Multicultural Humanities:

The Linguistic Turn, Implications and Praxis

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Introduction

Challenge

As a teacher developing the multicultural humanities curriculum for an urban Magnet program in Central Texas several years ago, I encountered one of the challenges of the multicultural framework. In developing a multicultural humanities curriculum, my co-workers and I integrated language arts and social studies following the geographical arrangement institutionally prescribed by 6th grade world cultures in Texas. Understanding the multicultural frame as political praxis or politics of representation, I developed units that reflected non-dominant and Western cultures. Developing a curriculum that spans continents and historical periods, working in multiple histories, cultures, and literary traditions emerged as an important challenge. How, as a teacher and curriculum worker, should I teach the proverbs from the *Tao*, selections from the *Koran*, or Latin American magical realism from within the long traditions they culminate without mangling them with trivia and exoticism? This question provides the motive for this autobiographical reflection.

Having stated the challenge of multicultural humanities globally, the approach I've developed presents itself partially, incrementally, and autobiographically. This autobiographical reflection describes the linguistic turn in the human sciences, discusses the turn's implications for curriculum development in the multicultural humanities, and presents an example of praxis that acts on these implications. Specifically, this autobiographical reflection describes the linguistic turn in the human sciences, and based on the turn, discusses implications for approaching curriculum development in the multicultural humanities emphasizing William Pinar's (2003, 2006) synoptic texts. Emphasizing synoptic texts, an interdisciplinary and flexible understanding of the multicultural humanities emerges for reconceptualized curriculum development. To further articulate reconceptualized multicultural humanities, I provide a praxis experiment that refuses a victory narrative (Cary,

1999) but instead emphasizes on-going reflection and complicated conversation (Pinar, 2004; Pinar, 2006; Slattery, 1995).

Positionality

Allow me to position myself as engaging in theory-practice. In engaging in theory-practice, I find myself working in two realities: the university —where publishing research dominates the institutional economy, and the urban public school —where keeping order and providing for measurable "achievement" reign. Rather than seeing theory-practice as conflicting dilemma or class structure, I find it represents a personal and public space in which theory and practice interrogate each other as complicated conversation (Pinar, 2004; Pinar, 2006; Slattery, 1995). Rather than approaching theory as Grandview and practice as personal activity, theory-practice requires a dialectical (Pinar, 2004; Schwab, 1978; Schwab, 1983) or synthetic (Slattery, 1995; Pinar, 2004, Pinar, 2006) relationship between theory and practice. As theorist-practitioner, I seek syntheses between reconceptualist (Pinar et al., 2002) and pragmatic (Dewey, 1997 [1938]; Schwab, 1978; Schwab, 1983) curriculum studies traditions. This desire for syntheses attempts to answer the question posed by William Pinar in *The Synoptic Text Today* (2006):

> In what sense can there be curriculum development that is simultaneously a form of understanding curriculum? If there can be curriculum development in the United States today, what form shall it take, by what method should curriculum be developed and toward what ends (p. ix)?

In these syntheses, I work toward reconceptualist curriculum development in the multicultural humanities that approaches Pinar's (2006) questions. Reconceptualist curriculum development is simultaneously utopian and pragmatic in that it seeks to act on thinking. Seeking to enact curriculum spaces (Cary, 2006) for complicated conversation (Pinar, 2004; Pinar 2006; Slattery, 1995), reconceptualist curriculum development always already takes place inside the grind (Jackson, 1968) of institutional time.

Reconceptualist curriculum development de-emphasizes roles of professional scholar or subject area specialist usually associated with university work. Although the professional scholar presents literatures as "lens" on data, I focus on the linguistic turn as having potential for curriculum development. Although the content area expert assumes "best practices" for the (fictitious) "universal classroom," this work in multicultural humanities represents pragmatic, context-specific practices (Pinar, 2004; Pinar, 2006; Schwab, 1978; Schwab, 1983) for others to engage in, work with, or adapt (Davis, 1997). Although I agree with pragmatic curriculum theorists regarding the need to adapt in contexts, I eschew their insistence on "the practical" as starting point. Instead, I assume that theories —even hegemonic "common sense" ones— silently generate, constitute, and produce material contexts or curriculum spaces (Cary, 2003; Cary, 2006). This autobiographical reflection assumes a dialectical relationship between reconceptualist and pragmatic work in making for reconceptualist curriculum development.

The Linguistic Turn

Toward Discourse. Michel Foucault's "What Is an Author?" (1988 [1969]) provides a convenient point of departure in approaching the linguistic turn. Foucault (1988 [1969]), rather than focusing on the author as individual making a literary contribution, emphasizes structures outside and enmeshed within the author's project, the economic function of the literary *corpus*, and a critical understanding of writing as existing within other fields discourses. The author-function, no longer the "author," inscribes herself within historical, social, and politic discourse practices already in circulation. Foucault (1988 [1969]), rather than taking up the traditional understanding of an author, emphasizes an author-function that enacts social, historical, and political practices.

Important here is that Foucault (1988 [1969]) identifies discourse as central to inquiry into material practices. He eschews the study of "men," "events," "deeds," or realist history. Instead, Foucault asks:

> What are the modes of existence of this discourse?
> Where has it been used, how can it circulate, and who
> can appropriate it for himself? What are the places in it
> where there is room for possible subjects? Who can
> assume these various subjects? (p. 222)

For the purposes of this autobiographical reflection, this move toward discourse is taken up, *not* as classroom content for students to "learn." Emphatically, students are *not* assumed to do Foucauldian discourse archaeology. Rather, Foucault's move toward discourse provides a reflexive approach to curriculum development. Foucault's move toward discourse articulates how cultural workers, especially educators, make use of, constitute, and re-ify historical, social, and political practices (Cary, 2003, Cary, 2006). In the classroom, the discourses we engage in represent historical, social, and political artifacts that constitute as well as reflect school realities. The discourses we engage must be taken up consciously as sites of struggle.

Centrality of discourse. The linguistic turn assumes Foucault's (1988 [1969]) move toward discourse. It establishes deployment of discourses as political praxis or politics of representation. The linguistic turn posits that discourses not only reflect historical, social, and political practices but *generate*, *constitute*, and *produce* them. In psychological inquiry, Donald Polkinghorne (1988) shows that discourses constitute an interactive backdrop for human experience: Merleau-Ponty arrived at the position that is central to my position— namely, that language takes up the contingencies of existence, and the perceptual openness of life to the natural and inter-subjective worlds, and molds them into a meaningfulness that is greater than the meaningfulness they originally hold. (p. 30)

Polkinghorne (1988) sees that human consciousnesses interact with structures of language in their formation. What is understood as "experience" emerges from historical and social narratives embedded in contexts and cultures.

In sociological inquiry, Norman Denzin (1989) takes up the linguistic turn when he writes that different languages play a constitutive role in understanding lives within societies. To Denzin (1989), languages of phenomenology, linguistics, ideology, psychoanalysis, and other human science disciplines all provide constitutive structures on what it means to live:

> Expressions of experiences are shaped by cultural conventions… They [lives] turn on the performance and enactment of cultural and social texts. When performed and enacted, a text comes to constitute that which it represents; that is, the life is in the telling or the writing. This means that expressions of lives as performed texts become socially constructed structures of meaning [Bruner, 1986, p. 7]. (p. 33)

In Denzin's (1989) sociological understanding, different discourses reflect, shape, and structure individuals' lives in society.

In philosophical inquiry, José Joaquin Brunner (1999) refers to the linguistic turn as starting point in conversations on globalized cultures:

> Postmodernity and globalization allude to a culture that has become extremely sensitive to languages and their radical historical contingency and historicity. There is no singular and identifiable "reality," however one might try to define it. Now, what's important regarding postmodern and global cultures is how language constitutes and communicates these realities. (p. 13)

Brunner (1999) insists that, rather than language simply reflecting static "realities," discourses—enmeshed and already inhabiting social, historical, and political practices—generate, constitute, and produce them.

Finally, in curriculum inquiry, William Pinar et al. (2002) also begin with the linguistic turn. In describing curriculum work, Pinar et al. write:

> To understand the contemporary field it is necessary to understand the curriculum field as discourse, as text, and most simply but profoundly, as words…. By discourse we mean a particular discursive practice, or a form of articulation that follows certain rules and which constructs the very object that it studies. (p. 7)

Again, in Pinar et al. (1995 [2002]), the linguistic turn emerges. Discourses not only reflect but structure, constitute, generate, and produce objects of study.

From this overview of work in psychology, sociology, philosophy, and curriculum, the linguistic turn emerges as coin of the realm in the humanities and human sciences. As a human science, curriculum work is located squarely in this linguistic realm. Nonetheless, implications of the linguistic turn as it relates to curriculum development remain for the most part, unexplored. This difficult task, one which articulates how the linguistic turn deepens awareness and reflexivity for curriculum development (specifically, here, in multicultural humanities) provides the balance of this autobiographical reflection.

Implications

Traditional humanities. Before discussing Pinar's (2004; 2006) synoptic texts as emerging from and reflecting the linguistic turn, allow me to outline traditional curriculum development as it relates to the humanities. Ralph Tyler's work (1949) best articulates the traditional field of curriculum development (Jackson, 1996). The Tylerian rationale (1949) presents a four step process for developing curriculum: 1) define learning objectives, 2) select experiences for achieving objectives, 3) organize the selected experiences into a curriculum, and 4) evaluate learning outcomes. In a traditional humanities approach, educators (supposedly) choose "socially valued" knowledge and skills, select learning experiences, organize them into coherent units of study, and evaluate learning outcomes. Although Tyler (1949) originally conceived of curriculum development as a local engagement between students, teachers, curriculum workers, and content specialists, his work for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) better known as "The Nation's Report Card" from 1964 to 1969 foreshadows the state-controlled administrative direction the Tylerian rationale (1949) has taken since his retirement and death. States, dominated by corporate interests (Apple, 2000; Pinar, 2004), administrate the four steps laid out in the Tylerian rationale (1949). Tyler's work (1949), which built on social efficiency/corporate theorists Franklin Bobbit, WW Charters, and Charles Judd, represents the hegemonic version of behaviorist psychology in educational measurement.

Traditional humanities curriculum, as enacted in the present, focuses on students' internalizing state objectives. In a unit on the US Constitution, for example, the state provides the following measurable learning objectives:

1. Students will identify federalist and anti-federalist arguments and relate them to current political issues.

2. Students identify contributions of figures relating to the US constitution such as Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Adams.

3. Students will identify and apply understandings of executive, legislative, and judicial in the US constitution.

4. Students analyze citizen guarantees provided in the US Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.

In traditional curriculum development enacted in the present, the teacher serves as technician in arranging for student activities that engage students in the study of men, events, deeds, and realist history. These objectives are, at the end of the year, assessed through high stakes standardized tests that have serious consequences for students, teachers, administrators, and school districts.

Synoptic Texts. The linguistic turn, with its focus on discourse, suggests an alternative direction for reconceptualized curriculum development in the humanities: Synoptic texts (Pinar, 2006). Synoptic texts emerge from and reflect the linguistic turn in the human sciences. Rather than focus on great men, events, deeds, and realist history of traditional humanities, synoptic texts suggest an

alternate dispersion of interdisciplinary knowledges. Pinar (2006) explains:

> In the new curriculum research we will provide not only synopses of important and timely individual essays or books; we will then juxtapose these in order to create complex and novel interdisciplinary configurations never before constructed. We work to create views (in words, montages) of especially interdisciplinary configurations not visible in the compartmentalized curriculum organized around school subjects and focused on standardized exams (p. 5).

In creating novel and interdisciplinary configurations of knowledge, synoptic texts emphasize alternate dispersions of knowledge as linguistic terrains for students' inquiry.

In creating these linguistic terrains for inquiry, synoptic texts enter into and challenge the contentious and always already political practices concerning "What knowledge is of the most worth?" Upon entering into and challenging discourses on school "knowledge," synoptic texts provide a

...new form of curriculum research and development [that] teaches teachers more about the subjects they teach and, especially, more about related interdisciplinary subjects. After reading the new curriculum research, teachers will not only know more about the school subjects they teach, teachers will also know more about related and interdisciplinary subjects and how these subjects might be extended to 'self' and 'society.' (Pinar, 2006, p. 3).

Emerging from and reflecting the linguistic turn, synoptic texts seek new discourses and representations and provide new entry points to the humanities as complicated conversation (Pinar, 2004, Pinar, 2006; Slattery, 1995). Complicated conversations include academic knowledges, teachers and students' lives, and critical social issues. In emphasizing this complicated conversation, synoptic texts carry on the original orientations of progressive education that focus on students and teachers' lived experiences as they relate to academic study (Dewey, 1997 [1938]; Pinar, 2004).

For example, a synoptic text focusing on the US Constitution might include rationalist, Enlightenment language as point of departure for the modernist project. The articulation of US institutions (e.g., democratic government and court systems) provide space for material practices and relations. Assumptions of "individuals" with rights and responsibilities, the rise of worldviews emphasizing progress, historical and social practices of private property, and an Emersonian religiosity surrounding personal achievement and successes represent several material practices that emerge from and correspond to language in the US Constitution. The synoptic text, as briefly sketched here, articulates an alternate interdisciplinary discourse that reveals the hegemonic practice of the middle class "individual" (Laski, 1984 [1936]).

These alternate interdisciplinary discourses in synoptic texts take on central importance for multicultural humanities curriculum. Broadly

speaking, the use of synoptic texts provides for linguistic immersion that corresponds with cognitive learning theories. As Jerome Bruner (1966) writes, intellectual growth is tied tightly to linguistic and cultural encoding:

> [Growth is] a mastering of techniques that are embodied in a culture and that are passed on in a contingent dialogue by agents of the culture. This becomes notably the case when language and symbolic systems of the culture are involved... I suspect that much of growth starts out by turning around on our own traces and recoding in new forms, with the aide of adult tutors, what we have been doing or seeing, then going on to new modes of representation with the new products that have been formed by these recodings. (p. 21)

Synoptic texts, however, turn Bruner (1966) on his head, and instead of providing for white, masculinist, and static "disciplinary" learning, they allow for intellectual growth as critical re-coding of interdisciplinary configurations that engage yet complicate disciplinary learning.

Praxis Experiment

Context. Since theory-practice is always situated, allow me to describe the context of my work. Southside Middle School[1], the school at which I worked until 2004, is an urban middle school serving a predominantly "minority" population in Central Texas School District. This urban middle school houses the inclusive Southside Humanities Magnet[2]. At Southside, Mexican-Americans and Mexican immigrants make up seventy percent of the population while African-Americans and whites split the balance. Seventy-five percent of the students are categorized as low SES. Recent Mexican immigrants in English as a Second Language classes make up approximately fifteen percent of the school's population.

Interstate Thirty-Five (I35) dissects the area that feeds into Central Texas Middle School in half. The great majority of students come from Eastside "minority" communities. White home owners living in gentrified neighborhoods on the Westside of I35 generally abandon Southside and send their children to private schools. The students in the Magnet program are largely from the Eastside, and when I worked there, fifty percent of magnet students were categorized as low SES. The ethnic mix of the Magnet matches the surrounding community with approximately 45% Hispanic, 25% African-American, 25% Anglo-American, and 5% other. Southside struggles with many of the problems that urban schools confront, however, we do not have chronic disorganization problems that several schools on Central Texas School District's eastside have.

The Magnet represents an attempt to re-integrate Southside. This program is responsible for a slightly increased number of middle class white students in the population over last years; however, the original Director of the Magnet made an effort at recruiting low SES and minority students for the program. The biggest change in demographics resulting form the Magnet when I worked there was an

increase in African-American representation. To avoid divisions typically associated with magnet programs, most Magnet teachers also work with neighborhood children, and Magnet elective courses are opened to all students. As a conscious choice, I worked in comprehensive school and Magnet programs. The experimental work I describe here took place within Magnet sections of 6th grade language arts unit on mestizaje as it related to Latin American cultures required in the state social studies curriculum. The unit draws on my ten-year residency in Mexico during the 90s accompanied by my relentless attempts to understand through reading in Latin American traditions. This work, presented as an autobiographical reflection, articulates Ivor Goodson's (1992) work that shows teaching as embedded in life histories. Particularly, it articulates Butt et al.'s (1992) autobiographical and holistic understanding that teaching is tied closely to teachers' lives and experiences.

Synoptic text - mestizaje. North American multiculturalism often emphasizes the white and black myths of European culture in Latin America. These emphases are more in line with the US history of Indian Removal than with Latin American historical understandings. The white myth centers on Europeans as saviors of barbaric cultures through the means of Christianity initially, and later, a christianized "progress." The black myth inverts the white myth and monolithically represents Europeans as oppressors, tyrants, and murders as facile critique. Within Latin American historical discourses, scholars consider discussions on white and black myths as dead ends (O'Gorman, 1967).

Scholarship from Latin American cultural, historical, social, and political traditions emphasizes racial-cultural blending or mestizaje as central to historical understanding (Basave-Benítez, 2002; Cervantes de Salazar, 1993 [1554]; De Benevente, 1994 [1536]; De La Vega, 1967 [1609]; Duverger, 1996; Fuentes, 1992 [1962]; Fuentes, 2000; 1987 [1950]; Paz, 1988 [1979]; Picón Salas, 1994 [1944]; Reyes, 1983a; Reyes, 1983b; Reyes, 1956; Sanchez, 1994; Uslar Pietri, 1974; Uslar Pietri, 1986; Vasconcelos, 1997 [1925]). This synoptic text (Pinar, 2004; Pinar, 2006) proceeds, not as a traditional realist history, but rather as an interdisciplinary discourse that provides an alternate linguistic terrain for humanities study.

Music, and in particular popular music, points us toward the center of racial-cultural blending or mestizaje like no other avenue. Tango, salsa, cumbia, mambo, merengue —all mix African, Native American, European, and Anglo American influences (Paredes, 1994; Sanchez, 1994). The Mexican norteña tradition combines Germanic-Polish polka rhythms with a Mexican tragi-comic sensibility signified by its accompanying grito which is both a cry of joy and despair. The border corridos, adopted from the Spanish romance and décima traditions, form a tradition of resistance to Anglo-American invasion along the Rio Grande (Paredes, 1994). In "The Chaos of Dances" (1994), Luis Alberto Sanchez discusses mestizaje as it relates to Latin American music:

> Let's go back to the Caribbean. Humanity is distinct there. The person who wishes to simplify thinks, 'Oh yes, African influences.' He's wrong. Because AmerIndian, Spanish, mulatto, white, and Chinese all throw buckets of fuel to the great bonfire over the boiling pot of soup called unedited races. (p. 85)

Using the metaphor of "soup called unedited races," Sanchez (1974) provides for complicated understandings, feminine imagery, and an emphasis on racial-cultural blending in relation to popular culture of Latin America.

The present markets and fayucas of Mexico City provide another example of mestizaje. In descriptions of pre-Hispanic Mexico from that of Bernal Díaz de Castillo upon entering Mexico City for the first time to the remembrances of Mexican academic Alfonso Reyes (1983a; 1983b; 1956), there is always a description of the market in which the sellers have the strangest and yet most common products. Precursor of modernist "boom" in Latin American literature of the 50s and 60s and personal tutor of Carlos Fuentes during his youth, Alfonso Reyes struggled with Latin American cultural identity (1983a; 1983b) and Mexican intelligence (1956). Echoed by Octavio Paz's "Mexican Intelligence" in *El laberinto de la soledad* (1987 [1950]), Reyes (1956) argues that Mexican intelligence requires a reinscription of the indigenous past, so the pre-Columbian Mexico in the present takes on visibility. In *Visión de anáhuac* (1983a) at the height of the Mexican Revolution, Reyes ruptures time by inscribing and critically re-inserting Pre-Columbian Mexican intelligence into the present-past markets:

> One finds everything in the markets—Cortez writes— 'Everything there is on Earth.' He explains further that one finds even more, like services, foods, silver workers. The main plaza is surrounded by gates, just like those in Salamanca. At least sixty thousand men pass through there every day. Each type of merchandise has its street…Everything is sold by established accounts and measures. …On one street, they sell hens, chickens, quetzales, toucans, parrots, doves, owls, falcons, eagles, and other birds. …On another street, boutiques sell salves, pastes, and medicinal syrups. &tc. (p. 16-17)

Today, enter any market in the Distrito Federal and take a look around. Go into a fruit and vegetable market and see imports like green beans, apples, celery, cantaloupe, and kiwi sitting alongside chayote, maguey, nopal, guayabana, and chilies of a hundred varieties. Continue your walk and enter the fayuca Tepito pushing originals and knock-offs of anything from Sony car stereos to Polo Chino kakis, from leather jackets to Gucci sunglasses, from Pokémon figures to Seiko watches. The commercial mestizaje, both indigenous and cosmopolitan, is always already modern and ancient (Garcia-Canclini, 1990).

Stepping away from present-past, it becomes important to recognize, modernist and poststructuralist discourses that not only described but generated, constituted, and produced the "Boom" of Latin American culture on the world stage. Influenced by the Mexican Revolution, Peronismo, and other re-organizations of political power in Latin America early in the 20th century, writers, educators, artists, journalists, and political figures such as Gabriel García Márquez, José Vasconcelos, Elena Poniatowska, Salvador Allende, Paulo Freire, Carlos Fuentes, Frida Kahlo, Julio Cortázar, Octavio Paz, David Siqueiros, Lázaro Cárdenas, Pablo Neruda, Silvina Ocampo, Ruben Darío and others mix indigenous and Latin American popular sentiments with Western epistemological traditions through a

repeated cosmopolitan tour-de-force. These intellectuals, artists, novelists, reporters, and politicians literally write Latin America out of invisibility and into existence. Think, for example, of the international influence of Diego Rivera or Fidel Castro during the 1950s and 60s as climactic representations.

Important in this coming-of-age is an epistemological shift that discounts Latin American cultures as botched colonial outposts of European civilization or folkloric "Indian" representations of a long-gone indigenous past. Instead, cities such as Mexico City, Bógota, Buenos Aires, and Carracas emerge as important centers of cultural production, avante guard art, leftist politics, and popular movements. This coming-of-age is represented, symbolically and tragically, through the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City. At the same time the Olympics arrive (once and forever) in Latin America, they are accompanied by student and popular protests and the massacre of *La noche de tlatelolco* (Poniatowska, 1997 [1971]), as the Díaz Ordaz regime massacres hundreds of protesters. This tragic coming-of-age points to the failure of mestizaje, as ascendant cultural representation that accompanied political movements, to sufficiently transform the material conditions in which people live their lives.

The Mexican Revolution at the beginning of the 20th century provides the backdrop for the ascendance of mestizaje. Mestizos like Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata emerge as symbols of the Revolution. The photograph by Agustín Victor Casasola of Villa and Zapata sitting in the Presidential Palace articulates, ironically, the centrality of the mestizo as historical protagonist. Legitimized by the Partido Revolucionario Instucionalizado (PRI), the monument to Villa west of the Historical Center in Mexico City houses Villa's and other revolutionaries' remains. José Vasconcelos (1997 [1925]), Mexican Secretary of Education after the Revolution, provides the ideological statement describing racial-cultural blending in the formation of "the cosmic race/la raza cósmica" that supports the integration of the indigenous past into a modernist vision of Latin America.

Ascendant during the Mexican Revolution as cultural identity, traces of mestizaje as cultural identity emerge earlier in history as evident in Oaxacan Benito Juarez's Presidency in 1861, Simón Bolivar's "Letter from Jamaica" discussing a new race, and Miguel Hidalgo's insurgency under the flag of the Virgin of Guadalupe in 1811. Bolívar, in "Letter from Jamaica" (1997 [1815]), articulates mestizaje as he envisions his Pan- American republic:

> We are a separate human genre. …we are neither Indians nor Europeans; rather, we are a species between the legitimate proprietors of this land and the Spanish usurpers. Being American by birth and having rights granted to other Europeans, we have to dispute these rights within our countries. We have to maintain our positions within our countries against the invasion of outsiders. We find this negotiation to be extraordinarily complicated. (p. 93)

Miguel Hidalgo, in flying a flag of the Virgin of Guadalupe, creates an indigenized identity for Enlightenment ideals of freedom, equality, and fraternity during the Latin American Independence Period:

Hidalgo took the flag with the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe. This flag would transform itself into the symbol of the insurgents. This decision re-enforced the popular character of the insurgents' cause. The cult of Guadalupe, practiced in its origins largely by indigenous populations, had grown since the 1600s to ample sectors of society including Criollos (Brom, 1998, p. 135).

As Octavio Paz (1987) points out, the Virgin of Guadalupe—in pre-Columbian times known as Tonantzintla—represents an important symbol of legitimacy in the Mexican high plains going back to the Aztecs' rise to power over the teotihúacanos and toltecos.

Reaching back to the Colonial period, el Barroquismo español, or the Spanish Baroque sensibility, represents a conscious return to Medieval religious formulas in the face of European Enlightenment thought (Picón Salas, 1944). El Barroquismo español provides another important integration of mestizaje, especially in Peru and Mexico. The elaborate ornamentation that characterized Baroque colonial architecture—in particular religious constructions like cathedrals, convents, and missions—mixed the sensibilities of the indigenous and mestizo artisans contracted to do the engravings, mosaics, and friezes. This mixing of sensibilities allows for the first Latin American synthesis of indigenous and European art. Indigenous symbols from the ancient codices like flowers, feathers, birds, masks, children, and geometric shapes mix with the catholic iconography of saints, angels, crosses and demons. This blending gives an Oriental splendor to Colonial constructs of the 17th and 18th centuries. Contrasting with the brutal silencing of the Native Americans that occurred during this time, indigenous and mestizo voices resound in the plasticity of images left in the labored stone and metals of the present.

Finally, Franciscan humanist monks and educators at the time of first contact provide an important point of origination in the discourse on mestizaje (Picon Salas, 1944). In the Spiritual Conquest carried out by Franciscan and Dominican monks, figures like Pedro Guzmán the Bishop of Oaxaca argued that the Word be instilled through warfare with indigenous peoples. Conversely, educators like Bartolomé de Las Casas or Bernardino de Sahagún collaborated with, defended, and provided space for Native Americans (O'Gorman, 1967). Las Casas defended the rights of Native Americans to Carlos the 5th and, as Bishop of Chiapas, won the dispute with Ginés de Sepúlveda regarding the Native Americans' "humanity," thus guaranteeing Native Americans' status as "souls" within Catholic power structures. Friar Bernardino de Sahagún, along with other Franciscans, opened the first bilingual schools in the Americas, taught Native Americans and mestizos as instructor of Latin grammar in the Colegio de Tlatelolco, and developed and collaborated with Mexican scholars in writing the bilingual *General History of the Things of New Spain* (Duverger, 1996). This collaborative text, in which Spanish resounds with thinking in Nahua and vice versa (Duverger, 1996), provides a first discursive mestizaje.

The contribution of Franciscans and Dominicans, of course, does not reside in the violent figures who supported the Spanish slave or encomienda system. Rather the contribution resides in those

practitioners who sought to collaborate, dialogue, and work with Native Americans. This pedagogical praxis provides the basis for Freirian social reconstructionists of the present (Elias, 1994).

Working the synoptic text. In working with the students, the synoptic text provides an interdisciplinary discourse for exploration rather than a fixed canonological statement for students to internalize. In exploring synoptic text as interdisciplinary discourse, I consciously avoid banking education (Freire, 2002 [1971]) that focuses on students' internalizing fixed "knowledge" statements. Instead, the synoptic text provides a discourse for students' exploration of interdisciplinary study and co-creation of knowledge. This particular unit contains curricular spaces (Cary, 2003) in which I lead the discussion and other ones in which the students' lives are predominant. Neither child nor content is given predominance in the curriculum; instead, a dialectical relationship between child and academic content is sought (Dewey, 1997 [1938]; Pinar, 2004). Nonetheless, the overall intent is on developing students educational experience (Dewey, 1997 [1938]; Pinar, 2004). The synoptic text as interdisciplinary terrain, it follows, supports a progressive vision of education in William Heard Kilpatrick's Project Method (in Pinar, 2004). The Heard Kilpatrick's project method becomes especially important at the end of the unit.

In framing the unit, we discussed different ways to teach about Latin America.[3] I placed four questions on the overhead for review.

1. What was the colonization story?

2. What happened to many Native American peoples?

3. When we say "Mexican" what are we talking about?

4. When we say "Mexican-American" what are we talking about?

In each class, I worked through these questions. The first two questions were designed to bring out the materials in my colleague's traditional social studies classes. Students responded accordingly, offering up narratives of Columbus, Cortez, Aztecs, human sacrifice, and mass killings carried out by Europeans. After engaging in this important act of memory, I told students that we were going to take a different direction in language arts (as we had done often in the year). Instead of focusing on colonization or massacres, we were going to focus on the racial-cultural blending or mestizaje in Latin America. At this point, we focused on the last two questions. The following exchanges were common in my classes.

-What do we mean when we say "Mexican?"
-Mexican is a mix of Mexican Indian and European.
-What's the social studies term for this mix?
-Mestizo, that's from Mr. Tombotty's [social studies] class.
-What do we mean by Mexican American?
-Mexicans that came to or live in the United States.
-How does the United State influence Mexicans who come here?
-Our parents work to get money here. We live here.
-What happens by living here?
-We learn about life here.

I emphasize, again, that we are going to talk about racial-cultural blending in Latin America and in their lives. This discussion establishes relevance to students' lives. Most of the students in my classes were Mexican immigrants or Mexican Americans.

At that point, I handed out sections of an article on mestizaje that I had written in 2000. This article provided information concerning the Franciscans' social experiments on living *with* indigenous people in México. We read the article in jigsaw fashion with each group focusing on the life and work of a particular Fransciscan including Toribio de Benevente, Vasco Quiroga, and Pedro de Gante. In reporting out, we discussed the reading focusing on the question, How is this different than your social studies class? How did this provide a place for cultural blending or mestizaje?

> -Some of the Franciscans fought against slavery.
> -They wanted marriage of Indians and Europeans.
> -Franciscans made communities and hospitals and schools in these communities.

With the article, we began exploring the discourse on mestizaje. Continuing with the synoptic text, I scanned several of my old photos of Mexican ruins in Yucatán, the cathedral at Santa María de Tonantzintla, and the Cathedral at San Francisco de Acatepéc, making them available on my Yahoo Briefcase http://briefcase.yahoo.com/bc/jjupp2002 for viewing. After having the children create a list of characteristics that described Mayan and Mixteco ruins, we viewed the Cathedrals on four computers in my room and asked, "What is European about the Cathedrals, and what is Indigenous about the Cathedrals?" In order to reinforce interaction in relation to the viewing, I had the students respond to the questions in a one-page journal entry that could be descriptive, narrative, or a combination of modes. Students generally wrote descriptions of what they saw.

During the viewing in 3rd period, an interesting discussion emerged. In looking at the ornate cathedrals, most students responded to their beauty. However, two students, the first white and the second a Mexican immigrant, had the following exchange:

> -I don't like these. These are too busy. Why do they worship using so much gold? I don't think that is really religious.
> -Maybe, but they are creating something beautiful. Isn't that worshiping God? People worship God by creating art.
> -I don't think we need to worship with gold.

It was one of those moments that you don't plan for, but it was very important, nonetheless. Side conversations began all around. I said, "You've tapped into an important historical debate between Catholics and Protestants. In the past, Catholics had money and built permanent stone structures. In Latin America, that often meant taking stones from Native temples and elaborating them. Protestants had money, too. But they still made wooden structures. They focused on the worship of God as a personal experience." This was toward the

end of class, and as I directed the students to pack up, I said, "Think about what you think is the right way to worship God? If you worship, of course…"

Because of time restraints, I moved along the terrain of the synoptic text to Latin America's "boom" or coming-of-age. Specifically, we read, discussed, interpreted and analyzed Julio Cortazar's "Night Face Up" (2001) and Isabel Allende's "Of Clay We Are Created" (2001) in a variety of formats including individual, small group, paired, and round-robin readings. In relation to the short stories, I asked the students to write a journal entry asking the questions, what was indigenous in these stories, and what was European in them? By having students analyze along indigenous and European lines, they were able to detect the blending that made the short story effective. They were also trained in close-reading since the story progresses through time ruptured fragments that weren't easy to follow.

Finally, they were also able to focus on the literary identity that Latin American authors developed in representing mestizaje. The study of magical realism finished with an Internet search in the library in which students collected two examples of magical realist fiction and reported to the class concerning their findings. I collected the examples of cultural blending found in the Internet search into a packet and photocopied them for use during independent reading time. The packet stayed in demand for the rest of the year during independent reading.

Finally, after having the students move along the interdisciplinary linguistic terrain that includes Franciscan social experiments, Catholic cultural blendings, and modernist literary texts, I culminated the unit with the Mestizaje Art Project. Through working with interdisciplinary discourses on mestizaje, students had developed a language to describe cultural blending of different phenomena. It was time to use this understanding in a synthetic rather than an analytic way. Students were to make an art product that showed the blending of two or more cultures and describe the meaning of blending in a three-hundred word reflection on the project.

Some projects went directly to the experiences and background of the students. One student made a diorama of the Texas-Mexican border they cross, and another interviewed her parents—her father East Indian and mother English—and talked about the cultural mix represented in her family. Another pair constructed a house from cardboard with Mexican and American symbols inside to represent their friendship. The house, which presented their inter-racial friendship, contained objects from both Mexican-American and White cultures.

Other projects stretched the imagination. One student pair made a skyscraper that combined Gothic and Roman elements. Another student who was interested in cartooning, studied the history of Japanese anime and American cartoons, how they influenced one another, and produced a cartoon that combined American characters like Mickey Mouse with Japanese characters like Astro Boy. One pair drew up story boards for a video game that combined two cultures. The projects, whose photos I still have in my student portfolios from that year, turned out great. Many students wanted to present their projects, even though that was not a requirement. For several weeks,

students presented and discussed their work in front of the class. One students, Amy Pang, brought in a video tape of the Chinese New Year in Taiwan. She explained to the class the influences of US culture in Taiwan, and we listened to Taiwanese pop music.

Critical reflection. Working along the interdisciplinary discourse on mestizaje, students represented personal and imaginative examples of mestizaje in their art projects. Nonetheless, it is important to engage in critical reflection on theory-practice in order to emphasize shortcomings along with the positive outcomes described above. As Paulo Freire writes,

> In other words, the practice of critical teaching, implicit in a correct way of thinking, involves a dynamic and dialectical movement between 'doing' and 'reflecting on doing'... For this reason, in the process of the ongoing education of teachers, the essential moment is that of critical reflection on one's practice. Thinking critically about practice, of today or yesterday, makes possible the improvement of tomorrow's practice. (p. 43-44)

Some students, especially several African American students, never bought into the art project, and their projects turned out mediocre at best. This can be a negative outcome of the project method. Some students do not do their best work on projects, so the question arises regarding disengagement. Project work sometimes allows students to hide and then hand in a very minimal effort. It is important to note that engagement wasn't equal all around. Although this is often the case in middle school classrooms, the fact that several African American students disengaged requires me to re-think the exclusively Latin American texts that I brought into the classroom to discuss mestizaje.

Another shortcoming besides disengagement was coverage of the discourses in the synoptic text. Time constraints on the unit forced me to cut the unit (because we had to "move on" to Asia), so I could stay on the same topic as social studies. This cutting of the synoptic text points back to the challenges mentioned at the beginning of this autobiographical reflection. Again, how do we teach from multiple historical and literary traditions without mangling them? There is so much to know... There are important representations that get left out... How can I get to everything? "Study, live and study," I say to myself, "The answer emerges partially, incrementally, and autobiographically...."

Finally, the biggest shortcoming of the unit was that it too much resembled a cultural "celebration." Although an analytic which shows racial-cultural blending as dominant identity *does* challenge White supremacy, my teaching never addressed the failures of mestizaje as Latin American ideological identity—which is a major discourse at present. Since the student movements of '68 in Mexico City, the social experiments of the Mexican Revolution were considered failures. Since that time, there has been a rupture with aesthetic modernism and magic realism that emerged as cultural representation of the Mexican Revolution. In literature, for example, there has been a return to LasCasian testimonial origins. Although I complain about time constraints, a simple critique of mestizaje as

identity might have taken place as discussions at the beginning or the end of class during the time spent on the art projects. So, in retrospect, the critique that mestizaje represents never got critiqued, and it should have been. Although the unit provides a critique of White supremacy, I never critiqued mestizaje and its failings.

Conclusions/Findings
There are no conclusions or findings in the on-going process of theory-practice, only a personal and public "complicated conversation" (Pinar, 2004; Pinar, 2006; Slattery, 1995). There is a continuing reflexivity and a political struggle over discourses and representations, as I lead and then set up the conversation for/with students. I come to embody the conversation, which doesn't have a resting point, and I carry around the students and their positive reactions and disengagements in my memories and visions of the work I did/do/will do. The complicated conversation is not finished but on-going. It is always changing and becoming as it takes place within contexts. As I write these words, the exhaustion I feel with colleagues, especially towards the end of school year, comes to mind. I am grateful that it is summer right now as I write this up. I am resting and gearing up for the next round.
I believe that there is only more theory-practice, more becoming, more conversation. Instead of concluding or communicating findings, I point you toward Philip K. Dick's *VALIS* (1991 [1981]) for reading:

> 31. We hypostatize information into objects. Rearrangement of objects is change in the content of information; the message has changed. This is a language which we have lost the ability to read. We ourselves are a part of this language; changes in us are changes in the content of information. We ourselves are information-rich; information enters us, is processed and then is projected outward once more, now in an altered form. We are not aware that we are doing this, that in fact this is all we are doing (p. 232).

ENDNOTES:

[1]All names are pseudonyms.

[2]This essay does not allow for a discussion of advanced academics programs—which would be a separate article. Let me assert that, rather than holding to reform language of "No child left behind" which has translated into "Give basic skills to minority children," I view advanced academics programs in urban environments in which I work as politically dynamic curriculum spaces (Cary, 2003; Cary 2006) for achieving equity that demand more attention in curriculum studies. In my thinking on advanced academics programs, I'm often reminded of Octavio Paz's essay "Nihilismo y Democracia," (1993) in which the author argues for a re-thinking of market economy for purposes of social justice.

[3]It is important to note at this point that, as language arts teacher, I was not responsible for teaching history. My role was to deepen students' engagement in 6th grade world cultures. Therefore, all year long, my colleague taught 6th grade humanities content, and I provided support for his efforts. In relation to the Latin American unit, he provided an overview of Latin America and Latin American

history that included indigenous peoples, colonization, Independence, the Mexican Revolution, along with an overview of Latin American societies including discussions of poverty rates, illiteracy, and urbanization. As mentioned previously, my work as language arts teacher was to deepen engagement in complex content rather than provide traditional periodized "history." Nonetheless, the unit benefited from his periodized approach since I was able to build from his foundations.

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