

AN INSIDER ACCOUNT OF INSIDER WITNESS PRACTICES:
DISCOVERING MY CHICANA IDENTITY

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MASTER OF SCIENCE

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an autoethnographic study of my transformation as a result of being involved with Insider Witness Practices (IWP). By engaging in a multi-vocal dialogue with “Anita”, my Mexican self, and “Hyphen Ana”, my Chicana (my reclaimed Mexican-American identity) self, I give an insider account of my participation in IWP. My study was guided by the following questions: How does my own hyphenated identity as Mexican-American play a role in my intimate connection to narrative therapy? Do narrative therapy and my Mexican culture have shared dreams and beliefs about humanity? What would happen to my personal life and hopes of being a narrative therapist, if my Mexican dreams and narrative dreams would come together? My involvement in this study was decidedly life altering and led to the return of the Mexican dreams I once had as a child and to the eventual embracing of a new Chicana identity.

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I would like to begin by extending my greatest gratitude and appreciation to the people throughout my life who have in some way encouraged me to be the woman, scholar, therapist, and person that I am today. As I look back on my life my heart is brought to tears as my life has been filled with generosity, kindness, and love.

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Lastly, I would like to acknowledge ‘Anita’ – for her brave, youthful, and lively heart that has reunited me with my Mexican dreams and the claiming of a Chicana identity. I couldn’t be more thankful for all that Anita has given my life and for being the hopeful light that allowed

me to never let go of my dreams. I didn't always know what I was reaching for in my life, but as I look back now, I know that it was Anita, my Mexican dreams, and Chicana identity that I had been desiring all along.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The following is an autoethnographic study of my *awakening* as a Chicana narrative therapist. In this autoethnographic study, I will tell my story about my involvement as co-participant and co-researcher in the development of an emerging practice in narrative therapy called Insider Witness Practices. As part of my involvement with Insider Witness Practices, I was afforded the unique opportunity of being intimately involved with the development of this practice from its very beginning. In this chapter, I will begin with the story of my awakening, which came as a result of my experience with Insider Witness Practices. I will also situate myself within my hyphenated identity as a Mexican-American woman, and how I have begun to return to my *Mexican Dreams*, to a life of color and magic, by reuniting to the Mexican side of my hyphen.

The Awakening

When I woke up on the morning of January 14th, 2015, it seemed that it would be a day just as any other. With the exception that this would be the first day of my last semester of classes for my master's program, the day started ordinarily enough. Given my usual morning routine, I was running just a little bit late and arrived to class just in the nick of time. I had no indication that this day would be unlike any other and ultimately it would change my life forever. I was excited to be involved in a class that was exclusively dedicated to narrative therapy (which happened to be my favorite theory), although I had assumed that it would be a conventional course in terms of the method of teaching and learning.

My assumptions were quickly shattered; however, when my co-instructors (Tom Stone Carlson and Amanda Haire) informed us that this class would 'break the rules' so to speak in regard to traditional teaching and learning practices. "Rather than learning how *to do* narrative

therapy, this particular class,” they said “is intended to immerse you as students in an experience of the spirit and ethics of narrative practice.” That’s when Tom and Amanda shared with us the exciting news that, as a class, we would be working very closely with narrative therapy co-founder David Epston on a special project that David hoped might reinvent narrative therapy altogether.

I can still remember every detail of that moment. I was in awe – my jaw dropped with disbelief. “Are you kidding me...David Epston in our class,” I said in my mind (or at least I hoped it was only in my mind). In spite of my utter excitement, my mind was full of questions: “What will this look like?” “Will David be coming to Fargo?” “Will he see my work?” “Oh God... will he see my work?” The thought simultaneously excited and scared me.

The special project that we would be working on was called Insider Witness Practices, a practice that David has been developing for over 30 years. And even though David had been using a truncated version of this practice with dramatic effects for over 30 years, the ideas were so novel that even he, the co-founder of narrative therapy, had a hard time finding the words to communicate this practice in a way that even the most advanced narrative therapist could grasp. For these reasons, David had invited Tom and Amanda to help him further develop this new practice and to begin to find the words to better explain it to others in a way that they could appreciate. And, we, the novice therapists that we were, would become key co-researchers and co-developers of this practice with Tom, Amanda, and David. My mind was swimming with questions...and still a little bit of fear.

Tom and Amanda did their best to explain to us what this practice was all about. They told us, “You will each chose a client to do this practice with and you will be interviewed as your client by us.” My mind was quickly puzzled and I could feel my heart picking up in pace. I

thought to myself, “What? Interviewed as our client?! What in the world do you mean?” As Tom and Amanda could probably sense our confusion, or perhaps it was the look of utter puzzlement on my face that gave it away – they went on to say, “This interview will be video recorded and we will meet with you and your client at a later time to watch the recording.” One of my classmates then asked what was on our collective minds, “What if we don’t know how to answer? What if we don’t know what to say? What if we don’t get it right?” Tom’s response to these questions began to put my mind at rest, “This isn’t meant to be a role-play; rather it is meant to be a portrayal of your own best hopes for your client’s life.” While a small part of my mind (perhaps it was my heart) was starting to settle, in another corner of my mind I couldn’t let go of the worry and pressure to get it right. Perhaps Tom and Amanda could sense the questions in my worried mind. They went on to explain, “The burden of the interview is on us. Your responsibility is to answer from the place of your own best hopes for what is possible in your client’s life that comes from your knowing of your relationship with the client so far.” After a few more worry filled questions about getting it right, they said something that not only put my mind at rest but my heart also. They said, “While we appreciate that you still have some concerns about the details of how this will all work, this is something that you have to experience in order to fully understand.” I can’t say exactly why, but I decided right then and there that I was going to trust Tom and Amanda and be open to this once in a lifetime opportunity. Going into this experience, I was hopeful that this would be a good or maybe even a great experience, but never could I have dreamed just how my life would be transformed.

In fact, what happened was beyond what even my dreams could have dreamed possible. As part of the narrative class on March 3rd, 2015, I experienced my first Insider Witness Practice interview with Tom. Each of the students were asked by Tom and Amanda to write a reflection

after participating in their interview by responding to the following questions that were included in the course syllabus: What was your overall experience of the experience? In what ways has this experience influenced your relationship with the person that you portrayed? Are there any new appreciations that you have for your client? If so, what do you find yourself appreciating more about your client? Do you see any new possibilities for your work as a therapist that you didn't see before? If so, what new possibilities are you seeing for yourself and for the people with whom you work?

After my first interview with Tom on March 3rd, 2015 I wrote a reflection in response to questions above that allowed me to give meaning to the experience of the interview, that up to that point had been beyond my ability for words. Perhaps a part of this written reflection can shed a light of what was to come:

I had no idea what was to come and how this would transform me. That is probably why this experience is even more special to me, not only as a therapist but also portraying my client. I feel as though I was part of something that was sincerely honoring and that I will keep near and dear to my heart. After completing the interview I felt so enlightened and awakened. I feel as though my own spirit was transformed and awakened; the spirit of who I desire to be as a therapist and the spirit and values, which I desire to guide my life and to live by. I felt like I was walking on a cloud and that I was unstoppable. I now saw and connected with things that had always been there but I was not aware that they were within my reach. I could now envision and even see and feel that that I could help bring about transformation in others the way I was transformed that day.

As you might have experienced by reading the above selection of my written reflection, the experience of my first Insider Witness Practices interview was profound for me personally and professionally as a narrative therapist. It was through this reflection that I was able to give voice to the dramatic feelings and experiences that occurred for me during the interview. As I attempted to give words to these feelings and experiences through my written reflection my life was propelled in a way that I could have never imagined.

Three months following my first Insider Witness Practice interview I had the opportunity to be interviewed by David Epston. The purpose of the interview was to help us all find the words and to make better make sense of the transformation that had occurred for me and my client that day. While I was excited and maybe a bit anxious, about the opportunity to be interviewed by David Epston, I was not prepared for the cultural and spiritual awakening that emerged on during the interview and the connections that I would soon make with my Mexican culture and understanding of narrative therapy. This connection came to my attention during the interview when David asked, “Ana, do you think that ‘Latin Spirit’ you are referring to made an unlikely appearance in the IWPs at Fargo, North Dakota of all places?” It was as if David’s question went straight into my heart. After a moment of stunned silence, I finally responded, “Of course! It was undeniably true! My Mexican spirit had definitely made its way to Fargo. There is no other way to explain it”. The ‘surprisingness’ of David’s question remained with me for several days. I had always felt that I somehow knew about narrative ideas. To say that I felt drawn to them would be an understatement. Was this the answer to my felt connection to narrative ideas? It was as if David’s question revealed something I had always known, Narrative ideas had always felt familiar to me. When I read about narrative therapy for the first time, I felt as if I had some mysterious pre-knowing of narrative ideas. How did I know narrative therapy

before I knew it? Is it possible that my pre-knowing has something to do with my reconnection with my Mexican spirit? Is it this connection that allowed me to find the words for this experience that seemed to be beyond the words that were available to me?

Statement of Reflexivity

Yo nací en México en Agua Prieta, Sonora donde viví por los primeros dos años de mi vida. Mi mama, María Guadalupe Huerta, nació en Guadalajara, Jalisco México y tuvo que sobrevivir muchas dificultades incluyendo la pobreza y viviendo en una familia y cultura que no creían en la educación de mujeres. Al través de todo esto, mi mama mantenía su deseo de educarse y logro una diploma de la escuela secundaria. Aunque tenia sueños de ir a la universidad por medio de no tener el apoyo de su familia no podría lograr este sueño para si misma. Pero mi mama nunca se rindió este sueño para mi y mi hermano. De hecho, mi mama tenia una corazón lleno de esperanza que yo y mi hermano podíamos tener una vida mejor en los Estados Unidos y con esa esperanza nos trajo a vivir en los Estados Unidos en el pueblo de Douglas, Arizona que esta situada en la frontera de Agua Prieta, Sonora. No tengo muchas memorias de mi vida en México y aunque vivía alrededor de la cultura Mexicana en mi comunidad hasta la edad de 14, hasta recientemente se me había olvidado mi vida Mexicana.

Pero ahora me recuerdo que cuando era chiquita tenía sueños mexicanas. Dentro de mis sueños no solamente soñé en español pero también en la cultura mexicana. Mis sueños estaban llenos de colores tan brillantes que podrían iluminar mi alma. Dentro de mis sueños mexicanas era parte de una mariachi. Estaba bailando con la música y cantando con las canciones. Mientras mis bailes había una sonrisa tan grande que podría llenar el mundo. No recuerdo el momento preciso pero sobre tiempo mis sueños mexicanas llegaron a ser sueños americanas. Dentro de mis sueños americanas ya no podía oír la música y se me olvido los bailes. Los colores tan

brillantes que existían en mis sueños mexicanas se descoloraban. Y la sonría que podría llenar el mundo, todavía estaba allí dentro de mis sueños americanas pero no más podía llenar un cuartito.

Realmente no se como esto sucedió. Sin reconocerlo mis sueños cambiaron a Americana. Pero un día se parece que me desperté de un sueño, y dentro de este sueño me hice la realización que mis sueños de en verdad dejaron de ser sueños. Digo esto porque para mi un sueño es algo que esta lleno de mágica. Sueños que son sueños verdaderos nos trasportan a lugares llenos de esperanza y posibilidad.

English Translation: I was born in Mexico in Agua Prieta, Sonora where I lived for the first two years of my life. My mother, María Guadalupe Huerta, was born in Guadalajara, Jalisco Mexico and had to overcome many problems, including poverty and living in a family and culture that did not believe in the education of women. Through all this, my mom kept her desire to educate herself and achieved a high school diploma. Although she had dreams of going to college, she was not supported by her family and was not able to fulfill her dream. But my mom never gave up on this dream for my brother and I. In fact, my mom had a heart full of hope that my brother and I could have a better life in the United States and with that hope she brought us to live in the United States in the town of Douglas, Arizona, which is located on the border of Agua Prieta, Sonora. I don't have many memories of my life in Mexico and although I was surrounded by Mexican culture in my community until I was 14 years old, up until recently I had forgotten my Mexican life.

But now I can remember that as a young child I had Mexican dreams. Not only did I dream in Spanish but I also dreamed with my Mexican culture. My dreams were full of vibrant colors that seemed to illuminate my spirit. Within my Mexican dreams I was part of a mariachi. I was dancing with music and singing along with the songs. While dancing I had the kind of smile

that could fill the entire world. I don't remember the precise moment, but overtime my Mexican dreams started to become American dreams. Within my American dreams I could no longer hear the music and I forgot the dances. The vibrant colors that once existed in my Mexican dreams started to fade. And the smile that could once fill the entire world? It was still there within my American dreams, but it could now only fill a small room.

I'm not sure how this happened. Without realizing it, my dreams became Americanized. But one day it felt as though I awoke from a dream and within this dream I discovered that my dreams had in fact stopped being dreams. I say this because for me a dream is one that is filled with magic. Dreams that are truly dreams are those that can transport us to places that are filled with hope and possibilities.

Throughout my life, the further I moved away from my Mexican dreams the more I felt like an impostor. I wasn't quite sure why I felt this way until I attended the Therapeutic Conversations 13 conference in April of 2016. It was during a keynote session of the conference by a Colombian woman named Marcela Polanco that I learned about the notion of living in the hyphen. For me, the hyphen was being labeled as a Mexican-American. People who live with such a hyphenated or hybrid identity often feel like they have to choose between one or the other (Elenes, 1997). Overtime, as my Mexican dreams turned into American dreams, my hyphen became unbalanced. Out of necessity, in order to fit in with dominant American culture and to have the successful life that my mother sacrificed so much for when she left everything in Mexico behind, I had to identify more with the American side of the hyphen. The problem was that no matter how hard I tried, I could never be considered American, and the further I left the Mexican side of the hyphen behind I could no longer be considered fully Mexican.

Over the past year, I have started to restore balance to my hyphen. After my first Insider Witness Practices interview with Tom, it felt as if something in me was awakened and my consciousness was alerted to the possibility that my dreams had lost their magic. I started to experience a return of my childhood dreams, they weren't quite Mexican dreams, but the color of my dreams started to brighten. The music started to return to my ears and I could feel the subtle movement of the dances in my feet. I could feel the Mexican side of my hyphenated identity coming back to life. Throughout this process I experienced a transformation of my hyphenated identity as Mexican-American, which resulted in the claiming of a Chicana identity. This transformation from Mexican-American to Chicana will play a key role in my autoethnographic study of Insider Witness Practices.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will include a brief review of narrative therapy, followed by a more detailed review of Insider Witness Practices. The chapter will conclude with a brief introduction of my methodology, autoethnography, and the purpose for conducting my autoethnographic study.

Narrative Therapy

Insider Witness Practices are situated within the realm of narrative therapy, a practice theorized through the social construction of reality through the storying of lived experience (White & Epston, 1990). David Epston and Michael White originated narrative therapy within the context of family therapy (White & Epston, 1990). Epston and White were especially interested in how stories organize families' lives and consequently contribute to the "survival" or "career" of the problem (White & Epston, 1990, p. 3). The theories that informed Epston's and White's (1990) thinking as they developed narrative therapy were post structuralism (Foucault, 1980) literary theory (Bruner, 1986), and performance theory (Turner, 1986). As a post-structural therapy, narrative therapists are concerned about the influence of power and knowledge and how they are used to generate systems in our lives that might oppress or privilege our lived experiences (White & Epston, 1990).

As a therapy that is influenced by literary theory, Epston and White (1990) argued that it is through the storying of lived experience that people make sense of their lives and interpret their lived experiences. The significance of the storying of experience can be found in the following words by Michael White: "We live by the stories that we have about our lives, that these stories actually shape our lives, constitute our lives, and ...*embrace* our lives" (White, 1995, p. 13-14). These stories have the potential to dramatically shape a person's experience of the world. While some stories have the capacity to richly describe a person's current and future

experiences, other stories offer narrow beliefs about who people are and what is possible for them (White & Epston, 1990).

Often times, the stories that are shaping a client's life when they come to therapy are heavily influenced by the problems they are experiencing in their lives. These stories can shape the client's primary lived experiences and often develop into dominant or problem-saturated stories (White and Epston, 1990). Living within the influences of these problem-saturated stories can be very damaging and detrimental to a person's sense of worth and sense of what is possible in life. It is through these overpowering problem stories that people can lose any sense of hope for their lives. It is often the case that while living in these problem stories people's dreams and aspirations may be washed-out and taken over by the problem's hopes and dreams. The problem's investment in one's life can muddle and blur the values and ethics that people live by and how he/she may still be living these out in spite of the problem's influence. As a result of the problem stories, people can often experience a limited view of self. It is in these problem stories that people's moral character can be erased and diminished.

Narrative therapy seeks to help people enter counter-stories that offer a more rich and just description of a person's history of life (White & Epston, 1990). A counter-story represents an alternative account of a person's life in such a way that it commands respect and has the effect of countering the problem story (Epston, Personal Communication). It is in through counter-stories that a person's life is restored and brought back to life (White & Epston, 1990). Narrative therapists are inclined to believe their clients are the experts of their own lives and seek to privilege a client's own knowledges and skills related to solving the problems in their lives (Morgan, 2000). When working with clients, narrative therapists also are aware that master narratives shape the story of people's lives (Morgan, 2000). Thus, narrative therapists pay

attention to larger cultural discourses (e.g., racism, sexism, heterosexism, and ableism) that limit people's possibilities in life. In summary, narrative therapy is a practice that seeks to re-author clients' lives through counter-stories to help people enter into more preferred ways of being (White & Epston, 1990).

Insider Witness Practices

Insider Witness Practices is a performative narrative practice that has been in the making for 25 years (Epston & Carlson, Unpublished manuscript). A precursor to Insider Witness Practices was a type of approach that was used for supervision and training invented by Johnella Bird and David Epston known as 'prismatic dialogues' in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Bird, 2006; Epston & Carlson, Unpublished Manuscript). This approach to supervision and training was given the name for the same reason that a prism divides light into seven independent colors, and involves the therapist providing a narrative of the client's lived experience (e.g. thoughts, actions, beliefs, hopes) in two distinctive versions, the problem's story and its counter-story (Epston & Carlson, Unpublished Manuscript). Johnella and Epston practiced and demonstrated this type of supervision throughout Australia, New Zealand, and other places.

Insider Witness Practices has been given its name to bring the practice alongside Michael White's performative practice known as Outsider Witness Practices, which was adapted from the work of Myerhoff (Myerhoff, 1982; 1986; White, 2007). Outsider Witness Practices are also known as a 'definitional ceremony', a name that was again adapted from Myerhoff (1982). As explained by Walther & Fox (2012) Myerhoff defined a definitional ceremony as an "artificially invented" occasion that offers a space for an audience to contribute to a person's "worth, vitality, and being" (pg. 11). White developed Outsider Witness Practices within the context of narrative therapy, in which witnesses come together to hear the desired telling's of a person's life and are

invited to make responses that lead to richer descriptions of those preferred stories (Walther & Fox, 2012). Unlike Outsider Witness Practices where the audience members are outsiders or strangers to the person, in Insider Witness Practices the performance is conducted by an intimate other, the client's therapist, and the client becomes the audience to the performance of her own life story (Epston & Carlson, Unpublished Manuscript). It is the belief that the purposes of Outsider Witness Practices and Insider Witnesses Practices are quite similar: How do we find the ways for clients to apprehend and appreciate our respect for them? How does one dignify the other? (Epston & Carlson, Unpublished Manuscript) Both Outsider Witness Practices and Insider Witness Practices come from a line of other similar narrative practices such as consulting your consultant, co-research, collective practices, and so forth (Epston & Carlson, Unpublished Manuscript).

Insider Witness Practices seek to dramatically transform clients' experiences of themselves through a witnessed performance of their life stories (Epston & Carlson, Unpublished Manuscript). Through this witnessed performance, clients are invited to become audience members to a portrayal of their lives as performed by their therapist that is biased by the therapist's hopes for the client's life (Epston & Carlson, Unpublished Manuscript). Drawing on the idea of performance, Insider Witness Practices uses the metaphor of a play in order to help distinguish and provide a structure for carrying out this practice. Given that Insider Witness Practices involve two separate interviews, these interviews are referred in theater terms as two acts of the same performance (Epston & Carlson, Unpublished Manuscript). In the section that follows, I will provide a description of each of these acts and how they are specifically situated in performance.

Act 1

In the Act 1 interview, the therapist is invited by the interviewer to engage in a portrayal of their client's lives that is biased by the therapist's best hopes for their client (e.g. individual, couple, or family). The Act 1 interview is not intended to be a role-play where the therapist attempts to copy the client or say 'get it right' (Epston & Carlson, Unpublished Manuscript). Rather, the Act 1 interview is more like portraiture where the therapist paints a portrait of the client's life that is biased by the therapist's hopes for his/her client and intends to reveal the essence of client's perceived moral character (Epston & Carlson, Unpublished Manuscript). The therapist in their portrayal of his/her client has the freedom to respond in surprising and novel ways during the interview as the interviewer leads the portrait in directions and places never traveled by the therapist and the portrayed client (Epston & Carlson, Unpublished Manuscript). Thus, in the Act 1 interview, the client's life story is performed in compelling ways that intends to capture the client's imaginations and that may lead to a new relationship with his/her own self that is informed by kindness, honor, compassion, and deep appreciation (Epston & Carlson, Unpublished Manuscript). The Act 1 interview is conducted by the interviewer and is performed in the absence of the client and is video recorded for the purpose of being shown to the client at a later time (preferably within two weeks) in both the presence of therapist and interviewer (Epston & Carlson, Unpublished Manuscript). The Act 1 is usually 45 minutes in length.

Act 2

In this Act 2 interview, the client is invited to watch the video recording of his/her therapist's portrayal of them from the Act 1 interview (Epston & Carlson, Unpublished Manuscript). This occurs in the presence of the interviewer, the therapist, and the client. Before beginning Act 2 interview, the interviewer makes it clear to the client that the interviewer and the

therapist are most interested in his/her experience and assessment of the portrayal. While it is common for there to be a great deal of convergence ('my therapist got me to T or the portrayal was spot on') during these interviews, the interviewer is especially interested in times of divergence where the portrayal might have gone beyond the client's own knowing of him/herself or just doesn't seem to 'connect' (Epston & Carlson, Unpublished Manuscript). It is during these times of divergence that a heightened level of meaning making is achieved, which provides the foundation for significant leaps of identity to be made (Epston & Carlson, Unpublished Manuscript). In order to encourage such divergence, the interviewer shares the following with the client:

"I want to acknowledge that I have asked your therapist to do something that is probably a bit unfair as your therapist can't possibly know what you know about your life.

However, your therapist has answered our impromptu questions from the place of his/her own best hopes and intentions for your life. Therefore, it is very important that you feel free to put us right from time to time during the interview. I will help you to do this by frequently pausing the video to stop and reflect on your experience of your therapist's portrayal of your life. I may even ask you, did your therapist get this right or do you need to put us right here?"

The purpose or intent of showing the portrayal is to invite the client into an unusual role of being both an insider and an outsider to his/her own lived experience. From this unusual location, the client is afforded the opportunity to engage with his/her own lived experience in an entirely novel way. On the one hand, the client 'knows' that he/she are watching a portrayal or performance of their life, which gives him/her permission to accept, revise, or to reject altogether, the meanings, proposals, and conclusions that are brought forward in the portrayal

(Epston & Carlson, Unpublished Manuscript). On the other hand, the client simultaneously connects with the portrayal as being somehow ‘real’ as it is founded on the actual events in his/her life. Thus, in this process clients relate to the experience in a both not-me and not-not-me kind of way (Schechner, 1988). From Schechner’s (1988) ‘not-me but not-not-me’ vantage point, clients often experience him/herself as being in a place of suspension that allows them to engage his/her curiosities and make meaning in ways that would not be possible from a completely ‘insider’ position. When being in an insider only position of ones life, clients are rarely able to achieve a vantage point that allows him/her to see the rich history of their moral character as persons and how the very essence of this moral character revealed itself in the struggles of his/her life (Epston & Carlson, Unpublished Manuscript). Thus, it is quite common for a client to have the experience of having traveled a great distance during the act two interview, and often report that he/she didn’t know that they had come so far or even having already arrived at the place of his/her hopes and dreams without being aware they had.

Purpose Statement

Given the dramatic transformations that came about in my life after being involved in Insider Witness Practices, I will be using an autoethnography methodology (Ellis & Bochner, 2000) to give an account of this unique experience that so significantly affected my life. Autoethnography is a hybrid genre of research that blends autobiographical writing with aspects of ethnography (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008). In an autoethnography, the researcher and his/her own reflexivity and reflections, are featured as viable data sources in his/her given study (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008, p. 8). In addition, the researcher may include a sociocultural process of identity construction that has led him/her to this point of his/her identify formation (Austin & Hickey, 2007). Therefore, I pursue this study to reflect on and respond to the following

questions: How does my own hyphenated identity as Mexican-American play a role in my intimate connection to narrative therapy? Do narrative therapy and my Mexican culture have shared dreams and beliefs about humanity? If so, what would happen to my personal life and hopes to be a narrative therapist, if my Mexican dreams and narrative dreams came together as one?

As I embark on this journey of story-telling, it is my hope that my words will somehow be able to compel and move the audience in such a way that captures what Cahnmann-Taylor (2008) refers to as, “indescribable emotional and intellectual experiences” (p. 13) that were such a significant part of my own journey with Insider Witness Practices. Through this autoethnographic approach, I hope to reveal the heart and essence of my experiences and bridge them together with my Mexican heritage in the spirit of autoethnographic research.

Throughout this paper you will notice that I use the terms culture, heritage, Mexican-American, and Chicana, often interchangeably. It represents my growing awareness as a result of engaging in this project of the complexity of my identity and my emerging knowledge of the distinctions of each of these concepts.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter will include a thorough description of autoethnography and how autoethnography applies and is relevant to my particular study. A detailed account will be provided of how I will be using autoethnography as a methodology, along with the sources of data that I will use for my study and how I will go about re-presenting my data through using a multi-vocal dialogic approach (Carlson, Unpublished Manuscript; Morson, 1994). Additionally, I will explain the purpose of engaging in an active, reflexive dialogue between my Mexican self, “Anita”, and my transformed Chicana self, “Hyphen Ana”.

What is Autoethnography?

Autoethnography is an approach to research that combines both autobiography and ethnography in such a way that researchers brings to life his/her own intimate experiences and reflections as a legitimate source of data for a given study (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008; Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Autobiographies typically are written about “epiphanies”, moments that are often remembered and perceived as having important influence on the course of a person’s life (Bochner & Ellis, 1992; Couser, 1997; Denzin, 1989), times in which someone is provoked to analyze the purpose or meaning of life (Zaner, 2004), and events that ultimately change the experience of a person’s life. On the other hand, writing an ethnography involves the researcher studying a culture’s relational practices, mutual values and beliefs, and shared experiences in order to help insiders (cultural members) and outsiders (cultural strangers) enhance their understanding of that particular culture (Maso, 2001).

Thus, an autoethnographic researcher, with hindsight and discernment writes about pivotal life altering moments that connects him/her to a particular cultural identity (Ellis et. al, 2011). In addition, it is essential that the researcher not only tells about his/her experiences but

also analyzes those experiences (Ellis et. al., 2011). According to Ellis and Bochner (2000), autoethnography “is an autobiographical genre of writing and research” (p.739) that uses a double consciousness approach in which the researcher initially focuses “outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experiences” and afterwards taking an inward look in order to expose “a vulnerable self that is moved by and...through” the researcher’s intimate experience with the subject at hand. Autoethnography forms its greatest meaning by “setting a scene, telling a story, weaving intricate connections among life and art, experience and theory, evocation and explanation ... and then letting go, hoping for readers who will bring the same careful attention to your words in the context of their own lives” (Jones, 2008, p. 208). Through this unique style of writing, the readers have the possibility of becoming intimately involved with a researcher’s storied life experiences that the reader might engage with another’s experiences much as if it was their own.

What is my Autoethnographic Study?

In my autoethnographic study I will be bringing to life the experiences that came as a result of being intimately involved Insider Witness Practices. In addition, I will also be highlighting and providing a personal account of how my Mexican identity and Mexican-American hyphenated identity (reclaimed Chicana identity) played such a crucial role in my transformative experiences with this practice. The emergence of this study came as a result of the life-altering experiences that I shared with Insider Witness Practices, as it was a pivotal time in my life that re-awakened the magic of ordinary life and brought me back to my Mexican dreams. It is my hope that through this autoethnographic study that I can weave together the many layers of my identity and the experiences with Insider Witness Practices to convey a story of a life that is deserving of living with insurmountable hope and extraordinary magic.

What Kinds of Studies/Topics are Most Appropriate for Autoethnography?

Autoethnographies are intended to be “highly personalized accounts that draw upon the experience of the author/researcher for the purpose of extending sociological understanding” (Sparkes, 2000, p. 21). Autoethnographic studies can involve the researcher sharing personal experiences with the audience members/readers that become part of the larger research narrative or the researcher directly combining autobiographical data and fiction (Leavy, 2009). Studies that are especially appropriate for autoethnographic writing are those that explore transformative life experiences and the process of becoming or those that seek to answer the question of how did I come to be who I am. A good example is Vasconcelos’s (2011) autoethnographic study, in which she sought to answer the following questions: “*What makes me the teacher I am? What had made me into the teacher I am?*” In order to answer these questions Vasconcelos had to explore “the personal, the self, for the purpose of extending sociological understanding regarding teaching and learning, and teacher identity formation” (p. 418). This was a method that allowed Vasconcelos (2011), as a researcher, to study herself in a way that would create a reflexive dialogue with the readers with the hope that those readers would relate and finding meaning in her memoirs, experiences, and practices. Ultimately, she desired that the audience of her autoethnography would be captured by the “intimacies of her own world” as to experience, “me too” moments, from her use of her own “self as a springboard, as a witness” (Vasconcelos, 2011, p. 418).

How is Autoethnography Relevant to my Study?

Autoethnography is relevant to my study because it allows me to engage in an intimate account of the personal transformations that have occurred in my own story of self as a Mexican-American woman and narrative therapist from the position as an insider to the development of

Insider Witness Practices. Through this process, I seek to learn more about how my own hyphenated identity as a Mexican-American woman and how my Mexican-American identity both shaped and was influenced by my participation in this practice. Thus, autoethnography is an appropriate methodology for this study because: (1) it offers the opportunity to detail the personal transformations that came as a result of being immersed in Insider Witness Practices; (2) it parallels the practice itself as I will be offering an insider account of “a practice in the making;” and (3) it looks outward at the ways in which my unique experience as a Mexican-American woman has shaped my own experiences and interpretations of this practice (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011) I hope that through my account of transformation with Insider Witness Practices that the reader may engage and be witness to my intimate endeavors and experiences with this practice through the exploration and emergence of my hyphenated identity.

What is the Source of Data Typically Used in Autoethnography?

A central focus for an autoethnographer is to explore and study the self (Vasconcelos, 2011). Autoethnographies aim to “produce aesthetic and evocative thick descriptions of personal and interpersonal experience” (Ellis et. al., 2011, p. 4). This is accomplished by establishing connections of cultural experience demonstrated through data such as interviews, field notes, and/or artifacts (Ellis et. al., 2011, p. 4). In addition, autoethnographers rely on more personalized data such as such as photographs, journals, and video recordings to engage the readers through these alternative forms of data. It is by such means that autoethnographic researchers not only make personal experience meaningful and cultural experience engaging, but by producing accessible texts, the researcher can make personal and social change more possible for readers (Ellis et. al., 2011).

My Sources of Data

The analytic data that I used for this autoethnographical study were the personal reflection and transcribed interview that were used to develop a record of my experiences of Insider Witness Practices.

Personal Reflection. As part of the narrative therapy class, I completed a written reflection designed to help me explore the influence of participating in the Act 1 interview. In order to help me to process the Act 1 interview, I was asked to consider and respond the following questions: What was your overall experience of the experience? In what ways has this experience influenced your relationship with the person that you portrayed? Are there any new appreciations that you have for your client? If so, what do you find yourself appreciating more about your client? Do you see any new possibilities for your work as a therapist that you didn't see before? If so, what new possibilities are you seeing for yourself and for the people with who you work?

After I completed my reflection paper for the Act 1 interview, Tom added comments and questions to my reflection directly in the text of my paper to assist me in extending my understanding as well as give further meaning to my reflections. Each completed response from Tom and I was referred to as a 'round' and the personal reflection that I used for this study involved 2 complete rounds. For an example of this process see an abbreviated excerpt from my written reflection following my Act 1 experience.

Ana: That as therapist we must be wholeheartedly engaged and believe in the remarkableness of our clients...Through this experience I desire nothing more than for my clients to experience what I did on that day...I had arrived to this

place...I did not give up even when I felt so isolated and completely alone and I did it because I had to. I deserve to live and I am someone who deserves to be loved.

Tom: Are you referring to you as your client here Ana or are you referring to you as Ana? Both? Was there something about experiencing your client being held in such a remarkable and loving light in the interview that allowed you to connect with yourself as someone who is deserving to be loved? If so what did it feel like for you to see yourself in this way?

Ana: I am referring to mostly me as my client and slightly myself, Ana...experiencing my client as someone remarkable and in a loving light in this interview really helped me to experience my own remarkableness and to...see myself as someone who is deserving of being loved...it felt truly amazing and incredible for me to see myself in this way...It was a very special moment for me.

Tom: When I read this particular part of your reflection for the first time, I was hoping that you might take more credit for your own transformation...I see your own humbleness in crediting your client...There is something quite beautiful to me about allowing yourself to be transformed through own honoring of others. What do you think about this Ana? I am just trying to make sense of something that is quite beautiful but hard to put words to.

Transcribed Interview. In addition to the reflection paper, on June 15th 2015, Tom Stone Carlson and David Epston interviewed me about my experience of participating in Insider Witness Practices. Emily Corturillo, a graduate student who was also in the narrative therapy class, transcribed the interview. After the interview was transcribed, a

similar round process that was described above was followed where David and Tom made comments and asked me to respond to their comments and/or questions to once again extend my understanding. For an example of this process see an abbreviated excerpt from the transcribed interview with Tom and David that took place about three months after my first Act 1 interview.

Tom: One of the things we've been trying to do, Ana, during these interviews with students is help come up with words to describe our own bafflement at this. That's where you came in at the end, is David's been—and he'll ask you this question too, but I'll start with it. What are the words that describe this experience so that we can help share this with other people?

David: Let me just put you in the picture of this conversation, Ana. We've all, at times, experienced ourselves as wordless or speechless. When you say speechless, it's not that you can't speak. We haven't got the words to speak. When you hear those words—I'm sure your mother has said to you, okay what's all this about? What's going on here? It sounds interesting. Everyone's crying all the time hearing you talk about it.

Ana: Everyone's crying all the time, yeah. That's pretty good.

David: Say she was speaking Spanish to a Spanish speaker, what words would she use in Spanish?

Ana: But I'm thinking about, you know, thinking of my mom and the experience of being there and what words she would use. I don't know why, but the word magical came to mind for me.

David: Ana, Would you mind taking this up with Maria/your mom to see how she might describe the 'magic' of this? I believe such an inquiry will take us further in our making

sense of IWPs than any other avenue we might pursue at the moment. I strongly believe this. Thanks for bearing with me on this, Ana!

María: Descubriste la magia de la otra persona – conociste a tu cliente y pudiste expresar la magia que has sentido en su presencia. Pudiste reconocer la magia en tu cliente y te identificaste en la magia que ella a vivido. No asumiste cosas de tu cliente porque tomaste tiempo en estudiar y conocer tu cliente, y que era significativa en su vida. Tu aceptaste la persona que conociste y como era ella. La escuchaste sin rechazó. Pudiste encontrar y reconocer cosas en común entre ella y tu.

English Translation: You discovered the magic of the other person. You came to an intimate knowing of your client and were able to express the magic that you felt in her presence. You were able to recognize (or more precisely translated as... become intimately acquainted with) the magic in your client and the magic of her life. You didn't assume things about your client because you took the time to study her and come to intimately know her and what was significant in her life. You were able to accept her and come to know her as if you were her. You listened to her without judgment, rejection or shame. You were able to find and come to have a shared experience together.

During this interview with David and Tom, it became clear that my Mexican culture played a significant role in helping me to make sense of the transformative experience that I had during my participation in the Act 1 and Act 2 interviews. In order to help me to further my appreciation for my Mexican culture, I was invited to engage in a conversation with my mom, Maria Guadalupe Huerta, about her cultural understandings and their possible relationship with Insider Witness Practices. These conversations took place in Spanish and are included in the

transcribed interview in both English and Spanish. Four rounds were completed during the review of the transcripts from my interview with David and Tom.

What are some of the Common Ways that Data is Re-Presented in Autoethnography?

The ways in which autoethnography is presented differs depending on the “emphasis that is placed on the study of others, the researcher’s self and interactions with others, traditional analysis, and the interview context, as well as on power relationships” (Ellis et. al., 2011, p.4). Autoethnographies produce a showing and telling of the researcher’s experiences that are often portrayed through characters, plot, dialogues, and scenes (Ellis, 2004). Typically, the written form of autoethnography is in first person-voice and may be presented in a variety of forms such as short stories, poetry... photographic essays, performance, and personal essays and journals (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p.739). It is within these genres that the researcher demonstrates both a first person account through “concrete action, dialogue, emotion, embodiment, spirituality, and self-consciousness,” and socio-cultural account of how their telling is also “affected by history, social structure, and culture” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739). Given its intimate nature, autoethnography is intended to be more of a demonstration or performance of the data that captures the imagination of the reader and engages them in a dialogue with the writer and the subject matter that is re-presented (Vasconcelos, 2011). Through this re-presentation of the data autoethnography researchers write in ways that “zoom backward and forward, inward and outward... between their personal, social, and cultural experiences – it is often the case that distinctions between the person and cultural become blurred, sometimes beyond distinct recognition” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

Vasconcelos (2011) decided to re-present her teaching-learning experiences through textual “snapshots” to create a photographic effect in which she framed certain experiences and

memories. Through this method of framing, it was the “use of present tense verb forms and careful word choice” that helped her to emulate the “tones and shades” of her “mental images” (p. 418). The verbal “snapshots” were also accompanied by “captions” that provided additional “clarifying, explanatory or reflective text” (p. 418). Vasconcelos (2011) also used the concept of a photo album in which she carefully captured and reconstructed significant moments in time to generate a sample narrative photo album of her teaching-learning life. This was an intuitive process for Vasconcelos (2011) as she recalled memories in her life related to her teaching and learning that “evoked the strongest feelings and were the most striking and memorable” (p. 419). The “autoethnographic album” that Vasconcelos (2011) created encompasses her textual snapshots along with the subsequent captions in which she details and reflects on the pedagogy of theory and practice (p. 419).

Autoethnography can also be said to be situated in research on oral and personal narratives in performance and communication studies, in which one situates oneself within the center of meaning making (Spry, 2001). “Personal narrative performance give shape to social relations, but because such relations are multiple... complexly interconnected, and contradictory... a story of the body told through the body... makes cultural conflict concrete” (Langellier, 1999, p. 208). Spry (2001) agrees that the experience of self-reflexive critique of one’s own positionality as a researcher inspires readers to reflect critically upon their own lived experiences, their construction of self, and their interactions with others (Ellis & Bochner, 1996). Through Spry’s (2001) experiences with sexual assault, grief, mental illness, and white privilege she has come to realize that through performing autoethnography she can position herself as an “active agent” with “narrative authority” over prevailing social myths that restrict “social freedom and personal development” (p. 711).

The performance of autoethnography gave Spry (2001) the power to no longer feel out of place with her own existence and body, as she explained it, “caught in the middle between Schechner’s (1988) not-me and not-not-me” as though she was outside her own body (p. 715). Through her performance she began to experience that someone within her own body was calling to her and through her embodiment of theory about anorexia nervosa it permitted her to enter a time in her life that had not been inhabited (Spry, 2001). Through this performance, Spry (2001) could now name the repressed places in her own body and immersed herself in being re-introduced to herself. Through the process of performance, the performer engages the text of another, either orally or written, in which the performer engages with the other in order to be transformed or altered (Conquergood, 1985).

How I Re-Presented My Data

In order to tell the story of my experience with Insider Witness Practices, I employed a multi-vocal dialogic approach (Carlson, Unpublished Manuscript; Morson, 1994). Accordingly, as a researcher, I engaged in dialogue with the primary characters that have played a central role in my reflections and experiences of Insider Witness Practices. The primary characters that appear in the story of my experience of Insider Witness Practices include myself (Ana), my mother Maria Guadalupe Huerta, David Epston, and Tom Stone Carlson. For the purpose of my multi-vocal dialogic approach in my writing, I will distinguish between two types of characters: passive and active characters. Passive characters include the people who appear in the set of reflections and transcripts that I will use as the source of my data (Carlson, Unpublished Manuscript). These characters are passive in that they have already spoken within the text of my reflections and transcribed interviews. These passive characters include all of the above-

mentioned characters, including myself or more precisely my former self, whom I will refer to as Ana.

In order to engage in an active and multi-vocal dialogue with the data, there are two active characters that you will encounter in my autoethnographic account of Insider Witness Practices. These characters include my current self or transformed self, whom I will refer to as Hyphen Ana, and my Mexican self, whom I will refer to as “Anita”. These active characters will emerge at key points throughout the existing text to engage in a dialogue with the words of the passive characters in order to inquire and to wonder with them. In order to reflect back on my experiences with Insider Witness Practices through my cultural heritage and identity as a Mexican-American woman, “Anita” will engage in dialogue with Hyphen Ana and will pose questions in the Spanish language. In addition, Hyphen Ana, will also pose questions and “Anita” who will respond in the Spanish language. The dialogue in Spanish will be translated back to English to make it accessible to the English reader and to continue the emergence of both selves (Anita and Hyphen Ana). Through this immersion in dialogue with “Anita”, I hope to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation for (1) Mexican culture, (2) how my participation in this practice allowed me to access the Mexican part of my hyphen, and (3) the magicalness of my Mexican culture and heritage.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

The results section is outlined into two main parts: *selections by Anita* and *selections by Hyphen Ana*. The selections are excerpts that have been chosen by either Anita or Hyphen Ana from either the reflection that I wrote after experiencing the Act 1 or the transcribed interview that took place with Tom Stone Carlson and David Epston three months after my first Insider Witness Practice interview. Each selection has been titled to fit the topic or theme of that particular excerpt, along with a brief description as to why that specific excerpt was chosen by either Anita or Hyphen Ana. Each excerpt selected will be the source of data that includes the passive characters that will engage Anita and Hyphen Ana into active dialogue. Each excerpted selection will also be outlined into sub-selections to separate the distinctive dialogues that take place between the passive characters in the excerpt and the active characters, Anita and Hyphen Ana. As I will be entering into multiple dialogues as either Anita or Hyphen Ana within different parts of the selected excerpt each sub-selection will be titled as *Selection 1.1*, *Selection 1.2*, etc. Each of these new sub-selections is the start of a new dialogue that returns to the main body of the selected excerpt from either the written reflection or transcribed interview.

Selections by Anita

Selection 1: Transformada por Mágica (Transformed through Magic)

Escogí este parte de mi reflexión porque pude apreciar la mágica de este momento. Tuve una experiencia que me transformo y el espíritu de mi alma se despertó. En este momento mi vida empezó a tener color otra vez. Yo pude sentir algo en mi alma que siempre ha estado conmigo y tal vez era Anita recordándome que todavía podría tener sueños Mexicanas.

English Translation: I chose this part of my written reflection because I could feel the magic that came alive through this Act 1 experience. I had an experience that transformed me and

awakened my soul's spirit. From this day my life began to have splashes of color again. I could feel something within my spirit that had always been there, and possibly it was Anita reminding me that I was still capable of having Mexican dreams.

Selection 1.1

Ana: My experience of an Act 1 interview was undeniably one of the most interesting and significant things I have ever been part of in my entire life. If someone would of told me beforehand that I was going to feel incredibly elevated and uplifted, and that it would be one of the biggest highlights while in my master's program, I am not so sure I would have believed them. I had no idea what was to come and how this would transform me.

Tom: In what ways did this experience transform you Ana? Is it possible that you allowed yourself to be transformed by this experience? If so, what might you have been doing to prepare yourself for this?

Ana: I feel as though my own spirit was transformed and awakened; the spirit of who I desire to be as a therapist and aspire to further connect with. The spirit and values which I desire to guide my life and to live by. I believe that I did allow myself to be transformed by this experience. I'm not entirely sure what I have been doing to prepare for this transformation but I believe that I was ready and desiring such a transformation in my life and maybe that in itself helped me to be so moved by this experience. I also believe that the value and importance I place on this work is a big part of the meaning that I was able to create from this experience. I have also been gaining a lot through reading the case stories and maybe in some way I carried them with me on that day.

Tom: I am wondering if it would be worth it to give the idea of what you have been doing to prepare yourself to be open to this transformation some more thought Ana. You

mention that you were ready and desiring such a transformation. How might you have been readying yourself Ana? I would be happy to offer some guesses in my role as your supervisor over the past few months if that is okay with you. Perhaps we can do this next time we meet if you can't seem to come up with any thoughts here. But I am certain that you will be able to.

Ana: I like the idea of readying oneself and what someone might have been doing to prepare themselves to experience such a transformation. I am not entirely sure what specifically I had been doing to ready myself but perhaps it was my heart and my spirit that knew that it was time.

Anita: Tengo mucho curiosidad como tu corazón y alma supieron que era tiempo para transformarse. Tal vez piensas que es posible que tu corazón y alma estaban recordando algunos de tus sueños Mexicanas que tenias cuando eras chiquita? Si esto es posible, que es que tu corazón y alma te estaban recordando de la cultura Mexicana que te hace creer en la posibilidad de transformación?

English Translation: I am very curious to know about how your heart and spirit knew that it was time to be transformed. Perhaps it was possible because your heart and spirit were remembering some of the Mexican dreams that you had as a child? If this is possible, what was it that your heart and spirit were remembering about Mexican culture that allowed you to believe in possibility of transformation?

Hyphen Ana: That is interesting. Not something I would have considered myself. I think it could be possible that my heart and spirit were remembering my Mexican dreams. That possibly being part of such a dignifying experience my heart couldn't help but to be moved. As a young child I remember feeling the deep love and care that people had for

each other. I enjoyed going out with my family and attending Mexican cultural events and observing how captivated we were with one another. The mariachi music, the dancing, and the spirit of these celebrations were overwhelmingly heartwarming. My fondest memories are those where I was surrounded by the overwhelming joy and hope that Mexican-American people offered one another. I could sense that there were sincere feelings of concern about the well being of others. That even through suffering and facing discrimination, unemployment, and poverty we could still embrace hope and love for another. It was as though we were transported and while we celebrated together these things appeared to go away. It was magical. Being connected to our language, culture, and belief practices I was surrounded by the kind of hope that could see beyond suffering. The American part of my hyphen might say that it's just to do with being part of a community and being around people like me, while the Mexican side of my hyphen might say that Mexican culture is one that thrives because of the unquenchable hope that drives our spirits.

I've come to recognize that I've always lived with the hope that resembles the kind of hope that people believe within Mexican culture. I believe that the hope I carry with me was born from these Mexican cultural gatherings that were filled with the bright colors, the enchanting mariachi music, and the lively dancing. My hope was awakened on the day that I performed the Act 1 and I have been discovering more about this particular kind of hope ever since. I can remember now where my hope was born and given wings – it was in all those celebrations where I could feel the unbreakable hope that offered so much more to us than just suffering and sorrow. When I experienced the Act 1, I was reminded of the spirited hope that is so much part of my Mexican heritage. It was as

though my heart knew this was familiar and could feel at home. My mind in many ways had forgotten, but my heart never let go. My heart was reminded of something it had known all along, and maybe that's the reason this transformation came on so readily.

Anita: He estado pensando Hyphen Ana de la mágica que describes en tu cultura Mexicana y que también podías sentir en hacer parte de esta practica. Hay algo en tus estudios que haz estado aprendiendo que te ha ayudado ha entender mas sobre la mágica que es posible en este mundo?

English translation: I have been thinking Hyphen Ana about the magic that you described experiencing in your Mexican culture and that you could also feel as part of this practice. I am wondering if there is something that you have been learning about that has been helping you learn and better understand the magic that is possible in this world?

Hyphen Ana: I have been studying magical realism and how it could help me make sense of my experience with Insider Witness Practices. Magical realism is a concept that is rooted within the Latin culture and is markedly found in the work of many Latin novelist such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez, a Colombian novelist who was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1982 (Polanco, 2010). I wonder if part of my connection with magical realism is its relationship with Mexican culture, in which people are encouraged to believe in the unimaginable and in a hope that is beyond despair. It provides a portal where time and the necessity of an objectively true understanding of events are suspended. Magical realism represents a way of looking at the world in which the real and the imaginary exist simultaneously, such as in the belief and existence of milagros (miracles). A milagro within the Mexican culture is often experienced as a phenomenon that is unreservedly worth believing and experiencing as magical and real in the same

instance. A milagro (miracle) when experienced in the Mexican culture typically involves something that is quite incredible and hard to believe for some. In many cases milagros happen to people who are faced with life-threatening illnesses or might have been saved from a catastrophic event.

This actually reminds me of a story that my mom once shared with me where she was much younger and she had become very ill. It was hard to say whether she would make it through. The story begins with her lying in bed, as she was very fragile and weak. She could barely muster the strength to move, but she wanted to get close to the window in her room so she could feel the sun beaming down on her on such a sunny, beautiful day. She mustered all the strength she had and managed to get down from her bed and crawl slowly to the window. As she peered outside of the window there were a couple of girls that were outside and they began to point and laugh at her. She didn't have the strength to respond to them, but just felt sadness in her heart that the girls were mocking her. What happened next some would say my mother hallucinated, as she was so ill. Right before my mother's eyes a striking, enigmatic spirit appeared. The spirit was glowing and beaming in the brightest light my mother had ever experienced. My mother was not fearful, but instead felt some of the greatest peace, love, and compassion she had ever experienced in her life. This wondrous spirit smiled warmly at my mother and reached out their hand and gently placed it over my mother's head. It was from this moment that my mom felt and knew that she would make it from this illness and would regain her health. When I think about a milagro, my mom's experience comes to mind. This was a moment that brought together both the magical, the unimaginable, and the real into one space in which both existed simultaneously.

On another note, I have also begun to learn about what magical realism offers to narrative therapy through Marcela Polanco, a Colombian narrative therapist and scholar, who I met last year at the Therapeutic Conversations 12 Conference. Magical realism also seeks to bring life to words that have often been rendered as ordinary through the objectification of language much like the use of externalizing conversations in narrative therapy (Polanco, 2010).

Anita: Tengo curiosidad en saber mas sobre esta idea que realismo mágico también puede revivir palabras o idiomas que ha veces ya no tienen vida porque han acido ordinárs. Hyphen Ana, que tu piensas sobre esta idea que tenemos que regresar la mágica o revivir a una idioma... piensas que esto es necesario para la idioma Español?

English Translation: I am curious and would like to know more about this idea of how magical realism can bring life back into words and languages that have been rendered as ordinary through the objectification of language. Hyphen Ana, what do you think about this idea that we have to return the magic or bring life back into certain languages... do you think this is necessary or needed for the Spanish language?

Hyphen Ana: I have always felt that the Spanish language is poetic and is a language that seeks to bring the world to life. It has not been de-magicked and has managed to resist and defy objectification. It is a language that is in favour of poetry and symbolism. In the Spanish language you paint a picture and in English, as spoken in Western culture, it attempts to reduce the idea to as few words a possible and provide exact or precise definitions. I wonder about the affect it has on people to be able to live in a place of magic and the imagination when they have to diminish there lived experiences into the most limiting spaces. It seems that life might become more trivial. To live without magic

would be to never experience the unimaginable or to live with an immeasurable kind of hope.

Anita: He estado pensando sobre tu deseo de ser una terapeuta narrativa y como la idioma Español podrá ayudarte a hacer la tipa de terapeuta que deseas ser para tus clientes. Que piensas sobre la idea de aprender o aprender de nuevo la terapia narrativa en Español? O tal vez puedes empezar a pensar y sentir en Español cuando estas en el cuarto con tus clientes?

English Translation: I have been thinking about your desire to be a narrative therapist and how the Spanish language can possibly help you become the kind of therapist you desire to be for your clients. What do you think about this idea of learning or re-learning narrative therapy through the Spanish language? Or perhaps you can begin to think and feel in Spanish when you are working with your clients?

Hyphen Ana: By staying connected to magical realism and the picture painting quality of my Spanish language I am invited to transform the words and images of my clients' lives that have become ordinary by finding ways to give new life these words and images. Perhaps it would be like painting a picture with words that has the effect of transforming the ordinary into the extra-ordinary. When I envision allowing myself to dream in Spanish in my work with others, I am envisioning therapy as a portal of transformation that gives people wings to soar and to discover their own magic in life just like I did that day. Given that the English language has lost some of its magic, by thinking and feeling in Spanish, by rebalancing my hyphen, it will help me to add splashes of color to my use of the English language.

Selection 1.2

Ana: Perhaps I had been readying myself by believing in the impossible and unimaginable. Perhaps I had been getting ready for this moment in my life by already believing in the magic of life. I think this belief has always been with me, but had been partially covered over the years. I try to carry my hopes with me everyday in life and in my work with clients. My hopes were strengthened by this experience. I think it allowed me to trust in my belief in the magic of life a bit more.

Anita: Dijiste que quizás preparaste para esta transformación por miedo de mantener tu creencia en lo imposible, lo inimaginable, y en la mágica que esta posible en la vida ordinaria y esto me hizo pensar si seria posible que tu creencia en la mágica de la vida sobreviviría si tu habías rendido completamente a tus sueños Americanas? Si dieras que no, sugiere esto, que nunca rendiste tu habilidad de soñar en Mexicana?

English Translation: You mentioned that perhaps your prepared for this transformation by maintaining a belief in the impossible, the unimaginable, and in the magic that is possible in the ordinary of life, and this left me thinking if it would have been possible for your belief in the magical to have endured if you had completely given into only having American dreams? If you believe this may be so, is it possible that you never gave up on dreaming in Mexican?

Hyphen Ana: To know that I never entirely gave up on my Mexican dreams is awakening to me. My heart felt something inexplicable when I finally came to know and realize that I didn't give up entirely on dreaming in Mexican. I was moved and delighted all at the once. I feel as though this awareness changed a lot for me. I could now move on with my life in a way that was liberated from shame or guilt. I had often felt a sense of

tension in my life; I was not doing enough to stay connected to my Mexican heritage and that I had given up too much on that part of my spirit. I could feel that something wasn't quite right when I was being encouraged to side more with the American than the Mexican part of my hyphen. I often experienced sadness and disappointment because no matter what I did I felt like an imposter; I was neither American nor Mexican. I could never live up to the standards of either one. Through this experience, I have come to appreciate my capacity to feel this tension and can now see that it was grief and loss that I felt at times about being too American. That tension created a space for my Mexican hopes and dreams to live on even if they were in the margins. I can now proudly say that I never gave up on the Mexican side of my hyphen. Anita, how does it feel to know that you have been with me all along? That even though you may have been in the margins I never gave up on you, and that I never gave up on our Mexican dreams?

Anita: Me estoy sonriendo con la mas grande sonrisa que he tenido en mi vida. Una sonrisa que esta llena de alegría y amor para ti y para nosotras. Durante los tiempos que te sentías completamente sola y desilusionada sobre tu relación con tu cultura Mexicana, yo siempre he estado contigo. Yo siempre era el guardián de tus sueños mexicanas. Tu todavía tienes la habilidad de soñar en Mexicana y esta parte de ti ahora puede crecer en algo mas bello y increíble.

English Translation: I am smiling with the biggest smile that I have ever felt in my life.

It's a smile that is full of joy and love for you and us. During the times that you felt disheartened and at a complete loss about your relationship with your Mexican culture I have always been with you. You never gave in completely on the idea of only having

American dreams. You still have the ability to dream in Mexican and this part of you will grow into something beautiful.

Selection 1.3

Tom: I am also very interested in your statement that you have desired a transformation in your life and work as a therapist. Do you think that this desiring of yours has been behind some of the preparations or steps that you have been taking to be the influential narrative therapist that you have longed to be? As you look back on the past several months, from this place of awakening, can you catch any glimpses of some of your ‘behind the scenes’ preparations that had previously escaped your view?

Ana: Yes! Absolutely! I do believe that my desiring of such a transformation was a part of my preparation to be influenced to be the kind of therapist that I desire to be for others.

Anita: Tengo mucha interés en saber mas sobre tu transformación que fue influido por tu deseo de llegar a ser la tipa de terapeuta que desean tus clientes. La razón por lo cual estoy interesada en esto es porque parece a mi que tu deseo de ser transformada no es un deseo egoísta pero viene de una preocupación por las transformación de otros. Que piensas de esto Hyphen Ana? Piensas que es un valor que esta asociada mas con la cultura Mexicana o a la cultura Americana? Si es asociada mas con la cultura Mexicana puedes decirme un cuento que me ayuda apreciar como lo aprendiste?

English Translation: I have a lot of interest in knowing more about your transformation that was influenced by your desire to be the kind of therapist that your therapist desire.

The reason that I am interested in this is because it seems to me that your desire to be transformed is not a self-centered desire but it’s grounded in how others are transformed.

What do you think about this Hyphen Ana? Do you think this aspiration is related more

with the Mexican or American culture? If it is related more with Mexican culture can you tell me a story that would help me understand how you came to learn this?

Hyphen Ana: I've always believed that the transformation that I experienced came as a result of the honor and deep sense of care that I felt for my client that day. I tried to open my heart to being moved and touched by someone who has experienced tremendous suffering and despair in her life. I feel that my hopes for my clients, and my desire to be transformed to be more of the therapist that my clients deserve is something that is connected more to the Mexican than the American side of the hyphen.

Your question reminds me of a story that my mom often shared with me when I was much younger. I can't recall if we were in Mexico or here in America. I think when I was much younger my mom often traveled back and forth from Mexico to the U.S. I don't remember how old I was, maybe around 3. We went to the store to buy some groceries for dinner, and we didn't have very much money. We only had enough for the meal that was ahead of us. As my mother was putting food in the cart, I noticed something that seemed a bit strange to me. There was food in the cart for my brother and I, but there was nothing in the cart for my mother. She didn't buy anything for herself. As we were sitting around the table eating our food, I looked at my mother with my three year old eyes and asked my mom 'No tienes hambre Mama? Vas a comer algo?' My mother then told me that she only had enough money to buy food for my brother and I. 'No te preocupes Anita. Estoy bien. Lo mas importante es que tu y tu hermanito tienen algo de comer.' When she tells this story she speaks of her amazement that such a young person could have such feelings of compassion and concern for others.

Anita: Estoy curiosa, si lo podríamos preguntar a tu mama cual es la razón que ella le gustaba contentar este cuento, que piensas lo que decía? Sabia algo de ti? Esta parte de ti?

English Translation: I wonder if we could ask your mother the reason that she enjoyed sharing this story, what do you think she might say? Did she know something about you? About this part of you?

Hyphen Ana: I believe that my mother shared this story so that I could learn not only about the deep feelings of care that I have for people who suffer unjustly, but also about the giving hearts of our Mexican people. That our Mexican hearts are touched by suffering that we see around us, and encourage us to stand with each other to offer resilience for the greater good of life. Maybe it was through my mom's own suffering that I was inspired to care about others' suffering and to actively and genuinely offer hope in this world.

Anita: Tal vez querías aliviar el sufrimiento de otros? En este momento cuando le ofreciste tu comida a tu mama, crees que tocaste el corazón de tu mama? Como piensas que tu mama se siento en ese momento en saber que tenia una hija que podría reconocer el sufrimiento de otros y también el sufrimiento de ella misma?

English Translation: Perhaps you wanted to alleviate others suffering? In this moment when you offered your mom's food to her, do you think that you touched your mother's heart? How do you think your mother felt in that moment to know that she had a daughter that could not only feel others suffering but also hers as well?

Hyphen Ana: I am so moved by these questions. My heart is lifted. It's wonderful to think that my mother's heart was so touched in this moment because of what I could offer to her. It's possible that my mom felt a profound sense of proudness by knowing that she

has a daughter that could recognize and attempt to alleviate her suffering. Maybe what I offered to my mom in that moment was much bigger than what any food could give her. I believe that it gave her a sense of hope for the future. That perhaps her suffering and sacrifices to come to America were somehow worth it.

Anita: Sea posible que tu mama en ese momento sabia que tenía una hija con un corazón Mexicana? Que dijo a ella misma en este momento, ‘Tengo una hija que conoce el corazón Mexicana?’

English Translation: Is it possible that your mother in that moment knew that she had a daughter with a Mexican heart? That she said to herself in that moment “I have a daughter that knows her Mexican heart?”

Hyphen Ana: I believe so, maybe she didn’t use those exact words, but I imagine that she felt a sense of great pride in knowing that she was raising a daughter whose heart could sense the needs and suffering of others and was also willing to do something about it. This is certainly at the heart of Mexican culture, to see and acknowledge the suffering in others and perhaps more importantly to take action by offering hope and alleviating the suffering in people’s lives. Another part of Mexican culture is to stand alongside one another in way that is fair and just, and that no one person is better or more important. We don’t look down upon one another, but instead we offer respect and value each other’s worth and significance in this world. We believe that we all have something to offer and give one another.

Selection 1.4

Ana: This desire of mine probably has been with me for a long time and has been waiting for a moment in life such as this one. Not just any moment, but one that was magical

enough to give life to my desires. It might also be possible that narrative has been a part of me even for much longer than I had realized. That it wasn't just something that I came to know when I came here for the masters program, but that I have been living with narrative ideas from when I was a young child.

Anita: Estoy muy interesada en saber como es que tu haz estado viviendo con las ideas de la terapia narrativa desde que eras una niñita. Esto me interesa mucho porque me hace pensar que tal vez hay una relación entre la cultura Mexicana y la terapia narrativa.

Hyphen Ana, es algo en que haz pensado? Hay algo mas que quiero pedirte. Es posible que la terapia narrativa sueña en Mexicano también?

English Translation: I am very interested in knowing how it is that you have been living with narrative ideas since you were a young child. I am very interested in this because it makes me think that possibly there is a relationship with Mexican culture and narrative therapy. Hyphen Ana, is this something you have thought about? There is something else I would like to ask you. Is it possible that narrative therapy also dreams in Mexican?

Hyphen Ana: I have only begun to consider and think about the possibility that there is a relationship between Mexican culture and narrative therapy. To me, it appears that Mexican culture and narrative therapy have many of the same dreams, and that narrative therapy also dreams in Mexican. Both dreams of narrative therapy and Mexican culture seem to have the same hopes for this world: to alleviate the suffering of others by being alongside them; that we don't come in wanting to fix people or fix their problems necessarily, but that we believe in people and see the good in them and what they are capable of. I believe that narrative therapy and Mexican culture share the kind of hope for humanity that can envision many possibilities for people's lives. They have a shared

belief in the unimaginable and the magical. Narrative therapy and Mexican culture believe in the impossible that sometimes comes alive through ordinary events in our lives. Perhaps, I've not only been having Mexican dreams but also narrative dreams since I was a young child. This is possibly where it all began for me. It is my Mexican culture and spirit that allowed me to already know the spirit of narrative ideas before I even learned them. Looking back now, when I noticed that my mom didn't have food and wasn't going to eat, I can see that I was feeling and acting in the spirit of narrative/Mexican ideas.

Anita: Tal como tus sueños Mexicanas están lleno de vida y colores tan brillantes que podrían iluminar la alma, cuando sueñas en narrativa también sueñas en color? Que sucedería si tus sueños Mexicanas y tus sueños narrativas llegaran a ser uno?

English Translation: Much like your Mexican dreams that are filled with life and vibrant colors that could illuminate ones spirit, when you dream in narrative do you also dream in color? I wonder what would happen if your Mexican dreams and your narrative dreams would come to be one?

Hyphen Ana: When I dream in narrative, my dreams are also filled in vibrant, beautiful colors. My narrative dreams are also full of life. When I think about my Mexican dreams and narrative dreams coming together I feel as though I have found my 'hogar' (home). The tension that I once felt is gone. This very idea of merging my Mexican and narrative dreams feels as if it has restored the balance to my hyphen. There is no doubt or uncertainty. There is peace and love. It is a place of magic and unconceivable hope.

Selection 2: Amor Mágico (Magical Love)

Esta parte de la entrevista con David y Tom fue muy especial. Al través de esta parte de la entrevista David me sugiero que hablara con mi mama para atener palabras que podía expresar esta practica. Al hablar con mi mama y pensar juntas en esta pregunta y también en pensar en la experiencia que mi mama tuvo cuando me miro en la conferencia en Minneapolis, sentí algo mágico. Sentí que algo muy maravilloso por mi mama. El espíritu de mi mama es un amor mágico, al igual como es el espíritu de esta practica.

English Translation: This part of the interview with David and Tom was very special. In this part of the interview David asked me to speak with my mother about the words that she would use to explain the experience and influence of Insider Witness Practices. Through talking with my mom and thinking together about this question and also thinking about the experience my mom had while attending the Narrative Therapy Symposium in Minneapolis, I felt something magical. I felt incredible depths of love for my mom. My mother's spirit is a magical love, which also parallels the spirit that I experienced with Insider Witness Practices.

Selection 2.1

Tom: One of the things we've been trying to do, Ana, during these interviews with students is help come up with words to describe our own bafflement at this.

Ana: My god, I don't know.

Tom: That's where you came in at the end, is David's been—and he'll ask you this question too, but I'll start with it. What are the words that describe this experience so that we can help share this with other people?

Anita: Estaba pensando en palabras que puede describir la experiencia de esta practica y empecé a pensar en lo que un cliente siente cuando puede mirar su vida al través de su

terapeuta. Puedo sentir hay algo familiar con la experiencia que clientes tienen que me recuerda de la cultura Mexicana. ¿Qué te piensas Hyphen Ana? Hay algo familiar con la experiencia que clientes tienen que te recuerda de tu cultura Mexicana?

English Translation: I was thinking about words to describe the experience of this practice and I started to think about what it must be like for a client to see themselves through the eyes of their therapist. I feel as though there is something familiar about the client's experience that reminds me about Mexican culture. What do you think Hyphen Ana? Is there something familiar about the client's experience through this practice that reminds you of Mexican culture?

Hyphen Ana: I feel like I really connect to what you are offering here Anita. There is something quite beautiful about how clients can see and experience themselves through this practice. I do agree with you that there is something familiar about this practice; especially the way clients are offered a unique experience to see themselves through their therapist's magical loving eyes. Clients can regain a sense of their dignity and character by being witnesses to their own honor and worth. This practice parallels how Mexican culture values people's dignity and humanity and the love and hope that we carry for one another. I feel that if I had to choose a ritual to symbolize the deep hope and magic love that lives on in the Mexican culture, that I would choose something similar to this practice. Insider Witness Practices transports all of us to a world that is full of magic and immense hope, much like what I have experienced when I am in the spirit and presence of Mexican culture.

Anita: Hay una frase en Español que me hace pensar en esta práctica, es algo así, "Ahorra me puedo ver a través de tus ojos." Y cuando una persona puede mirar su vida

atreves de otra persona en esta manera se pueden revelar muchas posibilidades para su vida.

English Translation: There is a phrase in Spanish that reminds me of this practice, it's something like this, "I can now see myself through your eyes." When a person is able to see her life through someone else's eyes that holds them in such high regard it can manifest an infinite amount of possibilities for her life.

Selection 2.2

David: Why don't you stay here and we'll just keep going, if you haven't got better things to do. [all laugh] Let me just put you in the picture of this conversation, Ana. We've all, at times, experienced ourselves as wordless or speechless. When you say speechless, it's not that you can't speak. We haven't got the words to speak.

Tom: It's wordless, yeah.

David: It's not usual for the likes of us to not have some ways of—these are professors! They're supposed to profess! They're supposed to be able to say what this is all about. It's not an unpleasant experience to—I mean, it's not at all unpleasant, but it's intriguing to people who believe they have good vocabularies to not have words. I was thinking when I was coming here, what words? The two words that I have hit upon, one was dignity and the other was beauty. In recent discussion, we kind of modified it back to a spiritual beauty. Then we also hit upon wonderment. Amanda, you've added a kind of hope.

Tom: A kind of hope, yeah, but it's a particular kind of hope. The word we use for it is the effect of our wordlessness is the effect of being in the presence of such immense hope. But I think it's also the fact that we're doing something that doesn't have words.

David: When you hear those words—I'm sure your mother has said to you, okay what's all this about? What's going on here? It sounds interesting. Everyone's crying all the time hearing you talk about it.

Ana: Everyone's crying all the time, yeah. That's pretty good.

David: How do you explain to your mother your experience of this? What do you tell her?

Ana: Um... Well, I guess in particular with my mom, I try to sort of simplify it as best as possible. But I think she actually got a pretty good picture just being there. I think her sort of being immersed in it in that moment.

David: In this case—this might be really good because she's not doing a psychology degree or something—even if they're Spanish words, what words would she use to describe what she experienced in that day? She might give us a...

Ana: That's a really good question.

David: I'd hoped you'd say that. [all laugh heartily] Sorry.

Ana: No! That's a really great question! Um... You know, I haven't asked her this, but I do want to ask her this question. But I'm thinking about, you know, thinking of my mom and the experience of being there and what words she would use. I don't know why, but the word magical came to mind for me.

David: Say she was speaking Spanish to a Spanish speaker, what words would she use in Spanish?

Ana: I would say that she would say que fue una experiencia magnificente. Que ella siento mucho amor, siento mucho cariño. (She felt a lot of love and a lot of sincere caring for one another.)

Tom: A great of love. I think it was a care, but a special kind of care.

David: Tom and Ana, would be good to get the best possible translation of what you were intending by your vocabulary.

Ana: It's a special kind of love that my mom experienced that day: one that was tender and dear to her heart and her history of life. A magical love that was palpable throughout this experience for her. It seemed that she felt rejuvenated and awakened and more connected to what is important in her life.

David: Anglos rarely consider this kind of love as opposed to romantic love as 'a magical love.' Can Maria explain to a guy from New Zealand what she means by a 'magical love'? Or is this something I should ask my Mexican friends in Xalapa or Cancun for their thoughts as well?

Ana: Magical love was something that came to my mind to me (Ana) as I was reading my response to the question about the kind of experience my mom had on that day...

Anita: Tengo mucho curiosidad y interés en saber mas de este amor mágico. Se parece que es algo muy especial para ti. De donde piensas que aprendiste de este tipo de amor? Como es que tu mama te pudo inspirar a sentir esto tipo de amor?

English Translation: I am curious and interested in knowing more about this magical love. It seems that it is something very special to you. Where do you think you came to know about this kind of love? How is that your mom came to inspire you to feel this kind of love?

Hyphen Ana: I believe that I came to know about such a love through my mother who has offered so much to my life. She sacrificed so much in coming to the U.S. because she wanted my brother and I to have opportunities to have a good life. I've come to know

about magical love through the immense love that my mom has offered me in my life. My mom is part of my Mexican dreams and she keeps me believing in the magical of this world. My mom has often shared stories with me that the American side of my hyphen would say are not real and has no place in this world. The Mexican side believes wholeheartedly in the spiritual experiences that have offered meaning and mystery to my mom's life. There has always been something very special about my mom. She has one of the most beautiful spirits that I've ever come to experience. She is part of the passion and heart that I have felt to offer restoration and healing to this world. Magical loving, I believe, has a place in the hyphen. It has roots in the Mexican side of my hyphen, but it's something that was awakened through my mom's experience while attending the Narrative Therapy Symposium in Minneapolis.

Anita: Dijiste que el amor mágico tiene rutas en el Mexicano lado de tu guion, pero también es algo que fue descubierto por la experiencia que tu mama tuvo en la Terapia Narrativa Conferencia en Minneapolis. Es posible que el amor mágico vive dentro el guion? Que tiene parte en cada lado del guion?

English Translation: You said that magical love has roots in the Mexican side of your hyphen, but it was also something that you discovered through the experience that your mother had at the Narrative Therapy Symposium in Minneapolis. Is it possible that magical love lives within your hyphen? That it has a place on both sides?

Hyphen Ana: I hadn't considered that. It does seem possible that magical love lives within both sides of the hyphen. It seems that it came alive through my mother and she inspired this come to alive, but it is also something that I found words for through the English language. I like the idea of thinking about magical love as living with the hyphen

as it frees me from having to choose one side or the other. It's a way that these two parts of me can come together to create something quite incredible and magical. Magical love makes me feel like I can belong to both sides of the hyphen and that I am American and I am also Mexican. Magical love's beliefs about hope and healing are similar to how people relate to one another in the Mexican culture. I do see this Anita; magical loving came through on this day and re-connected with me in a special kind of way. I feel a sense of happiness to know that my Mexican dreams came alive even when I didn't realize they were still with me.

Anita: Como es mirar atrás de tu vida y saber que haz estado soñando con tus sueños Mexicanos cuando tal vez pensabas que ya no podías soñar en Mexicana? Que piensas y sientes en saber esto?

English Translation: What is it like to look back on your life and know that you have been dreaming in Mexican all along when you believed that you couldn't have these kinds of dreams anymore? What do you think and feel to know this?

Hyphen Ana: I am elated and grateful to know that I have been dreaming in Mexican in spite of feeling disconnected with the Mexican side of my hyphen. I think I have come to realize that even though I don't always feel connected to the cultural pieces of my Mexican heritage, because I don't have the opportunity to attend Mexican events or be around people of my heritage, my Mexican culture is most strongly associated with my hopes and dreams.

Anita: Me parece a mi que muchas veces personas rendirán completamente a tener nomas sueños Americanos y no pueden tener o regresar a sus sueños Mexicanos. Estoy pensando si tal vez es un logro que haz podido todavía tener sueños Mexicanos durante tu

vida (tal vez cuando no lo sabias) cuando haz estado reforzada a tener nomas sueños Americanos? Y si piensas que si, que grande es este logro en tu vida?

English Translation: It seems to me that, in many cases, someone could give in completely to only having American dreams and may no longer have or even return to their Mexican dreams. I am wondering if it might be an accomplishment that you have held onto your Mexican dreams throughout your life (even when you didn't know it) when you have been encouraged to only dream in American? If you feel that this may be an accomplishment, what is the significance of such an accomplishment?

Hyphen Ana: Yes, I believe that I can see that as an accomplishment. I am not sure I would have seen that as an accomplishment in my life before this very moment. Knowing that despite the strong encouragement that I received to only dream in American, and somehow I never gave in; somehow I was able to dream again in Mexican is truly astonishing. This is probably one of the biggest and most profound accomplishments in my life and something I have been longing for. My heart and spirit have been waiting to be reunited with my Mexican dreams.

Anita: Estoy pensando en este logro de tus sueños Mexicanos y en tu habilidad de preservar todos estos años al contrario lo que haz aprendido aquí en los estados unidos, cuantas personas pierden sus sueños sobre los años y nunca los recuperan? Tengo mucha curiosidad en saber en cuán grande será tu corazón Mexicano puesto que no perdiste tus sueños Mexicanos?

English Translation: I am thinking about your accomplishment of your Mexican dreams and in your ability to preserve your dreams contrary to what you learned while living in the U.S. How many people lose their dreams over the years and never get them back? I

am wondering about how big your Mexican heart and spirit must be, given that you didn't give in to dreaming in American only and you still held onto your Mexican dreams?

Hyphen Ana: It is true that many people lose the ability to dream in Mexican and somehow are never able to be reunited. It is saddening to know that this happens. I feel something inexplicable to feel the immensity of my Mexican heart and spirit; that they held onto my Mexican dreams while being encouraged to let them go entirely. My dreams are filled with even brighter colors and the dances are becoming more spirited and fierce.

Selection 2.3

Ana: ...and I wanted to expand on my thoughts of what my mom might have experienced. I think you are right David; it is typically romantic love that is viewed as magical. I believe this experience was very magical for my mom as she reconnected with the love and compassion that she experiences for herself and others that have faced oppression. My mom experienced a greatness of love towards the people that have meant the most to her heart, and it reconnected her to what she has been standing and striving to live for. It appeared that my mom's loving and daring spirit came alive on that day. Magical love moves us to believe in ourselves and love ourselves wholeheartedly. Magical love influences us to experience the best knowing of ourselves and to honor those knowings. It becomes even more of a magical love when we can do the same for others. Magical love embraces hope and healing.

Anita: Hyphen Ana, conecté mucho en la manera que explicaste el amor mágico. Se siente como algo que no es parte de este mundo. Como es que pudiste tener las palabras

para hablar de este tipo de amor mágica? También estaba pensando de la terapia narrativa, y si es posible que el amor mágico también es una manera de pensar y sentir de la terapia narrativa?

English Translation: Hyphen Ana, I connected very much in the way that you described magical love. It feels like it is something out of this world. How is it that you came to have the words to speak about this kind of magic?? I was also thinking about narrative therapy, and if it is possible that magical love is a way to think and feel about narrative therapy?

Hyphen Ana: Yes, I do believe that it was my Mexican dreams that were speaking to me through that moment. My Mexican dreams came alive once again without me knowing it. I do believe that it is possible to describe narrative therapy in the ways I talked about magical love. Narrative therapy in many ways is about performing a magical kind of loving for our clients. Narrative therapy and magical love is about restoring humanity back into our world and to dignify the suffering of others. I can't imagine anything else that is more gratifying and fulfilling than for others to feel dignified through their own moral character.

Anita: Yo tampoco puedo pensar en algo mas hermoso en la vida de que uno puede sentir algo tan especial por uno mismo.

English translation: I also can't think of anything more beautiful, than for someone to experience and feel his or her own dignity and honor as a person.

Selection 3: Un Abrigo de Esperanza (A Shelter of Hope)

Al través la entrevista con David Epston y Tom Stone Carlson esta parte de la conversación me dejo pensando sobre el espíritu de la cultura Mexicana y de la esperanza en que

personas viven. Tengo curiosidad sobre esta conexión que esta practica tiene con la cultura Mexicana. Me parece que la terapia narrativa y la cultura Mexicana tienen las mismas ideas y éticas sobre como debemos de querer por otras personas. Esta parte de la conversación me dejo pensado en la esperanza que Ana ha tenido en su vida.

English Translation: As a result of the interview with David Epston and Tom Stone Carlson this part of the conversation left me thinking about the spirit that lives within Mexican culture and the hope that Mexican people live with. I am curious about the connection or relationship that this practice has with Mexican culture. It seems to me narrative therapy and Mexican culture has many of the same ideas and values about how we must care for another. This part of the conversations left me thinking about the hope that Ana has had in her life.

Selection 3.1

Tom: I think being in the realm of ritual, like we've been talking about, in the Act One interview— well, in the Act Two, the client is watching, listening to the therapist's hope for their lives and getting a sense of who they are in the therapist's eyes, but without the therapist saying, "I think you're wonderful. You can do it."

David: That is cheesy, isn't it? That is cheesy.

Tom: But it's born of a hope and a knowing context. And it allows for a way of sharing that maybe is a safer way of doing it.

Anita: Hyphen Ana, que tú piensas sobre esta idea que una terapeuta puede demostrar sus esperanzas para sus clientes sobre esta practica? Que uno puede compartir sus aspiraciones y esperanzas con sus clientes sobre esta practica en una manera que es mas sincero? También ha estado pensando, si tal vez esta practica en una manera te recuerda de la esperanza y amor que personas tienen para cada uno entre la cultura Mexicana?

English translation: Hyphen Ana, what do you think about the idea that as a therapist you can demonstrate your hopes to your clients through this practice? As a therapist you can share your aspirations and hopes with your clients in a way that is more sincere and transparent? I have also been thinking, if possibly this practice in some way reminds you of the hope and love that lives within Mexican culture?

Hyphen Ana: This is something that really connects with me. From my experience, I felt that this practice offered a space where hope could blossom and grow. The client was able to experience their therapist's fondest dreams and beliefs that they had for them. It was something very beautiful that was experienced by all who partook in this practice. There was something special about this experience that reawakened the love and hope that I have for my own life and for humanity. It transformed the spirit of my own humanity and for those that have been treated unfairly and unjustly in this world.

Anita: Estoy pensando en tus sueños Mexicanos. Piensas que en hacer parte de esta practica y mirar cómo tus clientes fueron transformados, si esto tal vez es parte de tus sueños Mexicanos? Tal vez sin saberlo, estabas viviendo tus sueños Mexicanos? Si dices que si, como te sientes en saber que haz estado viviendo tus sueños Mexicanos al través de esta practica?

English Translation: I am thinking about your Mexican dreams. Do you think while being part of this practice and witnessing how your clients were transformed, if this in itself is part of your Mexican dreams? If possibly without knowing it in the moment, you were living out your Mexican dreams? If this might be so, how do you feel to know that you have been living out your Mexican dreams through this practice?

Hyphen Ana: I can't say that I would have considered this myself, so thank you Anita for suggesting this. I don't think I had realized that maybe I was actually being transported to my Mexican dreams while experiencing this practice. Witnessing right before my eyes what has come from this practice and how beauty and hope has been restored to my clients' lives is more than I could have ever asked for. My heart is content to know that I have been living in my Mexican dreams, and that my Mexican dreams and narrative dreams have been in a shared experience of hope and magic.

Selection 3.2

David: Galeano (Eduardo), who sadly died very recently—I'm very sad about this—at 74, he has this—you'll have to translate it back into Spanish. He talks about his stories giving shelter to hope. It doesn't give hope; it gives shelter to hope. How do you say? *Abrigar la esperanza? Abrigar is shelter. What's hope?*

Anita: He estado pensando en Galeano y el dice que sus cuentos pueden crear un abrigo para sostener esperanza, no es que le dan esperanza pero es un lugar que esperanza poder ser sostenida. Hyphen Ana, haz pensado en la esperanza en esta manera? Puedes pensar en maneras que esperanza esta sostenida en la cultura Mexicana? Hay partes de la cultura Mexicana que ofrece un hogar o abrigo para sostener la esperanza?

English Translation: I have been thinking about Galeano and that he said that his stories could give shelter to hope, not that they gave hope but his stories were a place that hope could be substantiated. Hyphen Ana, have you thought about hope in this way? Can you think of ways that hope is substantiated within Mexican culture? Are there parts of Mexican culture that give shelter to hope?

Hyphen Ana: When I have thought about hope, I have often thought about it in the sense of how we offer hope and give hope, but I didn't necessarily think about the ways in which hope can be sheltered and the idea of offering a shelter for hope. I like the idea of thinking about offering a shelter, possibly a hogar (home) that hope can reside and prosper in. I think that is what came from the experience of Insider Witness Practices; through this practice we were able to offer a space where hope could be sheltered. Hope now had a home to reside in and be held by all of those involved. I am thinking about this question about the ways in which Mexican culture gives shelter to hope. I believe that the rituals and traditions of celebration, the dances and the music that are so much a part of Mexican culture offer ways for us to have a shared experience of hope. Perhaps, these are the reasons that hope lives on in Mexican culture because of all the spaces that provide a shelter for hope.

Anita: No se que piensas de esto, pero en tu manera de hablar de esperanza me hizo pensar en Gabriel (Gabo) Garcia Marquez. Se me hace que lo reconoces, es un Colombiano novelista que escribió muchas historias con el tema de realismo mágico. Y también tenía una convicción de regresar la humanidad a personas Latinas. Y me deje pensando en el corazón y alma de Gabo y también en tu corazón y alma. Y será posible que tal vez tengas un corazón que es parecido al corazón de Gabo? Que piensas y sientes de esto? Hay algo en común en el espíritu de Gabo y el tuyo?

English translation: I am not sure what you will think about this, but the way that you talked about hope made me think about Gabriel (Gabo) Garcia Marquez. I think you might know of him; he is a Colombian novelist that wrote many stories that involved magical realism. He also had a strong conviction about returning humanity back into

Latin people's lives. I was left thinking about Gabo's heart and spirit and also about your own heart and spirit. Is it possible that perhaps you have a shared heart with Gabo? What do you think and feel about this? Is it possible that you have the kind of spirit that can relate to that of Gabo's?

Hyphen Ana: Thank you for wondering about this Anita and asking me this question. I am familiar with Gabo and came to know of him most recently through Marcela Polanco's keynote at the Therapeutic Conversations 12 Conference in Vancouver last year. It appears that his love for humanity was unbreakable and astonishing. He seemed to offer so much hope to this world and unreservedly gave his time and life for others. I can't exactly put to words how I might feel to know that my heart in some way resembles that of Gabo's. I feel something quite beyond honor that you even suggested the possibility that my heart and spirit in anyway resembles Gabo's heart and spirit. I think his heart and spirit is one that was filled with magic and infinite possibilities for life. He brought life and magic back into this world. I think that I am also someone that believes more and more in the unexplainable, the magical, and the impossible; my heart is filled with tremendous hope for humanity. I hope to learn more about Gabo as my life continues and to carry his imagination and unwavering hope into my work with clients.

Selections by Hyphen Ana

Selection 1: A Therapist's Mexican Dreams

This selection comes from my written reflection after my act 1 interview, and made me feel more connected to my Mexican dreams. Looking back on this now it means something different to me. It seems that my Mexican dreams weren't only in the margins now, but they were becoming bigger and starting to bring life back into my dreams. I could dream in a way that

was invigorating and life sustaining. I've held onto my hopes and dreams as a therapist even through tribulation and significant doubt, and I believe that Anita's support and belief in me has carried me through.

Selection 1.1

Ana: My experience of an Act 1 interview was undeniably one of the most interesting and significant things I have ever been part of in my entire life.... I felt like I was walking on a cloud, that I was unstoppable. I now saw and connected with things that had always been there but I was not aware that they were within my reach.

Tom: Would you say that you allowed yourself to see things in yourself that up to this point you had only dreamed were possible? If so, what have you been doing to prepare yourself to see your dreams for yourself to come true?

Ana: I would say that I did allow myself to see things in myself that up to this point I had only dreamed were possible. I think I might have been preparing myself to see my dreams for myself come true by working so hard to reach the place that I am in life today. I have been committed and dedicated to making my dreams come true and living my life so that I could live out my dreams and experience them. I am right where I am suppose to be. This moment reaffirmed this for me. I am making my dreams a reality.

Tom: That is really saying something Ana! The fact that you had the hope and vision to even dream such a vision of yourself. How is that you could even dream of something so visionary for yourself? What do you think that this might say about the depth of the hope that is in your eyes and your heart? And, as if this was not extra-ordinary enough, how is that you dared to hold on to these dreams and visions of yourself during times of struggle and doubt that undoubtedly come to those who long to be therapists such as you do?

Ana: I do believe that that there is a lot of hope in my eyes and heart that have allowed me to hold onto my dreams even when doubt and uncertainty has visited my life. I suppose when I really think about the depth of the hope that I live with I am blown away and amazed. It probably is the depths of this hope that has kept me reaching for my dreams. I have tried to keep a hopeful heart throughout my life, and to believe in myself. Ever since I was a young child I often felt a sense of hopefulness and enthusiasm about life. I have always wanted to believe that something good could come of this life, and that I could live up to my dreams. It is my mother's sacrifices, my clients, and the unjust suffering of others that keeps me holding on to my dreams and visions. I want to offer something to this world and give something in return.

Hyphen Ana: Anita, I was thinking about what Ana said that even as a young child she had a certain kind of hope and enthusiasm about life and I am wondering if you could say more about the hope and enthusiasm that you felt as child? Is this particular kind of hope and enthusiasm that Ana lived with as a child in any way part of your Mexican heart? If so, is it also possible that it is your Mexican heart that has dared to hold onto to your dreams and visions of becoming a narrative therapist?

Anita: Siento en una manera que no se que decir o como responder. Pero al pensar en estas preguntas me alegro de felicidad porque deberá mente si pienso que mi corazón Mexicano es lo que me da aspiración y alimento para soñar. Cuando era niñita vivía con un corazón tan grande que podría iluminar mis sueños al creer que todo era posible. No sentía desilusión y creía en mi misma. Se me hace lo mas que Ana conectaba con el Americano lado de el guion lo mas que empezó a olvidara de sus sueños y en la mágica. Pero en leer lo que Ana escribió me hizo sentir mucha felicidad en saber que en una

manear no dejo de ir su creencia el mágica y esperanza. Con Ana todavía tener un corazón Mexicano todavía podido luchar por mis sueños en ser una terapeuta narrativa. Hyphen Ana, piensas que te haz reunido con el lado Mexicano de tu guion y que haz regresado a soñar en Mexicana otra vez? Si esto es posible, me puedes decir come te sientes en hacer reunida con tu corazón Mexicana y regresar a soñar en Mexicana otra vez? Como se siente hacer reunida?

English Translation: I feel almost at a lost of words in responding to this question. But in thinking about these questions I feel overjoyed because I truly do believe that my Mexican heart is what drives and encourages my spirit to dream. When I was little I lived with a heart that was so big that it could illuminate my dreams to believe that anything and everything was possible. I think that the more Ana connected with the American side of her hyphen she began to forget about her dreams and her belief in the magical. But in reading Ana's response it brought me great joy to know that she had somehow managed to hold on to her belief in magic and enduring hope. Hyphen Ana, would you say that you have been reunited with the Mexican side of your hyphen and that you have returned to dreaming in Mexican? If this is so, could you tell me what it is like to be reunited with your Mexican heart and to return to dreaming in Mexican? How does it feel to be reunited?

Hyphen Ana: Yes, I feel like I have been reunited with the Mexican side of my hyphen and that I am also dreaming in Mexican again. I feel as though I am Anita and that this part of me belongs with me just as much as the American side does. I feel like I have been reunited with an old friend and that our friendship maybe have been distant or absent at times, but now that we are reunited we'll always be together. I believe that my

heart always knew that somehow I would get back to Anita and to dreaming in Mexican. It is relieving to know that I have finally made it here and my life can begin anew. Anita, what does your Mexican heart feel to know that you have been reunited with Hyphen Ana, and to know that Ana never lost hope that she would dream with her Mexican heart again?

Anita: Mi corazón Mexicana siente algo muy especial por Hyphen Ana. Yo se la triste que ella a tenido en su vida por sentir tan decepción en pensar que ya no podía ser Mexicana. Que ella no tenia un lugar en la cultura Mexicana. Yo sabia que eso no era verdad y ahora también lo sabe Hyphen Ana.

English Translation: My Mexican heart feels something very special for Hyphen Ana. I know the sadness and desperation that Hyphen Ana has felt in her life thinking that she could no longer identify as Mexican. She felt that she no longer had a place within Mexican culture. I have always known that that was not true and now Hyphen Ana knows it as well.

Selection 2: The Hopeful Eyes and Wondrous Heart

This part of the written reflection after my Act 1 interview really spoke to my heart and spirit. I am interested in knowing more about the hopeful-eyes-and-wondrous-heart-spirit, and the history that has shaped these hopes and driven heart. I am also curious about the role that Anita might have in the development of these hopeful eyes-and-wondrous heart. I wonder about the return of the Mexican dreams, and if these hopes and heart are part of those dreams.

Selection 2.1

Ana: I do see new possibilities for myself that I didn't see before. I see what narrative therapy is truly about. I feel that I now understand what it means to not just use narrative

therapy as a technique (narrative therapy is not a technique!) but that it is stance that you are sharing and living out with your client (and that is an honor, in itself). This experience helped me to see and experience the influential and tender spirit of narrative therapy. I feel as though I experienced the driving force of narrative therapy that which moves us to see beyond the realms of this world (beyond what is imaginable), and to experience a new marvel, in which clients see themselves with a new set of eyes and a wondrous heart.

Tom: Wow Ana! Just beautiful! In saying that you experienced the driving force of narrative therapy, to see beyond what is imaginable, do you think that you could have had such an experience if you yourself didn't already believe in the unimaginable? Do you think that you gained a new set of eyes and a wondrous heart as a result of the interview? Or do, these eyes and hearts have a long history in you?

Ana: Thank you for such a wonderful reflection Tom. I don't think I would have been able to see beyond the imaginable and experience the driving force of narrative therapy if I didn't already believe in the unimaginable. I believe that it does help to believe in something in order to experience or see it. It would be much harder to experience something that you don't believe in. I think that the eyes and hearts do have a long history with me, I feel as though they have been with me all along. It seems that this moment helped me to rekindle that flame which connects me to these set of eyes and the wondrous heart.

Hyphen Ana: Ana, You mentioned that this moment rekindled the flame that connects you to your hopeful eyes and wondrous heart, and I am wondering about what was rekindled that allowed you to see with those hopeful eyes and wondrous heart. Anita, do you think that you had a part in this experience for Ana? Is it possible that it was your

Mexican heart that came alive and was rekindled on this day and allowed you to see through such hopeful eyes and wondrous heart?

Anita: Si, pienso que yo estaba con Ana en ese momento, y fui parte de lo que Ana siento cuando pudo mirar y sentir la mágica y esperanza. En este día yo tuve parte en la vida de Ana en una manera que la transformo. Antes de esto momento ella podía sentir la mágica y sabia que había algo mas en este mundo, pero fue en este momento que la mágica fue revivida y la pudo mirar con sus ojos y corazón.

English Translation: Yes, I believe that I was with Ana during this moment, and I was part of what Ana felt when she could see and feel the magic and hope. On this day I had a part in Ana's life that allowed her to be transformed. Before this day she could feel the magic and knew that there was something more to this world, but it was in this moment that the magic of this world came alive and she could see it right before eyes and heart.

Hyphen Ana: I am thinking about living in the hyphen as a Mexican-American woman, and if you feel that in some way this moment restored some balance to our hyphen?

Sometimes when we have moments in life such as these we can't always know what they mean or why they happened, but I am wondering if you look back now and see how this moment transformed us, is it possible that it was in this moment when we were transported to a life of living in the hyphen, both as Mexican and American, and all that came after this experience (the interview with David and the conferences) helped to shape our identity even further?

Anita: Si miro atrás a la experiencia que tuvimos si siento que algo fue restaurado en nuestra vida. Empicamos a sentir algo diferente y pudimos apreciar mas la mágica de la vida y entender que vivimos con una esperanza que puede sobrevivir los tiempos mas

duros. Pienso que pudimos poner las palabras a nuestras valores que son parte de la cultura Mexicana y que también tienen parte en la terapia narrativa. Tal vez Ana no sabía en ese momento que íbamos a empezar la restauración de nuestro guion pero al reunirnos con la magia de este mundo empicamos a reunirnos de nuevo con Ana.

English Translation: If I look back to the experience that we had we can see that something was restored in our lives. We started to feel different about our own sense of self and we could appreciate more readily the magic of this life and came to see that we live with a kind of hope that endures even the darkest of times. I feel that we could put words to many of the values and beliefs that come from Mexican culture and also are shared with narrative therapy. I don't think that Ana knew that in that moment she was going to begin the restoration of her hyphenated identity, but by her reuniting to the magic of this world she began a renewed relationship with her hyphen identity.

Selection 2.2

Tom: I am certain that your hopeful eyes and wondrous heart must have a long, long history Ana! How else could you explain the transformative influence that this interview had on you Ana? I would be very interested in getting to know some of the key moments in the long history of your hopeful eyes and wondrous heart? Would you mind sharing some of those key moments with me?

Ana: One of the people that shaped my hopeful eyes and wondrous heart is my mother and the moments I shared with her when I was a young child. I remember as a child I felt a deep love and concern for my mother. As a child my mother encouraged my spirituality, to read, to play imaginatively, to love with all of my heart and to hope beyond belief. She nourished my heart and soul. I also remember having a teacher when I

was in Elementary school that made me feel loved and appreciated. When I was in her presence I felt like I was her own daughter and she cared for me in such a way. She inspired me to care for others in very much the same way she cared for me, and offered a lot of hope for my heart and life. These are some of the moments where this all began for me. I feel that my hopeful eyes and wondrous heart started long before I was born and started many lifetimes ago with my ancestors, and maybe these eyes and heart are part of my heritage.

Hyphen Ana: Ana, you said that maybe your hopeful eyes and wondrous heart started long before you were born and maybe many lifetimes ago, and I am wondering, Anita, if you could say more about this? Anita, do you have a sense as to what Ana might be talking about here? Do you think that these hopeful eyes and wondrous heart have a place in Mexican culture?

Anita: Se me hace que Ana esta hablando de la cultura Mexicana y lo que nos ofrece en nuestras vidas. Pienso que los ojos de esperanza y el corazón maravilloso tienen una significativa historia con la cultura Mexicana, y esto es algo que podido sobrevivir en la vida de Ana mientras a vivido el los Estados Unidos. No pienso que hay otra manera de explicar como es que Ana pudo tener una experiencia que le hizo mirar las cosa con mucha esperanza y maravilla. Aunque Ana no sabia que esta parte de ella es algo que tiene parte en su cultura Mexicana, yo quiero que sepa que sus ojos de esperanza y el corazón maravilloso es algo que siempre a estado con Anita y ahora también parte de Hyphen Ana.

English Translation: I think that Ana is talking about the Mexican culture and what it offers to the lives of people. I think that the hopeful eyes and wondrous heart have a

significant history with the Mexican culture and this is something that has withstood that challenges that Ana has been up against in America. I am not sure if there is another way to explain how Ana could have had such an experience where she was open to seeing the world with tremendous hope and wonderment. Even though Ana did not know that these eyes and heart have a long history with the Mexican culture, I would like her to know that her hopeful eyes and wondrous heart have always been with her through me and now can also live through Hyphen Ana.

Selection 3: A Magical Pathway of Hope

In this selection David Epston invited me to ask my mom about her experience of being present during our presentation on Insider Witness Practices at Minneapolis. This part of the conversation with my mother was enchanting and mesmerizing. The way that my mother described Insider Witness Practices left me in awe and admiration towards her. There was something quite beautiful in the way my mother described the hope she felt and the magic she experienced. For this particular selection, I will be responding to my mother's comments from the perspective of Hyphen Ana.

Selection 3.1

David: Ana, would you consider asking Maria/your mom some question on our behalf, as you are right – your mother has a distinct vantage point, although I am sure she came to witness you presenting in Minneapolis, she could not help – I suspect – but be caught up in what transpired in the way that one and all were (e.g. immerse in the experience of it even if vicariously). Also being bilingual/bicultural, she might have access to matters that most of us won't (e.g. the celebration of ritual process rather than its diminution in Anglo-American culture).

María: Fue una esperanza con un camino que tiene una salida para una vida mejor – un camino que te puede llevar a una mejor vida. Ya no sientes miedo y vergüenza y te haz aceptado a ti misma. Es como una cadena se a rompido – una cadena de miedo se rompe y estas libre.

English Translation: She shared that she experienced a certain kind of hope that personified a particular kind of pathway. A pathway that could possibly lead to a better life – a better way of living. A pathway/passageway of hope in which you no longer experienced fear or shame and where you can now accept yourself. It's like breaking a chain – a chain filled with fear that had finally been broken and you are now set free.

Hyphen Ana: In that moment when I talked to my mom over the phone I don't think that I had quite realized just how captivating my mother's words were. It was through my written dialogue with David at a later time that I felt incredible admiration at how beautiful my mom could speak. I learned that my mother is a poet and that her wisdom is quite an extraordinary one. I know that my mom has suffered immensely throughout her life, but it also seems that through this suffering my mother's hope has been strengthened. This actually reminds me of something that I read along the way while learning about the borderlands/Chicana identity:

“...the narratives we live by...mirror stories we tell ourselves about ourselves, stories that shape both the ecstasy and terror of our world, disease our values, misplace our absolutes, and yet strangely gives us hope, inspiration, and a framework for insights. We can't escape narratives but I believe we can resist them and transform them” (Elenes, 1997, p. 368).

When I read this passage from the Elenes I felt incredibly connected to her words. It is our narrative that shapes our lives and at times these narratives are ones that are of suffering and hardship, but somehow it is through them that we can be transformed. Our hope is somehow transformed and gains strength through the hardships that we at times endure. I believe that my mom is the kind of person that has defied and transformed the narratives in her life that have tried to take away her dignity and humanity. She is a remarkable person and mother. It is through her that I gain my own strength and perseverance to move forward in this world.

David: Maria, your words are so beautiful they brought tears to my heart! I was wondering when you use the word ‘camino’, do you use it with any of the meanings that you might give to say ‘Camino de Santiago de Compostela’ in Spain? Is there a meaning of a pilgrimage? Why I ask is that your description is what I imagine pilgrims on the camino de Santiago de Compostela might very well feel, perhaps not at the beginning but hopefully at the end.

María: Un camino puede ser corto o largo, y vas encontrar curvas en el camino. El camino nunca va hacer derecho. El camino va llevar dolor, sufrimiento, decepción y tortura. El camino es como una cadena y cuando llegas al fin tienes que cortar esa cadena y dejar ir el sufrimiento, dolor y decepción. Tenemos que cortar unas cadenas de generaciones del pasado para poder crear nuevas cadenas para una vida mejor.

English Translation: Camino is about getting from one place to another but sometimes it is not a straight, clear, or easy path. You have to travel through disappointment, pain, and suffering in order to make it to the end of the journey. Hope is what keeps you moving through the pain and suffering and helps you make it to the end. Sometimes there

is no telling how long your travels will be. At the end of the journey you will feel a sense of freedom without pain, and you will be able to express and share your journey with others. You begin to experience a healing even through the pain and suffering that you endured.

Hyphen Ana: The way my mother described the restoration of ones life was very moving. I initially felt sadness because I know that this in some ways her words describe the pain that she has endured in her own life. I also believe that my mom is the kind of woman that has lived with a strong conviction in her life to stand for justice and honor those that are often pushed to the margins. As I continued to learn more about Chicana identity I read about Andrade's and Gonzales Le Denmat's (1999) work that spoke directly to my mother's narrative, "They recall their mothers never speaking directly about feminisms, yet they practiced what was necessary to push us in that direction... they offered their own hard won wisdom" (p. 155). This is my mother; I have been witness to her practices of feminism. She taught me to critically question and challenge the patriarchal traditions that are so often embedded in Mexican and U.S. culture. Through her own lived experiences my mom has gained wisdoms about life that have ignited and cultivated my own sense of self. As a result of my mother's teachings I have been directed towards a life of creation, where I exceedingly value *educación* (education) and treat others with immense *amabilidad* (kindness) and *respeto* (respect). Given my experience of growing up with such a mother, I had something to draw from. The intensity of my own fire as a feminist scholar has come from my mother – I have been able to draw from my own culture as a way of resisting the domination hierarchies and systems that want to keep us in the margins.

Selection 3.2

Ana: ... But I'm thinking about, you know, thinking of my mom and the experience of being there and what words she would use. I don't know why, but the word magical came to mind for me.

David: Ana, Would you mind taking this up with Maria/your mom to see how she might describe the 'magic' of this? I believe such an inquiry will take us further in our making sense of IWPs than any other avenue we might pursue at the moment. I strongly believe this. Thanks for bearing with me on this, Ana!

María: Descubriste la magia de la otra persona – conociste a tu cliente y pudiste expresar la magia que has sentido en su presencia. Pudiste reconocer la magia en tu cliente y te identificaste en la magia que ella a vivido. No asumiste cosas de tu cliente porque tomaste tiempo en estudiar y conocer tu cliente, y que era significativa en su vida. Tu aceptaste la persona que conociste y como era ella. La escuchaste sin rechazó. Pudiste encontrar y reconocer cosas en común entre ella y tu.

English Translation: You discovered the magic of the other person. You came to an intimate knowing of your client and were able to express the magic that you felt in her presence. You were able to recognize (or more precisely translated as... become intimately acquainted with) the magic in your client and the magic of her life. You didn't assume things about your client because you took the time to study her and come to intimately know her and what was significant in her life. You were able to accept her and come to know her as if you were her. You listened to her without judgment, rejection or shame. You were able to find and come to have a shared experience together.

Hyphen Ana: I am truly amazed at the way my mother described the magic that she felt and experienced through being a witness to the work I had done with my client through Insider Witness Practices. My mother's words flowed so naturally and intrinsically. She did not hesitate when she spoke and her words came with a proclaimed loving and tender tone. When I think about my mother's striking words, I am reminded of the teachings of Allen (1986) and Castillo (1994), which are revolved around indigenous perspectives and Mestiza consciousness. Allen (1986) and Castillo (1994) speak of the power that comes from the spirited woman that can give meaning to the world in distinguished ways. Allen (1986) suggests that the continuation of practices and indigenous traditions are acts in opposition to the conquest of oppression. It is through Allen's (1986) own experience with tribal traditions that she is able to give words to the origin of women's intelligence, in which she describes as "Thought Woman", a woman who generates creations within the realms of our universe. Castillo (1994) explains further that as people we need to have an ongoing awareness and relationship with our own bodies, minds, and spirits and also with that of others. It is through this channel, which she coins as "Xicanisma", where a person can experience a continual process of learning to listen and trust their inner voice and intuitions, to be a dreamer with visions, and to share their thoughts and dreams with others (Castillo, 1994).

As I think about Allen's and Castillo's work I am re-connected with the magic and spirituality of this world. I also feel a deeper appreciation for my mother's words of magic for they can be found within the realms of Chicana feminism. I believe that my mother is a "Thought Woman" – one who can generate and speak magic into our universe. My spirit, mind, and body resonate with honor for my mother. She is someone

that can fill my spirit with dreams and urges me to trust what I know and believe – in her I can see our indigenous histories, traditions, and cultures that are worthy of reclaiming. I feel as though I am just beginning to touch the surface of something that also has a long history with me – my Chicana consciousness. I feel a sense of urgency to know more about the Chicana lineage that has for so long been part of my own conviction as a human being. I am not static, I am not a fixed identity – I am in the process of becoming.

David: To discover the magic of the other person... is there anything more fateful than to do so? And even more so “to express the magic that you felt in presence” directly to her? Surely, this is the ‘heart and soul’ of what we are calling and perhaps our terms are clumsy, ‘Insider Witnessing Practices’, is it not? Maria, no one could possibly have described this more precisely and acutely than you have. To you, we will always be grateful I cannot thank you enough!

Ana: This is it! This is the heart and soul of this work – of these practices – this is how it comes to life and carries out such genuine transformations. I don’t think there is anything more momentous and significant than to discover the magic of the other person and in return to express that magic directly to them – how incredibly astonishing! Is there anything more beautiful than this?

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

Throughout this paper thus far I have written from the voice of several different versions of myself: Anita, Hyphen Ana, and my former self Ana. As a result of this multi-vocal dialogue with my various selves I have reinvented myself. Therefore, for the remainder of this paper I will be writing in the voice of my emerging Chicana identity.

When I first decided to engage in an autoethnographic study of my experience with Insider Witness Practices, I was not quite sure what I had signed up for. Initially, I felt some reservations about participating in a way of studying that would demand so much from me personally. At the beginning of this project, while I was excited about the possibilities that it would bring to my life, I also quietly sat in doubt questioning my abilities to embark on such a project that would involve a telling of my Mexican identity and heritage when I, myself, felt a bit like a fraud- I was neither Mexican nor American. Soon enough, I came to realize that this experience was not just my own and that other people who live a hyphenated identity might experience something similar (Elenes, 1997). As part of my initial reflection of my autoethnographic study and exploration of my dual identity, I realized that I was both Mexican and American and it became possible for me to occupy both spaces. I came to embrace my hyphenated identity as a Mexican-American woman. I felt that for the first time in my life I could proudly say that I am a Mexican-American and that both sides of the hyphen are equally relevant. I no longer had to be one or the other.

I no longer carried the heavy weight that came from feeling like an imposter. I realized that I didn't need to choose one or the other, but could exist within the hyphen. Initially, when I was thinking about Anita, I thought of her as a young me because that was the last time I remember living in my Mexican culture. As a result of engaging in this multi-vocal dialogic

approach, I noticed Anita growing up before my eyes. She was no longer my younger childhood self, she became a living part of my hyphenated identity as a 27 year old Mexican-American woman. As an outcome of engaging in a multi-vocal dialogue, I began searching the scholarly literature in order to might help me make sense of my hyphenated or hybrid identity. What follows is a summary of some of the things that I have learned along the way.

As described by Elenes (1997), “the *Borderlands* is the discourse of people who live between different worlds. It speaks against dualism, oversimplification, and essentialism.... it is a language that explains the social conditions of subjects with hybrid identities” (p. 359). The borderlands discourse brings to light the life of those who live with hybrid identities, and is favored by some Chicana/o scholars – people whose identity are in constant flux as they live in the in-between of U.S. and Mexican cultures (Elenes, 1997, p. 359). The *Borderlands* identity of Chicana/o is formed through fluidity and is not bound by binary constructions that were created and enforced by U.S. dominant culture (Elenes, 1997). The emergence of one’s identity is often a project that is never done alone, but instead is fabricated through the self and society at large (Elenes, 1997). It is through the erasure of land, language, culture, and identity that Chicana/os strive to reclaim was has been taken away and lost through the expansion of U.S. territory on Mexico’s native land (Elenes, 1997). The concept of the *Borderlands* originates in opposition to the discourse that is often experienced by Chicanas/os who live in the margins of U.S. culture and society (Elenes, 1997).

Not only are the borders of the Chicana/o discourse geopolitical through the representation of the U.S./Mexico border, but they are symbolic as well (Saldivar-Hull, 1991). It is through these borderlands that Chicanas/os live in a form of “belonging” and “not-belonging” – the boundaries are those areas between the alleged “First and Third Worlds, Anglo-America

and the symbolic spaces that limit people of color in the metropolis, and the formal and informal economy (the legal and the illegal)” (Elenes, 1997, p. 363). Since Chicanas/os have been marginalized in the U.S. through being objects of assimilation because their culture, language, and customs have been subordinated, they have had to construct their own ideas of identity (Elenes, 1997, p. 365). Borderland theories have been heavily influenced by Anzaldua’s (1987) project of a mestizo identity, one that recognizes the relationship between past and present oppression, and is located within the intersecting spaces of Mexican/Chicano culture, patriarchy, homophobia, and Anglo-American domination. Anzaluda’s describes her notion of a mestiza identity as a dual identity that incorporates the need for a new Chicana identity based on the indigenous past. Anzaluda often quotes W.E.B. DuBois to help describes mestizo identity:

“A kind of dual identity – we don’t identify with the Anglo-American cultural values and we don’t totally identify with the Mexican cultural values. We are a synergy of two cultures with various degrees of Mexicanness or Angloness. I have so internalized the borderland conflict that sometimes I feel like one cancels out the other and we are zero, nothing, no one. A veces no soy nada ni nadie. Pero hasta cuando no lo soy, lo soy” (Elenes, 1997, p. 365).

Elenes (1997) states that one’s identity can be created and reclaimed. Alarcon (1990) informs us that the name Chicana is often consciously and critically claimed and not an identity that one is born with, such as if often the case with a Mexican identity. The Chicana/o movement was constructed to stand against assimilation by a way of creating a new identity that was not tied to a hyphenated American identity (Elenes, 1997). It is crucial for a group of individuals who have been defined as inferior to have the power to name or construct their lived experiences free from such hyphenated identities like Mexican-American, so they may have the possibility to

reconstruct their histories and cultures – it is through these vehicles that one can stand against dominant discourses (Elenes, 1997).

Learning about Chicana and borderland identities has helped me to make sense of my own identity. It also happens to be consistent with the methodology that I've used in this study. In fact, the process that I followed, an autoethnographic approach, belongs to the borderlands/Chicana methodology, which allowed me to write myself in to my study and allowed for the emergence of my newfound identity as a Chicana woman. *Borderlands* theories use novel methodologies such as “life histories, testimonial, interviews... narratives, corridos, and visual arts” (Elenes, 1997, p. 366). It was through the process of my autoethnographic study that I was able to come to a better understanding and emergence of my Chicana roots. Through of the process of my discoveries, I initially felt that the emergence of my identity was coming more into my Mexican-American heritage, but now I believe that I have come to a new understanding of my roots as Chicana.

I feel that I can now begin the process constructing my own identity as Chicana and become more in tune with my family's indigenous roots. The Mexican-American label was not created by Mexican people, but rather it was a label that was placed on my Mexican people by White Americans to allow them to identify me as 'other' (Elenes, 1997). However, as Chicana I am liberated from being part of a hyphen that maintains a dominant and subjugated hierarchy. The Chicana identity offers me freedom from living as a hyphen. I no longer feel constricted – I feel like I have a choice now – to either go along with the marginalization of humanity or to reconstruct my own identity. As Chicana, I have more possibilities to challenge and be critical of the domains that tend to label and treat marginalized groups of people as *others* or less than. My Chicana identity offers me the authority to fill in the blanks of my identity, history, and culture.

Although this is a new process and I am learning more about my Mexican/Chicana identity, I can now see that my involvement with Insider Witness Practices opened the door for the eventual embracing of my Mexican/Chicana heritage and identity. Through this engagement in an autoethnographic study of Insider Witness Practices, I learned and came to appreciate the following. I have had lifelong relationship with narrative idea through my Mexican/Chicana identity, and that Mexican/Chicana culture and narrative therapy have similar hopes and beliefs about humanity. In a sense, I now see that I am not simply practicing a theory, but I am living out the gifts, beliefs, values, and traditions that have been passed on to me from my Mexican/Chicana heritage. My belief in an immeasurable hope has now been substantiated and has place (hogar) in my Mexican/Chicana heritage and dreams. My Mexican/Chicana identity has become a shelter where my hope can live and be sustained. I have also engaged more readily with daily practices and have begun to live out my Mexican/Chicana without really knowing it. I have started (returned) to think, feel, and talk in Spanish again. Looking back over the past several months of this process, I find that I am more in tune with my Mexican heart and I am using my heart more frequently to experience life, instead of always thinking life through in my mind. I have also noticed that I am listening to and singing Spanish music. All of this happened outside of my awareness. I only discovered these things when I stopped to look back on what had happened to me as a result of participating in this project. Since the return of my Mexican dreams, I have noticed that I smile and laugh more frequently; that I feel a greater sense of love towards other people. Anita is part of my everyday now, and it feels like I am home again. I have found my hogar (home). My life history is one that is filled with the magical, the unimaginable, and undefeatable hope.

When I started this project I came to a significant and sad realization that I used to have the capacity to dream in Mexican. I can't remember exactly when it was but at some point during my autoethnographic study of Insider Witness Practices, I woke up in the middle of the night and realized that my Mexican dreams had returned. Somehow, the room I was in suddenly lit up with vibrant colors, I could hear the enchanting songs, and I could see the picturesque dresses with the beautiful embedded flowers. And I dreamed of being in a mariachi. Best of all, my capacity to dream in Mexican has returned. In my dreams, I once again see the mariachis, the dancers in their beautiful dresses, and the vibrant colors of the room. It is a vision that has stayed with me ever since. I not only see my dreams of many colors when I am asleep, but I see them when I am awake. I even see them when I am in the room with my clients. It is as if the therapy room has transformed before my eyes and is filled with hope and color of my Mexican dreams.

When I enter a room now with my clients I can feel and hear the music in my heart, and I can envision myself dancing in the charming dresses with colorful embedded flowers. I see the most vibrant colors that fill my Mexican dreams with hope and magic. By returning to my room of Mexican dreams I hope that it can help me in a way that clients can also be transported to the beautiful places of their fondest dreams. Maybe this is what Gabo meant about magical realism.

Spanish Translation:

Cuando empecé este proyecto me realice algo muy importante y triste a la misma vez y eso es que tenia la capacidad de soñar en mexicana. No recuerdo exactamente cuando fue, pero en algún momento durante mi estudio autoetnográfico de 'Insider Witness Practices', me desperté en plena noche y me dio cuenta de que habían vuelto mis sueños mexicanos. De repente el cuarto en que yo estaba se iluminó con colores vibrantes, podía escuchar las canciones encantadoras, y pude ver los vestidos pintorescos con las hermosas flores incrustadas. Y yo

soñaba con estar en un mariachi. Lo mejor de todo, ha vuelto mi capacidad de soñar en mexicana. En mis sueños, una vez más veo los mariachis, los bailarines en sus hermosos vestidos y los vibrantes colores de la habitación. Es una visión que ha quedado conmigo desde entonces. No sólo veo mis sueños de mil colores cuando estoy dormida, pero los veo cuando estoy despierta. También los veo cuando estoy en el cuarto con mis clientes. Es como si el cuarto de terapia se ha transformado ante mis ojos y está lleno de esperanza y color de mis sueños mexicanas.

Cuando entro un cuarto con mis clientes puedo sentir y oír la música en mi corazón y tengo visiones de mi bailando en los hermosos vestidos con flores incrustadas de dos colores. Yo puedo mirar los colores mas brillantes que llenan mi sueños Mexicanos con esperanza y mágica. Al regresara al cuarto de mi sueños Mexicanos tengo esperanza que tal vez me ayude en una maneara para que mis clientes también puedan ser transportados a lugares de sus sueños mas increíbles. Tal vez esto es lo que Gabo pensaba y sentía de realismo mágico.

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