DOING THE PUBLIC GOOD

Latina/o Scholars Engage Civic Participation

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Since we were young children, we recall family stories about working toward the public good. Our father tells stories of his mother, our Abuela Virginia, who managed the affairs of the modest family ranch, el rancho Alameda, in the Municipio Dr. Cos in the northern Mexican state of Nuevo Leon. Virginia saw a steady stream of wandering mexicanos between the 1920s and the early 1950s trek from the interior of Mexico on their way to the United States. Mamá les daba de comer a todos que pasaban por el rancho (My mother fed everyone who walked through our ranch), recalls our father, José Angel, as he describes how his mother practiced her own brand of philanthropy. Our mother tells similar stories of how her mother, Agueda, monitored the northward activity of immigrants who headed north of the Rio Grande River, y les daba refugio (and she gave them refuge). Abuela Agueda did this from her residence at Capote Ranch, which sits on the northern bank of the river in Hidalgo County.

As working-class matriarchs living along the border during the first half of the 20th century, our grandmothers had a particular appreciation for the plight of working Mexicans who came across the border in search of a better life, but they also seemed to raise children who understood the importance of knowing those stories. They taught their children about a particular social fabric for service as they wove the experiences through their stories (Villenas & Moreno, 2001). Our parents say they learned the stories through the
pláticas they heard from their parents, and as they transmitted the family stories to us through this distinct plática method, our epistemological condition was shaped; the pláticas informed the method through which we learned and knew the nature of our reality. The ontological dimensions, or the nature and form through which we made sense of our realities, were similarly encapsulated by las pláticas (Pizarro, 2001). This is a critical point for us as sons, brothers, fathers, teachers, researchers, and agents for community change. Every part of our work is driven by the stories we have learned, the stories we create, and the stories we imagine. We nurture and transmit stories to our families, our students, and to the public at large through pláticas, just as our abuelas and our parents did with us.

Stories have enriched the life of the family. To be sure, formal education has not been in great supply in the history of the family narrative; our grandparents spent just a tiny fraction of their time in a traditional school environment; our mother never attended school, though she recalls a traveling teacher making infrequent stops in the ranch where she was raised; and our father went up to the fourth grade, because that’s as much education as la escuela rural offered. Much like scores of other Mexican immigrant families, ours is similarly working-class, rural, and with limited experience in formal schools. Nevertheless, our father has penned his autobiography, and our mother has authored a decade-long oral history. When family pláticas focus on formal schooling, our father claims to have attended the most learned of all educational institutions, La Universidad de la Vida (the University of Life), as he calls it. Our family encyclopedia looks like a veritable compendium of oral stories, written documents, a series of videos, and a range of other visual representations. We learned through the stories as they have been manifested through words, images, pages and more recently digital media; we bring these experiences to our work as college professors.

When we arrived in this country as young children, our family’s transnational road had already been paved. Our paternal grandfather, Silverio Alanis, traveled to Mesilla, New Mexico, during the 1880s to shear sheep. In his unpublished autobiography, our father writes about his own days as a young sheepherder in Nuevo Leon as an experience that simply built upon his own father’s ranching tradition (Guajardo, 1986). When our mother, Julia, was born in 1934 in Mexico, she was born as a U.S. citizen. We were curious about this as young children and later found through collecting family oral histories that our mother’s family fled El Capote Ranch on the U.S. side of the Texas-Mexican border in the late 1920s, as they eluded Texas Rangers who were searching for our grandfather. Our grandfather was purportedly a bulega (bootlegger) who, after committing a crime, gathered his wife, Agueda, and two young children and took them to Mexico, where they would be safe from the infamous Rinches who pursued him. Our mother would be born in the family’s new home in Mexico just a few years later.

Growing up in a rural community and attending a public school system along the border, we were engulfed by waves of stories on a daily basis. When we attended Edcouch-Elsa High School in the early 1980s, the school district held the dubious distinction of being the poorest public school district in Texas, according to property tax base measures. The culture of the school, however, was anything but impoverished. Whereas objectified indicators suggested that high poverty rates, high unemployment, and low levels of adult educational attainment defined an impoverished school and community setting, local people did not seem to entirely heed those indicators. A robust spirit and culture permeated daily life (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Locals embraced a community narrative that celebrated young people...
and their achievements, just as they respected the resiliency and struggles of the town’s elders. In this context, the schools and community failed to use any clear vision or framework through which to develop the richness and vitality of its residents.

Our work as local educators has focused on building that framework: one based on identifying local assets and subsequently working to develop them. But this work is riddled with institutional complexities. Opportunities for this work abound in the schools, but the bureaucratic and impersonal nature of the educational institutions within which we have worked during the past 15 years also have created numerous obstacles to community-building initiatives. On one hand, the public high school out of which we have worked has allowed space to engage in community-based research work, youth leadership initiatives, and sundry other developmental work. The universities we work in today similarly offer spaces for creativity and innovation. On the other hand, both places are driven by sets of standards that have little to do with the life, spirit, or pulse of the community outside the educational institutions. The standards and testing mania that govern school cultures in the early part of the 21st century come increasingly closer to suffocating the creative impulses of teachers in the public schools and professors in universities (McNeil, 2000; Valenzuela, 2005). Our experience as public school teachers and university professors has taught us the necessity of exploring different avenues, sometimes outside the institution, to engage in work that matters to us and matters to the community. In this context, we founded a nonprofit educational organization in 1997, the Llano Grande Center for Research and Development, with offices at a local high school (the Center also owns a retreat house in the rural countryside) but which operates independently of the control of the public school and the universities out of which we teach and work.

First Person Commentary—Francisco

After completing a bachelor’s and a master’s degree from the University of Texas at Austin, I returned to teach at our alma mater, Edcouch-Elsa High School (E-E HS), while Miguel stayed in Austin learning the trade of organizing youth, parents, and community members for the purpose of creating greater educational opportunities for Latino and African American students in East Austin. During the early 1990s, I initiated a college placement program that quickly gained regional and, eventually, national attention. From one of the most impoverished high schools in the state, dozens of Mexican American students began to gain entrance into some of the most exclusive universities in the country, most of them Ivy League schools. By the mid-1990s, however, I had worked with other teachers and with Miguel to modify this work by infusing a significant community-based research focus into the college placement work. That’s when Miguel and I founded the Llano Grande Center as a research enterprise focused on training students to conduct oral histories, organize asset mapping and development exercises, and institute local social change initiatives grounded in a different pedagogy (Freire, 1970).

The work of the Llano Grande Center is consistent with our work as college professors. The range of programming hosted by the Center includes teacher training, youth community leadership, digital storytelling, economic development, and capturing both personal and community narratives. At the university, we participate in developing emerging public school leaders who undergo reflexive exercises in personal and community understandings. Through the Center and the university, we use the plática methods we learned from our parents, grandparents, tías and tíos, and others in the community that raised us. We teach through plática, as much as we teach through story and the narrative form.

In the following text, we present an overview of the work in which we have been engaged for the past 15 years. This conceptual framework (see Figure 5.1) provides an overview and an outline that frames the work.

Building Networks of Service

Method

Consistent with the ontological position of our personal development, we use the method most theoretically consistent and epistemologically congruent with our educational development. This method disrupts the traditional order of things; it precedes the traditional research question and identification of the problem statement. The plática, or dialogue (Bohm, 1996), is the activity we engaged in during afternoons with our parents as we sat around the kitchen table, or as we sat on the porch and ate watermelon to assuage
The oppressive South Texas heat. We learned at a young age that the *pláticas* was an act of sharing ideas, experiences, and stories. This process was reciprocal as our parents gave us an opportunity to pose questions or just provide the platform to exercise their skills. We recall our older brother, Pepe, using the *plática* space to imitate the play-by-play announcers of the Bravos de Reynosa, the regional team from the Liga Mexicana. He began by announcing the starting lineup, transformed himself into a batter, then became base-runner as he sped around the neighborhood in an attempt to beat out the shortstop's throw to first base. The *pláticas* created the stage for the game of life. Everybody had an opportunity to display skills; this display was not about schooling, however; it was about teaching, learning and sharing. This was also the place where our parents read to us.

The *plática* (Padilla, 1993) created the knowledge and allowed for the multiple realities to be (re)presented without being ridiculed. There was great laughter, but there was even more admiration for everyone’s willingness to participate in the *plática*, and even more in the collective growth. It made sense that when we grew up and became teachers and researchers we would use this same strategy to teach and learn. The *plática* as method is authentic and has an inherent robust quality. When we were growing up, we understood never to violate the chief ingredient of the *plática*—la palabra (the word). The *plática* pushes the researchers' comfort zone, for without authenticity, the *plática* will not yield the necessary currency needed for building community and conducting sound research. The *plática* requires the facilitator to become open and vulnerable, as the *plática* process becomes reciprocal. The *plática* also has been a valuable tool in our community work, particularly as a mechanism through which we share information, build relationships, and collect data. It can be used in a one-on-one conversation, a house meeting (small, purposeful group gathering), focus group, classroom conversation, and/or as a community-organizing tool.

Additional data sources used to inform this chapter include personal, family, and community reflections, stories, over 15 years of community work experience, and the archives of the Llano Grande Center for Research and Development. The Center has been the principle vehicle for the public work we identify in this document, but it is expanded to make sense of the impact this work has had personally and professionally.

As reflected in the framework, the method is critically important, because it is the *plática* that informs and filters the stories coming from each of the quadrants in the model. We make sense of the work through this anchor of *plática* and the world that we have collectively constructed.

The research questions guiding this document include:

- What informs our commitment to the common good?
- What are the structures and process that nurture activism and work toward the common good?
- What is the impact of this work on the self, the community, and the institutions of higher education?
- Why is the *plática* a vehicle for public engagement?
- What problems, or obstacles, have we encountered in the academy?

**Contributions and Impact**

*Family, Values, and Context*

The pedagogy of family and story informs our view of the public good. As our parents shared the stories of our abuelitas in our own home and in our community, we saw the daily acts of human kindness, which were always
unconditional. One particular event reminds us of this thematic, when our father, Papi, taught us an important lesson in the public good.

One afternoon in the early 1980s, we rode with our father down Highway 107 heading west toward Edinburg, Texas, in our red and white 1974 Ford pickup truck. We recall the years because it was during the time of great political unrest in Central America. Living along the border, we saw many people pass through; many were men fleeing the military. Others were whole families leaving their country because of their political positions. Most of these people had few options; they had to leave or face death—this was the common story.

On this day, as we drove west, we saw a young man and an older gentleman running across the highway. They had the same look of exhaustion and fear we had become accustomed to seeing on others who had come before them. Our father stopped the vehicle and drove in reverse on the shoulder of the road. He stuck his head out of the truck and called the strangers to come over. Our father stepped out of the truck first, followed by us, and he began a conversation with them. The conversation seemed natural, non-threatening; it even seemed like one that they had been engaged in for years. After about 20 minutes of talking, our father put his hand in his pocket and pulled out some cash. He reached out and gave the money to the older gentleman. He ended the conversation with the traditional bienes suerte y que le vaya bien (good luck and have a safe trip).

We got back into the truck. As adolescents we had all kinds of things going on in our minds, ranging from imagining the fear the boy was experiencing to why our father gave them money. To be sure, our father never gave us any cash. With his customary vision, our father saw through us, or maybe he just felt that this was the right time to share a story. He began by sharing that when he saw the men in the rearview mirror, he had to stop because he saw himself. As a young man growing up in Mexico, he and his brothers repeatedly crossed the Rio Grande to search for work in the agricultural fields in the United States. He was what is frequently referred to as a mojado (wetback or undocumented worker). For a number of years as a teenager he crossed the river, worked, and then headed back home on the weekends. On this day, he saw himself in the young man. He simultaneously saw himself in the older man as he saw his own children in the younger man. In a matter of seconds, all of these memories, emotions, and visions crossed his mind.

The connections he made are what allowed him to engage in conversa-
Our parents have always been very proud of who they are as human beings, but they are especially proud of who they are as political and spiritual beings. We always had a good dose of balance in our house. One parent would tend to act based on "que sea la que dios quiera," while the other was a bit more aggressive about the reality of the world and would say, "dios no cumple antojos." So our reality was informed by this combination, which moved us to prayer at times, but mostly to action. Along with the "dios no cumple antojos," there was that other issue of agency. As living beings we can create our own church wherever we were. Our father, mostly for convenience, quotes scripture. He says, "Wherever there are two or more in my name, there is a church." Though his statement always gave us an out for not showing up at church on Sunday, there are other lessons to be gleaned from those words. Inherent in his comment is that we have agency, and we have power to help Dios (God) make things happen. With God on your side, how can you go wrong? But it also raised the role of personal and collective responsibility for making things happen in our lives, our community, and—now—in higher education.

As undergraduate students who had graduated high school in one of the most economically depressed areas in the state and the poorest school district in the state of Texas, we did not have all of the academic tools to survive in the state flagship university.

First Person Commentary—Miguel
I was so out of the mainstream educational story that my higher education story begins at the local technical institution in South Texas; my first degree was in carpentry. In carpentry school, I figured out that knowledge and age were not congruent. But carpentry school was a fascinating experience because I was in a classroom with 30-, 40-, and 50-year-old men trying to find a career. They were attending school on the old Job Training Partnership Act resource. I always found it interesting that these older men would look for leadership and direction from someone like me, a 19-year-old student. While I was there, I also realized I needed to continue studying.

First Person Commentary—Francisco
While Miguel studied carpentry, I was finishing high school and thereafter enrolled as a freshman in one of the country’s largest universities, the University of Texas at Austin. My freshman year was disastrous; my roommates and I lived about 15 miles from the university, I worked 30 hours per week as a cook at Kentucky Fried Chicken, I took a full course load, and tried to figure out how financial aid worked.

First Person—Miguel
I knew I had to continue to work; after all, our oldest brother, Pepe, had gone to the local college and laid the foundation, and our parents always expected us to do the same, though we were all trying to figure out what that meant. The first few years after high school were critical. For example, I basically learned how to read and write between the ages of 19 and 21; I never wrote a research paper or even an essay in high school. Fortunately, Pepe had just earned an English degree and teacher certification from the local college and was still living at home. At that time, Pepe taught me how to put words together to form sentences, sentences together to form paragraphs, and ideas together to write narratives.

First Person—Francisco
When I left for college, I immediately realized that I needed a strong support group to do well. As I struggled through my freshman year, I worked hard to convince Miguel to join me in Austin, after he completed carpentry school. As soon as Miguel finished his program, he applied for admission to the University of Texas at Austin, but he was rejected because of low ACT and SAT scores. After several semesters at Austin Community College, Miguel finally joined me at UT. Since that time, he and I have lived together and/or done our professional work together. All of this has been natural for my brother and me because we grew up in the same home, shared the same room, and simply grew up as close brothers.

We have constructed ourselves in the same image, spirit, and cultural practices as our parents. Though the surroundings and institutions have changed, our cultural being and identity have remained the same. Our political selves have been influenced by a radically different reality that has in-
cluded rich academic and professional experiences that were not always positive or innocent. In fact, many of the direct messages countered the common and public good. It took much moral fiber and mutual support not to give in to the perverted power ideology of the institution and the soldiers who were training us. One of our saving graces was a handful of faculty who marched to a different beat. They recognized our work in the public sector and supported it. These supporters have become friends of our work and mentors in a number of areas.

These experiences have informed our development as human beings: our mother’s compassion, our father’s need for action and personal agency, our brothers’ commitment to each other’s well-being, and the academic training we have received from the institutions of the Western world that have created us as political beings. The actions of our political reality have been grounded by our need to recreate the Universidad de la Vida that our parents talk about and are so proud of belonging to. Our work for the public good is framed by this commitment to life, to community, and to each other. Our political selves have added the critical race elements that are central to the survival of a functional democracy. If democracy is to prevail, we must deal with the difficult issues of race, class, gender, and equity. To use this proposition is not an esoteric theoretical question; it is about engaging in true pláticas, research, and giving voice and legs to the ideas that surface from these pláticas. The strategies have changed, but the place and space have been constant. The next section articulates some of the public work in which we have engaged with our partners, but, to be sure, this would not have happened without our own development and growth as individuals, family members, and public intellectuals.

University and Intellectual Community

University faculty positions can be challenging environments in which to live and negotiate. There is a professorial culture that calls for particular behaviors and a certain kind of production. Though the position comes with a level of privilege, it also removes people from community-grounding work such as what we were engaged in throughout the 1980s and 1990s. The demands of being on campus, preparing for courses, holding office hours, publishing, and service work, which tends to be defined by how many committees one serves on, creates circumstances that preempt faculty mem-
power. As the community voices pushed particular research and other agendas, we came to appreciate the slow speed of the traditional academic environment, where ideas cultivated therein tend to take shape three to five years after those same ideas are birthed and developed in the community. By the time traditional scholars collect data and write about and publish them, work in the community has moved beyond the literature. This is why it is essential to connect community practice to the literature and the theory, and vice versa. We must be conscious of the lag in time, but, more important, the research actions need to be relevant.

The relevance to the community work we do at the Llano Grande Center and the issues we deal with attracted the attention of some of our university faculty members. As we used the classes to write up our work, our mentors created the space for us to contribute to the academic world. This is when the academic growth began to take place; it was when we sat with faculty members and explored the intricacies of an issue, the practice, theory, and documentation that we began to get into the heads of our mentors. The publishing took place, but, most important, our relationships grew, and we began to craft a space for belonging at the university. When we engaged in pláticas with our mentors, we found that our work was important in the academy; it had its place in the literature, and it was possible to occupy the space in a university. Though we get our mail and we do our service to feed the institution, our work, research agenda, and service are primarily informed by the lessons our parents taught us and by the needs and energy that our community partners provide for us.

Though we are junior faculty, we come to this work with the reality that is not commonly seen or experienced at the university. We know that when we ask our colleagues to join us in a semester-long conversation with our local community, not too many are willing. But for those who are, we must be ready not only to propose the idea, but also to be willing to articulate the framework, the structure to implement the idea, and the framework for analysis. The plática, which seems organic to us, is not always the preferred pedagogical or research style to more mainstream academicians.

Our classrooms also challenge those students who are accustomed to simply listening to a lecture. They usually have to adjust to engaging in dialogue, which is typically about theory and practice. In our view, the role of the university is to engage with community and community issues at all levels, and our teaching is directly connected with the community. Our students are required to do community work through their assignments, service, or research, and our assignments are purposefully structured to affect the public good. The assignments range from tutoring and collecting oral histories or community stories to administering research and evaluation services for local programs and/or schools. Universities have a role in the development of communities, and we see ourselves as agents for facilitating this process and the community change that comes as a result of this work.

Problems

One of our most important mentors in the academy was Henry Trueba, who succumbed to cancer in the summer of 2004. As my brother and I stood by his deathbed early that summer, Henry looked at the two of us and firmly offered critical words of wisdom on two issues that we follow professionally and personally. First, he spoke about the importance of working together. "Whatever you do," he said, "make sure you stick together, because the
academy is a very isolating place, and it can eat you up. Always work together, draw strength from each other.”

After a lifetime of negotiating spaces of power in numerous academic posts across the country, Henry had particular insight regarding isolation in the academy. He shared stories of Latino junior faculty members who, in the absence of a strong support system, tended to drift to the margins of university life and, as a result, found it difficult to gain tenure. We have seen in our trek as junior faculty the product of both strong and weak support systems; but without question, the most important support has been that which we provide each other. While our departments on occasion have offered research, publishing, service, and other development opportunities, the most sustaining support is the one rooted in the lifelong relationships we have as brothers. Growing up in the same home, sharing the same room, sleeping on the same bed as children tends to help form strong bonds, and our experience is no exception. To be sure, we also draw strength from our community partners, with whom we have nurtured long-standing personal and professional relationships. Without those sustained relationships, however, the academy could very well, as Henry warned, “eat you up.”

Second, Henry spoke about the importance of being faithful to the research agenda we had developed. Because our research is primarily rooted in the realities of South Texas youth, families, communities, and institutions, Henry understood the potential conflict between the type of research the university traditionally requires and the research with which we were already engaged.

“A focus on collecting voices of elders, children, and others, and using that as data,” he once told us, “is legitimate as a research enterprise, but you may need to convince others in your academic departments that it is legitimate.”

The problem with our research agenda has not necessarily been with our departments or colleagues; in fact, they have been very supportive. A greater source of tension has been what Padilla (2005) calls the formidable “culture of measurement” that has gripped public schools across the country. A critical part of our agenda focuses on finding and cultivating stories in schools and in communities, and we have trained high school students through our work with the Llano Grande Center to identify, collect, and process narratives (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2004). Training young ethnographers in public schools has been a central component of the Center’s college-preparation work. Numerous young researchers have found opportunities in higher education admissions because of the kind of work they have done while in high school. With the advent of the new federal policy, No Child Left Behind, however, public schools have shifted to a strict mode of measuring every student according to quantified matrices, rather than facilitating teaching and learning processes where teachers and students find their voices (Guajardo et al., 2006) or creating spaces where they become community researchers who uncover others’ silent voices (Trueba, 1989). Though public school and communities continue to respond positively to our research work, we also see schools’ growing reluctance to invest time and energy in teaching and learning processes that are not measured by the “official” accountability system. That has become an increasing problem.

Community and Llano Grande

We find much of our strength in the networks that we have built. Clearly, the familial network is our core, and the influence of our parents has been critical. Our family network is also at the center of our work. Our brothers, parents, spouses, and children have been part of program development, research, and community development initiatives in which we have taken part since we have been in formal educational environments. Our dissertation defenses provide an interesting example of how our families have been involved.

First Person Commentary—Miguel

When I defended my dissertation in the summer of 2002, more than 30 people attended, 20 of them family members. As I defended, one of my brothers recorded the event on video.

First Person Commentary—Francisco

When I defended mine in 2003, 35 family members attended as well as some former high school students and other community members. The faculty committees may have been surprised to see such large crowds, but it was important to us and important to our families that we all be part of the work and the celebration.

The most important professional network that has supported and even sustained our work is the product of an organization we founded while we
both taught in the public schools. The creation of the Llano Grande Center for Research and Development has been a manifestation of a sustained conversation we had been engaged in with friends who shared a similar vision of community revitalization through educational empowerment since we were teenagers. As kids growing up in a rural border town, we felt a deep connection to community. Townsfolk took great interest and pride in the school-related activities of youth, and elders and others typically supported and protected these interests. This reality influenced the nature and quality of our conversations with peers about education and community life. The conversations we nurtured beginning in the early 1980s influenced our decision to return home after college, but they also gave shape to a particular consciousness for local youth about the value of community.

Soon after our return to Edcouch-Elsa, we led an ambitious college placement effort where E-E HS students began to gain admission into Ivy League and other exclusive universities across the country. But after several years of sending dozens of talented students to these colleges, it became increasingly apparent that this work looked more like an exercise in exporting talent, than it did a community development program. We certainly did not want to participate in what is called the brain drain, which especially plagues rural communities. So we responded to the growing concern by initiating an oral history project. Before the oral history project, the college preparatory work functioned without any significant community education or awareness effort. The oral histories, we believed, would expose high school students to the stories of local elders (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2002). As students engaged in this learning process, they would also gain a new awareness of their hometown, by taking part in writing the narrative of their community. To formalize the college prep, oral history, and other community-based programming, we founded the Llano Grande Center at E-E HS in 1997.

Through the Center, the idea we imagined 20 years before is now being realized. It is important to note that, beyond the youth development and community awareness work coming out of the Center, a critical result has been formation of a network of people committed to the common mission of revitalizing the spirit and hope of our community. That network has been an essential part of how we have negotiated and survived the sometimes-difficult higher education culture. The youth and community development work that define the purpose of the Center is at the core of our research agenda as university professors. We write about it; we present the experiences at academic conferences; and we continue to provide leadership for the ongoing work. The Center is staffed by young professionals who were raised in the same rural place as we. Their dreams were nurtured as teenage students when they worked on youth leadership and community-based research initiatives. They graduated from high school, and then after graduating from Yale, Brown, Columbia, Tufts, UT–Pan American, UT–Austin, and other colleges, they returned to rural South Texas to help fuel the passions of other youth. This is the public good in which we are invested, and it is the work that stirs our passions as well.

Synthesis and Impact

We have worked to create spaces where both the public good and academia can coexist. We have done this because we've had good mentoring, but also because we feel a need to respond to the shifting demographics and changing needs of our community. We have learned that, to negotiate the spaces within institutions, we must develop a strong foundation in the communities we are serving, the work we are doing, and the lives we live. There is a natural and historical tension between the values and cultural practices of the university and those of traditional communities. A public intellectual must understand how to create, negotiate, and use power in a relational manner. To nurture this coexistence, we must respond to and live by a value system that we understand and that has proven to be effective over time; we must be able to nurture strong relationships within our community; and we must always work to create sound practices that are informed by history and research and grounded in sound theoretical practices.

We are junior faculty in institutions and academic departments that say they value the public work we engage in, but only time will tell if the balancing of our public work with the needs of the institution yields satisfactory results for both the institution and us. Of course, if the results are not positive, then we will not survive in the academy. The only thing we know for certain is that the foundation for our values, our work, and commitment to building strong community originated at home, and these elements will continue to inform our work. This is really the only thing over which we have some control, but there is little doubt that future terrain for this work is fertile and very much needed in our comunidades. This will fuel communi-
ties and public intellectuals who need a strong foundation within the academy.

References


