American higher education (126-7). Similarly, Grimm argues for a postmodern perspective for researching writing centers, a perspective which she claims creates a more democratic theoretical approach to studying student writing (118).

Moreover, the literacy project, though originally housed in all American colleges, was governed by particular cultural concepts which embodied the ideologies of the dominant social class and which were observable in English department pedagogical practices (Berlin 5). Institutions carry values and ideologies in the teaching of writing, for as Berlin says, “. . . literacy involves a particular variety of rhetoric—a way of speaking and writing within the confines of specific social sanctions” (3-4). The academic sanctions on literacy production in higher education in turn control the way students view reality. Both Kells and Berlin expose the tacit expectation of any academic culture shaping the minds of the future middle class in writing classrooms all over the nation. But if the literacy enterprise continues to historically under-represent student groups, then the social, economic, and political conditions of educating our nation’s emergent middle class will cripple the idea of a democratic American consciousness. Broadly, the cultural complexities of HSIs support academia by sustaining particular sanctioned literacy practices, which, as Mexican American and Chicana/o students continue to fill our



nation's classrooms, will dismantle the myth of equality in higher education and its power to grant social equality. This predictable outcome will inevitably occur if pedagogical approaches do not become sensitive to cultural aspects of Mexican American and Chicana/o students.

The need for understanding the student's cultural background in tutor training practices is imperative to better assist Mexican American and Chicana/o students with writing, yet the dismissal of racial and cultural differences with writing is present in both the field of composition and writing center tutor training publications. For example, although there is a history of enlightened educators who have created curriculum that fosters a dual linguistic pedagogical approach incorporating the culture of Texas Mexican students' literacy (hooks 1994; Valdéz 2001; Artze-Vega et al., 2007), a legacy of racial discrimination is well documented, as such innovative educational reform goes unacknowledged and as a wave of homogenizing teaching pedagogies remains prevalent in the education system (Mejía 178). Racism is embedded in our everyday language but is steadily becoming a topic that's unmentionable, as explained in Victor Villanueva's Burkean approach to rhetorical racism in "Blind: Talking about the New Racism" published in *The Writing Center Journal* in 2006 (5). Villanueva aspires to create a dialogue about race and advocates that "[w]riting centers can never forget to talk to students" about racism, because, as Villanueva observes, of a lack of cultural and racial awareness in writing center publications and research (4).

Interestingly, Villanueva's call for race awareness was heard a year later when Geller et al. talk about racism in the writing center in *The Everyday Writing Center: A Community of Practice*, which has a chapter called "Everyday Racism: Anti-Racism

Work and Writing Center Practice.” Gellers et al. view the writing center as a place in the institution where racism can be discussed among students and faculty (93). While discouraging but not surprising, Geller et al. emphasize the neglect and limitations of older tutor education texts as having “a very *particular* and limited understanding of race in writing centers” (96). Similar to my efforts, Geller et al. suggest incorporating texts by scholars of color to “complicate the work of white scholars” when training tutors (97).

The aspiration to create a dialogue about race at the writing center, as emphasized by Villanueva and Geller et al., is currently a major shortcoming because for many Mexican American and Chicana/o students, living with difference is very much a part of the everyday which makes it difficult for them to articulate their individual “internal colonialism” (Mejía 172). Most Mexican Americans and Chicana/o students need help negotiating their identities in an institution that has typically excluded their cultural experiences in the homogenizing educational system. How should tutor training change to address concerns with negotiating dominant discourses and which will tap the critical consciousness of Mexican American and Chicana/o students’ identity in the academy?

In this thesis, I will therefore focus on writing center publications’ shortcomings in addressing the cultures of Mexican American and Chicana/o students seeking help at the writing center. By merging writing center research centered on the tutoring of Mexican American and Chicana/o student writers with Mexican American and Chicana/o studies focused on issues of writing, I can construct an effective way to tutor Mexican American and Chicana/o student writers at the writing center. In Chapter II, I will explore how writing center research can address Mexican American and Chicana/o students in tutor training, and I also will expound on the shortcomings of traditional tutor training

approaches. In Chapter III, I will articulate the social, cultural, and historical position of Mexican American and Chicana/o students in the United States in general and in academic discourse in particular in order to fill the gaps in writing center publications and research when addressing this particular student group. In Chapter IV, I will specify core areas tutors should stress when tutoring Mexican American and Chicana/o students who are seeking help at the writing center. In my Conclusion, I will recommend a more effective tutor training approach that will better assist Mexican American and Chicana/o students with college writing.

## NOTES

1. In this essay, I will use the terms Mexican American and Chicana/o to identify American-born Mexican origin people who share a unique social, political, and cultural history.

## CHAPTER II

### LOCATING MEXICAN AMERICAN AND CHICANA/O STUDENTS IN WRITING

#### CENTER TUTOR TRAINING

Research in tutor training publications and more specifically in *The Writing Center Journal* from its conception in 1980 to the present has circulated various suggestive guidelines and approaches to tutor training practice. For example, in “What Lies Ahead for Writing Centers: Position Statement on Professional Concerns,” Jeanne H. Simpson provides a list of suggested guidelines for operating a writing center and which the National Writing Center Association created (38). Among Simpson’s guidelines, I will highlight for discussion guidelines number two and number six. I will use Simpson’s suggestive guidelines as a backdrop to interrogate the use of sociolinguistics in tutor training. Although emphasizing the social and cultural aspects of linguistics seems promising, I will focus on how writing center tutor training continues to sustain social hierarchies and an illusionary sense of diversity, further placing Mexican American and Chicana/o students’ needs with writing at a deficit. I also will show how writing center research begins to create illusionary efforts in accounting for cultural difference in tutor training practices.

The following works provide a basis for articulating how conservative tutor training practices foster hegemonic ideas of language which place Mexican American and Chicana/o students’ needs with writing at a deficit. *The Writing Tutor* (1982) by Marian Arkin and Barbara Shollar, *Talking About Writing: A Guide for Tutor and*

*Teacher Conferences* (1985) by Beverly Lyon Clark, “Shall We Talk to Them in ‘English’: The Contributions of Sociolinguistics to Training Writing Center Personnel” (1983) by Jay Jacoby, *The Practice Tutor* (1987) by Emily Meyer and Louise Z. Smith, and Jeff Brook’s “Minimalist Tutoring: Making the Student Do All the Work” (2001) do not address issues of cultural difference in the writing process which can effectively assist Mexican American and Chicana/o students with college writing.

First, though, I will begin by stating guideline number two of Simpson’s list of suggestions and will clarify the meaning of the guideline in general. Simpson states, “Regardless of its organization and design, a writing center should be based on the idea of individualized instruction. Therefore, materials and methods chosen for writing centers should be adjusted to individual needs” (38). More specifically, Simpson supports the writing center as a site which can provide individualized tutoring for students. Simpson also declares that resources should be adjusted to a student’s needs with writing. Over all, Simpson is suggesting writing center tutor training and resources to tailor to the students’ needs in general, and the actual practice, which leaves it to the discretion of the writing center director to change tutoring how he/she sees fit in meeting the needs of particular student writers (38).

Simpson’s suggestion number six here deals specifically with tutor training; as Simpson states, “Tutors should be given guidelines for defining acceptable and unacceptable intervention in a student’s writing process” (39). In other words, writing center directors must establish clear guidelines about the level of control tutors can have on a student’s writing process. Among various streams of dialogue about the role of a tutor, the overarching application of writing as a process is embraced by writing center

research. This shift from a current-traditional pedagogy to writing as process is prevalent today in composition studies as well as in writing center tutor training (Berlin 5; Bloom 31-2). Simpson is thus suggesting that writing center directors must specify the ethical and unethical level of involvement a tutor can have in a student's writing process.

When anyone conducts a study of writing center research regarding tutor training in meeting the writing needs of Mexican American and Chicana/o students in particular, they should also begin by embracing a sociolinguistic approach in teaching writing. Yet the incorporation of aspects of sociolinguistics in tutor training will not and does not change traditional tutor training practice. In "Types of Conferences and the Composing Process," Eric H. Branscomb breaks down the five components of the writing process to emphasize three focal points: process, content, and skills (29). However, Branscomb's writing process frame is conservative in that it does not allocate focal points for students negotiating two languages in the writing process.

Tutor training research has embraced an indirect approach in assisting students with the writing process while implementing concepts of sociolinguistics in tutor training to inform issues of culture in writing. The research in writing center publications, though, uses elements of sociolinguistics as a vaccine for inoculating the cultural clash occurring in some tutorial sessions with Mexican American and Chicana/o students. Due to the ever increasing population of ethnic students questioning the effectiveness of traditional tutor training practices, writing center publications began embracing a cultural studies approach for theorizing and articulating issues of cultural diversity at the writing center (Cooper 1994; DiPrado 1992; Kilborn 2001).

Moreover, when writing center tutor practices begin to incorporate concepts of sociolinguistics in tutor training so as to foster the linguistic diversity that accounts for culture, the tutor becomes an advocate of Standard Written English, causing the sustainment of social hierarchies and thus placing Mexican American and Chicana/o students at a deficit. Current mainstream tutorial practices remain pervasively present in writing center work. Current traditional tutorial practice is supported by positivistic classroom practices that foster a superficial, generalized, and essentialist understanding of academic writing.

In the preface to *The Writing Tutor*, Marian Arkin and Barbara Shollar discuss the detached nature of written language to spoken communication (2). Since Arkin and Shollar structure their tutorial approach on the idea of writing as a process and emphasize that “[w]riters must adapt the model to their own needs, and tutors must help writers isolate those strategies and techniques most useful to them” (4). According to Arkin and Shollar, tutors should guide writers in applying the process strategies to meet the students’ particular needs with writing. Yet, I argue that Arkin and Shollar’s ethnocentric epistemological view of an individualized writing process model does not account for cultural differences.

Even though Arkin and Shollar’s individualized writing process approach seems applicable to all types of writers, I will expose the areas where Arkin and Shollar could have opened a discussion for the cultural complexities but failed. Arkin and Shollar’s cultural ambivalence is reflected in the “tutor profile,” which they describe by stating, “Notice that the profile tries to balance the three aspects we believe most important to good writing: an understanding of one’s motives and one’s abilities as well as that of



others, and awareness of the composing process, and a knowledge of grammar, syntax, and mechanics” (7). Yet the “tutor profile” advocated by Arkin and Shollar uses current-traditional pedagogical practices to provide tutors with their skills in writing.

Furthermore, Arkin and Shollar incorporate a section on creating a “tutee profile” which allows the tutor to gain an understanding of the writer’s history, attitudes, and habits with writing (13-17). Keeping in tune with Arkin and Shollar’s emphasis with an individualized writing approach, their cultural ambivalence is also sustained when the “tutee profile” does not address the cultural effects of a student’s writing history, attitude, and habits. As Arkin and Shollar state, “. . . you as a tutor recreate the role of the auditor so your tutees can use the dialogue to improve their writing” (2). The dialogue Arkin and Shollar aspire to create in tutor training is a culturally exclusionary epistemological conversation that places Mexican Americans’ and Chicanas’/os’ linguistic concerns with writing at a deficit.

Three years later, *Talking About Writing: A Guide for Tutor and Teacher Conferences* by Beverly Lyon Clark was published. Clark begins by articulating cultural difference with language practices by minority students in writing, but Clark maintains many conservative tutor training practices already addressed in Arkin and Shollar and stemming from conservative epistemological views of writing. Clark emphasizes that tutoring humanizes the teaching of writing, and for the sake of argument, the humanizing social and cultural forces innate in writing should be addressed in tutor training but is oddly left out (13).

In her Introduction, Clark distinguishes the difference between students who are “traditional college or high school students” and basic writers or otherwise considered

clients who are English as second language writers (4). Although Clark has an understanding of particular student groups having particular issues with culture concerning Standard Written English, Clark erroneously combine basic writer's concerns with writing by ESL writers (4). Clark's student distinctions do not encompass Mexican American and Chicana/o student writers who are often dual language or bilingual students—English and Spanish is their first language and second language. Clark is not articulating the writing concerns of dual language or bilingual students.

Similar to Arkin and Shollar, Clark emphasizes the need to gain an understanding of the writer's feeling and attitudes about writing but ignores the issues of social and cultural complexities inherent in Standard Written English. Although Clark's approach to tutor training does not suggest conducting a writer's inventory, she suggests that tutor commence "preliminary talk" with the writer to create a comfortable, relaxing, and trusting relationship with the writer (112). Moreover, the preliminary talk is the tutor's assessment time to confirm if the writer needs specialized assistance stemming from disabilities or if the student is having trouble understanding the language or words (114).

Clark positions the tutor as a peer or guide and not as a dictator, yet when issues of difference in language comprehension are concerned, tutors should direct nontraditional students to seek specialized assistance (114). So in keeping with Simpson's suggestive guidelines, Clark is opting not to train tutors to engage issues of culture and to instead direct Mexican American and Chicana/o students who often have a difference in language comprehension to seek specialized assistance elsewhere. Although Clark has an understanding of the linguistic variations of language, she provides no guidance for tutoring Mexican American and Chicana/o students whose "errors result

from the interference of another language or dialect” (58). Clark’s approach is thus dismissive of tutor training toward student’s negotiating two languages and thus sustains social and cultural hierarchies at the writing center.

In “Shall We Talk to Them in ‘English’: The Contributions of Sociolinguistics to Training Writing Center Personnel,” Jay Jacoby stresses an indirect, nonauthoritative tutor approach when working with students who are “keenly sensitive to language” (3). Unlike Arkin and Shollar and Clark attempting to democratize Standard Written English as the great normative, Jacoby asks tutors to self-reflect on their linguistic prejudices (7). In his conclusion, Jacoby quotes Shirley Brice Heath in support of his advocacy of raising a tutor’s cultural and social awareness of language; as Heath states, “The real test of meaning lies in our ability to be aware of what we have intended in our messages and how we have been understood” (12). Unfortunately, Mexican American and Chicana/o student writers’ messages and ideological constructions have not yet been accurately accounted for in tutor training research.

From around the mid to late 1980s to the present, writing center research began embracing concepts of sociolinguistics in tutor training manuals to work with ethnic students having difficulty with writing. Although the literature in tutor training which incorporates sociolinguistics aspires to democratize and appease the systemic oppression Standard Written English causes among various ethnic students, including Mexican Americans and Chicanas/os, what I find curious is that, although there is a shift toward incorporating sociolinguistics in tutor training, Standard Written English is viewed as a normative medium that is free from social structures. Also, the changes which have yet to be seen are changes to orthodox tutor training practices. Even more concerning is how

Mexican American and Chicana/o students' concerns with writing are still unaccounted for in tutor training publications.

In 1987, a tutor training manual entitled *The Practice Tutor* by Emily Meyer and Louise Z. Smith begins addressing issues of culture with writing. Meyer and Smith employ a sociolinguistic perspective on writing as process in the training of tutors. Although Meyer and Smith's attempt to address the social nature of language seems provocative for the time, they use concepts of sociolinguistics to create an equal linguistic playing field between tutor and a student who is negotiating between two languages by defining Standard Written English as a written dialect that is ideologically free. In "Working with Dialects and Patterns of Error," Meyer and Smith make distinctions between the varieties of students who are speakers of vernacular English and have English as a second language (10). They apply Mina Shaughnessy's description of the "American-born student as having a 'quasi-foreign relationship' to Standard Written English" (10). They also provide a background on the psychological aspects of language changes involving community disconnect and cultural identity (205). Yet Meyer and Smith fall short of connecting the epistemological effects of culture on language that affect writing in Standard Written English.

For example, Meyer and Smith quote from E.D. Hirsch's *The Philosophy of Composition* and assert, "Such a written language is a 'different kind of language system,' one that is isolated from any class or region, 'transdialectal in character, an artificial construct that belongs to no group or place in particular, though of course it has greater currency among those who have been most intensively trained in its use'" (208). The application of sociolinguistics in valuing a student's cultural differences is

counteracted by defining language as context free and ideologically neutral, an “artificial construct” (208). Yet Meyer and Smith use this erroneous culture-free view of Standard Written English to position the tutor and the Mexican American and Chicana/o student writer as equals. As Meyers and Smith state, “. . . you may need to make special efforts (beyond those described in Chapter 1) to encourage nonstandard and ESL speakers to converse with you as equals” (210).

In a more progressive move, Meyer and Smith attempt to employ Mina Shaughnessy’s description of grammar as providing “more of a way of thinking, a style of inquiry, than a way of being right” to better assist student writers to negotiate two languages (129). Meyer and Smith instruct tutors to reconstruct a student writer’s line of reasoning that resulted in an error. They provide a hypothetical situation and state, “Surmising that [the student’s] error was not simply a slip of the pen, [the tutor] asks [the student] to explain her line of reasoning” (217). By viewing grammar error as a way of thinking/style in writing, tutors can help writers think through the grammar rules.

Mainstream tutor training publications begin to account for nontraditional student groups, such as Mexican American and Chicana/o students, but conservative homogenizing tutor training continues to view issues of culture concerning the acquisition of Standard Written English as a deficit. Six years later, the minimalist approach in tutor training publications will become a staple in writing center tutor training practice. Jeff Brooks’ article, entitled “Minimalist Tutoring: Making the Student Do All the Work,” describes the “hands-off” way of helping students with writing. As Brooks says, “Ideally, the student should be the only active agent in improving the paper”

(224). The goal of the minimalist approach is for tutors to take an indirect stance in keeping the writer's autonomy in writing.

On a deeper level, however, Brooks fails to acknowledge the mainstream ideologies tied to Standard Written English and how mainstream curricula under-represent students who practice alternative literacies. So, by virtue of the literacy enterprise fostering Standard Written English as the only acceptable literacy practices, nontraditional students never "own" their constructions of knowledge in writing. Grimm would agree, for as she asserts,

In the autonomous model, writing center work appears innocent and helpful. Writing centers are supposed to support nonmainstream students so that they can learn the skills necessary to be successful in an educational system that wasn't designed with them in mind. When literacy is understood as a neutral skill detached from culture, the literacy practices of school seem to be universal, the way that good people naturally behave.

(31)

Grimm deconstructs the cultural assumptions of traditional tutor training approaches and discusses the need for alternative tutor training approaches that can help students, like Mexican American and Chicana/o students, to negotiate their literacy practices in the academy.

The amalgamation of Mexican American and Chicana/o students' concerns with writing and second language learners' concerns with writing is an age old misunderstanding of cultural difference between student groups that fail to meet a particular student group's individualized concerns with writing. Clark's as well as Meyer

and Smith's efforts to address Mexican American and Chicana/o student's issues with writing combine them with ESL students' issues with writing. They also label Mexican American and Chicana/o student writers as "inexperienced" writers. In chapter "Working with Dialects and Patterns of Error," Meyer and Smith do aspire to "explain the kinds of problems [tutors] may encounter in helping both inexperienced and ESL writers to acquire proficiency in Standard Written English" (204).

I will use Meyers and Smith's tutor training approach as an example to demonstrate how the view of Standard Written English as a normative culture-free medium sustains social hierarchies. But as Standard Written English continues to be the practice of academic discourse, Mexican American and Chicana/o student's historical, social, and cultural experiences with language go against the grain of the idea of Standard Written English as neutral. Yet theories of peer tutoring and collaboration follow the same lines of assuming that Standard Written English is a language without culture. As Meyers and Smith state, "Perhaps the most important principle we can voice is that because nonstandard and ESL speakers have the same *composition* (as opposed to linguistic) problems as other writers, the strategies presented in this chapter should be used in addition to, not instead of, those presented elsewhere in the book" (204).

Due to this idea of Standard Written English being culture-free, many theoretical shifts are observed occurring as writing center publications begin generating ideas of multiculturalism at the writing center. Although theories of peer tutoring and/or collaboration undergird the majority of contemporary writing center research writing as a socializing process (Bruffee 1984; Ede 1991; Trimbur 1987), writing center theory begins to broaden its range to incorporate theories fostering ideas of culture and the

epistemological effects on writing. Once writing center publications begin to address issues of cultural diversity, other theories of sociolinguistics, postmodernism, and postcolonialism become manifest in writing center publications and provide avenues for theorizing about American-born, dual-linguistic or bilingual Mexican American and Chicana/o student concerns with writing (Bawarshi and Pelkowski 1999; Cooper 1994; Grimm 1999).

Among the theoretical concerns surrounding tutor training practices, the theme of tutor as peer/collaborator under the pennant of diversity raises cultural concerns in the Mexican American and Chicana/o community. Compositionists and writing center practitioners alike have voiced such concerns. In “Collaboration, Control, and the Idea of a Writing Center,” Andrea Lunsford states, “As I argued earlier, I think we must be cautious in rushing to embrace collaboration because collaboration can also be used to reproduce the status quo; the rigid hierarchy of teacher-centered classrooms is replicated in the tutor-centered writing center in which the tutor is still the seat of all authority but is simply pretending it isn’t so” (7). For peer/collaborative tutor training to become more attuned to the issues of a student’s culture with writing, aspects of peer/collaborative tutor training in particular must incorporate the issue of control so as not to silence the voice of difference.

In Chapter III, I intend to infuse theories of identity construction to defuse hegemonic theories of “peerness” and collaboration in tutor training as discussed by Bruffee and Trimber and which expose the ethnocentric underpinnings sustaining social hierarchies when assisting Mexican American and Chicana/o students with writing.



### CHAPTER III

#### RECONSTRUCTING THE CHICANA/O IDENTITY

Before I infuse into my study theories of identity construction that address issues of the historical, social, and cultural factors that are relevant to Mexican American and Chicana/o college writers, I will articulate a culturally relevant background of Mexican American and Chicana/o students to alleviate writing center publications of their homogeneity. I am using the definition of a Mexican American and Chicana/o student as articulated in *Learning from Experience: Minority Identities, Multicultural Struggles* by Paula M.L Moya.<sup>1</sup> In order to include Mexican American and Chicano males, I have extended Moya's definition of a Chicana to include males as well. Since Moya's definition of a Chicana/o is sustained by a postpositivist realist theory of identity construction, supporters of postmodern theories of identity construction may not value its integrity. But I embrace a postpositivist realist theory of identity construction because of its ability to account for the relevance of historically and culturally exclusionary models of humanity affecting identity in academic publications and research (12).

The following works by Chicana/o authors each demonstrates the historical, cultural, and social makeup of the Chicana/o ideology used to unite and empower the Chicana/o community. These works include Gloria Anzaldúa's collection of essays and poetry entitled *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Rudolfo A. Anaya's "Aztlán: A Homeland without Boundaries," Lucha Corpi's collection of essays entitled *Máscaras*,

and José Antonio Burciaga's collection of essays entitled *Drink Cultura c/s: Chicanismo*.

I will articulate how the aforementioned group of works in the creation of a Chicana/o ideology undergirds much theorizing about alternative perspectives on identity construction and alternative rhetorics.

The ideology of Chicanas/os is described by various Mexican American authors in various publications. Each author describes their experiences as a Chicana/o born and raised in the United States, each see the Chicana/o ideology is a counteraction to hegemonic discourse. Although the authors' experiences are subjective and oftentimes narrative in form, each expresses their individual conflicts with hegemony. Broadly, the counterhegemonic social constructions articulated by Chicana/o writers express the social, political, and economic disadvantages hindering their social mobility and create epistemic consequences for their cultural production.

To ward off the negative consequences of hegemony, a Chicana/o must be conscious of the Chicana/o history of the region of the Southwest that has often been unacknowledged in American society. The Chicana/o ideology is a social belief or philosophy opposing hegemony which empowers the people who are born in the Southwest region of the United States. First, people born in the Southwest have a Mexican and Indian ancestry. A Chicana/o also acknowledges the myth of Aztlán as a homeland and claims the Southwest region as being the mythical homeland of Aztlán that belongs to Chicanas/os. Chicana/o culture in some ways is a synthesis of American and Mexican cultures which create a hybrid Chicana/o culture and identity, a fusion of two cultures to create one unique culture.

The Chicana/o community's acknowledgement of a hybrid culture is a counterhegemonic rhetorical strategy to subvert the dominant ideologies and liberate nuanced discursive practices that contest hegemony. Through rhetoric, the Chicana/o community creates examples of contemporary "autoethnographic texts" (Pratt 175). In order to generate Chicana/o versions of "autoethnographic texts," Chicanas/os must respond to their political oppression in the social hierarchy of American society, and the response should strive to change the infrastructure that keeps them oppressed (175).

In order to understand Chicana/o ideology, one must understand the meaning and the reasoning behind the establishment of a Chicana/o identity. Chicana/o history is the foundation and stronghold that keeps this Chicana/o ideology thriving today. For one to be identified as a Chicana/o, one must know and understand the struggle embedded in the Chicana/o ideology. The history and culture of the Chicanas'/os' presence in the Southwest region of the United States has been diluted by the dominant group of American society. So it is the job of a Chicana/o to uncover the true history that is a part of this region and which decentralizes hegemony. After the U.S.-Mexican War, a new border was established between the United States and Mexico (Anzaldúa 29).

On February 2, 1848, the signing of Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo made the Rio Grande River the new border between Mexico and Texas, and "[it] left 100,000 Mexican citizens on this side, annexed by conquest along with the land" (Anzaldúa 29). The Mexicans were forced to assimilate into American culture, and the Mexicans' land "was soon swindled away" from the Mexicans who lived and farmed on the land (29). The result of colonization displaced the Mexican culture, both on the economic and social level, and such cataclysmic cultural uprooting resonates even today.

While Americans were trying to assimilate the Mexicans, the Anglo Americans refused to give them their rights allotted to all who were citizens of the United States. As reflected in the May 3, 1954 Supreme Court case *Hernandez vs. State of Texas*, the U.S. Supreme Court decided

It is a denial of the equal protection of the laws to try a defendant of a particular race or color under an indictment issued by a grand jury, or before a petit jury, from which all persons of his race or color have, solely because of that race or color, been excluded by the State, whether acting through its legislature, its courts, or its executive or administrative officers. (1)

After being detached from their native country and forced to assimilate into American culture, many Mexican Americans did not feel completely a part of this new nation.

Mexican Americans in this region were silenced by the dominant white society, and it wasn't until the 1960's when the Chicanas/os of this region banded together to finally break the silence of hegemony. The Chicano Movement of the 1960's revitalized the Chicanas'/as' Mexican cultural origins and connection with the indigenous "history, myths, spiritual thought, legends, and symbols from Native America which are part of the Chicano's collective history" (Anaya 234). The Chicano Movement created a "cultural nationalist consciousness which brought together" the Chicana/o community (236). The establishment of the Chicana/o community and the "declaration of Aztlán as the ancestral homeland" were the two accomplishments established by the Chicano Movement (232). Those who identify themselves as a Chicana/o uphold the traits and principles that distinguish Chicanas'/os' history and culture from the white race in American society.

A Chicana/o must thus understand and express the true history of the Southwest region, because traditional views of American history of the Southwest exclude Chicano history that has largely been unrecognized by American society. The job of a Chicana/o, then, is to disseminate the Chicano history and culture of this region and teach other Mexican Americans who are typically blinded by the hegemonic discursive practices of omission. Many Chicana/o authors write about the suppression of Chicano history and culture and shed light on the historical injustices of the dominant group in American society.

José Antonio Burciaga, for instance, describes the “silence imposed on our Mexican culture, history and beautiful Spanish language” by the Anglo Americans (40). Burciaga understands the importance of “express[ing] those beliefs and to teach” what was once forbidden or unacknowledged by American society (40). Anzaldúa also discusses Chicana/o history in her collection of essays and poetry, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. In her first essay, “The Homeland, Aztlán,” Anzaldúa immerses the reader in the Chicana/o history of the Southwest region after the establishment of the Mexican and United States border. Anzaldúa provides this historical background in her collection of essays and poetry to educate the reader who is unfamiliar with the true history of the Southwest region.

Moreover, Naomi Quiñónez in her essay “Molcajete Mamas” also speaks of Chicanas who discover Chicana/o history for the first time. Quiñónez says, “The newfound knowledge of their past validates their present; their life and concept of self takes on new meaning” (172). This newfound knowledge of history provides the foundation empowering Chicanas/os to strive for the change of hegemonic forces (170).

Every Chicana/o needs a history to give them reason to demand equality and political justice in the United States.

In “Aztlán: A Homeland without Boundaries,” Anaya describes how Chicana/o history has empowered the Chicana/o community. He says, “. . . naming coalesces the history and values of the group, provides an identification necessary for its relationship to other groups or nations, and most important, the naming ceremony restores pride and infuses renewed energy which manifests itself in creative ways” (230). So, the role of a Chicana/o, according to Bernice Zamora, is to “search for [their] own *real* history, not the fabricated one on record” by American society (24).

After an individual identifies his or her Chicana/o history and culture, the individual must also acknowledge his or her Mexican heritage that is descended from the indigenous people of Mesoamerica, and this is person born and/or raised in the United States (Moya 41-2). A Chicana/o must therefore embrace the indigenous ancestry because the indigenous is where Chiancas/os draw their spiritual strength to fight the political oppression of Anglo American society. You cannot have the Chicana/o identity without acknowledging the indigenous blood that runs in the veins of every Chicana/o. Anzaldúa likewise describes the indigenous people who in their mating with the Spanish created the Chicana/o race.

For example, Anzaldúa says, “*En 1521 nació una nueva raza, el mestizo, el mexicano* (people of mixed Indian and Spanish blood), a race that had never existed before. Chicanos, Mexican-Americans, are the offspring of those first matings. Our Spanish, Indian, and *mestizo* ancestors explored and settled parts of the U.S. Southwest as early as the sixteenth century” (27). Aside from the indigenous heritage, the Chicana/o

must also feel a part of the spiritual world of their “mesoamerican ancestors, [which] helps to fill another great void” that was created when American society denied Chicana/o cultural freedom (Quiñónez 173). The Chicano Movement created unity by defining Chicanas’/os’ history, cultural, and the ancestral ties to the indigenous peoples from Mesoamerica. Anaya confirms that “[p]art of the Movement’s work was to revive our connection with our Indian past, and to seek a truer definition of that past. This meant reviving the history, myths, spiritual thought, legends, and symbols from Native America which were part of the Chicano’s collective history” (234).

Even though the Chicano Movement was centered on political change, it provided a reunification with the ancestral and cultural history that was crucial to the union of the Chicana/o people. For example, Burciaga says Chicana/o identity “is more than a political label for it has a link to [the] indigenous past” (49). Chicanas/os must therefore embody their indigenous heritage and acknowledge their ties to the indigenous peoples of Mesoamerica in order to be identified as Chicanas/os and distinguished from the American white society.

The myth of Aztlán is therefore a fundamental part of Chicano ideology. It was the force of the Chicano Movement and continues to provide spiritual cohesion in the struggle for political justice in American society. In the very first statement in Anzaldúa’s first essay, she identifies the Chicana/o link to the indigenous people of the Southwest region of the United States. As Anzaldúa says, “*The Aztecas del norte*...compose the largest single tribe or nation of Anishinabeg (Indians) found in the United States today. . . . Some call themselves Chicanos and see themselves as people whose true homeland is Aztlán [the U.S. Southwest]” (23). The Aztec myth of the spiritual homeland of Aztlán

thus created a “spiritual awareness which reverberated throughout the Southwest” and united the Chicana/o community into a new consciousness (Anaya 232). The legend of Aztlán declared this location of the homeland to be in the northern part of Mexico, which is the Southwest region of the United States (235).

The Southwest region is thus defined as Aztlán by an individual who is born or raised in this area and is a synthesis of the both Mexican and Spanish cultures. The idea of a Chicana/o hybrid does not stray from Moya’s definition of the ideology of the Chicana/o, and is such a strong element that each Chicana/o author creates a Chicano rhetoric based on their experiences with hegemonic discursive practices. Burciaga provides several descriptions of the Chicana/o hybrid or the budding of a mestiza/o consciousness which is created from two cultures. For example, as Burciaga says, “To live on the border unites and separated two cultures, two worlds, to be at the entrance and the exit and to be able to accept both. These cultures cross each other not to assimilate one another, but to ‘transculturates’” (66).

Chicanas/os are placed in a middle ground between two cultures and become one new culture. Burciaga explains a paradox in the Chicana/o identity; he states that “We were caught on the razor sharp edge of two vastly different cultures, and in trying to identify with each side, while condemned by both sides, we denounced both and identified as the third alternative with a little and a lot from each side. We became Chicanos” (63). Chicanas/os are the creation of two cultures, and their “ancestors were not only the conquistadores but also the conquered” (49).

The union between the Europeans and indigenous people of Aztlán is further exemplified by Anaya in his essay when he describes the Chicana/o synthesis as



“open[ing] new avenues of exploration by which we could more clearly define the mestizo who is the synthesis of European and Indian ancestry (232). The *mestiza/o* is a name given by Anaya, and Anzaldúa expands this idea in her essay “*La conciencia de la mestiza/Towards a New Consciousness*.” She says, “*En unas pocas centurias*, the future will belong to the *mestiza*. Because the future depends on the breaking down of paradigms, it depends on the straddling of two or more cultures. By creating a new mythos—that is, a change in the way we perceive reality, the way we see ourselves, and the ways we behave—*la mestiza* creates a new consciousness” (102). The history according to her of the struggle and war on the “U.S.-Mexican border *es una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country—a border culture”—a Chicana/o culture (25). The new consciousness of Chicanas/os is one where a politically aware person embraces the two cultures and creates a new rhetoric and a new creation of knowledge. Chicanas/os perceive reality around them and attempt to create a new reality, one that understands the struggle for political justice in American society.

The Chicano/a academic community thus recognizes the need for a new theory that takes identity into account so as to valorize border identity construction. In *The Chronicles of Panchita Villa and Other Guerrillas: Essays on Chicana/Latina Literature and Criticism*, Tey Diana Rebolledo speaks for the Chicano/a community in academia; as Rebolledo says, “This priority of placing our literature in a theoretical framework to ‘legitimize’ it, if the theory over-shadows it, in effect undermines our literature or even places it, once again, in a state of oblivion. Privileging the theoretical

discourse de-privileges ourselves” (42). Since the mainstream ideology legitimizes only conservative theoretical frameworks as viable theoretical apparatuses to judge Chicana/o literature, that is, Chicana/o writing, Chicana/o writers must internalize the dominant ideology and manipulate academic discourse to both be accepted into the hegemonic fold and to use rhetoric to resist discursive submission (42). For example, Rebolledo weaves fiction into literary criticism so as to create a Chicana/o rhetoric that is embraced by academic discourse but nuanced to valorize a Chicana ethos.

Chicana/o rhetoricians and compositionists as well as scholars of ethnic literature and cultural studies alike have theorized about identity construction, yet conservative agendas in English departments continue to exclude alternative critical frameworks that account for culture in curricula (Rebolledo 45). In *Learning from Experience: Minority Identities, Multicultural Struggles*, Moya says, “My aim is thus to provide a theoretical clarification that affirms the work of some minority studies scholars even as it provokes others to rethink the usefulness of postmodern theory” (3). Rebolledo and Moya argue for the broadening of conservative theory to better understand border crossers’ transcultural experience causing Mexican American and Chicana/o writers to negotiate and re-articulate their cultural identities relative to the dominant discourse in higher education.

Following the same lines, Moya, a self-identified Chicana feminist, navigates the academic field and argues for a more culturally relevant theoretical approach to examine identity construction. Moya begins her argument against the social exclusionary practices from the dominant group by harking back to the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (2). In her Introduction, She states,

Some thirty years after the founding of the first Chicana/o studies programs, the cultural productions of Chicanas/os still do not occupy a secure place within academia. It is a predicament that mirrors the situation of Americans of Mexican descent who, some 150 years after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, still do not occupy a secure place within the imagined community of the United States. (2)

By using realism to illuminate the theoretical and political significance of identity, Moya argues against certain postmodern theories of identity construction as only “[arguing] that the relationship between identities and the ‘real’ or ‘material realm’ is arbitrary, [but] I argue that the ‘real’ is causally relevant to our epistemic endeavors (including the formation of our identities) because it shapes and limits our knowledge-generating experiences” (13). Moya tests theories of postmodern identity construction which deny the material influence of the historical, social, and cultural cost of hegemonic conservative discursive exclusionary practices (12).

Similarly, in “Arts of the U.S.-Mexico Contact Zone,” Mejía explores the resonating transcultural lived experiences of Texas Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and Chicanas/os and applies a theoretical framework to better understand the systemic historical and cultural effects of the U.S.-Mexican borderland as a contact zone (172). Mejía considers the unanticipated linguistic condition of U.S.-Mexican borderland bilinguals in the field of rhetoric and composition (172). For Mexican American and Chicana/o writers, the development of the Chicana/o ideology creates what Rebolledo, Moya, and Mejía describe as transcultural discursive practices which account for historical, social, and cultural factors that influence the creation of knowledge in writing.

In Chapter IV, I intend to infuse theories of identity construction that are culturally sensitive to the historical, social, and cultural factors that influence Mexican American and Chicana/o student writers. I will apply culturally relevant issues on writing to defuse hegemonic theories of “peeriness” and collaboration as discussed by Bruffee and Trimber and which expose the ethnocentric underpinnings sustaining social hierarchies when assisting Mexican American and Chicana/o students with writing

## NOTES

1. “When I refer to a Mexican American, I am referring to a person of Mexican heritage born and/or raised in the United States whose nationality is U.S. American. The term for me is descriptive, rather than political. The term Hispanic is generally used to refer to a person of Spanish, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Dominican, Cuban, Chilean, Peruvian, and so on, heritage who may or may not have a Spanish surname, who may or not speak Spanish, who can be of any racial extraction, and who resides in the United States. As it is currently deployed, the term is so general as to be virtually useless as a descriptive or analytical tool. Moreover, the term has been shunned by progressive intellectuals for its overt privileging of the ‘Spanish’ part of what for many of the people it claims to describe is a racially and culturally mixed heritage. A Chicana, according to the usage of woman who identify that way, is a descended from the indigenous people of Mesoamerica and who was born and/or raised in the United States. What distinguishes a Chicana[o] from a Mexican American, a Hispanic, or an American of Mexican descent is not her[or his] ancestry or her cultural upbringing. Rather it is her [or his] political awareness; her [or his] recognition of her [or his] disadvantaged position in a hierarchically organized society arranged according to categories of class, race, gender, and sexuality; and her propensity to engage in political struggle aimed at subverting and changing those structures” (42).

## CHAPTER IV

### A POWERFUL RELEASE: EXPLORING CULTURAL SENSITIVITY IN TUTOR TRAINING

When writing is rhetorically contextualized as a medium to construct an autonomous identity, the element of control does not escape the equation when imagining the concept of writing housed under the watchful eye of an institution—Standard Written English. All the while, as writing center practitioners continue to support the effectiveness of collaboration without addressing the cultural forces influencing collaborative tutor practices, the writing center will continue to unproductively assist Mexican American and Chicana/o students with writing. The most provocative title writing center tutor training research gives tutors is “peer.” The term of tutor as peer caught favorable support among writing center practitioners, which is solidified by the latest tutor training manual published in 2008, entitled *The Longman Guide of Peer Tutoring* by Paula Gillespie and Neal Lerner. The point I will focus on in this chapter is the role of the tutor in tutor training practices on the grounds of seeing the tutor as a peer/collaborator who, when culture is concerned, tutors as a “peer,” but not as an equal.

In *Angels’ Town: Chero Ways, Gang Life, and the Rhetorics of the Everyday*, a Ralph Cintron, a rhetorician and an ethnographer, describes in the conclusion of his ethnographic study of Angles’ Town a Cartesian critique of the politics of ethnography (230-32). Cintron views ethnographic study as an ordering of the rhetoric of the everyday

which is often messy and disorderly (229). As Cintron says, “It seems to me that, through writing, the world in all of its variation becomes sorted into a pattern. . . . Writing is the making of an order and the blank surface is the space or servant that bears the order” (229). Using Cintron’s trope of writing and the blank surface, I will argue that the institutional practices enacted through Standard Written English represent just “one discourse of measurement, among many that attempts to interrupt or shape amorphousness that might otherwise meld us into everything else, and we call these interruptions or shapings acts of consciousness or self-consciousness” (231). Generally, Standard Written English is a dominant discursive practice among all other discourses that shapes our identities and creates distinctions among individuals.

Broadly speaking, the social, political, and economic disadvantages of Mexican American and Chicana/o students restrain their epistemic autonomy which allows them to express their “consciousness or self-consciousness” through writing (Cintron 231). I gather from the following authors’ works important ideas which nurture the idea of using a student’s culture as a resource in teaching writing and which meets a student’s particular needs with writing. These authors’ works include Paula M.L. Moya’s *In Learning from Experience: Minorities Identities, Multicultural Struggles*, David Bartholomae’s collection of essays *Writing on the Margins: Essays on Composition and Teaching*, Min-Zhan Lu’s article “Professing Multiculturalism: The Politics of Style in the Contact Zone”, Anis Bawarshi and Stephanie Pellowski’s article “Postcolonialism and the Idea of a Writing Center,” Jaime Armin Mejía’s article “Arts of the U.S.-Mexican Contact Zone,” and Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford’s *Singular Texts/Plural Authors*. Ultimately, the most effective way to assist Mexican American and Chicana/o student

writers is by incorporating elements of ethnic rhetoric into tutor training, elements that interconnect a student's cultural background with their writing.

For the sake of strengthening an approach to better assist training tutors to assist Mexican American and Chicana/o students with writing, the applicability of using ethnic rhetoric creates avenues to examine the writer's ability to become an autonomous agent of his or her writing during a tutorial session. More specifically, the practical uses of rhetoric in pedagogy seem promising since its applicability accounts for the racial, social, and cultural factors that shape the student writer's identity in writing. For Mexican American and Chicana/o writers, the elements of rhetoric provide opportunities to explore the uses of language, either written or spoken among various discourses that collide in the composition classroom and the writing center. Yet, contradictions can arise, causing tension and complexity when examining the nature of writing when collaboration among students and tutors of different cultures is involved (Ede and Lunsford 112).

Arguably, there is still much work to be done in defining the true collaborative efforts when diversity is factored into the equation. As Lunsford articulates, "Because as the latest pedagogical bandwagon, collaboration often masquerades as democracy when it in fact practices the same old authoritarian control" (3-4). Lunsford is aware of the context sensitive, socially bound nature of the epistemological ever present in tutorial practices, since Mexican American and Chicana/o writers will use their identity construction to expose the political motives undergirding their research and writing, as discussed in Chapter III. When tutors address the significance of cultural differences in identity negotiations with the writing process, Mexican American and Chicana/o writers



can better understand their subject position in relation to the use of Standard Written English as a linguistic medium.

As Moya articulates, “I contend that it is precisely because identities have a referential relationship to the world that they are politically and epistemically important: indeed, identities instantiate the links between individuals and groups and central organizing principles of our society” (13). By examining the linguistic and discursive codes of writing from the dominant discourse in relation to a student’s writing, Mexican American and Chicana/o students cause rhetoric as a learning tool to examine the patterns of their ideas as they construct their identities in Standard Written English. Yet the process of creating order with Standard Written English will pose a challenge to Mexican American and Chicana/o students whose identities are in most cases multifaceted and riddled with complexities (Mejía 180).

The writing center can train tutors to aid Mexican American and Chicana/o student writers to understand their rhetorical positions in academic discourse. Similarly, in “Postcolonialism and the Idea of a Writing Center,” Anis Bawarshi and Stephanie Pelkowski state, “What we are suggesting, finally, is that the writing center, in addition to helping marginalized students function within academic discourses, should also make explicit how these discourse affect them—how these discourses rhetorically and socially function” (54). For instance, tutors often discuss the oppositional literacy practices of academic standards with marginalized students. But collaboration is crucial for these students and tutors because homogenizing pedagogical teaching practices are so deeply embedded in their identity constructions from years of schooling that breaking from conformity will be a struggle for both tutor and writer. Bawarshi and Pelkowski provide

an example of a author who “uses the colonizer’s discourse—a discourse used to impose on him a subject position—in order to redefine himself” (52). Mexican American and Chicana/o writers, however, can appropriate elements of the dominant culture to redefine their cultural identities through writing and art, and tutors can help them articulate those discursive distinctions when tutor training accounts for cultural differences.

Moreover, when exploring the method of error analysis by Bartholomae and Lu, I observe that error analysis can provide a text for analyzing rhetorical intent, but Mexican American and Chicana/o students and tutors can view deviations from Standard Written English as a possibility for rhetorical intent rather than error. In “The Study of Error,” for instance, Bartholomae defines how error analysis applicability works with bilingual or dual language speakers; he says,

Error analysis begins with the recognition that errors, or the points where the actual text varies from a hypothetical “standard” text, will be either random or systematic. If they are systematic in the writing of an individual writer, then they are evidence of some idiosyncratic rule system—an idiosyncratic grammar or rhetoric, an “interlanguage” or “approximative system.” (22)

For Bartholomae, error analysis allows students to self-assess their idiosyncratic sentence contractions and work towards correcting errors (33).

Although error analysis effectively enables students to recognize their structural tendencies, its application does not generate autonomy for Mexican American and Chicana/o student’s identity construction in writing. Since cultural identity is an individual’s understanding of the world based on their historical, social, and cultural

experiences, the sentence structural deviations from Standard Written English are remnants of the minority student's particular knowledge based on their particular social location (Moya 43). Yet, if instructors and tutors want to generate a more democratic method of teaching writing, an ideological shift must occur when applying error analysis. When working with Mexican American and Chicana/o student writers, instructors and tutors might have a deficit perception of error as systemic. However, for a deficit perception to be avoided, the teacher and tutor must specify the method of error analysis he or she will be using in the classroom and writing center.

For example, in "Professing Multiculturalism: The Politics of Style in the Contact Zone," Min-Zhan Lu articulates a multicultural approach to writing that breaks hegemonic definitions of error analysis to focus rather on the writer's intention and style of written language (447). Lu's multicultural, counterhegemonic pedagogy acknowledges the writer's historical, cultural, and social experience with the world beyond the classroom. Lu asks her student writers to conduct a close reading for "error" as "deviations from the official codes of academic discourses not only in relation to the writer's knowledge of these codes but also in terms of her efforts to negotiate and modify them" (448). When focusing on the writer's negotiation and modification process in striving to meet Standard Written English, Mexican Americans and Chicana/o students need to understand the coding and decoding process to become better writers of culturally-based writing.

In more ways than not, Lu's error analysis is a counterhegemonic approach to teaching writing. For tutor training to implement Lu's error analysis, tutors need to have an ideological shift by labeling a writer as an autonomous subject rather than seeing the

student's errors as stemming from ideals created by hegemony (447). Such an ideological reconceptualization of the writing process to account for cultural constraints views writing as interpretative and can help Mexican American and Chicana/o student writers build confidence with their writing. Mexican American and Chicana/o student writers must therefore learn how to be confident in articulating their interpretation of the world because Standard Written English is used by the dominant group as a filter to deem other linguistic practices discernable as "other" and therefore as discardable. Once tutors emphasize the writing process by accounting for identity negotiation when re-producing Standard Written English, then Mexican American and Chicana/o student writers can understand the discursive shifting that is taking place with them in writing.

By tutors applying Lu's error analysis, the role of tutor will also shift to help the writer in deciphering the intent of the language along the lines of form and meaning (451-2). As Lu states, "In getting the class to enact a 'close reading' of the two segments [of writing], I aim to shift attention to the relationship between a discursive form . . . and the particular meanings it might be said to create in particular contexts" (453). If tutors can contextualize errors to account for a Mexican American and Chicana/o student writer's intent to break academic discourse and view patterns of errors as reflecting a writer's social position on the content of the writing, tutors can encourage and aid the student's negotiation of identity in writing (Lu 447). For Mexican American and Chicana/o students, the consequences of assimilating mainstream pedagogical practices of writing can limit the development of their critical thinking.

For example, in "Arts of the U.S.-Mexican Contact Zone," Mejía asserts for Southwestern minority bilingual and bicultural students when given English-only texts,

English-only texts do not provide or stimulate the critical thinking skills inherent in bilingual students. Mejía says, “[English-only] texts, however, continue to be ones that do not contain bilingual or bicultural codes that Southwestern minority students could identify with (encoding) or that could challenge their expanded linguistically-based analytical powers (decoding)” (175). Essentially, conservative pedagogical practices which only aim at conserving Standard Written English and that do not account for student culture do not stimulate critical thinking. For Mexican American and Chicana/o students, multicultural lived experiences are a part of their everyday social context. So, if educators employ culturally relevant pedagogical approaches analyzing language that may deviate from the “standard,” educators can open windows to a new critical awareness of academic discourse.

For Mexican American and Chicana/o students in general and for Texas Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the Southwest, in particular, identity construction is “grounded in language, with consciousness itself originating in language and being an effect and not a cause of discourse” (Mejía 197). So in order to tap into the critical consciousness of student’s negotiating between languages resulting in multilayered discourses, Mexican American and Chicana/o student writers need to learn to identify various discourses influencing their identity constructions in writing. As Mejía says, “Bilingual and bicultural students learning to encode and decode discourses influencing the construction of their identities must no longer be limited to reading in works not marked by the codes characteristic of autoethnographic texts like Hinojosa’s of those of [my] students” (197). So, the most effective way to assist Mexican American and Chicana/o students is by infusing the student’s cultural background in tutor training.

When educators employ a Mexican American and Chicana/o student writer's culture as a resource for teaching writing, for many students, examining what oftentimes seems familiar will stimulate critical thinking and motivate them to complete the assignment. One way to develop the critical literacy of Mexican American and Chicana/o student writers is to have them "write about their families" (Mejía 187). Although the task may seem simple, the assignment can stimulate critical thinking when supplemented with readings that utilize identity construction at various levels of discourse. Many dominant discourses, for instances, create negative stereotypes of Mexican American culture which influence how students will write about their family. But students learning to recognize how dominant discourses operate negatively to influence the historical, social, and cultural definitions of race, class, gender, and sexuality will generate opportunities for students to examine the multilayered discourses which influence their identity construction. Tutors should be trained to know that certain assignments inhibit rather than promote the student's critical thinking, depending on how closely students identify with the assignment's topic.

So in order to get Mexican American and Chicana/o student writers to talk about their past academic experience with writing, tutors will need to maintain a level of control because traditional classroom practices as well as writing center practices will invariably shapes tutor's and writer's expectations when talking about writing (Trimber 22). In *Singular Texts/Plural Authors*, Ede and Lunsford confirm from their survey at the writing center how they discovered two modes of collaboration: the hierarchical and dialogic. The pedagogical tensions with collaboration are casually interconnected with social, political, and cultural factors housed in institutional discursive practices (125). For

a tutor operating in the hierarchical mode, knowledge is “most often viewed as information to be found or a problem to be resolved. The activity of finding such information or solving such problems is closely tied to the efficient realization of a particular end product” (133). On the other hand, for a tutor in the dialogical mode, “group effort is seen as an essential part of the production—rather than the recovery—of knowledge and as a means of individual satisfaction within the group” (133).

The importance for tutors to recognize how knowledge is socially constructed based on the power and control being negotiated and shared with Mexican American and Chicana/o student writers is essential to creating a conducive use of collaboration during a tutorial session. Many writing center practitioners, however, often apply theories of collaboration in tutor training at the writing centers that do not account for culture. For example, Kenneth A. Bruffee in “Collaborative Learning and the ‘Conversation of Mankind’” provides a history and theories of social construction in collaborative learning (636). Overall, Bruffee challenges traditional classroom pedagogy as limiting the potential to understand the creation of academic discourse which positions tutors as receivers of knowledge rather than producers of knowledge (636). Yet Bruffee’s theory of collaborative learning falls short of tending to issues of culture in academic discourse.

Although Bruffee views the creation of knowledge as socially constructed, he does not provide an assessment of the creation of knowledge which shows how knowledge is influenced by social, political, or cultural forces in collaboration with each other. Ede and Lunsford’s research on collaboration undercuts Bruffee’s theory of collaborative learning for not accounting for a social context (115). The only implication Bruffee gives of a social context is when he talks about the creation of “abnormal

discourse” as functioning “to see the provincial nature of normal discourse and of the communities defined by normal discourse” (“Collaboration” 648). Yet Bruffee does not articulate the social location of “normal discourse” or the social location of the “abnormal discourse” (648). Generally, Bruffee’s collaborative learning and the creation of the student as peer or of equal status occur in a vacuum. Although Bruffee’s theory of collaborative learning would not properly assist Mexican American and Chicana/o students with writing, collaboration can incorporate a student’s culture to help facilitate the shiftiness of authority that is a natural part of collaboration (Ede and Lunsford 133).

When writing is contextualized as a medium for creating autonomous identity constructions, tutors must exercise a level of control in order to stimulate collaboration with Mexican American and Chicana/o student writers negotiating their identity in academic discourse. Although the writing center is housed under the watchful eye of the institution, Standard Written English can still be used as a text. By conducting error analysis that considers the influence of the social, political, and cultural factors on writing, educators can create situations to raise awareness about the writer’s position in academic discourse. The tutor viewing the writing process to address issues of culture can better assist Mexican American and Chicana/o student writers more effectively negotiate their identities in writing.

In Chapter V, I intend to show how to value the cultural capital of Mexican American and Chicana/o students by using culture as a resource in tutor training. My hope to create a more cross-cultural approach in tutor training which may seem far reaching, but I will account for cultural difference in tutor training to better assist Mexican American and Chicana/o student writers.



## CHAPTER V

### ASKING GOOD QUESTIONS: MEETING THE NEEDS OF MEXICAN AMERICAN AND CHICANA/O STUDENT WRITERS

I will provide a short synopsis of the ideas and points I have addressed in the previous chapters that underpin my conclusion. In Chapter I, the Introduction, I provided a stream of thinking along the lines of my search for identity and clarity over my ethnicity and nationality through my experiences in primary, secondary, and postsecondary schooling. I stressed the stigmatizing effects of an assimilationist curriculum as surely influencing my academic interests and which act as a gauge in homogenizing discourses in writing center research. In Chapter II, I argue how writing center publications use concepts of sociolinguistics to address social and cultural aspects of language, yet fall short in addressing the epistemological effects writing has on Mexican American and Chicana/o students when culture is not accounted for. In Chapter III, I provide a description of important aspects of Chicana/o ideology which contain a historical, social, and cultural foundation that supports and empowers Mexican American and Chicana/o writers to construct their identities with writing. In Chapter IV, I assert that tutor training can use measures that account for culture to effectively aid Mexican American and Chicana/o students to construct their identities and reverse the negative epistemological effects of exclusionary literacy practices in writing.

In my study, I stress the importance of making clear cultural differences in writing in order to properly aid Mexican American and Chicana/o student writers who have historically, socially, and culturally faced systematic underrepresentation. Because Mexican American and Chicana/o student groups are often underrepresented and politically reduced to assimilation, many Mexican American and Chicana/o students choose to assimilate and begin the cycle of “internal colonialism” (Mejía 172). Although Mexican American and Chicana/o students have cultural capital that’s equally as usable as one which American ethnocentric educational perspectives may construct through an exclusionary pedagogy, educators must nevertheless not overlook the importance of a student’s culture as a resource in teaching writing. While my aspiration to create a more cross-cultural approach in tutor training may seem far-reaching to some, I refuse to deny that my cultural experiences within higher education bear witness to the positive effects tutor training can have, as a tutoring that accounts for cultural difference can better assist Mexican American and Chicana/o student writers improve their writing skills.

First, tutors must have an understanding of the diverse context of the student’s ethnic community. Second, tutors should develop a cultural awareness of what diversity means to them and how diversity affects traditional tutorial approaches. Third, tutors should identify a student’s linguistically and culturally diverse literacy skills as a resource during a tutorial session. Fourth, tutors should collaborate with writers by giving them the option of using Spanish and/or English when participating in a tutorial, thus tailoring their tutorial approach to meet the linguistic needs of Mexican American and Chicana/o student writers. When writing centers use traditional tutorial practices which neglect cultural difference, they fail to develop Chicanas’/os’ confidence of their literacy skills,

skills which will be needed for them to become better writers. Contextualizing the location of the writing center, with Mexican American and Chicana/o students comprising its community, and contextualizing the literacy practices of that particular student group will provide avenues for developing a new cultural awareness which breaks away from traditional tutorial orthodoxy.

For tutors to gain an understanding of the context of their student community, writing center directors should at least provide a general idea of the student demographic attending the institution and estimates of the student demographic commonly attending the writing center. Along with student demographics, writing center directors should provide general information about the cultural background of multicultural students' experiences with academia. Tutors will often begin to draw assumptions about particular racial groups based on the tutors' previous experiences, both inside and outside of academia.

In *The Everyday Writing Center*, Geller et al. state, "We realize that since writing centers are situated within the institutions which are themselves implicated in the power structures that wittingly or unwittingly foster racism, they cannot completely escape resembling and reproducing much of what students of color experience outside of our spaces" (92). In order to combat racial assumptions, directors should create a dialogue about race and culture and provide readings about writing by scholars with multicultural backgrounds. As Geller et al. assert, "We suggest, therefore, including readings by scholars of color (writers like bell hooks, Beverly Tatum, Elaine Richardson, Richard Rodriguez, Victor Villanueva, and Mini-Zhan Lu, to name a few) to enhance and complicate the work for white scholars . . ." (97).

For all those Mexican American and Chicana/o students who live in the borderlands of Texas and Mexico, the U.S. Southwest, and who grow up with two cultures and two languages, Anzaldúa declares their having a dual identity and dual cultural practices, while living in the borderlands. In the preface of her the collection of essays and poetry, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Anzaldúa says, “I am a border woman. I grew up between two cultures, the Mexican (with heavy Indian influence) and the Anglo (as a member of a colonized people in our own territory)” (1). Anzaldúa also addresses how this cultural and linguistic complexity places Mexican Americans and Chicanas/os at a deficit as they enter higher education in the United States, due to the lack of pedagogical support. For many Mexican American and Chicanas/o students, composition classes, whether basic or not, seldom acknowledges the student’s language as tied to critical thinking, thus placing them at a deficit. The language diversity in the Mexican American and Chicana/o community can create a conflict that can be observed in writing center practice (Grimm 87). Yet, the writing center is the ideal place for understanding the linguistic and cultural issues nonmainstream students bring with them to the tutorial session.

Before any approach to tutor training can acknowledge culture within its practice, directors must make tutors aware of the “institutional reluctance (?), inability (?), failure (?), to adapt traditional educational practices to the needs of changing student populations” so that writing centers can break ideological assumptions stemming from remediation (Newman 48). For example, the writing center director must break down the assumptions that Mexican American and Chicana/o student writers are not necessarily dealing with the same issues with writing that second-language learners have with

writing. Mexican American and Chicana/o students are what Shaughnessy calls a “native-born student” (92). As Shaughnessy asserts,

At the same time, however, the native-born students differ from the second-language students in significant ways: they have usually experienced little or no success with written English in school, which is often not so of foreign-born students in relation to their native language; they have not identified the real reason for their lack of success in writing, having usually perceived themselves (and having been received by their teachers as well) as native speakers of English who for some reason use “bad” English; and finally, perhaps most importantly, they have been functioning in English for years, understanding the English of people in their communities and being understood by them in the full range of situations that give rise to speech, and managing, although usually in more restricted or restricting ways, to hold jobs, get diplomas, and talk with a variety of “outsiders.” (92)

Insuring that tutors understand the particular circumstances which Mexican American and Chicana/o student writers are in, in relation to other ethnic groups, will help alleviate misconceptions based on the type of writing help they need.

An example of the cultural disconnect happening during tutorial sessions is found in the narratives in Anne DiPrado’s essay, “‘Whispers of Coming and Going’: Lessons from Fannie.” She depicts the cultural disconnect often occurring in tutorial sessions when a tutor and writer are dealing with epistemological differences stemming from differing cultural experiences with writing (351). DiPrado demonstrates how mainstream

practices create tacit expectations of the writing of nonmainstream students which lead to frustration, misunderstanding, and sustaining an ethnocentric bias by both tutor and tutee. Not only at the tutorial level, but even at institutional level staff do “not know enough about these students to understand how their academic experiences are affected by home-life, culture, and limited fluency in the institution’s dominant language” (Newman 45). Writing center directors should therefore incorporate aspects of students’ cultural differences in tutor training to better assist Mexican American Chicana/o students specifically and to eliminate the culture clash observed in tutorial sessions.

After directors provide tutors with outside readings about the cultural complexities associated with writing, tutors should develop a cultural awareness of what diversity means to them and how diversity affects the traditional tutorial approaches. Directors should motivate tutors to discuss previous academic experiences with writing as well. This moment will allow the director and other tutors to identify with one another and observe the diversity among the community of tutors. As Okawa et al. state, “In the training/learning process that evolved in our program, I found that one major consideration, especially in a multi-cultural writing center, is this: both tutors and students come to each tutoring session with experiences and expectations that are culturally based” (14). By contextualizing the community on the basis of culture, tutors can develop a “critical reflection or inquiry that may include an exploration of their own assumptions, values, and world views—a process I call ‘self discovering’—as well as those of their students” (14).

After the director uses the context of the community of the students as a text to examine tutors’ critical awareness of assumptions about writing and multicultural student

writers, tutors need to know how diversity affects traditional tutorial approaches. The language that comes naturally to mainstream students and which is privileged in the institution has coerced nonmainstream students to lose confidence in their language—audience—reality, thus stunting the development of critical thinking in writing. In her postpositivist realist theory of identity, Moya develops a lens for understanding why mainstream cultural expectations create exclusionary institutional linguistic practices that force nonmainstream students to seek the place that “holds” them to the university—which Newman says is the writing center (Moya 136-7; Newman 44). Moya provides eight principles for creating a “true democratic and culturally diverse society” (19-20) which can help the writing center acknowledge its social location as stemming from the political, economic, and epistemological mainstream. They can also help to acknowledge the cost of using its position to ignore non-mainstream, non-traditional, Mexican American and Chicana/o students. The writing center instead become a space to communicate the misunderstandings of the culture of the academy, its discourse, and its tacit expectations which often are not made explicit in the classroom (Moya 155).

Tutors should also learn to identify a student’s culturally-based literacy skills as a resource during a tutorial session. I would focus on how a tutor can harness a Mexican American and Chicana’s/o’s culture as a resource in a tutoring session. One way a tutor can use a Mexican American and Chicana/o student writer’s culture is by accounting for culture in the writing process to facilitate the linguistic negotiation which can build a student’s confidence in their writing. Mexican American and Chicana/o students for the most part have developed a lack of confidence in writing Standard Written English due to systemic exclusionary practices in the educational system. Tailoring the writing process

to account for a linguistic negotiation can help tutors develop a Chicano/a or Latino/a student's confidence and critical thinking in writing.

For example, in *At the Point of Need: Teaching Basic and ESL Writers*, Maria Wilson Nelson conducts focus group research on identified ESL and basic writers (12). Nelson desires to boost an ESL or basic writer's confidence with writing by creating trust and bonding between tutor and writer seems promising. Yet in "ESL and Native-English Speaking Writers and Pedagogies—The Issues of Difference: A Review Essay," Carol Severino states, ". . . Nelson emphasizes the similarities between the writing processes and problems of native and non-native speakers and recommends the same process-based, workshop approach for both populations" (63-4). In other words, Severino notices that lacking in Nelson's research is the recognition of cultural difference between the student groups' linguistic differences (Nelson 1; Severino 63). Because Nelson does not apply a different approach that takes cultural differences into account in the writing process, Nelson's approach sustains an ethnocentric bias which does not effectively aid nontraditional students with their writing. In order to break a Mexican American and Chicana's/o's "linguistic terrorism," tutors must stimulate conversation about how cultural difference is a part of the writing process and how negotiation is a natural part of writing in Standard Written English.

Although building confidence in Mexican American and Chicana/o students is a key ingredient in writing, tutors must provide an effective response that does not stigmatize and hinder the creation of a student's confidence in writing (Newman 49). For example, in "Discovering a 'Proper Pedagogy': The Geography of Writing at the University of Texas-Pan American," Ramirez-Dhoore and Jones include a section called



“Discursive Games” in their essay which emphasizes how teachers can talk to their students about developing a “discursive confidence” (82). They state, “Here at UTPA, it means being able to talk about past literacy practices and to reconcile them with current expectations and to change those expectations through this interrogation” (82).

Another way to accommodate a Mexican American and Chicana/o student writer’s culture in a tutorial session is by having the tutor give the writer the option of using Spanish and/or English when participating in a tutorial. During the drafting phase, the Mexican American and Chicana/o student writer should be able to converse comfortably in his or her language of preference in a tutorial session without being stigmatized. For example, in “A Multiservice Writing Lab in a Multiversity: The Purdue University Writing Lab,” Muriel Harris discusses the writing lab at Purdue University which serves a diverse clientele. Each student brings with them a diverse writing history and practice, so the lab provides a variety of tutorial approaches and methods to assist each student’s specific needs in writing (4). By developing a cultural awareness of the diverse literacy practices of the community of students, the writing center can tailor its tutorial approach to develop confidence in Mexican American and Chicana/o students by developing critical thinking skills.

Not only can the writing center provide a place for alternative literacy practices for helping students develop ideas and an understanding of the writing process, but tutors should learn how to respond to Mexican American and Chicana/o student’s writing. Newman suggests tutors should provide more effective responses to student writing and make more explicit the expectations of academic writing (51). Grimm would support this type of tutoring that “make[s] the tacit understandings explicit, offering the students more

choices and more information about how these practices work” (32). During a tutorial session, the tutor should use declarative statements over questioning statements when commenting on the student’s paper. For example, as Newman says, “The declarative statement shows the insecure student writer that we recognize his/her competence; the question suggests that there might not be a thesis in the paper, and even if the student thinks he/she wrote a thesis, the question leads to second guessing and to diminishing confidence” (49).

The tutor should not assume the student is familiar with the features of effective writing identified by the academy, nor should the tutor expect the student to fix the paper to meet academic expectations without guidance. The tutor should use the student’s paper as a text to identify the features that are working in support of the written task and provide the vocabulary for those terms, such as significance, unity, clarity, economy of language, grammatical acceptability, vigor, and authentic voice (Newman 51). The tutors can make academic literacy expectations explicit to Mexican American and Chicana/o student writers which will give them the “insider knowledge” needed for them to succeed in higher education (Grimm 32).

When developing tutor training using collaboration that infuses a student’s diverse literacy skills as a resource, directors must insure the importance of tutor control. Because when applying tutor practices that break from traditional teaching practices, tutors may find it easy to slip back into the role of authoritarian (Lunsford 7; Trimber 22). The power and authority between tutor and writer should be negotiated and shared in negotiating what issues should be addressed, how to resolve those issues, and how changes are made on a student paper (Lunsford 7). At all times, tutors must be aware of

the social, political, and cultural context of the student and his or her writing and not stray from being the authority of the decisions, solutions, and corrections made on a student paper. Much too often, tutors assume the writer understands the culture of the university and the resources available to students at the institution. In “Centering in the Borderlands: Lessons for Hispanic Student Writers,” Newman provides three example of non-mainstream students “[lacking] strategies for negotiating an institutional environment dominated by traditional mainstream authority, a lack of preparedness exacerbated by literacy problems and by insufficient support mechanisms from the institution” (47).

In order for collaboration to work positively for Mexican American and Chicana/o students, tutors must help them develop a critical consciousness about writing. In “Validating Cultural Difference in the Writing Center,” Greg Lyons says, “But, in my view, the most ambitious goal of writing centers is to validate cultural difference while helping students who feel alienated develop a critical consciousness toward their own place in the university and the wider mainstream culture” (145). Although creating a writing center tutor training approach that takes culture into account may seem ambitious for some, when educators create a philosophy stressing the true nature of collaboration, then change can happen.

## WORKS CITED AND WORKS CONSULTED

- Anaya, Rudolfo A. "Aztlán: A Homeland without Boundaries." *Aztlán: Essays on the Chicano Homeland*. Ed. Radolfo A. Anaya and Francisco A. Lomelí. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico P, 1998. 230-241. Print.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. 1987. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999. Print.
- Arkin, Marian, and Barbara Shollar. *The Writing Tutor*. New York: Longman, 1982. Print.
- Artze-Vega, Isis, Elizabeth I. Doud, and Belkys Torres. "Más allá del inglés: A Bilingual Approach to College Composition." *Teaching Writing with Latino/a Students: Lessons Learned at Hispanic-Serving Institutions*. Ed. Cristina Kirklighter, Diana Cardenas, and Susan Wolff Murphy. Albany: State University of New York P, 2007. 99-117. Print.
- Barnett, Robert W., and Jacob S. Blumner, eds. *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing Center Theory and Practice*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2001. Print.
- Bartholomae, David. *Writing on the Margins: Essays on Composition and Teaching*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005. Print.
- Bawarshi, Anis, and Stephanie Pelkowski. "Postcolonialism and the Idea of a Writing Center." *The Writing Center Journal* 19.2 (1999): 43-58. Print.
- Berlin, James A. *Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1900-1985*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1987. Print.
- Bloom Lynn Z. "The Great Paradigm Shift and Its Legacy for the Twenty-First Century." *Composition Studies in the New Millennium: Rereading the Past, Rewriting the Future*. Ed. Lynn Z. Bloom, Donald A. Daiker, and Edward M. White. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2003. 31-47. Print.
- Branscomb, Eric H. "Types of Conferences and the Composing Process." *The Writing Center Journal* 7.1 (1986): 27-35. Print.
- Bruffee, Kenneth A. "Collaborative Learning and the 'Conversation of Mankind.'" *College English* 46.7 (1984): 635-52. Print.
- . "Peer Tutoring and the 'Conversation of Mankind.'" *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing Center Theory and Practice*. Ed. Robert W. Barnett and Jacob S. Blumner. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2001. 206-218. Print.

- Brooks, Jeff. "Minimalist Tutoring: Making the Student Do All the Work." *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing Center Theory and Practice*. Ed. Robert W. Barnett and Jacob S. Blumner. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2001. 219-24. Print.
- Burciaga, José A. *Drink Cultura C/S: Chicanismo*. Santa Barbara: Joshua Odell Editions, 1993. Print.
- Canagarajah, Suresh A. *A Geopolitics of Academic Writing*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh P, 2003. Print.
- Carino, Peter. "Early Writing Centers: Toward a History." *The Writing Center Journal* 15.2 (1995): 103-115. Print.
- . "Open Admissions and the Construction of Writing Center History: A Tale of Three Models." *The Writing Center Journal* 17.2 (1996): 30-48. Print.
- . "Power and Authority in Peer Tutoring." *The Center Will Hold: Critical Perspectives on Writing Center Scholarship*. Ed. Michael A. Pemberton and Joyce Kinkead. Logan: Utah State UP, 2003. 96-113. Print.
- Cintron, Ralph. *Angels' Town: Chero Ways, Gang Life, and the Rhetorics of the Everyday*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1997. Print.
- Clark, Beverly Lyon. *Talking About Writing: A Guide for Tutor and Teacher Conferences*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan P, 1985. Print.
- Cooper, Marilyn M. "Really Useful Knowledge: A Cultural Studies Agenda for Writing Centers." *The Writing Center Journal* 14.2 (1994): 97-111. Print.
- Corpi, Lucha, ed. *Máscaras*. Berkeley: Third Woman P, 1997. Print.
- DiPrado, Anne. "'Whispers of Coming and Going': Lessons from Fannie." *The Writing Center Journal* 12.2 (1992): 125-144. Print.
- Ede, Lisa. "Writing as a Social Process: A Theoretical Foundation for Writing Centers?" *The Writing Center Journal* 9.2 (1991): 3-13. Print.
- Ede, Lisa, and Andrea Lunsford. *Singular Texts/Plural Authors: Perspectives on Collaborative Writing*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois U, 1990. Print.
- Engle, Jennifer, and Vincent Tinto. *Moving Beyond Access: College Success for Low-Income, First-Generation Students. The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education*. Council for the Opportunity in Education. Nov. 2008. Web. 1 Dec. 2008  
<[http://www.pellinstitute.org/files/COE\\_MovingBeyondReport\\_Final.pdf](http://www.pellinstitute.org/files/COE_MovingBeyondReport_Final.pdf)>.

- Fox, Helen. *Listening to the World: Cultural Issues in Academic Writing*. Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English, 1994. Print.
- Gebhardt, Richard C. "Balancing Theory and Practice in the Training of Writing Teachers." *The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook*. Ed. Edward P. J. Corbett and Gary Tate. New York: Oxford UP, 1981. 153-69. Print.
- Geller, Anne Ellen, Michele Eodice, Frankie Condon, Meg Carrooll, and Elizabeth H. Boquet. *The Everyday Writing Center: A Community of Practice*. Logan: Utah State UP, 2007. Print.
- Gee, James P. *Social Linguistics and Literacies: Ideology in Discourses*. New York: Falmer Press, 1990. Print.
- . "What Is Literacy?" *Negotiating Academic Literacies: Teaching and Learning Across Language and Culture*. Ed. Vivian Zamel and Ruth Spack. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1998. 51-59. Print.
- Gillespie, Paula, and Neal Lerner. *The Longman Guide to Peer Tutoring*. New York: Person Education, 2008. Print.
- Gillespie, Paula, Alice Gillam, Lady Falls Brown, and Byron Stay, eds. *Writing Center Research: Extending the Conversation*. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002. Print.
- Grimm, Nancy Maloney. *Good Intentions: Writing Center Work for Postmodern Times*. Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1999. Print.
- Harris, Jeanette, and Joyce Kinhead. "An Interview with the Founding Editors of The Writing Center Journal." *The Writing Center Journal* 9.1 (1990): 3-14. Print.
- Harris, Muriel. "Talking in the Middle: Why Writers Need Writing Tutors." *College English* 57.1 (1995): 27-42. Print.
- . "What's Up and What's In: Trends and Traditions in Writing Centers." *The Writing Center Journal* 9.1 (1990): 15-25. Print.
- Hernandez v. State of Texas. 347 US 475-74. Supreme Court of the US. 1954. *Thomason Reuters Global Resources*. Web. 24 Feb. 2009.
- Hispanic Serving Institutions Web Site*. Web. 3 Nov. 2008  
<<http://hsi.ollusa.edu/default.asp>>.
- hooks, bell. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge, 1994. Print.

- Hussar, W. J., and Bailey T.M. U.S. Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences. *Projections of Education Statistics to 2017 (NCES 2008-078)*. "Table 22 Actual and Projected Numbers for Enrollment in All Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions, By Race/Ethnicity; Fall 1992-Through Fall 2071." 36<sup>th</sup> ed. Washington, DC, 2008. 66. Print.
- International Writing Centers Association*. 4 Sept. 2008. Web. 2 Oct. 2008  
<<http://writingcenters.org/>>.
- Jacoby, Jay. "Shall We Talk to Them in 'English': The Contributions of Sociolinguistics to Training Writing Center Personal." *The Writing Center Journal* 4.1 (1983): 1-14. Print.
- Kilborn, Judith. "Cultural Diversity in the Writing Center: Defining Ourselves and Our Challenges." *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing Center Theory and Practice*. Ed. Robert W. Barnett and Jacob S. Blumner. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2001. 391-400. Print.
- Kinthead, Joyce, and Jeanette G. Harris, eds. *Writing Centers in Context: Twelve Case Studies*. Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English, 1993. Print.
- Kirklighter, Cristina, Diana Cardenas, and Susan Wolff Murphy, eds. *Teaching Writing with Latino/a Students: Lessons Learned at Hispanic-Serving Institutions*. Albany: State University of New York P, 2007. Print.
- Kells, Michelle Hall. Forward. *Teaching Writing with Latino/a Students: Lessons Learned at Hispanic-Serving Institutions*. Ed. Cristina Kirklighter, Diana Cardenas, and Susan Wolff Murphy. Albany: State University of New York P, 2007. vii-xiv. Print.
- Lerner, Neal. "Writing Center Assessment: Searching for the 'Proof' of Our Effectiveness." *The Center Will Hold: Critical Perspectives on Writing Center Scholarship*. Ed. Michael A. Pemberton and Joyce Kinthead. Logan: Utah State UP, 2003. 58-73. Print.
- Lu, Min-Zhan. "Professing Multiculturalism: The Politics of Style in the Contact Zone." *College Composition and Communication* 45.4 (1992): 442-458. Print.
- Lunsford, Andrea. "Collaboration, Control, and the Idea of a Writing Center." *The Writing Center Journal* 12.1 (1991): 3-10. Print.
- Lyons, Greg. "Validating Cultural Difference in the Writing Center." *The Writing Center Journal* 12.2 (1992): 145-158. Print.

- Masiello, Lea. "Style in the Writing Center: It's a Matter of Choice and Voice." Ed. Ben Rafoth. *A Tutor's Guide: Helping Writers One to One*. Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 2000. 55-66. Print.
- Mejía, Jaime Armin. "Arts of the U.S.-Mexican Contact Zone." *Crossing Borderlands: Composition and Postcolonial Studies*. Ed. Andrea A. Lunsford and Lahoucine Ouzgane. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh P, 2004. 171-198. Print.
- . "Bridging Rhetoric and Composition Studies with Chicano and Chicana Studies." *Latino/a Discourses: On Language, Identity & Literacy Education*. Ed. Michelle Hall Kells, Valerie Balester, and Victor Villanueva. Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook, 2004. 40-56. Print.
- Meyer, Emily, and Louise Z. Smith. *The Practice Tutor*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987. Print.
- Moss, Beverly J., and Keith Walters. "Rethinking Diversity: Axes of Difference in the Writing Classroom." *The St. Martin's Guide to Teaching Writing*. Ed. Cheryl Glenn and Melissa A. Goldthwaite. 5<sup>th</sup>ed. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2003. 417-440. Print.
- Moya, Paula M.L. *Learning from Experience: Minority Identities, Multicultural Struggles*. Berkeley: University of California P, 2002. Print.
- Nelson, Jane, and Kathy Evertz, eds. *The Politics of Writing Centers*. Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 2001. Print.
- Nelson, Marie Wilson. *At the Point of Need: Teaching Basic and ESL Writers*. Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook, 1991. Print.
- Newman Méndez, Beatrice. "Centering in the Borderlands: Lessons for Hispanic Student Writers." *The Writing Center Journal* 23.2 (2003): 43-62. Print.
- North, Stephen M. "The Idea of a Writing Center." *College English* 46.5 (1984): 433-46. Print.
- . "Revisiting 'The Idea of a Writing Center.'" *The Writing Center Journal* 15.1 (1994): 7-19. Print.
- Pemberton, Michael A., and Joyce Kinkead, eds. *The Center Will Hold: Critical Perspectives on Writing Center Scholarship*. Logan: Utah State UP, 2003. Print.
- Pratt, Mary Louise. "Arts of the Contact Zone." *Negotiating Academic Literacies: Teaching and Learning Across Languages and Cultures*. Ed. Vivian Zamel and Ruth Spack. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1998. 171-86. Print.



- Quiñónez, Naomi. "Molcajete Mamas and the Feathered Pens." *Máscaras*. Ed. Corpi, Lucha. Berkeley: Third Woman P, 1997. 169-176. Print.
- Rafoth, Ben, ed. *A Tutor's Guide: Helping Writers One to One*. Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 2000. Print.
- Ramírez-Dhoore, Dora, and Rebecca Jones. "Discovering a 'Proper Pedagogy': The Geography of Writing at the University of Texas-Pan American." *Teaching Writing with Latino/a Students: Lessons Learned at Hispanic Serving Institutions*. Ed. Cristina Kirklighter, Diana Cárdenas, and Susan Wolff Murphy. Albany: State University of New York P, 2007. 63-86. Print.
- Rebolledo, Tey Diana. *The Chronicles of Panchita Villa and Other Guerrilleras: Essays on Chicana/Latina Literature and Criticism*. Austin: University of Texas P, 2005. Print.
- Severino, Carol. "ESL and Native-English Speaking Writers and Pedagogies—The Issue of Difference: A Review Essay." *The Writing Center Journal* 13.2 (1993): 63-70. Print.
- Shaughnessy, Mina P. *Errors and Expectations: A Guide for the Teaching of Basic Writing*. New York: Oxford UP, 1977. Print.
- Simpson, Jeanne H. "What Lies Ahead for Writing Centers: Position Statement on Professional Concerns." *The Writing Center Journal* 5.2 (1985): 35-44. Print.
- Speck, Bruce W. *Facilitating Students' Collaborative Writing*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass A. Wiley Company, 2002. Print.
- Street, Brian. *Social Literacies: Critical Approaches to Literacy in Development, Ethnography and Education*. New York: Longman, 1995. Print.
- Stuckey, Elspeth J. *The Violence of Literacy*. Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook P, 1991. Print.
- Texas A & M University Writing Center. 4 Sept. 2008. Web. 2 Oct. 2008  
<<http://writingcenter.tamu.edu/iwca/>> .
- Trimbur, John. "Peer Tutoring: A Contradiction in Terms?" *The Writing Center Journal* 7.2 (1987): 21-28. Print.
- . "Multiliteracies, Social Futures, and Writing Centers." *The Writing Center Journal* 20.2 (2000): 29-32. Print.
- Valdés, Guadalupe. *Learning and Not Learning English: Latino Students in American Schools*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2001. Print.

Villanueva, Victor. "Blind: Talking about the New Racism." *The Writing Center Journal* 26.1 (2006): 3-19. Print.

Wenger, Etienne. *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1998. Print.

Zamora, Bernice. "Silence at Bay." *Máscaras*. Ed. Lucha Corpi. Berkeley: Third Woman P, 1997. 21-34. Print.

## VITA

Gina Guzman was born in McAllen, Texas, on December 16, 1982, the daughter of Jose Alejandro Guzman and Marta Guzman. After graduating from James “Nikki” Rowe High School, McAllen, Texas, in 2001, Gina entered South Texas College. After a year, she attended the University of Texas-Pan American, Edinburg, Texas, and she received the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English in December 2005. In September 2006, she entered the Graduate College of Texas State University-San Marcos, Texas. In January 2007, she began course work in the Master of Arts in Rhetoric and Composition program at Texas State University-San Marcos. During the following years she has always shown an interest in teaching writing. For two years, she has been a tutor of English language arts for incoming freshman at San Marcos High School in the Caminos Pre-College Access and Leadership Program, a summer program designed for at-risk eighth graders from Miller Middle School and Goodnight Middle School to earn High School credits. She was also employed as a tutor in the Writing Center at Texas State University.

Permanent Address: 1909 Fullerton Ave.

McAllen, Texas 78504

This thesis was typed by Gina Guzman.