

Mojado Crossings along Neoliberal Borderlands

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Like a guerrilla vato, I try to sneak across the cultural battleground, trying to go un-noticed, strategically securing a temporary sanctuary. Like a migrant intellectual, a bracero doctorate student, I till the fields of identity, joining in with the help of others, sowing a renewed social memory. Like a mojado (wetback) ethnographer, I attempt to cross the artificial border...into occupied academic territory, searching for a coyote (smuggler) to secure my safe passage.

(personal notes, 1995)

Ethnographic inquiry is most appropriate when it places events and people in the social, cultural, and political history and contexts in which they are constituted. It can never be innocent nor neutral, since it is embedded in a political and moral process. Its very origins transit a path with Western colonialism, still seizing both geopolitical spaces and the descendants of colonial subjects. Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989) has called it as a conversation by the Us (white-man), for the Us (white-man) about the Them (native), in which

the "Them is standing on the other side of the hill...naked and speechless."

In the past, this research project has mostly been nostalgic, trying to preserve the "vanishing primitive." However, this process has certainly engraved many an imprint. When Levi-Strauss represented those "primitive cultures," he essentially gave birth to them in the Western context (Quintana, 1990). His recordings and interpretations are why they (we) "exist," and remain textually imprisoned in often stagnant and parodic representations. Quintana sees the language of ethnographic description as not only a set of intricate symbols representing and preserving existence and knowledge, but as a violent force "ripping through individuals as well as cultures in order to create units of preservable information" (p. 208). It has been a tool to enforce particular values and representations, that control, dictate and categorize.

Many post-colonial critics have sought to uncover ethnography's imperious beginnings. Currently there is much talk about resolving the colonial legacy of ethnography, and particular attention has been paid to issues of "Othering" (Bhabha, 1983; Fine, 1994; Rosaldo, 1989; Villenas, 1996). Rosaldo problematized the once romantic notion of the lone ethnographer who would travel off to the exotic to capture raw data (and bring it back to render it visible). In doing so, Rosaldo has also contended that this "once-dominant ideal of the detached observer with a neutral language" has been displaced (p. 37). Conquergood (1991) moreover has argued that presently, "no group of scholars is struggling more acutely and productively with the political tensions of research than ethnographers." In fact, he goes on to state, that one can date the early challenges against objectivist science to about the same time as colonialism's direct collapse (p. 179).

Nevertheless, many researchers have been complicit in colonial agendas by assuming expert authority, having not questioned their particular positions of privilege, enabling the voyeuristic objectification of their research participants and self-serving strategies of representation and text-making practices. Critics have prodded that we should reconsider our privileged positions as researchers. In relation to "Othering," Fine (1994) states that we ethnographers should scrutinize our particular identities with respect to race, class, and gender. While many wish to evade the exploitative nature of the research relationship, trying to reconcile the privileged identities of "we" ethnographers, vis-a-vis the marginalized communities under research, I personally cannot approach this methodology nor locate myself in the discursive "we" in the exact same fashion. My particular researcher positionalities are as a Chicano/Mexicano/Indigena, a descendant of colonial subjects, a first-generation university student, and working-class background. It carries with it its own situatedness, multiplicity, history, and awkward forms of privilege quite different from those research dilemmas that often arise for European Americans.

The Value-laden Ethnographer as Bodily-Instrument, Text-Maker, and Inventor of Cultures

Here, "the mojado ethnographer" argues that the role of values is inherent in qualitative research.

Qualitative researchers work from an interpretive view of the nature of reality. That is to say, they share a view that reality is not given, but constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Humans are actively engaging in the process of constructing culture through their daily interactions (Bennett & LeCompte, 1990). Cultural meanings are constructed across many social settings, and because people hold a variety of different perceptions, this interpretive view is based upon a flexible rather than a fixed ontology. Inquiry then is value bound, in the choices of frame and focus by the researcher, but also in the values that inhere in the particular contexts in inquiry. Qualitative researchers do not separate themselves nor their influence from what is being inquired. They believe they make up part of the scene which they are viewing. They are, in fact, a component in the social reality as sustained and continuously negotiated through communication (Bowers, 1987). Since meaning is constructed through social interaction, what qualitative researchers communicate about the nature of reality is not free of their own underlying assumptions and interpretations of the world.

The appropriate questions and methods for a study rely, without exception, on what the intentions are of the researcher and the basic assumptions they share (since one is not separate from what one studies). Multiple approaches are pursued and a strategy operates at several levels (Denzin, 1984 & 1989). The first workings are to discover the very questions that penetrate the most insight. Beginning with real-world observations, the potential research moves to personal theory and then to formal theory, concepts, and models from literature which frame a focused research question (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). The design unfolds as the fieldwork unfolds (Patton, 1990). Theory is linked to methods, and methods to the scenes studied, grounding one's work. The methods rely heavily on direct observation (participant observation), open-ended interviewing, and textual analysis of human products. However, the degree and extent of utilization of each of these methods depend on the researcher's purposes, the guiding questions, theoretical framework, and the scene itself.

The goals of qualitative research are many and multiple. On a simplistic level, it may be no more than to study real-world situations using descriptive methods of inquiry. Unlike many de-contextualized quantitative measures which serves knowledge for knowledge's sake, qualitative research serves to contextualize inquiries and "inform action, enhance decision-making, and apply knowledge to solve human and societal problems" (Patton, 1990, p. 12). At a basic level, there

is a belief that those who have lived their experiences know more about it than others. It conveys the contexts, systematically, in order to push beyond our own limits of time, space, and culture to approximate an understanding of the phenomenon inquired.

By contextualizing, we move toward an ethic of holism. The principal idea is that it is impossible to separate any phenomenon from its whole context without losing crucial aspects of its meanings. The whole is said to be more than just the sum of its parts, and each part is also containing the whole within it. This is why an interpretive view is congenial to metaphor, synecdoche and metonym. With the nature of synthesis in mind, the unachievable ideal of this research has become to "learn all, take all into account, and tell all" (Noblit & Engel, 1991).

Ethnography's modes of inquiry have been borrowed and sometimes strengthened by a spectrum of disciplines and researchers. Positivistic social scientists and market researchers, for example, have long employed focus-groups (usually alongside mass-scaled questionnaires and surveys). Cultural studies, as an inveterately altering discipline, has also turned to ethnography. In its convergence, During (1993) has written that it has been used "to avoid the pitfalls of sociological objectivity and to give room to voices other than the theorist's own" (p. 21). He believes an understanding of this is crucially important because "it highlights the difficulty of either claiming or disclaiming academic and, more especially, ethnographic authority" (p. 20).

Ethnography can be seen as both a bodily praxis where the researcher is the instrument,¹ as well as an academic discourse in and of itself. The ethnographer is self-conscious about text-making practices, making ethnography both a social science research method and a social science textual genre. Wagner (1980) has characterized this as two styles of creativity. Ethnographers not only "invent" their scholarly texts, but the cultures they study as well. The researcher strives to render his or her experiences understandable, in a familiar way, and invents them as "Culture."

This returns us to the role of values, and to the central notion that ethnography can never be innocent nor neutral since it is embedded in a political and moral process. The value-laden ethnographer is, then, all these things: the bodily-instrument, the text-maker, and the inventor of cultures. Perhaps it is this stark (albeit socially-constructed) reality, in light of the ever present de-centering and fragmentation in a postmodern age, that has pushed many critical and conventional ethnographers alike to rethink their projects (e.g., *postcritical ethnography*, *public anthropology*). "More than ever, conscious of the larger historic context, it has become increasingly more meaningful to engage and investigate the cultural production and practice of individuals, social groups and organizations, both outside and inside the academy, who make claims of collective knowledges, democratic values and social memories around the coordinates of difference, diversity and representation" (Murillo, 1997, p. 263).

Culture, Politics, and Alliances

"The mojado ethnographer" argues that the increased sensitivity to, and tension in the politics of ethnography have opened up new occupiable spaces and possibilities, where other bodies of work can increasingly be drawn upon.

Currently there is a visible tradition, what Grossberg, Nelson, and Treicher (1992) have called "the new ethnography," which is allied principally with cultural studies in the United States. Cultural studies, like today's field of education, in its current practices has multiple roots, diverse foci, and addresses a multitude of contexts. In fact, to remain sophisticated in this particular historical moment requires that the "new ethnography," education and cultural studies alike embrace the task of drawing together the disperse and multiple foci of numerous theoretical frames, and exploit their often blurred and tentative definitions and distinctions between each.

Cultural studies have been anchored within particular conversations with their larger socio-cultural contexts, and constructed alongside those cultural explanatory frames of their historic moment. As a whole, current cultural studies have been mostly influenced by the many and multiple theories of social and cultural diversity coming out of Europe, that have explored the role of social structures and cultural industries in either reproducing or transforming that diversity. These theories have been first *reproductive* theories that revolve around societal transmission, and deal almost exclusively with social structure, where historical beings are "acted upon;" but they have been *productive* theories as well, which are concerned with voluntary action, where history is open to change and contestation, and where social agents are viewed as "actors."²

Though not exclusively, cultural studies' literatures and anthologies, particularly when looking at schooling, have turned to the early writings of Reproduction theory, Critical Social theory and Cultural Production theory, as part of the theoretical legacy. These studies have roots in the theoretical traditions of both micro and macrolevel analyses. They have borrowed from interpretivism the belief that reality is socially constructed, and have appropriated and utilized the research methodologies from the micro-level ethnographic frames. Yet they have simultaneously also borrowed from both functionalist and neo-marxist conflict theories a concern for social and economic inequality and the macro-level structural constraints.³

Influenced by early theories of Marx and Simmel, much of the focus is on the contradictions of capitalism, particularly the economic determinism and patterns of property ownership between labor and capital. The underlying thought is that the unequal distribution of wealth and material goods in society is the origin of distinct cultural life-ways among the economic classes, and the primary source of

cultural conflict. The perspectives of Althusser and Bourdieu are also particularly influential. Althusser, from a perspective of social reproduction, wrote about the ways cultural industries, like schooling, function as an ideological State apparatus that trains students to their respective goals, imparts an ideology where failure is blamed on the student, and ultimately reproduces the class system. Bourdieu, from a perspective of cultural reproduction, wrote that class structure alone is not reproduced, but also class-based differences imbedded in cultural and linguistic practices. His notion of cultural capital has been employed to analyze the general cultural knowledges, cultural products, mannerisms, aesthetic tastes, and language patterns possessed by both elite members of "high culture," and working-class members of "popular culture." Analogous to currency, some cultural capital has higher value than others, as when elite culture is a sign of intelligence. Thus reproduction involves both the transmission of class structure and particular culturally-based signifying practices.

The historic foundation of critical theory began with the writings of theorists that came to be termed the Frankfurt School. Horkheimer, Adorno, Benjamin, and Marcuse, who do not share a common theory, have similar perspectives which share common elements and concerns. Other theorists attached to this project have been Habermas, who articulated the incapacity of logical empiricism (positivism) to adequately explain social phenomena. The work of Gramsci is also associated with this project, particularly the concept of hegemony which seeks to explain the mutations of domination that maintain power structures without explicit force.

In this explanatory framework which both built upon and departed from earlier theories, there was a reevaluation of Marx's prediction of the dictatorship of the proletariat, with less primacy of class and economic determinism, and new emphasis on multiple dimensions of power (particularly ideology). This opened new theoretical frames that could now include race, gender, religion, economic development, and peace movements as culturally productive spheres. It also incorporated new poststructuralist perspectives, influenced greatly by the linguistic turn across social sciences, that could recombine the earlier pessimistic views of rigid social structure, with the agentic or voluntaristic view of self-determination and hopeful alternative social systems.

From the frameworks of reproduction and critical theories, cultural studies' writers sought to reconcile and reconfigure issues of culture, structure and agency, developing broader frameworks by which to understand and harness cultural production. In particular, the concept of resistance was seen as a means of addressing social complexity. Sometimes still referred to as resistance theory (in studies of schooling), it is most closely associated with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham, England.

Alliances between ethnography and cultural studies, as several scholars have pointed out, can span a whole variety of intellectual and research practices that engage and intervene in the reception, interrogation, reproduction, production and

understanding of culture at multiple and simultaneous levels and degrees. Education, and critical educational theory in particular (see Weiler, 1988), evidence the alliance between education and cultural studies. Grossberg (1994) has acknowledged that education is "one of the most pressing, promising, and paradoxical sites of cultural studies to have emerged recently." He has called it paradoxical because despite the centrality of education in cultural studies' early beginnings (revolving around central issues of pedagogy and the potential for democratic struggle), education has had little later attention. He has described some of the founding figures of (British) Cultural studies (Hoggart, Williams, Thompson, and Hall) as having all started their intellectual projects in the field of Education (p. 3), only to move on to other concerns.

The contention is that these alliances between ethnography, cultural studies, and education create and sustain intersections that can, and are, often viewed as sites of contestation within the academies of higher learning, where cultural critics can address, converge, and oftentimes diverge over differing approaches to culture, its practices, productions of pedagogy, languages of critique, and real-world political considerations and consequences of intellectual life. This being the case, these few (and far and in-between) sites of contestation have also been invigorated by the alliances with the geopolitical and transnational repertoires among feminists, peoples of color, workers' movements, pan-Indigenist struggles, post-colonial critics, and leftists, among others. These intersections, in one form or another, each interrogate the social dimensions and cultural domains of power relations.

Some Chicano/Mexicano and pan-Latino educators and scholars have particularly been attracted to the various explanatory frameworks coming out of past and present cultural studies, and to politically-engaged research frameworks like critical ethnography, finding key conceptual linkages to Chicano/Latino studies and attending to issues of power. In this light, ethnography, cultural studies, education and Chicano/Latino studies all can more easily step into each other and into the academic spaces opened by the alliances, furthering the enrichment and broadening of each as they become extensions of each others' projects. They can work together in both academic and non-academic spaces alike to draw upon the diverse resources and rich cultural histories of struggle, at the intersections of power, geopolitics, discursive practices, community, and identity.

Alternative Scholarship, 'Other' Discourses and the Problematique of Chicano/Mexicano/Latino Scholars

"The mojado ethnographer" argues that as post-colonial subjects, a history has been forged of remaining faithfully skeptical of both the grand narratives of modernity and the theoretical legacies that have informed Chicano/Mexicano/Latino scholars intellectually.

Maciel and Ortiz (1996) have written that as Chicanas/os (and now Latinas/os in the broader sense) enter a new millennium, we are at a critical juncture. After decades of intense social struggle (though much has been accomplished) many challenges sadly remain. The *movimiento* brought renewed optimism reflected in Chicano art, muralism, bilingual poetry, theater, ideals and rugged activism. It made strides in community issues, education, self-awareness, and labor struggles. These continue to develop, and one clear result is the vital emphasis on alternative scholarship. There was a recognition of the need to address the limitations of previous research on the community, and search out better-informed approaches. Chicano scholarship became a visible academic trend that tried to overcome the generations of silence in U.S. society.

Despite the gains of Civil Rights, Affirmative Action, Bilingual Education, the institutionalization of Chicano Studies, Financial Aid, and so on, only small numbers of Chicanos have achieved a degree of social mobility. There has been little progress overall with respect to the larger Chicano/Mexicano community (now more often characterized by Latino and Immigrant). Maciel and Ortiz (1996, p. x) write that the 1980s marked a dismantling of the many triumphs of the *movimiento*, as immigrants had been under direct attack, and the so-called decade of the Hispanic came and left. The 1990s has brought about differing patterns of activism as these previous patterns become rendered even more obvious. Some activists have resorted in direct action reminiscent of the 1960s, and others have partaken in United States/Latin American cultural activities and interaction (namely issues around immigration). Maciel and Ortiz believe it necessary to first make an assessment of the Chicana/o experience since the 1970s, and then move forward to multidisciplinary perspectives that can better describe the "conditions, fortunes, and experiences of Chicanas/os in the contemporary era" (p. xi).

Some Chicano/Latino scholars have looked to the importance of particular sites of cultural production and exchange. The alternative scholarship on the role of *Corridos* (popular Mexican ballads) serves as an example of what can be profitably learned by examining those expressive cultural spaces that serve as pedagogical tools to create and sustain particular sites of resistance (Gallegos, Murillo Jr., Padilla, Soto, & Villenas, 1992). Fusco (1995) has also called for the importance of looking at the role of the *Corrido* as the conduit of a history suppressed by Euro-Anglo society. She believes that "culture and communal expression are perhaps the most important sites of resistance, indicative of everyday political struggle" (p.35). She goes on to point out that resistance isn't always direct, overt or literal, but often articulated through semantic reversals (the process of infusing icons, objects, and symbols with differing meanings).

Saldívar (1990) has theorized that the significant body of literary texts produced in the Southwest in the 19th and 20th centuries was part of the struggle for Mexican American communities to retain cultural integrity and an organic sense of unity. He has examined the representative aspects of Chicano narrative

forms (short story, verse, autobiography, and the novel) that have yet to be included in the canons of literature among English, Spanish, and Comparative Literature departments. He has pondered if new theoretical developments of literary analysis can be used to understand the products of a socio-cultural group that still in many ways defines itself "in opposition and resistance to mainstream social, historical, economic, and cultural modalities" (p. 3). One of his principal concerns, he writes, is "can theories of mass culture developed by the Frankfurt School and extended by Stuart Hall and other scholars as 'cultural studies,' help us understand the unvoiced, unread literature of Mexican American men and women in the United States?" (p. 3). Too, he wonders, are the Eurocentric paradigms of scholars working within the parameters of hegemonic cultural and aesthetic traditions appropriate for literary products coming from the margins?

Saldívar believes that narrative strategies in Chicano literature seek to demystify those unequal power relations through a process of "dialectics of difference" (1990, p. 5). In these dialectical forms Chicanas/os struggle with a political reality, where history is the subtext that is attempted to be recovered. The ideology of difference emerges from an impulse toward radical deconstruction toward a cultural production of meaning. In this dual tendency, he writes that the task of Chicano narrative is not to reproduce images of reality in passive manners—but "to deflect, deform, and thus transform reality by revealing the dialectical structures that form the base of human experience" (p. 7).

Chabram and Fregoso (1990) believe that within the problematics inherited by Chicano/Latino intellectuals of the 1990s, there are recurring questions that are key. The first is anchored within the genealogy of the Chicano student movement; "how does Chicano (Latino) studies enact, articulate, and textualize the community, and how does this narrativization translate into the empowerment of a community?" Implicit in this is the long-existing question of "what's the relationship between theory, self-representation, and practice?" (p. 203). From a Cultural studies perspective, they exploit these tensions by interrogating: (1) the often accepted belief that Chicano (Latino) studies equates unproblematically with community empowerment, and (2) if a singular cultural identity equips the necessary condition for this equation.

Like Maciel and Ortiz, Chabram and Fregoso describe that during the struggles of the *movimiento*, a cultural space was opened to self-describe and self-name, thus the term Chicano. This allowed for competing representations to the existing negative stereotypes in the dominant media and general culture (e.g., Frito Bandito, intense Spit Fire, or the superstitious lazy Mexican). They state that the term Chicano was "both the affirmation of our working-class and Indigenous origins, and the rejection of assimilation, acculturation, and the myth of the American melting pot" (p. 205) But while this self-representation was empowering and positive, it stemmed from the common-sense belief that identity was uni-dimensional, rigid, and transcendental. They therefore push for the reframing of

Chicano cultural identities around the theoretical frames offered in Cultural studies (and Stuart Hall). That is to say, they argue that identity should be constituted within the problematics of difference, production and positionality, not the old compositions of binaries (Anglos vs. Chicanos).

They also address the ways where Eurocentric critical and post-structuralist frameworks can reinscribe the Chicano/Mexicano (Latino) experience under an abstract concept of "difference." The binary White-Black social category overshadows Mexican-origin populations. Even theorists from the academic left often circulate the myth that difference is a "recent" phenomenon—when in fact it's imbedded in our historical trajectories. Chabram and Fregoso (1990) believe that to recuperate that which was silenced by all the aforementioned cultural frames, it is necessary to incorporate the many complexities of cultural forms, linguistic discourses, and practices of resistance in order to respond effectively.

The more recent turn to postmodern abstractions has affected theoretical perspectives of cultural domains in radical ways. Particular contributions to new conceptualizations arise from the research of long-standing migration circuits among Mexicanos in the United States. The modern concept of community, based on the nation-state, common language, and experience has long become incapable to gain an understanding of the fragmented and often paradoxical identities that are negotiated between worlds, intersecting economies, and distinct socio-cultural spaces. Rouse (1991 & 1996) has contended that there is an increasing sensibility that the conventional processes to represent the worlds of those that are studied, and the worlds that researchers themselves inhabit, are strained beyond their limitations due to the heightened pace of changes taking place. This crisis of calling into question the existence and representations of readily separable cultural domains is not exclusively particular to cultural studies, ethnography, education, nor Chicano/Latino studies, but they can join in an alliance to push forth new readings in this era of what Harvey (1989) has called the move "from Fordism to Flexibility." Because of the shifts to new social spaces, "the modern sensibilities leave us unable to comprehend" (Rouse, p. 248).

A re-examination of the recent notions of postmodernity has led critics (mostly postcolonial) to believe there is a danger of reinscribing the old patterns where Eurocentric explanatory frameworks may again be named as the "progenitors" of the new intellectual game. Through more recent realizations of the disrapture, fragmentation, and multiplicity, particular Eurocentric conceptualizations have now been able to "name" it, and produce new meanings from it—"so now it's true and correct." Yet this totally ignores the larger global systems, shifts, and histories of socio-cultural groups already involuntarily anchored within the social spaces of the nation-state. Rouse has done well then to problematize the modern socio-spacial images as being incapable of addressing the postmodern complexities. He states that only rarely has Mexican migration been used to reappraise those existing images. The contention is that Mexican migration is

symptomatic of the larger unfolding of transnational capitalism, and is a potential site of where alternative cartographies (and epistemologies) of social space can be drawn.

During (1987) has proposed that "the concept postmodernity has been constructed in terms which more or less intentionally wipe out the possibility of post-colonial identity...the conceptual annihilation of the post-colonial condition is actually necessary to any argument that 'we' now live in postmodernity." Rocco (1990) has further articulated on how postmodern frameworks have yet to fully acknowledge the ways that cultural forms are differentially experienced in the lives of "Others." He says that it's ironic that the image of the "Other" remains such an abstract one, given the physical proximity of the "Other" to the theorist.⁴ Limón (1991) writes that despite critics' stance on the postmodern (critical, celebratory, or ambivalent), "few, if any, seem to take into account other, more socially pervasive and imbedded, usually negating articulations of postmodernity, especially as postmodernity may be experienced daily within racial, class, and ethnic subaltern sectors" (p. 129). These points all illustrate a contradiction of postmodernity, in which that "difference" is rendered "similarity" under one lump umbrella of "a postmodern experience."

Aiming at the academic left (in the United States), a critique of some popular theoretical conceptualizations (e.g., critical pedagogy) reveals that there are still major unexamined assumptions and taken-for-granted at play. Regardless of particular intellectual alliances (even working within class-based hermeneutics) much privileging and leadership remains limited to white males. There exists "a tenacious refusal to recognize and seriously engage with issues related to cultural difference or conflict beyond that of a class analysis, which inadvertently permits the discourse to adhere to a dominant Eurocentric, albeit radical, definition of culture that consequently, marginalizes and delegitimizes the voices of those who are emersed in the depths of a bicultural existence and in complex forms of oppositional consciousness that emerge from such experiences" (Darder, 1991). With Chicano/Mexicano and pan-Latino scholars, rooted in a post-colonial legacy, there is exchanging, strengthening, lending, and appropriating of analytic tools and linguistic discourses from critical social theory—but simultaneously there should not be a hesitation to critique (where appropriate) the cultural underpinnings and the geo-political genealogies that have borne their meanings. That is to say, despite the current debates around identity and representation, the academic world of "theory" is still anchored principally from a Eurocentric positionality.

Mojado as Native Diasporic, and Inequality of Mobility and Movement

"The mojado ethnographer" relates his often problematic and paradoxical

performances of identity, and explains "Mojado" as a heuristic device and cultural metaphor.

As a native researcher (how "native?"—I'm not sure) involved in ethnography as both a bodily-praxis and text-making genre, I relate to those in research settings on multiple and numerous dimensions. What I've experienced is not unlike what Naples (1996) has called the "outsider phenomenon" (p. 139), in that the positionalities of outsider/insider are neither permanently fixed nor ever static. In response, I have strived to bring my own closely associated positionalities to my field work, conscious that I will never become a neutral transmitter of stories and voices. Identities, languages, and knowledges are so intimate with thought and meaning that my particular multiplicity and lived experience often brings a layer of description and symmetry beyond that usually acknowledged by researchers. Putting identity on the line may help us to move beyond learning about emic cultural practices and move toward an ethic of working within cultural practices, and in turn broaden the instrumentalities of other ways of knowing.

My experience as an educational ethnographer, to date, can sometimes be described as traveling those blurred boundaries when Other becomes researcher, narrated becomes narrator, translated becomes translator, native becomes anthropologist, and how one emergent and intermittent identity continuously informs the other. It is a spatial place as best articulated by Limón (1991) in his description of "the particular challenges posed to the 'native' anthropologist in his or her attempt ethnographically to represent ethnic worlds riven with cultural contradiction in this postmodern moment, while responding critically to a history of flattening stereotypical representations of these worlds" (p. 116). The scrutiny of my researcher identities has become an exploration of what Villenas (1996) has called the colonizer/colonized dilemma. She writes "I am the colonized in relation to the greater society, to the institution of higher learning, and to the dominant majority culture in the research setting. I am the colonizer because I am the educated, 'marginalized' researcher, recruited and sanctioned by privileged dominant institutions to write for and about Latino communities. I am a walking contradiction with a foot in both worlds—in the dominant privileged institutions and in the marginalized communities" (p. 714). Her story is a manifesto to how Chicanas/os along the journey to becoming legitimated university-sanctioned researchers do not smoothly discard their marginalization for new powerful and privileged positions associated with their university affiliations.

Mojado Ethnography is how I have chosen to describe one node along my journey. *Mojado* (wetback) refers to Mexicans and other Latinos who cross the nation-state territorial border into the United States, and are socially, politically, economically (as well as legally) constructed as "illegal entrants" and "newcomers." The origin of the word refers to people, who upon unable to afford a *pasador*, *pollero*, or *coyote* (border-guide and smuggler), swim or wade across the Rio

Grande on their own, *a la brava*, in clandestine fashion; taking their chances along with others in crossing the border to rejoin their families, make emergency visits, take up waiting employment on the other side, escape the poverty (or all these things). Though I don't have a reason in my current life-situation to cross the Rio Grande, the phenomenon is all too familiar to me having been raised along the United States/Mexican *Frontera* (borderlands), and I choose to use the real-life metaphor as an experiential and culturally-genealogical tool to make meaning of my cultural, racial, ethnic, discursive, political, theoretical, and even class crossings into ethnography and academia.

Mojado symbolizes the distrust and dislike experienced in *gringolandia*, as *la raza odiada*, "those damn Mexicans"—*extranjeros*, which literally means "outsiders." As Chicano/Mexicano I am sensitive to the word Mojado, for having been raised along the borderlands as a *fronterizo*, I have been confronted my whole life with the noticeable economic and lifestyle disparity between both sides of the border. Even as a very young child I was struck with the open arrogance and attitudes of American *turistas* (flaunting their *moco*-green dollars), who on a daily basis flood bordertowns on the Mexican side to do their haggling and shopping (anywhere from replicas of pre-columbian artifacts to prostitution). For many, *la Frontera* is a curse.⁵

Crossing borders as a Mojado can be a dangerous and vulnerable act. Border-crossers are often referred to as *pollos*, or chickens, because like chickens that may end up plucked and eaten, they are equally as vulnerable of what awaits in-between and on *el otro lado* (the other side). Entering the United States via holes in rusting fences, rat-infested tunnels, confined spaces of car trunks, flooding rivers, train cars, or darting across freeways, and then walking on back trails in mountain and desert areas, sometimes days on end without food or water, is a life-threatening journey. Along the border are *rateros*, who rob and oftentimes kill their victims, by exaggerating their *coyote* claims about securing a safe passage across the border. The *migra*, or I.N.S., is waiting on the U.S. side, patrolling the border as a brute repressive police force, stanching the flow of "illegals," oftentimes through abuse and murder. Once on the U.S. side, living and working with the constant threat of *la migra*, and at the mercy of employers, *mojados* often must then live in concealment, changing their names, identities, and sometimes nationalities, forced to buy and carry fake birth certificates, false declarations of citizenship, *micas chuecas* (falsified greencards) and use social security numbers that belong to others.

The use of Border (*La Frontera*) or Borderlands as analogy is not original to me (nor any other scholar), and neither is there a homogeneous consensus on its meaning. Nor am I the first to use the metaphor to describe the difficulties of crossing into academia.⁶ At the risk of seeming romantic, I must say it most closely belongs to the realm of the disenfranchised and estranged. Garcia (1985 & 1996) has documented the Border as "symbol and reality in Mexican-American thought."

He writes "having grown up in demographically complex communities in which it was not at all uncommon to find Mexican nationals (both 'legal' and 'undocumented'), third- or fourth-generation Mexican Americans, and the U.S.-born children of all these groups living in close proximity, the meanings of potentially crucial distinctions such as those between native and foreigner, citizen and alien, and 'American' and 'Mexican' became increasingly vague and ambiguous" (1996, p. 89).

In the recent past, *La Frontera* has also played a crucial and guiding role in the political thought and strategies of Mexican nationalists, marxist working-class ideologues, anti-imperialist intellectuals, Chicano cultural nationalists, feminists, pan-Indigenistas and international-socialistas to make meaning of class-position, coloniality, ethnic, race and cultural positionalities and consciousness of Mexicans, Mexican-origin groups, and other Latinos in diaspora. It also has been a guiding metaphor of Chicano-Latino Studies, mostly around the discursive questions and coordinates of "nationhood" and "internal colony." It has also provided a framework for a spectrum of scholarship, for example, on the consciousness and coming together of diverse cultures,⁸ to portray ethnographic encounters,⁹ the process by which Chicanos become associated with criminality,¹⁰ and to describe the intersections between education and cultural studies.¹¹

The notion of the Border, to say the least, has "caught on." And it is not all that uncommon now to find its usage among many scholars and social scientists theorizing from a location closer to the center (as opposed to the margins). I certainly don't wish to claim an exclusive ownership of the analogy because I happen to be Chicano/Mexicano, or mire in binaries like center/margin. But it has become increasingly important to question and problematize the more romantic, uncritical, and glorified notions of border-crossing. Borders and boundaries are social constructions and do not exist independent of our volition (Rodríguez, 1997). Moreover, the very meaning itself of the border is contingent upon the status, positionality, and characteristics of the "crosser" (Chang, 1997). Gonzalez-Peterson (1997) writes that "scholars and essayists in the social sciences think it is clever to use border as metaphor to describe the movement between worlds, cultures, social status, class, gender, and/or states of mind, but very few have known the nuances of being mojado, an illegal, a coyote, a turista, or a pocha in the border context...it is not a pretty going-between for many of us." She goes on, "the discourse has been limited to very essentialist and dualist approaches and hinders the multiple perspectives of research agendas and their theoretical frameworks."

In her critique of multiculturalism, Darder (1991) has stated that "theoretical concepts such as 'crossing borders' and 'border intellectuals' inadvertently serve as abstracted notions which legitimate subtle, and not so subtle, forms of racism and cultural invasion through an intellectual and academic disrespect for the cultural boundaries and integrity inherent in the historical knowledge and expe-

riences of people of color." She goes on to state "that it is fueled by an arrogant refusal to acknowledge the limitations of one's subject position as a cultural/historical being and, as a consequence, to grapple with the constrictions of one's perspective, particularly when one seeks to name those experiences which exist outside of one's cultural/historical reality." Therefore, as she goes on, "the notion of 'border crossing' supports the unentitled right of a person from outside of a cultural community to name and voice for that cultural community and to appropriate the knowledge without an actual understanding of the cultural genealogy that informs its meaning and intent...this is done in the name of intellectual study, research, and theoretical discourse" (p. 2).

At the risk of exaggerating marginality, Mojado, for me, best describes both the current socio-political and academic distresses, as well as the heroic yet costly successes, of ethnographers, who are Chicano/Mexicano, pan-Latino, womanists, feminists, working-class and/or other scholars of color. It refers principally to an inequality of mobility and movement across borders, be it in the larger research setting (Villenas, 1996), as classroom instructor in a predominantly white campus (Vargas, 1996), in the dominant-sanctioned theories and discourses that emanate from an unexamined Whiteness (Diaspora Productions, 1997), or in the university policies and practices of admission and faculty tenure (Shattering the Silences, 1997), to provide just a few examples. The (post)capitalist mode of production of knowledge by the institutes of higher learning, like other "mediating institutions" (Lamphere, 1992), are not unlike that of international and intersecting labor phenomena in that they are complicit with policies imposed by global elites that "have made it possible for a small group of people to become more and more mobile" providing the flexibility for their exit and entrance yet "physical and other barriers to the movement of poor people have proliferated" (Jimenez, 1997).

My use of Mojado is not only born from the experience of proletarianized descendants of colonial subjects, of the structural constraints inherited as commodities or *brazos* in U.S. society. But also it reflects a processual and agentic celebration of its irony of reversal.¹² No border can completely be impregnable. In the middle of all this *desmadre* (chaos), we Mojados can sometimes learn to navigate cultural, intellectual, and physical landscapes, *burlando la frontera* (mocking the border) every time we cross *a la brava* (without the help of smugglers or border-guides) as casually as crossing the street, going un-noticed by *migra* and *mordelones* (both real and academic border patrol and gate-keepers). We can "dart across the freeway of academia" and "chuckle at the turistas who buy our artifacts buried for a few years to look like antiquities" (Gonzalez-Peterson, 1997). We celebrate our biculturality and smile smugly when we say *que somos un pueblo sin fronteras* (we are a people without borders).

Mojado is both a stereotype and social-standing that more and more people are relegated toward. "We are all suspect," to quote an anti-Proposition 187 slogan in California. My use of the word is a reclaiming, an appropriation or a "throwing

back" of a symbol of oppression. I embrace it only temporarily as just one positionality among a postmodern repertoire, so as to grapple with history, so as to learn, among many things, from those "subjective/categorical dilemmas" (Gallegos, 1997) faced by indigenous peoples as well as other descendants of colonial subjects. After all, from a "meso-centric" perspective (Godina, 1996), we didn't cross the borders, the borders crossed us! And the socio-political and historical irony of the term Mojado is that Mexicans and other indigenous peoples cross over into ancestral lands that were invaded, annexed, and are currently occupied by the United States of America.¹³

Little, of course, can be understood outside its socio-history: "The political concepts that have shaped modern history—democracy, the citizen, nationalism—no longer seem adequate for coping with contemporary realities" (Mongia, 1996). Poor and working-class Chicano/Mexicano/Latinos, I dare say, have never really enjoyed any of the certainties of modernity, unless you count racial subordination, cultural indifference, and economic exploitation. In the midst of a global integration and promise for a new era, Mojado is both symbol and reality of the migrant, the exiled, the estranged, the refugee, the trans-nation-state, the multiple, the fragmented, the marginal, the displaced, the contradictory, the liminal, the postmodern nomad, the transgressive, and the native diasporic.

The Closing of the Borders

"The mojado ethnographer" explains his estrangement from both academic and non-academic spaces alike.

At the end of this century, with massive reconfigurations in the structure of the economy, the devolution and disintegration of social programs, an expansive retreat from Civil Rights, and political realignments and dissolution of the meaning of cultural democracy, inequalities have shifted, if not worsened. The global and epic forces of a "post" age of market-credo economic restructuring and integration are driven by a new hyper-mobility of capital, and include deindustrialization, the emergence of new centers of finance and information centers, new regional economic specializations in cultural commodities, the consolidation of the U.S. military, and the privatization and devolution of government programs to local levels. The undermining of the nation-state, changes in socio-political structure and policy, a higher population mobility, media interconnectedness, and exchange of goods and services are all occurring at an unprecedented rate: "These processes of restructuring and influx have fostered new discourses about social division, at a time that there is mounting evidence of increased popular anxieties about economic security and the allocation of public resources among contesting groups" (NCPS, 1997). Wealth has been sharply redistributed, even within sectors of the white middle class: "Facing the

prospect of not being able to replicate the privileged circumstances of their parents, the baby boomer generation of frustrated and 'angry white males' is struggling to shore up its eroding position" (Harrison, 1998, p. 16). After all, I suppose, it was easy to agree with affirmative action in the late 1960s when there was a popular perception of an endless pie of an expanding economy. But today, one can claim that the once normalized -conventional split between the Right and Left is no longer—and a new split can be seen along the lines of those who believe a free-market logic (neoliberalism) should run all human affairs, and those who hold strong to other values and counter-remembrances.

As both Chicano/Mexicano and scholar, I am located both outside (in the greater society) and within the academy in the current "rhetoric of exclusion" (Chavez, 1997, p. 61) of anti-immigrant nativism, reversal of Civil Rights' gains, judicial attacks on affirmative action and bilingual education, and promotion of English as the official language. In this estrangement from both academic and non-academic spaces alike (even within some current discourses of multi-culturalism), I must also include the binary Black-White racial fixations and other racial dualisms (Goldfield, 1990; Winant, 1993 & 1994), and the sanctioned hierarchy of knowledges in the institutions of higher learning (see White Man's Scrapbook, in Diaspora Productions, 1997).

In larger research settings, Mojado ethnographers often must muster the courage to navigate across those cartographies of cultural assault, subjecting ourselves to physical, emotional, and discursive risks. In the small, rural town in the American South where I recently conducted my research, discourses of "at-risk," "problem," and "unentitled" are most closely associated with Latinos (Adkins, Givens, McKinney, Murillo Jr., & Villenas, 1995). It is a town, where on road signs, can be found bright orange stickers spreading a message of bigotry and hate, pronouncing "Earth's Most Endangered Species: THE WHITE RACE—help preserve it." "While there is no Alamo to remember, nor occupied territories to claim, nor a legendary Aztlan to recreate, needless to say, the history of Native American colonization and genocide and the history of slavery and Jim Crow have worked to reinscribe the same relationship and identities formed against practices and discourses of domination" (Murillo Jr., & Villenas, 1996).

In the American South, I had not always easily crossed borders, having been denied housing based on racial discrimination, sometimes paying a higher set of prices for local goods and services reserved for "those damn Mexicans," and the recipient of piercing stares by onlookers surprised at my bravado to sit comfortably at restaurant tables and demand equal attention. All the while, dealing with the psychological uneasiness of knowing I left the comforts and security of home and family, lured by the trappings of one day becoming a professor - researcher—for this?—for ethnography?—for the "right" coyote credentials and *mica* to "lure" into other people's lives, and go back to write my academic *chisme*? My back and forth crossings into academia and ethnography cannot solely be viewed as proud

achievements (somehow stagnated in time and place), but moreover yet, as both—a rarely interrupted negotiation of my complicity with the dominant hegemonic institution, as well as—a continually strategic repositioning and rethinking of the real-world relationship between praxis, theory and textual practices. In my journey of Chicano critical consciousness, “from solidarity in the Southwest to solitude in the American South,”¹⁴ from “translated” to “translator,”¹⁵ the border travels with me, as a re-territorialization of both paradox and positionality.

Through ethnocentric judgements, white cultural practices, and unfair exploitative relations of racism, persons and groups are reduced to physical traits believed to characterize a “race,” like skin color or the amount and texture of hair, or reduced to cultural behavior like language. Scapegoating too continues to increase through “racialized” fallacies of welfare parasitism, affirmative action as reverse discrimination, immigrant encroachment, and intelligence as a fixed genetic reality. These all have contributed to the deteriorating treatment and material conditions of persons of color and minorities. Despite my university affiliation, the fact remains that I am a member of a long-suffering targeted community held suspect to be “foreign,” “un-American,” “unentitled,” and “problem.” It is under this cultural assault and estrangement (now increasing in the neoliberal geopolitical realities of postcolonialism, deindustrialization, telecommunications revolution, and transnational capitalism), despite any legal documented status nor undocumented standing within the modern nation-state, that individuals, groups, and now entire communities, are relegated to a less than pariah Mojado status of an increasing “global village” of have-nots. It is under these conditions that many of us now must learn to “do ethnography.” We are at odds with what constituencies we serve, and are forced to develop, rethink, or reinvent our research praxis, identities, and projects.

As Esteva and Prakash (1996) have written, “new political, economic, and social paradigms are once again in the process of being imposed by a few upon the many” (p. 15). The promise of a new world age has largely become the shutting of an old world cage. It is under these conditions, a re-colonization of sorts, that Mojados must seek refuge along the alliances, reversals, paradoxes, and positionalities; as though they are pedagogical sites that can be visited and reconnoitered, so as to help sustain a resiliency while inhabiting, operating, or traveling within those spaces. It is nervously ironic that in these (post)capitalist and (trans)national geographies where borders are being torn down, shifting, slipping, shuffling, and opening up that increasing numbers of people are re-experiencing a closing of the borders. What we are living cannot be a “new world order,” but is rather a “new world disorder” (Drucker, 1993 p. 113), or better yet, a “new world border” (Gómez-Peña, 1996).

Not a Love-Affair with Ethnography

“The mojado ethnographer” argues that, though problematic, a marginal positionality can in fact be advantageous in this postmodern liminal moment.

Rosaldo (1989) has argued that the research agenda should move more toward the zones of difference or borderlands. This is to say, that in these postmodern geopolitical realities of postcolonialism, deindustrialization, and transnational corporations, borders should be reconceptualized not solely as barriers but also as bridges and critical organic linkages. From a non-Western historical experience, Mojado ethnographers have shared an insecure refugee status with now increasingly larger numbers of displaced people and have broader access to those liminal zones of exile. The modern concept of community, based on the imagined nation-state, common language, and experience has long been incapable of understanding our fragmented and often paradoxical identities that are negotiated between and betwixt multiple worlds, twisting economies, and distinct socio-cultural spaces. Poor and working-class Chicanas/os/Mexicanas/os/Latinas/os are forced to reside within transnational spaces and negotiate our lives in the complexity of multiple class and racialized experiences. We reside and theorize from the locations of these border zones, and we are in many ways emblematic of postmodernity itself.

The defamiliarization and alienation experienced through a Mojado positionality (real, imagined, temporary, or otherwise) can serve as pedagogical resources to create alternative and diverse discourses and models, what Villenas (1996) has named to be “our own paradigms and languages” (p. 730). They may help build bridges not yet built, or regenerate abandoned ones. Mojados create the need for *coyotes* and *fayusqueros*, for border-guides and smugglers. They present an opportunity to invent and reimagine new *coyote* strategies and pedagogies, where we can better band and learn from each others’ struggles through renewed horizontal and reciprocal associations. Moreover, crossing borders and inventing postmodern *coyote* strategies and pedagogies for survival and resilience (albeit contradictory and fragmented) are a matter of life or death for the growing diaspora of the disenfranchised, and this is quite different from the detached and unengaged intellectual camps of postmodernity within the academy.

In the end, the issues and dilemmas I currently face as a researcher may not be all that distant from what all ethnographers face in one way or other. I too grapple with my presentation of Self (selves) in a new research setting, I too wish to not radically interrupt the consensual definitions in that setting, I also ask the hard questions like if friendship can be data while I explore those explanations of the social order employed by the friends I study. I’m also very interested in honoring that trust, that gift bestowed upon me when people offer their stories, and struggle to refashion textual representations in a non-parodic polyphony of voices.

What crossing over into ethnography might do for me is many and multiple. On one level, it potentially enhances my conceptual tools critical for "reading" the qualitative world around us (Eisner, 1988). All interpretive inquiries about "anything and all" are experiential opportunities to learn and acknowledge my limitations and cultural/historical constructs, in particular when seeking to name those experiences that exist outside my social reality. Even in the name of research, I wish not to appropriate knowledge without grappling with my personal constrictions and without an actual understanding of the cultural genealogies that inform their meanings and intents. Thus, new meanings are potentially negotiated as ethnography leads me into liminal cultural space (Bowers, 1987).

What is offered is the ability to seek alternatives to the analysis of "objective reality" found in literatures, where energy is lost battling over representations of this abstract reality. Qualitative inquiry might do for me a sort of "working through" (Freire, personal communication, 1991) toward an approximation of understanding of microlevel contexts without, for me, the exclusion of macrolevel linkages to economic, social, political and cultural constraints such as class, postcoloniality, ethnicity, and gender.

Despite much of the rhetoric of cultural diversity and pluralism in universities, disciplinary fields, research settings and theoretical discourses, I do not have a love-affair with ethnography. As "halfie" ethnographer (Narayan, 1989; Lavie, 1990; Abu-Lughod, 1991; Behar, 1993) I only enjoy partial membership in the academy. Moreover, with the unsituated authority of "translator-traitor," I am incapable of unproblematically assuming the Self of anthropology. Nevertheless, the fields that employ an engaged value-bound ethnographic inquiry offer Mojados along the neoliberal borderlands an opportunity to position ourselves (with the help of coyotes¹⁶) within alternative public spheres in these institutions and intellectual practices so as to carry out the work of battling over the production of meaning, both multiple and democratic.

Notes

1. See Clifford, 1988; Conquergood, 1991; Goffman, 1989; Guba & Lincoln, 1981; and Malinowski, 1922 & 1961.
2. See Bennet & LeCompte, 1990; and Weiler, 1988.
3. See Bowles & Gintis, 1976; and Morrow & Torres, 1995.
4. *Es cierto! El Otro esta pa' un lado lavando sus trastes, preparando su comida, limpiando su casa, cuidando sus niños, cortando el zacate, ó pizcando su tabaco.*
5. *Por ahí, dicen, cuando vino el alambre—vino el hambre.*
6. See Gaspar de Alba, 1988.
7. See Flores, 1997 for a discussion on new contexts/concepts for the study of Latino ethnicities.
8. See Anzaldúa, 1987.
9. See Behar, 1993.

10. See Gutiérrez-Jones, 1995.
11. See Giroux & McLaren, 1994.
12. This moves beyond a binary of center/margins, toward a multi-centric positionality.
13. Who's the real illegal alien?—pilgrim.
14. See Murillo, Jr., 1996.
15. See Murillo, Jr., 1997.
16. I refer specifically to the cultural brokerage that occurs in the academy, where more knowledgeable and experienced academics sponsor students' entry to the world of university-sanctioned research and scholarship.

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Critical Research and Narrative Omniscience: Looking for Researcher Voice in the Crisis of Objectification

By Brian McCadden,
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Introduction

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Critical ethnographers use their work to aid in the effort to, as Kincheloe and McLaren state, "confront the injustice of a particular society or a sphere within the society" and "as a first step toward forms of political action that can redress the injustices found in the field site or constructed in the very act of research itself" (1994, p. 140). This, in our estimation, is a valuable pursuit. We admire the sense of urgency and moral passion embedded in critical ethnography and consider ourselves to be researchers who work for social justice as well. The focus of our article, then, is not so much to critique critical ethnography in relation to its claim to epistemological or methodological legitimacy, but to critique it in relation to its forms of epistemological and methodological ex-