Undoing Giftedness: Considering Adolescent Latina Identity Performativity in United States Public Schools

Jenna Nelson

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UNDOING GIFTEDNESS: CONSIDERING ADOLESCENT LATINA IDENTITY
PERFORMATIVITY IN UNITED STATES PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
EDUCATION

PROGRAM IN CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

BY

JENNA NELSON

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation employs a series of literary genres to navigate the reader through the importance of complicating normalized notions of giftedness and Latina identity as well as the interrogating the complexity of subjectivities. Using post qualitative inquiry (St. Pierre, 2014), I blend writing practices typically used in fiction and in theoretical inquiry. Fiction writing such as narratives, scriptwriting, poetry, visual-art, journaling, and poetry are implemented to analyze and represent the individuals in this inquiry. This dissertation consists of three Acts and an Intermission to carry the reader through the various stages of my inquiry. Through writing the dissertation in this manner, I highlight the discursive, cultural, and political structures that construct subjectivity and dismantle the modes of representation utilized in research.

I employ Judith Butler (1990) to undo giftedness and reimagine the field of gifted and talented education. This inquiry highlights the means through which Latina identity is discursively constructed through sociocultural and political norms within gifted and talented classrooms and exposes how these learners disrupt ready-made constructions of Latina identity through subversive acts. Constructing a collective identity for these learners is problematic as the complexity of individual subjectivity makes it impossible to envision the Latina population as a homogenous group. Additionally, although the norms for giftedness that are embedded in the US school system possess a shaping impact on student subjectivity, giftedness ought to be viewed as a discursive construction. As these
students reveal and have constructed through their experiences both inside and outside of the classroom, giftedness stretches beyond our normative perceptions within the United States. Through *cultural translation* (Butler, 2004), educators and curriculum theorists can begin to rethink static notions of *giftedness* by creating a new lexicon to dismantle the dominant discourses and hegemony of gifted education.
CHAPTER I

ACT I: STUDENT, TEACHER, SCHOLAR

Writing from an autobiographical narrative standpoint throughout much of this dissertation was a complex process as I am “always fragmented in time, taking a particular or provisional perspective on the moving target of [my] past, addressing multiple and disparate audiences” (Smith & Watson, 2002, p. 47). Considering poststructuralist theories, Smith and Watson (2002) highlight five constitutive processes of autobiographical subjectivity that work to highlight the notion that memories and their associated stories are constructed and facilitated by complex and muddled discursive acts. The five constitutive processes identified by Smith and Watson (2002) are the following: memory, experience, identity, embodiment, and agency. Engaging in this form of inquiry, when paired with radical doubt, “is legitimated as a strategy to arrive at intersubjectivity thereby avoiding false claims to objectivity and failure-prone inner (hyper) subjectivity” (Roth, 2005, p. 3). As previously noted, the means through which we construct and interpret life events are messy as we are more complex than monolithic subjectivities.

The impossibility of constructing a comprehensive, linear narrative is ever-apparent in this inquiry as the stories are not chronological but shift and move as I come to understand the complex content associated with this project. The implementation of poetry, prose, reflection, images, and theoretical insights are messy, however, they help shape the ever-evolving findings of this inquiry. As Lather and Smithies (1995)
note, “no life neatly fits into any one ‘plot’ line and narratives are multiple, contradictory, changing, and differently available depending on the social forces that shape our lives” (p. 98). The complex nature of autobiographical writing does not provide us with the ability to accurately represent events as they truly occurred. As Miller (2005) reminds us, autobiographical representation is an imperfect recollection of socially mediated events that are shaped by “historically situated and discursively inflected practice” (p. 47). This understanding further illustrates the unfinished perceptions discussed in this dissertation.

As you read this dissertation, consider the messy, uncertain nature of our lives. How we are always being poked, prodded, and shaped by discourse, our experiences, and our interactions with others.

I am the Gatekeeper

I am the gatekeeper. Welcome to my garden full of roses that will brighten your day. Sunflowers that stretch up to the sky, keeping watch over the other plants when I am away. Petunias, all shapes, sizes, and colors—all opening in unison as the sun creeps across the garden each morning. Lilies that spread their vastly different colored and sized petals and move with the sun as it tiptoes across the garden.

I am the gatekeeper. Each of my plants is different. Each, even if they are the same breed, have a different story, they have a different appearance. Being attached to the same ground, they still do not encounter the same experiences. Some are prized more than others. Some are seen as less expensive.

I am the gatekeeper. I see people observing my garden each day. With implicit expectations for each flower and considering how they could put it in a bouquet. Each
flower has a different social connotation attached to it—the rose, a gift showing love; the sunflower, intended to brighten one’s day; the petunia, signifying the desire to spend time with someone or peacefulness; and the lily, meant to represent the soul of the departed and to bring peace to those who have lost a loved one.

I am the gatekeeper. Society places standard expectations on my flowers to indicate their purpose and value. Growing from a single seed, they each came to be in the same ground from a different start. Despite growing from the same ground, each will leave my garden with a different purpose. But what that purpose will be is shaped by their future beholders.

I am the gatekeeper. These flowers are the students that enter our schools in the United States (US) each day. Each possessing lived experiences that are discursively constructed within the social and academic space. Rather than seeing each flower, or student, as part of a collective bunch, we ought to consider how linguistic acts enforce performative acts1 to undo normative categories that segment and confine individuals to essentialized groups, such as gender (Butler, 1990). We must acknowledge the experiences of individuals who are precarious2 and are vulnerable to violence and

---

1 At the foundation of my dissertation study is Butler’s performativity theory (1990). I depend on Butler as my central philosopher because she provides the theoretical framework necessary for me to engage in my inquiry on Latina identity within the programmatic structure of GATE in the US. Butler’s work offers an integral lens for my study as this lens will allow me to highlight the value of moving beyond stereotypical, collective constructions of Latina identity and culture.

2 Butler’s concept of precarity is also central to my dissertation study. Butler (2009a) defines precariousness as a “generalized condition relies on a conception of the body as fundamentally dependent on, and conditioned by, a sustained and sustainable world; responsiveness—and thus, ultimately, responsibility—is located in the affective
displacement due to identity markers like gender, race, religion, and class to acknowledge the impact that power has on their lives (Butler, 2009a). The blooming experiences of adolescent Latina learners identified as gifted and talented are to be considered in relation to performativity and precarity here to examine how broader relations of power impact the learning environment and student identity as well as how power operates within greater society through discursively constructing subject-“Other” relationships. Like all flowers, each one is not the same. Each flower cannot speak for all of its kind.

The precariousness of life relates to the different conditions that relate to living beings. According to Butler (2009b), “anything living can be expunged at will or by accident; and its persistence is in no sense guaranteed” and precarity “designates that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death” (p. ii). Precarity leaves certain populations at an increased risk of vulnerability as societal norms are instances of power as well as the means through which power operates and is reproduced.

Interrogating Latina identity within GATE within our current political climate, it is valuable to consider how the US has constructed the Latinx population as dangerous and as of lesser value, particularly in relation to education access, personal livelihood, and national safety. Precarity works to further complicate conversations on student responses to a sustaining and impinging world” (p. 34) Through lying outside of the grievable lives of the US, the lives of Latina students have become precarious in the eyes of the education system.
identity as it considers the lives of individuals who are vulnerable to violence and displacement for other identity markers, in addition to gender, such as race, religion, socioeconomic status, etc. Acknowledging the precarity of Latina identity enables the consideration of how the identities of these learners reflect broader relations of power and expose how power operates within society.

Within GATE, dominant US power operations dictate curricular practices, assessment procedures, and literature choices, causing there to be a heavy focus on the Western canon and standardized approaches to assessment (CogAT, NWEA, etc.). From my teaching experiences, such power operations are culturally biased and leave minimal room for diversity and the valuing of individual student identity, ultimately causing those who lie outside of the US standardized norm (i.e., White, English speaker) to be left out of the GATE curriculum (Clark, 2007). As a female classroom teacher of gifted and talented learners, the curriculum I designed was heavily reliant on US patriarchal norms to bolster my intelligibility as a capable educator. My male administrators frequently asserted power over the curriculum, assessment practices, and teaching strategies I was allowed to use within my classroom. I knew that in order to be recognized as a knowledgeable practitioner that I needed to align with their expectations. The norms constructed by my male administrators shaped how and what way I appeared as a classroom teacher within the public space through the assertion of their power over what occurred within my classroom. Because of this, I was unable to recognize diverse learners within my practices as much as I would have liked to out of fear of non-
compliance and unintelligibility. In turn, I constructed diverse learners as precarious out
of my desire to remain intelligible as a classroom teacher.

Considering the experiences of Latina students participating GATE in the US, one
must contemplate how Latina students have become unrecognizable beings as they are
systematically excluded through discursive acts within the US education system.

Acknowledging the national precarity of Latinx individuals and the complexities of
essentializing their gender identities, I see how I, as well as other educators, have shaped
this population of learners as precarious within GATE. Participating in an ELA
curriculum dominated by male authors in the traditional English canon, standardized
testing, and vocabulary centered on the knowledge of Greek and Latin root words, Latina
students, as bodies outside of the hetero-masculine White gaze, are particularly at risk of
being further subjugated within the US education system. The essentialized identity
constructions linguistically molded onto the bodies of these learners place these students
in a treacherous space that is dictated by the expectation to performatively conform to
societal expectations while remaining undervalued and almost unrecognized within the
scholastic space.

Acknowledging the precariousness of Latina learners is also particularly valuable
to consider within our current political and educational landscape. When Donald Trump
was elected in November 2016, my heart sank. The spew of hatred towards immigrant
minorities, and more specifically towards Latinx individuals erupted across the nation.
Entering a Chicago Public high school, the day after Trump was elected was
heartbreaking and infuriating at the same time. I heard Latinx students fearing for the
state of their family members, for themselves, for their friends. Dreading that they, or a loved one, would be deported at a moment’s notice. Worrying that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers would barge into the school or their home at any moment and take them away from the life that they know, the life that they love. As individuals chanted “BUILD THAT WALL,” millions of Latinx families cowered in fear about their fate, and the livelihood of their entire family within the US. In this age of an abundance of hateful rhetoric towards the Latinx community and the uncertainty of DACA\(^4\) that worked to protect the Dreamers\(^5\), it has become ever apparent that the lives of Latinx individuals in the eyes of the powerful subject\(^6\) are precarious.

**Motivation**

“The body implies mortality, vulnerability, agency: the skin and flesh expose us to the gaze of others, but also to touch, and to violence [...] Although we struggle for rights over our own bodies, the very bodies for which we struggle are not quite ever only our own. The body has its invariably public dimension. Constituted as a social phenomenon in the public sphere, my body is and is not mine. Given over from the start to the world of others, it bears their imprint, is formed within the crucible of social life; only later, and with some uncertainty, do I lay claim to my body as my own, if, in fact, I ever do” (Butler, 2004, p. 26).

---

\(^3\) Frequent chant at Donald Trump presidential rallies (2016) in relation to the desire of Trump’s supporters to build a wall between the US and Mexico in the interest of regulating illegal immigration.

\(^4\) Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. US immigration policy that was established in June 2012 to allow some individuals who arrived in the US as minors illegally to receive a two-year deferred action from deportation and eligibility for a work permit. This deferred action could be renewed every two years.

\(^5\) The DREAM Act (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act) is a US legislation that allows for minors who have entered the US illegally the opportunity to obtain conditional resident status or permanent residency through being an exemplary individual and obtaining a GED or higher in the US. Dreamers are the individuals impacted by this Act.

\(^6\) The subject in this instance is the US legislative, judicial, and executive branches of government.
Student

Growing up in the public school system of the United States as a White student, I rarely took a step back to consider the experiences that culturally and linguistically diverse learners encountered during their schooling. The elementary and middle school that I attended ranged from kindergarten through eighth grade. My school consisted of primarily White students, causing me to never consider the scholastic experiences of other populations of learners until later in my middle school career. Because my school was some-what homogenous, I assumed that we were all receiving the same quality education. We were not.

It was not until I was in sixth-grade that I was exposed to the detrimental quality of schooling being provided to peers in my grade who immigrated to the US. When Claudia started attending my school after emigrating from Mexico, instead of providing her with robust English Language Learner (ELL) services, my school opted to pair her with a Spanish speaking student in all of her courses to serve as her translator and help her acquire the content. Observing this choice by my district, even as an 11-year-old felt wrong to me. Why were we all being provided with a quality education, while these two students were being placed in a high-pressure and problematic position? How come they are being forced to learn this way, and for the one student, teach? Why were they being treated differently? I recall being confused by this action taken by my school district, but as a White student, I did not do anything about it because it did not impact me and my access to education. Thinking back on it now, I was privileged to be able to turn my back on a situation that I viewed as problematic.
Thinking about my interactions with Claudia, I reflect on the need “to consider a dimension of political life that has to do with our exposure to violence and our complicity in it” as well as her “vulnerability to loss and the task of mourning that follows” (Butler, 2004, p. 19). Claudia’s entrance in my school instigated the loss of her language due to the institutionalized expectations for learning of the White, patriarchal schooling environment of my school. As a White student, I watched Claudia’s forced assimilation to the US school system through the decision of my school to not provide ELL services out of the desire for her compulsory adjustment to the US school system. Claudia’s fear of the loss of and mourning of her native language was apparent in her desire to speak Spanish as often as possible with her Spanish-speaking peer. Despite her desire to maintain her language, the teachers forced her to only use English within the learning environment. The loss of her language led Claudia to be depressed and not participate in learning—she was virtually silenced by the White, patriarchal expectations for intelligibility within the scholastic environment. As a student, I was complicit. I did not take a stand to help Claudia, despite noticing the stress she was undergoing as her language, a significant part of her identity, was being systematically stripped away. As Butler (2004) notes, “one mourns when one accepts that by the loss one undergoes one will be changed, possibly forever” (p. 21). Claudia’s loss of language was required for her to become intelligible within the predominantly White scholastic community of my school. Had she not undergone this process, she would not be able to be acknowledged as a member of the learning community.
As a White female, I was able to go through my time in school without feeling as if my culture or learning was being stifled. In high school, the demographics of my school shifted dramatically compared to my K-8 schooling. In high school, the student population was 44% White, 44% Hispanic, 1.6% Black, 5.1% Asian, and 5.3% Two or More Races (Illinois Report Card, 2018). At first, the demographic shift was a shock. I had grown accustomed to being in courses with like-race, experience, language, and background peers. High school was a whole new space. Much like my former school, my high school implemented problematic practices when working with Spanish speakers. While a vast majority of the student population were Spanish speakers, these students were not allowed to use their home language within the classroom, nor were they able to use any form of slang from Mexico within our Spanish courses. At the time, I found this problematic, but I rationalized it by thinking that my school was just trying to enforce formal Spanish speaking practices to enrich the learning of the Spanish speakers.

Considering these actions now, I understand the subtractive bilingualism perspective of my school and the problematic impact that the enforcement of not speaking your home language and being forced to amend it to match its colonial roots.

In addition to negating informal Spanish speaking practices, my school also segregated learners through the use of Honors and Advanced Placement (AP) courses. In high school, I did not participate in Honors courses and I did not participate in AP until

---

7 Subtractive bilingualism is “where [the first language] is being replaced by [the second language], [and] implies that as a bilingual in a language minority group develops skills in [the second language], his competence in [the first language] will decrease […] Many bilingual children in subtractive bilingual learning situations may not develop native-like competence in either of their two languages” (Cummins, 1976, p. 20).
my senior year—I will delve into this more in a later Act, particularly in relation to gender and my identity construction. Being placed in these courses, I was separated from my White peers that I had attended school with at my former school. The systematic segregation practices of my school based on test scores created a divide in the school—which is unfortunately not an uncommon practice in US schools. As one of the only White students in each of my classes, I felt only a fraction of what it was like to be viewed as unintelligent and not of value within the US school system. Being White, I was afforded the ability to engage in a curriculum that matched my identity and my home language, while other students could not. I was not forced to experience the loss of my language or my identity during my time as a student or mourn the loss of these elements because I was an intelligible body within the White, patriarchal scholastic environment. I was intelligible as a female, I was intelligible as a White student within the curriculum, and I was intelligible as a native English speaker. Aligning with the norms socially inscribed on my body, I remained complicit to the violence being instilled on my classmates who remained unrecognizable in relation to the norms prescribed by those in power.

Throughout my time in the formative years of the public school system, I focused on my experiences within the classroom while not closely considering the experiences of others. The privilege I possessed to be able to ignore the potentially detrimental scholastic and cultural experiences of my peers while engaging in a curriculum that matched my identity is problematic, and unfortunately a conflict that I grappled with as a classroom teacher as well.
Teacher

Upon entering my first year of teaching, I felt elated—I finally was going to have my own classroom! This was the day that I had dreamed about since middle school. Though I taught in a classroom where I was the main instructor for two summers as a preservice teacher, this felt different because I was finally in a public school setting with my teaching license.

As a young, White female teacher, I fit the stereotypical mold of what you would expect to see walking into the classroom on the first day of school. Though my identity had not changed since my summer teaching position, the demographic makeup of my students shifted significantly. I went from instructing my summer course with student demographics consisting of 70% Hispanic, 25% Black, and 5% White students to standing in front of a class of ~98% White and ~2% Asian students. I went from a classroom filled with immense cultural, racial, ethnic, linguistic, socioeconomic diversity, to a nearly homogenous learning environment. But, I had landed my first teaching job. It was not my place to consider or even question why there was a significant lack of diversity in my gifted and talented English classroom. I was powerless within the system of my district.

As the school year progressed, I sunk further into the United States (US) normative practices, like emphasizing standardized assessments, primarily teaching texts from the traditional English canon, and testing student knowledge on a weekly basis. I
began placing value on standardized assessments—like MAP\textsuperscript{8}—and testing my students weekly on Greek and Latin root words found in the curriculum of The Word Within the Word\textsuperscript{9}. Assessments of normative knowledge, something I once despised, became what I prized to show my success as a teacher.

As my first year of teaching came to a close, I enrolled in a gifted and talented certification program at Northwestern University to learn how to better educate this population of learners. Through this program, I began to see that being labeled as gifted and talented was not a one-size-fits-all construct.

How did we get here?\textsuperscript{10}

HOW?

I taught the…

\textbf{Affluent}  
Disadvantaged

\textbf{English Speakers}  
English Language Learners

\textbf{US Born}  
Foreign Born

\textbf{Gifted and talented}  
Low-

Performing

Yet, my gifted students were marked as:

\textbf{Affluent}  
English Speaker

\textsuperscript{8} Computer adaptive achievement tests designed by Northwest Evaluation Association. Assessments are taken in Mathematics and Reading. The difficulty of each question is correlated with student performance on previous questions.

\textsuperscript{9} Vocabulary program designed by Michael Clay Thompson. Relies on etymology to build student knowledge of Latin and Greek stems. Test-based system.

\textsuperscript{10} In this dissertation, I use poetic expression to highlight my positionality and my complicated experiences on my journey as an educator and in my journey as a researcher in this dissertation (Lather & Smithies, 1997).
US Born
Gifted and Talented

HOW?\textsuperscript{11}

At the beginning of my second year of teaching, I was determined to revamp my district’s method for identifying students for gifted and talented education. The glaring inequitable access to gifted and talented education (GATE) occurring in my district encouraged me to write a proposal for my district for my master’s capstone project on how to diversify GATE in my district by considering alternative identification methods outside of CogAT\textsuperscript{12} and MAP. I also wished to challenge the notion of giftedness and our current GATE practices (Borland, 2003). At the time of my proposal, students in my district were identified to participate in GATE in third grade through CogAT and MAP.

Change.
CogAT, MAP
3rd grade, systemically segregated
Scores.
White and Asian students placed in GATE
Students of Color placed in General Education
Students unidentified, no chance
Of changing placement.
Students of Color—Latinx, and Black
Capable of being in GATE.
But looked at as if they lacked
Intelligence, standard English,
linguistics, and even math.

\textsuperscript{11} Writing this poem was painful because it highlights the inequitable state of the US education system. Exposing the complex, stark binaries between populations of learners shows the impact that sociocultural and political structures play in constructing the US school system.

\textsuperscript{12} Cognitive Abilities Test is a screening test used for identifying students for participation in gifted and talented programs. This assessment assesses the following: verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning, spatial or non-verbal.
Why were these students left out?  
Left out of the conversation?  
With zero chance to change the situation.  
Administrators unwilling to shift.  
To look at all learners.  
Equitable chances.13

Once students were assessed, classes from fourth grade through eighth-grade became systematically segregated based on student scores on these assessments. From these scores, White students and Asian students were typically placed in GATE classrooms, while students of Color were placed in general education classrooms.

Types Booming through the Stereo  
섰 Genius  
素敵な I excel on standardized tests  
 siè Fit into a box  
ませ Test-taker  
素敵な English speaker  
素敵な Desirable

素敵な Teachable  
素敵な Ambitious  
素敵な Loves reading and math  
素敵な Exceptional at all academics  
素敵な Never fails  
素敵な Too smart for peers  
素敵な Everyone is White or Asian  
素敵な Destined for greatness14

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13 This poem brought back complicated memories for me. I was a new teacher in the school district, so I had little to no impact on the identification practices for GATE. This left me in a place of powerlessness and confusion as to how I could authentically impact the field and reconsider how giftedness is defined.

14 As a teacher, I found that the students who I interacted with, most commonly, within my GATE classroom aligned with these stereotypes. These socially constructed means
This assessment practice left students who were not identified for GATE with little to no chance of moving into GATE. Because of this, the GATE classrooms that I interacted with at the seventh and eighth-grade level were primarily comprised of White students who had been in the district since at least third grade.

As one of two GATE teachers at my school, my administration looked to me to assess students for GATE who were at or near the high performing grade-level score on the English MAP assessment. In this role, I was required to develop, administer, and score an assessment to grant students access to GATE. On the assessment I designed to evaluate students, I provided them with two Shakespeare sonnets that they could choose from to annotate and analyze. In their analysis, students would consider the following:

- think about how your chosen interpretations influence the meaning of the entire poem;
- form an argument for reading the poem based on your interpretations; write your interpretations (DON’T USE I!) in a valid argumentative form: begin by asserting your argument, followed by a close reading of the rhetorical effect(s)/words that support your argument, describe how these words operate in the poem, and finally interpret the meaning of those words.

Though Shall Not Pass—Well, you can if you can write like me…

Times New Roman

12-point Font

Double-spaced

for understanding gifted learners appears like a series of checkboxes, where only those who fit this mold become intelligible as gifted.
We know the story

Write like me,
Format like me,
Think like me.

You want in?

Well, here are
The rules...

Do not use “I”!

Annotate Shakespeare
Cite direct quotes
Persuade me.

Did you analyze?

Use formal English?

Omit colloquialisms?

Match the rubric?
Provide new insights?
Yes? To all?
I’ll consider it…

Sincerely,

The Gatekeeper

15 Writing this poem encouraged me to consider Foucault’s (1984) notion that power operates and that people do not own power. According to Foucault (1984), power simultaneously acts in multiple directions and that where power exists, there is a potential for a resistance. Relations of power are consistently negotiated and renegotiated, allowing
Through this assessment, solely graded by me, I systematically became the sixth through eighth-grade *gatekeeper* for English GATE at my school.

**THE Gatekeeper**

A moniker
Stemming from ideologies that
Proceed and exceed me

Going against my beliefs
Diversity in GATE
Yet, not closing the gate on US norms

Assessment design
Standardization
Align with US

linguistics
Zero consideration for bilingualism
Zero consideration for alternative representations of giftedness
Zero consideration of all learners.\(^1^6\)

When designing this assessment, I focused on students being able to analyze a high-level text and being able to articulate their ideas in writing. I did not, however, consider the fact that students have varied, highly individualized ways, for displaying their intelligence. While knowing that there was a lack of diversity in GATE in my school, I continued to perpetuate and enable this issue without batting an eye through my

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for shifts in power relations. As the Gatekeeper, I am not the sole holder of power. I do not possess power at all times as power is unstable, indicating that my authority was not static.

\(^1^6\) My self-identification as the gatekeeper was a difficult experience for me as I reflected on how, at the time, I was truly invested in diversifying GATE. Reflecting on my actions now is a point of pain for me as I understand the complexities and implicit biases involved in my practices. Though I have learned from this experience, I wish I would have never would have created a space in which I enabled these perspectives.
essentially standardized assessment. Through my assessment, I systematically segregated learners by choosing a practice that would methodically favor White students.

Why?

An Enabler

Always Unjust Practices

Selling Students Short¹⁷

Despite my personal, and at the time, unrealized enforcement of inequitable identification practices for entry to GATE, I still wrote a proposal for my district about how to make GATE more diverse, which was later rejected because my administrator told me, “the community would never allow that to happen.” This interaction with my administrator was heartbreaking and infuriating. I felt helpless and as if I could never have as significant of an impact on the field of education as I had always dreamed I would.

The “Community”

Diversity.

“The community would never allow that to happen,”
The administrator told me.

I had envisioned new ways to assess students

Use non-standardized measures,
Non-verbal indicators

That could open and expand GATE,

¹⁷ Writing this poem was troubling because my goal as a teacher was to provide all learners with an equitable access to a quality education. I feel that I sold students short by not considering the impactful role of sociocultural and political perspectives on my practices as an educator.
Reshape the gifted pastures
And rethink the classes.

But diversity isn’t allowed.
Whiteness is prized.
And only those with the community funds of knowledge
And English as a primary language survive.
Because “the community would never allow that to happen.”

From this frustration, however, I found the courage to realize that if I was going to truly shift the field, I needed to change my profession. At that moment, I chose to leave the teaching profession to attend graduate school in pursuit of improving educational equity for minority learners, particularly within GATE.

In my desire to diversify GATE at my district, I was working from a theoretical perspective grounding in critical race theory. Under critical race theory, researchers focus on critiquing society and culture (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Bell, 1989; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). I focused on identifying Black, Latinx, and other racial/ethnic groups into the GATE classroom without considering the complexities of student identities and the sociopolitical and historical norms that riddle out nation’s education system.

Scholar

At the beginning of my doctoral studies at Loyola University Chicago, I began considering how to better educate Latinx students in GATE classrooms. Grounding my research in Ladson-Billings (1995) and Gay (2013), I looked towards culturally relevant

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18 It is difficult to consider how sociocultural and political perspectives permeate the education system and construct student bodies and their placement within the scholastic system based on hetero-normative and standardized practices that work to uphold and progress the dominant population—which in this case was White, middle class.
pedagogy\textsuperscript{19} as a means for improving the learning of Latinx students, which I hoped, in turn, would improve Latinx retention in GATE.

Collective
Real
Personal

Considering my perspective on culturally relevant pedagogy, I viewed this pedagogical perspective as a way to address the learning of a collective (racial, ethnic, socioeconomic status, etc.) population of students. Through drawing on students’ experiences, I saw this perspective as a way to make the curriculum more personal for students to engage their learning. Culturally relevant pedagogy runs the risk of essentializing groups of students as it does not consider that there is not a fixed notion of collective identity. As I contemplated and wrote several papers for courses on this topic, I began to feel uncomfortable with my current frame of inquiry. Was I being too simplistic? Was I normalizing students and placing them into race-based normative boxes?

The common lens used, that I considered using, to examine the experiences of Latina learners is Chicana feminist epistemology. Under the umbrella of critical theory, Chicana feminist epistemology works to emancipate and empower the Latina population. Chicana feminism has reshaped epistemological and methodological tools typically used in research. According to Delgado Bernal (1998), “Chicana epistemology must be concerned with the knowledge about Chicanas—about who generates an understanding

\textsuperscript{19} Term developed by Ladson-Billings (1995). Culturally relevant pedagogy is “a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 18).
of their experiences, and how this knowledge is legitimized or not legitimized. It questions objectivity, a universal foundation of knowledge, and the Western dichotomies of male versus female” as well as “maintains connections to indigenous roots by embracing dualities that are necessary and complementary qualities, and by challenging dichotomies that offer opposition without reconciliation” (p. 4). The methodology of testimonio has grown out of Chicana feminist epistemology. It is the examination of cultural intuition, critical reflexivity, and the brown body/sexuality (Perez & Saavedra, 2017). Testimonios work to “forge connections between the individual ‘I’ and the collective ‘we.’ That is, testimonio allows for one individual to tell her story while connecting it to similar conditions across her community, whether within a national and global control, or even in privileged spaces such as academia” (Saavedra & Perez, 2017, p. 452).

Working towards acknowledging a collective identity is part of the reason that this school of thought was not selected for this project because under poststructuralist theories, a collective identity cannot exist. Additionally, although it is influenced by various schools of thought, Chicana feminist epistemology is not a homogenous perspective as various theorists consider the tenets of postmodernism, poststructuralism, realism, or post ontological pluralism, the goal of the work of Chicana feminist epistemology is to stop injustice against oppressed communities, like Latinas, and engage in resistance (Ortega, 2015). Because my project is non-emancipatory and it works beyond “inclusion models” in GATE, using Chicana feminist epistemology does not
align with my work as I work to examine the sociopolitical frames that construct Latina students in GATE.

**Theoretical Framework: Cracking Open the Gate**

**Performativity Theory, Subversion, Psychoanalysis**

It was not until the second year of my doctoral studies when I enrolled in Curriculum Theory and Research that I began to see new ways to shape my inquiry. I was reacquainted with the philosopher and theorist, Judith Butler. I had worked with Butler extensively during my master’s degree at Boston University in my English courses, but it was not until this class that I had even contemplated the possibility of employing poststructuralist theories that I had learned about from my background as an English major to the field of education. I began to realize that using Butler would address the epistemological dilemmas that I was facing in my consideration of how to deal with normative identity as this theory would allow me to complicate standardized notions of identity.

Being reminded of Butler’s performativity theory brought me excitement and a sense of complexity to my work that had not been there before. Though working with Butler, admittedly, causes me immense anxiety and discomfort, I find her theoretical

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20 Philosopher and gender theorist in the fields of feminist, queer, and literary theory. Developed gender performativity theory.
21 “Gender reality is performative which means [...] that it is real only to the extent that it is performed. [...] Certain kinds of acts are usually interpreted as expressive of a gender core or identity, and that these acts either conform to an expected gender identity or contest that expectation in some way” (Butler, 1990, p. 527).
perspectives relevant and valuable to consider within the field of education to complicate and extend our discussions related to identity.

Why are you so challenging to understand?

How are you so complex?

You frustrate me, yet you are so valuable to me.

Eye-opening.

Considering Butler within the field pushed me to reconsider my once prized perspective towards culturally relevant teaching as I began to think about the complexities of identity. For Butler (1990), gender identity is never stable as it is consistently constituted by the linguistic acts of others and the stylized performances by the individual to align with societal expectations. Gender identity cannot be normative as all individuals who align with a given gender possess divergent experiences and social identifiers that construct them as a dynamic group, which makes the hasty implementation of culturally responsive practices within the learning environment at risk of essentializing populations of learners. Although Butler does not specifically consider racial identity, I still found culturally relevant pedagogy problematic as the cultural experiences of any population of learners are not homogenous in nature. At this time, I reflected most specifically on the diverse identities of my Latina students in the summer

22 Although her work is dense and her perspectives on identity are complex, I find that Butler’s voice adds valuable insight to reconsidering identities within the field. I note that she has opened my eyes because she has helped me consider how theoretical perspectives found in English can be applied in education and because her work has helped me begin to understand the complexity of student identity and push beyond normative understandings of student populations.
program I taught in prior to entering the field. In this unique teaching setting, male and female students were separated during instructional time, providing me with ample opportunity to get to know the gender-based expectations and identities of my students. The 22 ten to fourteen-year-old students, 15 of which identified as Latina, that I worked with on a daily basis immigrated from or were first-generation Americans from a plethora of Spanish-speaking countries with incredibly diverse cultural, social, and linguistic heritage and experiences. Though these diversities existed, these students were all classified as Latina. Reflecting on my students, I began to see the dangers of essentializing racial identity through the unthoughtful implementation of culturally relevant pedagogy as essentializing a whole population is incredibly problematic.

Beyond the racial identities of Latina learners, I want to consider the gender-roles embodied or performed by this population within GATE. As a teacher, both in the summer program and in my school district, I repeatedly heard Latina students described as docile, boisterous, caregivers, quiet, I never once heard this group of students labeled intelligent or gifted. I want to push back on societal constructions of the Latina body and reconsider what a Latina student looks like, particularly within the confines of GATE.

According to Butler (1993), the materiality of the body is not recognizable apart from the existence of such regulatory norms, creating a dichotomy between those who are the subject and those who are the abject beings, or those who are not yet “subjects”. Through this, the subject is “constituted through the force of exclusion and abjection” (Butler, 1993, p. 3). These constructions dictate what constitutes as human and whose life is valuable versus what or who does not, which is transferred into the scholastic
environment. In this discursive construction, the subject-“Other” relationship is built, and in this juxtaposition, the means through which one comes to understand and is constructed by society emerges.

By working towards recognizing the diverse, discursively constructed experiences of all Latina students, from all backgrounds and nations, teachers may be able to begin to understand the complexities of the identities at work in the scholastic environments. For Butler, gender is discursively and politically constructed through the cultural norms and discursive acts that dictate and shape the lived experiences of “women.” Through these prescribed regulatory norms, power is discursively imposed upon “women”, through linguistic, cultural, and gender-based normative identity constructions. Because gender is what we put on each day, this perpetual action becomes falsely understood as natural, thus surrendering individuals’ authority to expound cultural norms through subversive bodily acts (Butler, 1990).

In addition to performativity theory, Butler (1990) unpacks the subversion of identity in her text *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. In this text, Butler (1990) presents an ontological critique of the concept of subjecthood and works to complicate identity formations through considering differences that exist across time and space. This radical assertion calls for the need to view our *stable sex* categories of ‘male’ and ‘female’ as discursively constructed formations that are unstable and ultimately work to progress the intelligibility of masculinity and femininity. Through disentangling the categories of sex/gender, Butler (1990) dismantles the ontological subject that appears prior to action. For Butler (1990), there is no doer before the deed, thus exposing how
there is “no gender identity behind the expressions of gender” as “identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (p. 25). In this instance, we are able to see the uncontrollable proliferation of ‘Other’ sex/gender possibilities that emerge outside of the male/female binary. Because of this, “these new discursive positions are not set apart from a rigidly circumscribed heterosexual femininity but are central to its constitution as they are produced, in effect, through the deployment of these norms” (Nayak & Kehily, 2006, p. 461). Butler’s (1990) anti-foundationalist critique of identity reconsiders the feminist notion of a collective female subject and through subversion and identity proliferation, we are able to negate this notion and comprehend the unstable notions of identity.

Butler further interrogates the concept of loss and mourning through psychoanalysis to grapple with identity construction. Working off of Freud’s (1957) concepts of mourning and melancholia, Butler considers loss and mourning and the shaping impact this has on identity. For Freud (1957), mourning considers the experience of something lost, which melancholia is the loss itself that is lost or denied. Butler (2004) examines the desire of individuals to attach ourselves to what has been lost is seen in “the thrall in which our relations with others hold us, in ways we cannot always recount or explain” (p. 23). Our tethering of ourselves to our relations with others is intensified when a person or thing is lost. We ultimately become bound to the absence of what we have lost because “when we lose some of these ties by which we are constituted, we do not know who we are or what to do” (Butler, 2004, p. 22). We are dependent on the other and possess a need to exist in relation to the other. This, however, is impossible and
problematic as we can never be fully reflected in the other as identities are complex and we are consistently shifting. For Butler (2001), “no matter how much we each desire recognition and require it, we are not therefore precisely the same as the other—there is an irreducibility to our being, one which becomes clear in the distinct stories we have to tell, which means that we are never fully identified with any collective ‘we’” (p. 93). The loss of elements like language, cultural norms, and immigration, furthermore, play a shaping role in the identity formation of the subject. 

Because Butler does not consider psychoanalysis in relation to the field of education with her work, I looked towards the work of Britzman (1998) to help me further interrogate psychoanalysis in relation to student learning. Psychoanalytic theories of learning tend to focus on the following: “how the work of learning puts the self into question; how this work can reverse its content and turn against the learner; and, how learning becomes entangled in the vicissitudes of unhappiness, suffering, conflict, accident, and desire” (Britzman, 1998, p. 31). Learning is a complex process in which the learner is heavily involved in a psychic event that is significantly personal for the student. As educators, we have a tendency to not contemplate how our content, practices, and values may be mirrored in the curriculum. Reflecting on the work of Freud, Britzman (1998) further notes, “the study of learning is a study of how individuals attach, displace, forget, and disengage knowledge. And with these moves, the study of learning is inseparable from the study of love” (p. 31). Curriculum and learning engage learners on a significantly personal level that pushes learners to interrogate themselves in the process.
**Challenging the Field**

By challenging the normalized understanding of Latina identity, I review and rethink the operation of US sociohistorical practices of GATE in an effort to *undo* our current understanding of and approaches to giftedness as well as go beyond recognition and inclusion models in GATE to deconstruct the US sociohistorical norms embedded in discourse in GATE. Through shifting the direction of discourse on GATE, I hope to reconsider how *giftedness* and *Latina* are socially and historically constructed within the US through discourse. Using Butler’s (1990) performativity theory and her related conceptualizations of subversion and psychoanalysis, I explore the possibility to review and rethink Latina subjectivity in GATE through the use of Butler’s performativity theory and the concept of precarity. For my research, I contemplate the following questions: in what ways is Latina identity, in relation to *giftedness*, discursively constructed in advanced English classes? What are the sociopolitical and cultural norms that construct Latina subjectivity as gifted and talented in advanced English classrooms? In what ways do these students disrupt a ready-made construction of Latina identity and what are the implications for teacher pedagogy? I hope that through complicating essentialized perspectives towards Latina students identified as gifted and talented that the field of education may begin to rethink normative perceptions towards this population of learners and understand the importance of *undoing* our current understandings.

**Mode of Inquiry: Post Qualitative Inquiry**

“*What I cannot imagine stands guard over everything that I must/can do, think, live*”

(*Spivak, 1993*).
Despite my intrinsic desire as a researcher trained in humanist research practices to engage in traditional qualitative research in conjunction with feminist poststructuralist theories, as my research evolved, this became a complication process and it became necessary to shift my methodology to consider my research through a new, non-humanist lens. Looking towards researchers like St. Pierre and Lather, I encountered a new perspective for viewing my research, post qualitative inquiry. This emerging methodology stems from poststructuralist feminist inquiry and ushers an updated means for engaging in research. For St. Pierre (2017b), post qualitative inquiry does not rely on humanist methodology and methods but instead uses them to comprehend why these elements are inappropriate for this type of inquiry. Because of this, post qualitative inquiry requires “a very lengthy preparation, yet no method, no rule, nor recipes” (St. Pierre, 2017b, p. 1). In a field typically dominated by positivist thinking, moving away from conventional humanist qualitative methodology to an (un)known, (un)certain space of inquiry is both a thrilling and daunting experience, yet it has allowed me to imagine new means for looking at data. In this section, I explicate how poststructuralist feminist inquiry has evolved and how I use post qualitative inquiry in my work to consider my research.

The Swirling Brain

I look into the face of my schooling
21 years of being a student
Vigorously consuming information
Sucking in every drop oozing from my texts
From the voices of my teachers, instructors, peers

I look into the face of my ways of thinking
So heavily drenched in my schooling
Qualitative, Quantitative, Mixed Methods
Three choices
Three ways to think

I look into the face of my future research
An expansive field with no end in sight
Endless potential beyond the *posts*
Beyond conventional modes of research inquiry
My eyes are opened, I can see color

Beautiful, intermingling
colors
Playfully shifting, shaping, interacting

I can finally see.

**Genealogy of Post Qualitative Inquiry**

Questioning the utility of the combination of qualitative research methodology and poststructural theories, St. Pierre and Lather reconsider research methodology and present a new lens for considering research. Since engaging in her dissertation research, St. Pierre has felt conflicted by conventional humanist qualitative methodology. While writing her dissertation in 1995, St. Pierre (2017b) began to realize “those two structures could not be thought together, that their ontologies and epistemologies were incompatible because of their very different descriptions of human being, language, discourse, power, agency, resistance, freedom, and so on” (p. 1). The mismatch of conventional humanist qualitative methodology and poststructural theories was problematic to St. Pierre because she found that these elements could not be thought of in conjunction with one another

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23 Unraveling the traditional research practices that I have used and been taught throughout my schooling for engaging in research was an eye-opening experience because I am able to see the potential of research to not rely on these standardized notions but to allow for grappling with *concepts*. 
when engaging in research. Her struggle to reconcile this issue was exacerbated and complicated through the emergence of debates on what qualified as rigorous scientific based research (SBR).

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act and the 2002 National Research Council Report, Scientific Research in Education, sparked discourse around what is considered high-quality SBR research. The emergence of these documents pushed researchers like St. Pierre and Lather to defend qualitative research to counteract the neo-positivist perspectives. For the first decade of the 21st century, researchers were forced to defend qualitative research methodology, despite the critiques that had previously emerged in the development of qualitative research methodology (St. Pierre, 2014). According to St. Pierre (2014), “it was like living in a time warp as we responded to those who were ‘paradigms behind’, those who had missed all the turns—e.g., the social turn, the cultural turn, the linguistic turn, the postmodern turn, and so on” (p. 2). Embedded in their defense of qualitative research methodology, researchers like St. Pierre and Lather were also forced to protect the integrity of postmodernism from positivism. As researchers were forged to defend qualitative research, it began to tighten up, ultimately revealing its latent positivism in its quest for being viewed as a legitimate field of research (St. Pierre, 2014). The positivist qualities of qualitative research further reveal its mismatch with postmodern and poststructural theories, exposing the problematic disconnect between theory and methodology in methodologies like poststructuralist feminist inquiry.

Frustrated by the continued positivist nature of qualitative research methodology and the inability to reconcile it with “the posts” (e.g., postmodernism, poststructuralism,
etc.), researchers who defended qualitative research methodology began to critique it again, focusing on ontological issues. In 2011, St. Pierre (2014) presented the ambiguous term “post qualitative” to indicate the mismatch between conventional humanist qualitative methodology and “the posts”. The impossibility of the intersection of these perspectives progressed the emergence of post qualitative inquiry, allowing research to be considered through a new lens and progress the field. In the emergence of post qualitative inquiry, St. Pierre (2014) presented the following possibilities post qualitative inquiry: (a) “if social science researcher put aside conventional humanist qualitative methodology, […] they might actually use the productive analyses provided by “the posts” to think about what puzzles them” and (b) “putting assign conventional humanist qualitative methodology also allows for the ‘new empiricism’ and the ‘new materialism’ organized under the ‘ontological turn’” (p. 10). Challenging the humanist nature of qualitative research and pushing against its positivist qualities, post qualitative inquiry allows researchers to view research through a new lens. Additionally, engaging in the ontological, which is commonly ignored due to the epistemological quest for meaning, we can further disentangle science and philosophy (St. Pierre, 2014). Breaking our conventional perspective on research methodology requires rethinking how we engage in research and participating in an unstable inquiry.

Where do I turn?

Where does the path go?

Where is it leading me?
Opened labyrinth

Reimagining the Field

“If we cease to privilege knowing over being; if we refuse positivist and phenomenological assumptions about the nature of lived experiences and the world; if we give up representation and binary logics; if we see language, the human, and the material not as separate entities mixed together but as completely imbricated ‘on the surface’—if we do all that and the ‘more’ it will open up—will qualitative inquiry as we know it be possible? Perhaps not” (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013, p. 629).

According to Lather and St. Pierre (2013), to move beyond conventional humanist qualitative methodology, it is necessary to rethink humanist ontology. As educational researchers, we have been trained on the conventional humanist qualitative methodological practices, making it challenging to think outside of our training. This is what makes this shift in thinking particularly confusing for me because I am engaging in a mountainous inquiry, without my traditional tool-kit to help me scale the terrain. Rethinking the use of categories to organize and structure my inquiry, such as a literature review, have further complicated my inquiry in ways that I had not anticipated. For Lather and St. Pierre (2013), we must also consider Descartes’s invention of the *cogito*, or the knowing subject, to acknowledge that humans are not only at the focus but they are prior to all categories of qualitative inquiry. Additionally, they posit that we should consider entanglement to problematize the categories of humanist qualitative research methodology. In regards to the researcher, because no doer exists before the deed, the

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24 Engaging in post qualitative inquiry and pushing against humanist qualitative inquiry is a complicated process possesses twist and turns that I am still grappling with. The image of a labyrinth emerged in my mind while working to understand post qualitative inquiry because the labyrinth is complex, mangled entity, much like how I envision post qualitative inquiry.
researcher is always already becoming in entanglement. Because of this, Lather and St. Pierre (2013) suggest that we cannot disconnect ourselves from the *mangle* (Self) and then also separate a small piece of the *mangle* (Other) long enough to study it. The world is unstable, and therefore, individuating is not possible. Likewise, it is valuable to question why we privilege words in certain texts over words in others. For St. Pierre (2014), if one uses post ontologies, it does not make sense to disaggregate our analysis of words *collected* in documents from our analysis of words *collected* in interview transcripts and field notes. Separating the ‘literature review’ from the ‘findings’ segments and privileges certain words over others, causing qualitative research to align with positivist ideologies (St. Pierre, 2014). Ultimately, questioning the practices of conventional humanist qualitative research methodology exposes the inherent problems with thinking about research through this lens, pushing me to venture into the (un)certain territory of post qualitative inquiry in my investigation.

“*I*” and Subjectivity in “the Posts”

Within poststructural theories of subjectivity, theorists have targeted Descartes’s *cogito* in their critique of the Enlightenment’s description of *man*. For the purposes of this dissertation, I will use St. Pierre’s definition of the *cogito* as it highlights key qualities that juxtapose poststructuralist thought. According to St. Pierre (2017a), Descartes’s *cogito* is “the knowing, epistemological subject; a unique, unified, agentive, coherent, self-contained individual/person/self-uncontaminated throughout his life by culture, by history, by living […]; the Self set against all the Others; the empirical Investigator; the master of the universe. The subject is so normalized he’s imperceptible”
Like St. Pierre (2017a), I believe that the refusal of the *cogito* individual is important as individuals are far more complex.

In her work, Butler has critiqued the “I” through acknowledging that agency is not a given but it is possible as the subject is forced to reiterate itself to uphold its identity. Through this act, the subject becomes recognizable and has the capacity to engage in “subversive repetition” (Butler, 1990, p. 32). Furthermore, Foucault (1982) notes that we ought to “refuse what we are…we have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality” (p. 216). Considering the perspectives of these researchers, St. Pierre (2017a) finds these instigations of freedom powerful and valuable to consider within research. For St. Pierre (2017a), poststructural theorists, like Butler and Foucault, offer critiques and highlight that “I” is a powerful means, yet only one of the ways for interpreting human being.

**Ontological Dissonance**

Reflecting on her dissertation experience, St. Pierre (2017a) reconsiders conventional humanist qualitative methodology of the methods used to collect ethnographic data—interviews and field notes. When considering the concept of the *field*, St. Pierre (2017a) views it as “the Same/Other binary: the field is a place of cultural difference the researcher travels to, an inside (the Same) against the outside that’s different from it (the Other)” (p. 689). Viewing the field in this way allows us to consider how the field is constructed in a problematic manner that automatically creates a separation between the researcher and the field in which research is taking place. St. Pierre (2017a) calls into question the normalized elements of conventional humanist
qualitative methodology to question the “I’s” of a study and deconstruct the ontological dissonance of our traditional means for working with qualitative data to expose how this methodology ultimately immobilizes and confines us as researchers do not see outside of our conventional qualitative practices.

**Writing as a Method of Inquiry**

“Writing as a method of inquiry” (Richardson, 1994) play a role in the construction, analysis, and understanding of my dissertation project. Utilizing this method within my inquiry afforded me the opportunity to make connections, reimagine, and come to understand my material through new and unexpected ways. Richardson’s (1994) writing as a method of inquiry stems from poststructuralist theories and is a messy process that can ultimately lead to more confusion and questions, particularly when working with unstable notions of identity. While this mode of inquiry is considered within this dissertation, it is partly adapted as Richardson’s (1994) initial conceptualization of writing as a method of inquiry was grounded in traditional qualitative inquiry. I have taken writing as a method of inquiry into account in my dissertation because post qualitative inquiry considers the perspective that writing is a mode for thinking, understanding, and inquiry. Although this is the case, using writing as a method of inquiry must be used with caution in post qualitative research as it is grounded in the conventional practices and modes of thought of traditional qualitative research.

While working with my study, I was immediately drawn to writing as a method of inquiry because I was drawn to the ability to engage in a non-linear, complicated method
of inquiry that allowed me to “get lost” (Lather, 2001) in my thinking and writing when writing about what I was thinking about. I found the prospect of engaging in such an inquiry both inspirational and daunting because such thinking required me to push back against my desire to understand too quickly and to instead engage in a process that enabled “a stammering relationship toward the incompletely thinkable conditions and potential of given arrangements where we are all a little lost, caught in enabling aporias that move us toward practices that are responsible to what is arising out of both becoming and passing away” (p. 159). Engaging in the writing journey of this dissertation has been a complicated process that has caused me to frequently “get lost” (Lather, 2011) to come to my ever-evolving understandings that I encounter in this work.

Richardson (1994) initially set out in her conceptualization of writing as a method of inquiry to “encourage researchers to explore their own processes and preferences through writing—and rewriting and rewriting. Writing from our Selves should strengthen the community of qualitative researchers and the individual voices within it, because we will be more fully present in our work, more honest, more engaged” (p. 516). An initial aim for Richardson (1994) was to rethink the construction and formulaic nature of qualitative writing, to rethink how qualitative researchers interact with and present their research. Writing as a method of inquiry enables researchers to process data through writing in a way that acknowledges that “writing is thinking, writing is analysis, writing is indeed a seductive and tangled method of discovery” (St. Pierre, 2017, p. 967). Partly employing writing as a method of inquiry allows me to process the content in a way that affords me with the ability to make unforeseen connections within the content that I may
not have been able to see otherwise. Under writing as a method of inquiry, while the means through which ideas are presented and come to be understood add complexity to qualitative research, writing as a method of inquiry remains grounded in traditional qualitative methods—like interviews, field notes, the use of traditional headings—which is why writing as a method of inquiry is partly implemented in this dissertation.

**Writing ↔ Becoming**

“*Writing is a question of becoming, always incomplete, always in the midst of being formed, and goes beyond the matter of any livable and lived experience*” (Deleuze, 1993/1997, p. 1).

Richardson’s foundational efforts to push back against traditional qualitative inquiry and qualitative writing is evolved through post qualitative inquiry. Grounding my dissertation is post qualitative inquiry enables me to further differentiate my modes of representation within my work as well as dismantle the practices of conventional humanist qualitative research. St. Pierre, a student of Richardson, extends writing as a method of inquiry under post qualitative inquiry to view writing as a means for becoming. For St. Pierre (2017b),

Post qualitative inquiry asks that we push toward the intensive, barely intelligible variation in living that shocks us and asks us to be worthy of it. It asks us to trust that something unimaginable might come out that might change the world bit by bit, word by word, sentence by sentence. Writing is, after all, a method of inquiry. In writing, we can and do invent and reinvent the world. (p. 4)

Post qualitative inquiry extends the method of writing as a method of inquiry because it expands beyond the conventional humanist qualitative research means for presenting and thinking about content.
Thinking about writing and research in the manner enables us to view writing as an adventure, as space for an uninhibited investigation that allows us to push toward the incomprehensible. We are able to move toward “Derrida’s différence, Deleuze’s pure difference, perhaps toward a different world” (St. Pierre, 2017, p. 3). As writing happens, deconstruction occurs and the text begins to undo itself. The overpowering movement of writing overtakes the writer, causing a loss of control. In this loss of control, the writer finds it impossible to keep up with her thinking and writing as new ideas emerge that could not have been thought without writing. Post qualitative inquiry enables us to deconstruct formal academic writing. Considering Derrida’s (1967) deconstruction of traditional structures that inhibit our ability to write and think using conventional qualitative inquiry. For Derrida, we are not able to capture or transmit significance from one individual to another as the data we encounter traditionally within research does not represent the real. Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) further complicate our capacity to engage in conventional qualitative inquiry through the concept of assemblage. For Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987), assemblages are “multiplicities or aggregates of intensities” (p. 15) and an assemblage is “the minimum unit. Not a person. Not an interview. Not the field. Not datum” (St. Pierre, 2017, p. 4) that, through writing, “a writer is invented by an assemblage at the very moment when, in [her] originality, [she] is inventing it” (Lecercle, 2002, p. 188). Pushing against and negating the traditional methods, structures, and writing practices of conventional qualitative inquiry enables the researcher to think beyond the formulaic confines of qualitative research and come to reimagine thinking and writing.
Post qualitative inquiry opens the capacity to think beyond traditional data and sources, and move into an uninhabited space that considers elements outside of formal data—dreams, memories, and emotions—to imagine and construct writing and research differently. As St. Pierre (2017b) notes in her aching shift from conventional humanist qualitative inquiry to post qualitative inquiry, although she had “‘collected’ official ‘data’ during official ‘fieldwork,’ […] data appeared in dreams, in my body, and in memories […] Data became irrelevant and data analysis was writing and thinking and laying out of the field of the text, moving” (p. 4). St. Pierre’s (2017b) struggles with traditional qualitative inquiry resonates with me because as I worked through my dissertation initially implementing conventional qualitative inquiry in my format, I felt inhibited, my work felt contrived.

Post qualitative inquiry has shaped my dissertation in my writing and in my consideration of my research. Engaging in this process has enabled me as the “post qualitative inquirer” to engage in an unrestricted inquiry because in post qualitative inquiry, “there is no recipe, no process. This is truly experimental inquiry—attending to the surprises that point to difference and refusing the impoverished answers we’ve given to the questions the world has posed […] The post qualitative inquirers who has prepared herself must trust herself and do the next thing, whatever it is—to experiment—and to keep moving” (St. Pierre, 2017b, pp. 2-3). While I initially found post qualitative inquiry a daunting endeavor—the freedom, the lack of structure, the inconsistency—as I have worked through this dissertation study, I have begun to see the true beauty in being able
to step outside of traditional qualitative inquiry. I feel as if the chains of conventional research have been unlatched. I am able to finally see clearly.

**Rethinking the Path**

Considering post qualitative inquiry, and most specifically the voice of St. Pierre and Lather, has come to not only reshape how I look at my dissertation, but how I look at educational research as a whole. Like St. Pierre (2014), the culmination of my learning as a student and doctoral candidate has brought me to where I am now. As I move forward with my project, I keep the tenets of post qualitative inquiry at the front of my mind and use the Butlerian concepts of performativity, subversion, and psychoanalysis to (re)envision my work. Engaging in this process enables me to look beyond positivist inquiry by considering elements outside of conventional qualitative research components like interviews, classroom observations, or field notes. Using post qualitative inquiry I can interrogate dreams, personal history, and memories to reimagine the capacity of traditional qualitative inquiry to represent the complexities of our experiences. My understanding of qualitative inquiry and the *posts* have given me the ability to rethink inquiry and think of new ways to engage in research. Although the path has not been straight, nor will it ever be certain…
CHAPTER II
INTERMISSION

Thus far, this dissertation has been relatively convention, apart from the central use of narrative voice. It has included existing research, the introduction of the theoretical framework, and the presentation of the research methodology. Act II brings the promise of a new light, the embodiment of my (re)vision of conventional qualitative inquiry through post qualitative inquiry. Engaging in several modes of (re)presentation—scriptwriting, narrative text, visual art, and journaling—I interrogate the complexities of student and teacher subjectivity and expose implications for curriculum and instruction. Act II consists of three parts that will take us on a journey about the intricacies of identity and the shaping role of discursive acts. Part I is a written as a theatrical version of a lesson that takes place in Mrs. Nelson’s fifth-grade, dual language gifted and talented classroom that focuses on the experiences of three Latina learners identified as gifted and talented—Maya, Caffy, and Angela. Part II is a fictional story in Mrs. Nelson’s classroom as they read *The Giver* by Lois Lowry. In Part II, journal entries written by Mrs. Nelson and Chloe25, another Latina student in the classroom identified as gifted and talented, about the text and their personal experiences are presented. Part III is

25 Chloe is a fictional character that is derived from the analysis of eight fifth-grade Latina learners who identify as gifted and talented participating in the same fifth-grade dual language gifted classroom. I have chosen to weave the experiences of Chloe and her classmates into her narrative to ensure clarity and comprehensively discuss the intersubjectivities of classroom teachers and students.
a narrative discussion by three English doctoral students in Dr. Lansbury’s doctoral
English course at Loyola University Chicago: Transnational Exchanges, Collaborations,
and Appropriations. The discussion participants are Amber, Michelle, and Michael.
Using the theories\textsuperscript{26} of Butler, these students apply Butler to unpack the student and
teacher experiences presented in Part I and Part II.

\textsuperscript{26} Performativity theory, subversion, psychoanalysis.
CHAPTER III

ACT II: INTERWEAVING SUBJECTIVITIES

Part I

Playwright27 Note: Background

The following text is based upon the experiences of the same lesson plan in Mrs. Nelson’s fifth-grade classroom. The individual experiences shared are from three students, Maya, Angela, and Caffy. The accounts of these individuals are written in this manner to highlight the subjectivity of each individual through their inner monologue in conjunction with their spoken discourse that enters the space of the other characters. Infusing the inner monologues with the outside discourse of the characters works to highlight how our personal subjectivity constructs how we perceive the world around us and how we interact with others.

27 In my articulation of my content, I turned to scriptwriting to place student voice and their subjectivity front and center in my inquiry. Considering performance ethnography (Denzin, 2003), I contemplated how I could utilize this method of inquiry within my analysis and articulation. Performance ethnography is “an emerging arts-based method of qualitative inquiry [that] presents a tangible opportunity to bridge the gap between scholarly activity and teaching and learning” (Oberg, 2008, p. 1). While performance ethnography is grounded in critical theory as one of its central goals is to illuminate marginalization and work towards the emancipation of marginalized populations, I still find performance ethnography valuable to consider in my inquiry. Through not engaging in an emancipatory examination of my material, but remaining true to poststructuralist feminist thoughts and post qualitative inquiry, I cautiously implement performance ethnography to present my inquiry and highlight how subjects discursively enact and react as well as are shaped by linguistic acts that construct their identities.
Through performativity theory, Butler (1990) highlights how linguistic acts construct our gender and that we comply with these expectations, oftentimes, without question. Each day, we go about our lives without much consideration for how we discursively construct our surroundings and impact those around us. As we enact our remedial tasks, we unabashedly neglect to consider what is going on in the heads of those around us and how our perceptions of the same event may be conceived completely differently based on our subjectivity and epistemological perspectives.

To articulate the impact of how our subjectivity and epistemological perspectives shape our perceptions of the same event, I look to the Rashomon effect (Heider, 1988), which is a theoretical perspective that stems from the Japanese Rashomon (1950) by Akira Kurosawa. The film focuses the retelling of the same event from four very different accounts. Each perspective strives to enhance the virtue of the narrator of the account, causing each version of the event to be presented as truth (Heider, 1988). The Rashomon effect (1988) stems from the implication that the subjectivity of one’s perception and/or recollection impacts one’s impression of an event or phenomena (Heider, 1988; Roth & Mehta, 2002).

Considering the Rashomon effect (1988) in relation to poststructural qualitative research, I contemplate the role of discourse and language in the performative construction of the subject and/or a perception of an event opens the possibility to consider the authentic discursively constructed perceptions of a teacher participant and three student participants (Butler, 1990). Drawing on my discussions with students and classroom observations, I construct a fictional recollection of the same lesson plan from
the diverse perspectives of these individuals. Keeping each ‘story’ recollected intact, I consider the intention and language used by participants as opposed to splicing data into a specific coding structure. Maintaining the authentic voice of participants highlights their individual subjectivity. To further expose the subjectivity of the participants, I have used a narrative structure similar to that of Rashomon (1950) and with the Rashomon effect (1988) to expose how an individual’s subjectivity impacts their perception of the same classroom lesson.

**Characters.** The main characters in this play are Maya, Angela, and Caffy. Maya is a fifth-grade student who is Latina and identifies as Mexican and African American. She is a native Spanish speaker and English is her second language. She is very bubbly and is an incredible ice skater. Angela is also a fifth-grade student who is Latina and identifies as Mexican American. Her native language is Spanish and English is her second language. She is compassionate and is the partial caregiver giver for her two younger siblings. Finally, Caffy is a fifth-grade student who is Latina and identifies as Mexican. She is a native Spanish speaker and English is her second language. She cares deeply about her family and is protective of her siblings.
**Setting.** The sun is rising over Northwood Elementary School, filling the classrooms with the light of a new day. Monday through Friday, Northwood houses the learning of 562 students from kindergarten through sixth-grade. The diverse student body that floods the school identify as Hispanic (82%), Black (7%), White (6%), two or more races (2%), and American Indian (2%) (Illinois Report Card, 2017) and many are of low-socioeconomic status (90%) and English Language Learners (ELLs) (60%) (Illinois Report Card, 2017). As one of the 29 schools in the district that houses a dual language program out of the 57 total schools in the district, Northwood fosters the linguistic abilities of their learners through dynamic English and Spanish instruction at all grade levels. While Northwood is one of the many schools in the district with a dual language program, it is the only school that offers a dual language gifted program from fourth through sixth-grade.

And this is where our story begins. In the fifth-grade dual language gifted classroom of Mrs. Nelson’s. Containing 20 learners, Mrs. Nelson’s classroom reflects the cultural diversity of the greater demographics of Northwood. Busing in students from across the district for participation in the dual language gifted program, the classroom pulls together students from diverse socioeconomic, racial, and linguistic backgrounds to create a thriving classroom community. The central group that the play centers on is a group of three students, Maya, Angela, and Caffy.
Scene I: Maya

Students and teachers and inaudible and are preparing for the school day to begin.

STUDENTS: “Yo prometo lealtad a la bandera de los estados Unidos de America, y a la Republica que representa, una Nación bajo Dios, entera, con libertad y justicia para todos.”

MAYA (to herself; students on the stage are motionless): Before coming to Northwood, my old school wouldn’t say the pledge in Spanish every day. I really like how often we speak Spanish at this school. I’m really happy that I tested into gifted dual language in third-grade. These last two years at Northwood have been fantastic!

I have enjoyed being at Northwood because I feel like I am finally being challenged at school. Kindergarten through third-grade was pretty boring honestly. I knew everything already that we were learning about in math. Every day at school was incredibly boring. Fourth-grade wasn’t all that challenging either. This school year, we have been working with content in math that is at the middle school and high school level. The first time I felt truly smart in school was a week ago when I took the MAP Math test. I thought I was actually going to do very bad on it because I was failing like on the test we had for the chapters and on the homework. It was really rare that I would get homework right. When I got my score, and I saw that I grew nine points and that I met my goal for the whole year, I felt like I was smart! Even though I haven’t really grown in MAP Reading, I am happy that I have grown in math. I wonder what we are going to focus on after working with the poetry again this morning…
The classroom comes to life. Students and the teacher begin moving and preparing for the class period.

MRS. NELSON: “Ok, get with the group of people you worked with the last two days. Today, I want you guys to be focusing on translanguaging--so comparing English and Spanish. Feel free to use the translanguaging notebook that you have been using in math to think about the poems. I would also like you to think about which version of the poem you prefer, English or Spanish. I am excited to see what you guys think and come up with.”

Students begin grabbing their notebooks, utensils, and posters and begin working.

MAYA (to herself; students are silently working): I’ve kinda enjoyed working with our poem this week. We have spent the last two days focusing on basic parts of the poem, like author word choice and important words that connect to the words that we have focused on in Caesar’s English this year. Since we are working on translanguaging today, I made a page in my translanguaging notebook for the things that Mrs. Nelson would like us to focus on comparing between the two poems today. I like using the translanguaging notebook because it gets me thinking in both Spanish and English and comparing the languages with one another.

MAYA writes the translanguaging components in her notebook.
Figure 1. Maya’s translanguaging notebook.

MAYA (to her group members): “Ok, I have put what we are supposed to focus on in my translanguaging notebook. So, what do you guys think about the poem? Which one do you like better?”

ANGELA: “I think this simile might be important. It makes the poem seem more depressing.”

MAYA: “It seems like it’s more depressing than it is in English. In English it says, ‘who snores up and down up and down up and down again/ is the rain on the roof that falls like coins/ asking who loves him/ who loves him who?’ and in Spanish the poem says, ‘que ronco arriba y abajo arriba y abajo arriba y abajo vez/ es la lluvia en el techo que cae”
como monedas/ preguntando quién lo quiere/ ¿quién lo quiere?Quién’” (Cisneros, 2013, pp. 50-51).

The group grows somber.

ANGELA: “I think in my understanding of the similes, they feel a little bit more different because in English it’s not as depressing.”

MAYA: “In Spanish, it doesn’t even feel like it’s raining. It’s just like depressing.”

CAFFY: “That part of the poem is definitely the saddest. I think it’s because in Spanish it is more depressing to me.”

ANGELA: “I definitely agree. It’s more depressing. I think it’s sad because I can relate to the abuelo in the poem. I can feel a little lonely sometimes. Like nobody’s on my side. Like, I feel like I’m getting away from people. Sometimes, I like to lock myself in my room and calm down by listening to music and coloring in one of those detailed coloring books.”

MAYA: “I relate to the abuelo too. I’m the youngest one on my team at my level. I feel that way because most of my friends are in high school and middle school, so I feel kinda lonely because they don’t always want to hang out with me as much because of the age difference.” It’s tough sometimes to be the youngest on my ice skating team because I am five to six years younger than most of my teammates. Sometimes, I wish I could spend more time with them outside of practice because I do love being around them.”

CAFFY (writing their ideas on the poster): “We definitely need to focus on this tomorrow when we present. I think we can all agree that the Spanish version of the poem makes us all feel emotional. Let’s write that down on the poster.”
**MRS. NELSON** interjects. Students stop moving.

MRS. NELSON: “*Clase, no hay más tiempo ahora.* Please begin cleaning up your posters. You will have about five-minutes tomorrow before we begin our presentations to wrap-up your ideas.”

*Students silently begin rolling up their posters and moving back to their seats.*

MAYA (to herself; the rest of the class is silently cleaning up materials): I never really thought about how the languages could take on different meanings. I guess I could think about translanguaging in more than just math and sometimes science class. Even though I speak more English at home, I actually find English harder than Spanish. Part of the reason why Spanish may be easier is that it is my first language. It also may be easier for me because in Spanish you don’t have to pronounce as many things. That makes it easier to write in Spanish because you can listen and hear how the words are spelled. In English, you can’t always do that.

I’m really happy that I know Spanish. I feel like it’s an important piece of who I am. My dad is African American and my mom is Latina and from Mexico, so I am both African American and Latina. Because both languages are spoken at my house, I tend to speak Spanglish pretty often when I am with my mom. I will have been an only child until January, so I haven’t had anyone to really talk to about my experiences. My family is close to both my family in the US and my family in Mexico. We try to see everyone at least once a year—mostly for holidays. Even though I don’t always celebrate the same holidays as my classmates who are also from Mexico, I feel close to my heritage. I don’t celebrate things like Día De Los Muertos and Día de la Independencia. It’s interesting
because we are all Mexican, but we don’t all celebrate the same things or have the same experiences with our families.

I love speaking both Spanish and English though because I know that I will be able to put it on my resume and get a great job in the future. Even though I am happy I speak both languages, I also run into experiences as an African American Latina that my Latina peers never do. It’s tough sometimes because I hate when people assume that I don’t speak Spanish when I am with my mom. Last Friday, when we were ordering tacos, the woman working there treated me like I didn’t understand her when she spoke to me in Spanish. I was just thinking about what I wanted to order. Then, she asked my mom if I wanted rice and beans in Spanish. This was really frustrating for me because she assumed that because I didn’t respond to her right away that I didn’t know Spanish and that my mom did because she looks more Latina. Every time someone sees my mom, the always assume that she speaks Spanish.

*MAYA is broken from her reflection to herself by MRS. NELSON.*

MRS. NELSON: “Clase, es el tiempo para matemáticas.”

*End of scene I.*

**Scene II: Angela**

*Students and teachers and inaudible and are preparing for the school day to begin.*

STUDENTS: “Yo prometo lealtad a la bandera de los estados Unidos de America, y a la Republica que representa, una Nación bajo Dios, entera, con libertad y justicia para todos.”
ANGELA (to herself; students on the stage are motionless): I love knowing that when I am at school that I get to speak in both Spanish and English. I have spoken Spanish my whole life, but I didn’t always have the chance to speak Spanish at school. In preschool and kindergarten, I was the only kid in my class who spoke Spanish, everyone else spoke English. Because of this, I was forced to learn English pretty quickly at school, which is something my siblings have never experienced. They have always been able to speak Spanish and English at school. I think that is why I am better at English than my younger brother and sister. That’s ok though. I like speaking both languages well because I can communicate more. My mom and dad have said that if you speak more languages, that you’re more likely to get a job and get paid well.

MRS. NELSON’S instructions interject.

MRS. NELSON: “I would also like you to think about which version of the poem you prefer, English or Spanish. I am excited to see what you guys think and come up with.”

The classroom is motionless apart from Chloe.

ANGELA (to herself; students on the stage are motionless): All I heard is Mrs. Nelson talk about comparing Spanish and English and it’s got me thinking about which one I prefer in real life. I do like speaking Spanish and English, but Spanish is definitely my favorite language of the two. For me, language means a lot to me because it shows where I am originally from. If you’re from Mexico and you’re Mexican, you need to speak Spanish.

Students begin grabbing their notebooks, utensils, and posters and begin working.
If you’re American, you speak English. Language is where you come from. If my family wasn’t from Mexico, my family would all be speaking English. My mom has taught me that if you are Mexican, it doesn’t look good if you don’t speak Spanish and she tells people if they don’t speak Spanish to “learn your culture.” This is why knowing Spanish and English is important to me because it is part of my culture and my identity. That is also part of the reason why my family doesn’t really celebrate the Fourth of July, but we celebrate Día de la Independencia. My family finds this day more important because it is an influential day in our history. I’m always surprised when I hear that other Mexicans do not celebrate this or Día de Los Muertos.

MAYA: “Let’s start thinking about the meaning of the poem and Maya and whether we prefer the English or the Spanish version.

ANGELA: “Thinking back to when we read it yesterday, I remember that we noticed a simile in the poem in both languages. I think this simile might be important. It makes the poem seem more depressing.”

*MAYA begins reading the poem and is inaudible.*

ANGELA (to herself; the rest of the group is inaudible and interacting): I actually think hearing both languages read aloud is helpful because it gives us the chance to hear the differences in both languages. Geeze, that part of the poem is depressing.

ANGELA: “Well, Maya read both English and Spanish and I think in my understanding of the similes, they feel a little bit more different because in English it’s not as depressing.”

*MAYA is discussing her beliefs about the poem inaudibly.*
ANGELA: “I definitely agree. It’s more depressing. I think it’s sad because I can relate to the *abuelo* in the poem. I can feel a little lonely sometimes. Like nobody’s on my side. Like, I feel like I’m getting away from people. Sometimes, I like to lock myself in my room and calm down by listening to music and coloring in one of those detailed coloring books.”

ANGELA (to herself; rest of the group is inaudible and interacting): I’m relieved to hear that Caffy related to the *abuelo* in the poem too. I like how we all can feel a connection to the poem in different ways. We are all so different, but I like how we are connected by being in the dual language gifted class. I love that we are all smart.

Before coming to Northwood, I was always singled out in my classes. At my old school, in third-grade, I sat at a table where all of the smartest kids sat. The teacher would always say, “you go sit at that table.” If there was a new math thing we were learning, we would have to watch videos of the math problem that would try to explain. The teacher would then say, “back table, you can start on the problems if you want to.” Whenever I was given tough math problems, I was always able to do them. There were 26 kids in my dual language class in third-grade and only four of the smarter kids got into gifted, including me. My friends would always tell me that I was most likely to get into gifted.

My family was so happy when I got into gifted dual language. After I took the test, they sent a letter home that would say if you got in or not. I really wanted to get into gifted, but if I didn’t, I’d understand. I have actually done really well on all of my MAP Math and Reading tests, so I actually would have been a bit surprised about not getting in. It’s crazy to think about how excited I was when my family told me that I got into
gifted. One day, my dad took off of work out of nowhere. He typically works until 12 at
night and on the weekends, so I was confused why he took a day off. He then told us that
he was taking us out to eat at my favorite Mexican restaurant! Even though I was excited
because we were going to my favorite restaurant, I was still really confused because we
typically only go there on birthdays. When we finished dinner, I thought we were just
going to leave, but all of a sudden, the waiter came out with a sundae and my family
shouted, “congratulations! You got into gifted!” This was a big deal because my parents
didn’t go to college and they didn’t have gifted when they were in school so it was really
important to them.

MRS. NELSON interjects and begins to close the class period.

MRS. NELSON: “Clase, no hay más tiempo ahora. Please begin cleaning up your
posters. You will have about five-minutes tomorrow before we begin our presentations.”

End of scene II.

Scene III: Caffy

Students and teachers and inaudible and are preparing for the school day to begin.

CAFFY: After meeting with Mrs. Nelson yesterday, I have been thinking a bit more
about which language I speak and when. This morning on the bus I drew what I was
thinking about. I never really thought about it before, but I definitely speak more Spanish
at home than I do at school. My mom speaks some English and my dad knows more
English than she does, but they still prefer to speak in Spanish. We moved here when I
was one-year-old. The only person I really ever speak English with at home is my
brother. We don’t really like to speak in Spanish with each other. I don’t know, I usually
like English more. It’s my favorite language. I just feel that it’s better than Spanish. I just think that speaking in English is better. Anyways, I’m glad that I have my markers here at my desk to finish up what I was drawing on the bus. CAFFY is doodling in her notebook. Students come to life to state the Pledge of Allegiance. Each student is standing and has his/her right hand over his/her heart.

STUDENTS: “Yo prometo lealtad a la bandera de los estados Unidos de America, y a la Republica que representa, una Nación bajo Dios, entera, con libertad y justicia para todos.”

CAFFY (to herself; students are inaudible and preparing for the school day): It’s kinda interesting that we say the pledge in Spanish but we use more English at school than I do at home. It’s funny, some of my friends say that we speak so much Spanish at school. Maya claims that its ¾ of our day. I don’t know, I don’t think we speak in Spanish that much. I definitely speak in English more often hear than I do at home. Maybe that’s why I feel like we don’t use as much Spanish at school as she does. CAFFY finishes drawing her reflection from the bus and shows it to the audience.
MRS. NELSON: “Ok, get with the group of people you worked with the last two days. Today, I want you guys to be focusing on translanguaging--so comparing English and Spanish. Feel free to use the translanguaging notebook that you have been using in math to think about the poems. I would also like you to think about which version of the poem you prefer, English or Spanish. I am excited to see what you guys think and come up with.”

Students begin grabbing their notebooks, utensils, and posters and begin working.

CAFFY (to herself; students are inaudible and are beginning to analyze their poem): I really like being in the gifted dual language class. The kids at my old school were bad. They didn’t care about being there. It was frustrating and tough to make friends because I was different than them. I’m happy to be at Northwood now in Mrs. Nelson’s class.

Being in gifted makes me feel smart. When I got into gifted, it was the first time in school that I felt like I was intelligent. Being gifted means that I’m higher than other people, I’m smarter than they are, which makes me feel good. I have done well on my MAP Reading and Math tests this year. I have high reading scores, which I’m very proud of.

Whoa, I just got so lost in what I was thinking about that I didn’t realize that Mrs. Nelson just checked in with us and then walked away. I think she was talking to everyone about the simile at the end of the poem. I’ll just jump in here with an idea so that it looks like I’ve been paying closer attention.
CAFFY: “That part of the poem is definitely the saddest. I think it’s because in Spanish it is more depressing to me. It makes me sad for the grandpa and I relate to him because sometimes I just want to be alone and wrap up in a blanket with snacks when I feel sad like he does.”

MAYA: “Yeah, the language in English is not as depressing as it is in Spanish. I don’t know how to explain it, it just makes me depressed.”

CAFFY (to herself): I’m happy to hear that we all feel this way, but have different reasons for how we connect with the abuelo. I actually really like working with the poem because I haven’t ever connected to a character in a story or to the things that we have read in English or Spanish literature. I also really like being able to think about Spanish and English differently.

MRS. NELSON interjects.

MRS. NELSON: “Clase, no hay más tiempo ahora. Please begin cleaning up your posters. You will have about five-minutes tomorrow before we begin our presentations to wrap-up your ideas.”

CAFFY (to herself; students are inaudible and packing up): I think we will have a great presentation tomorrow. I’m happy Mrs. Nelson likes what we talked about. I love being in this class.

End of scene III.

Playwright Commentary

The accounts of the same lesson plan from each character’s perspective expose how an individual’s perception of the same event is not uniform, thus complicating the
ability to possess a comprehensive understanding of a given event. Each of us possesses our own subjectivity that impacts the means through which we perceive the world around us. The *Rashomon* effect (1988) highlights the impact of subjectivity on an individual’s recollection of a given event, thus causing observers to possess contrasting, yet plausible accounts of the same experience. Stabile (2013) notes that when it comes to memory, the original “‘inscription’—the act itself—is erased and forgotten, and thus lived experience is deposited in memory, and reposited in narrative” (p. 194). For Stabile (2013), memory shifts with each iteration and is shaped by the space and the moment in time in which it is recalled. Because of this, the recollection can be rewritten and overtaken by a new memory (Stabile, 2013). Considering the instability of memory, the mode for writing this play was chosen to highlight the inner discursive monologues of the characters and the role that their inner discourse grounded in their personal subjectivity, in conjunction with their social discourse, shape their perception of the event. The perspectives of these individuals work to provide an incomplete picture of the same event. Ultimately, the stories from Maya, Angela, and Caffy highlight the complexity of Latina student identity, what it means to be gifted, and the role that home expectations and language play in motivating these students for achievement.

**Part II**

**Author Note**

The following text is grounded in a three-week study of the novel *The Giver* by Lois Lowry in the fifth-grade dual language gifted classroom at Northwood Elementary School. A translated Spanish version of this text is being read, which aligns with the
curriculum expectations of the English-only gifted classroom. I, Mrs. Nelson, have taken on the role of the classroom teacher to examine my subjectivity as a White, female educator juxtaposed against the subjectivity of the Latina learners. Through classroom discourse and the journal reflections Chloe, I highlight the complexity of individual subjectivity and identity construction. Interweaving my experiences with those of the students, as well as the perspectives of Butler, I highlight three areas of consideration related to the novel *The Giver*²⁸: Family Unit, Tradition and Customs, and The Importance of the individual.

**Monday, April 16, 2018: Family Unit: Read Chapters 1-8 of *The Giver* & Journal**

“Two children – one male, one female – to each family unit. It was written very clearly in the rules” (Lowry, 1993, p. 11).

As the sunshine permeates through the window of Mrs. Nelson’s fifth-grade classroom, students begin unpacking their backpacks and preparing for the school day to begin. While students get out their homework, Mrs. Nelson passes out their new classroom text, *The Giver*. The texts possess the new book smell. They have never been opened; this year’s class will be the first ones to dive into the book. As students pick up their new book, they notice that it is written in Spanish.

²⁸ The novel *The Giver* was chosen for this inquiry because the students in the fifth-grade dual language GATE classroom had read the Spanish translation of this text during their ELA block this school year. I specifically selected this text to frame my inquiry in Part II because I wanted to highlight the use of this normative text, although translated into Spanish, being used in this classroom. While the language of the text has changed, its content has not. In *The Giver*, in the community of focus, everyone is the same. I think that this text contains valuable commentary on subjectivity and the dangers of enforcing a collective identity. The protagonist, Jonas, ultimately engages in acts of subversion to challenge the discursively constructed norms of his society.
“Good morning everyone! Today we will start reading *The Giver*. I have always loved this book. I remember reading it in my English class when I was your age. I think that you all are really going to love it—I have noticed that a lot of you are into dystopian texts, so this will be right up your alley!”

“Mrs. Nelson, wasn’t this book written in English originally? Why are we reading it in Spanish?” Chloe asked. Chloe is an incredibly bright and inquisitive student. She has spoken Spanish her entire life but prefers using English when she is at school, which is why she is wondering why the text is being used in Spanish.

“It was originally written in English by Lois Lowry. We are going to read it for our Spanish literature unit though. The translation is really well done.”

As the students begin sifting through the text, Mrs. Nelson explains how the text will be considered: “We are going to try something new while we are reading *The Giver*. Each week we will focus on unpacking a big idea related to the book. Every Monday, I am going to give you all a journal prompt that you will write a response about that is related to the big idea for that week. You will write your reflections on Google Docs and submit them in Google Classroom. You can get creative with these. If you want to write poetry, include drawings, or even hand-write some of your reflections, that is totally fine. You can also write your reflections in either English or Spanish. Just make sure that you place every component of your reflection on one document. These reflections are due every Friday by 11:59 p.m. We will be discussing some of these ideas in class, but your journal is a space for you to dive into these ideas more deeply. Are there any questions?”

Jason raises his hand. “What is the prompt for this week?”
“I was just getting to that. The prompt for this week is posted already to the assignment on Google Classroom. The prompt for this week is posted already to the assignment on Google Classroom. The prompt is: What role does the construction of the family unit play thus far in *The Giver*? What role does gender play in your personal life? Please use this week to think about this prompt as you are reading the book. For tonight, please read chapters 1-8. Alright, we are going to stop here for today. Please put your English books away and take out your math textbook.”

**Journal of Mrs. Nelson.** In *The Giver*, gender plays a significant role in the construction of the family units, job options, and marriage. Within the text, we are told that spouses are assigned by the government and are dictated by gender. Because of this, individuals are forced to align with and comply with the expectations of their sex. Within the text, we also do not see any same-sex couples, thus further exposing the insistence that individuals comply with the norms and expectations of their gender. Much like the spousal assignment, we see households being constructed based on gender—each family is allowed only one male and one female child. The dictatorial role that gender plays within this society exposes the weight that gender holds in this world. Additionally, when Lily indicates that the job she wishes to possess is a birthmother, she is quickly shut down by her mother because birthmothers have children for three years, do not get to keep their children, and once the three years are over, they are expected to complete hard labor. Women were virtually enslaved by their ability to have children is appalling as we do not see the male characters in the text being potentially subjected to a similar fate.
Ultimately, the ability of society to dictate one’s life is frightening because individuals within the text are not truly given free will.

I am fourteen years-old. “Jenna, it’s time to start preparing for Christmas—put your presents in your room and come help me in the kitchen.” Mom gently prompts our usual routine on the holidays, prepare the food, clean the house, and make sure we look perfect for when the family begins to arrive for Christmas dinner around 3 p.m. My dad and brother continue playing with my brother’s new video games—I wish I could enjoy my Christmas new gifts, but there is work to be done.

My mom and I are preparing for my mom’s side of the family—approximately 30 people—to come over to our house to celebrate Christmas. “Alright, it’s time to start chopping up the elements of the salad while I prepare to put the ham in the oven. Once that is done, I will need you to clean the bathroom and make sure that any clutter left on the desk is put away so that we can close the computer cabinet.” “Sounds good,” I reply. I passively go through the motions of preparing for my family to come over. I hear the sound of my brother’s new GameCube game ringing from the living room. My dad snoring on the couch taking a nap. “Jenna, please make sure that you wear the new outfit I bought you last week for Christmas tonight—you look so pretty in it.”

“Mary, I am ready for lunch—can you make us something?”

“Ok, honey. I will pull together some of the leftovers from last night and bring them into the living room for you boys.”

I am eighteen-years-old. Same routine, different year. Put your gifts away, cook, clean, look pretty. No help from the boys.
“Jenna, can you prepare the appetizers, clean the bathroom, and make sure that any clutter in the bathroom is put away.”

“But don’t we all need to use the bathroom to get ready?”

“Yes, but do it anyways so that your dad doesn’t get mad about it. He hates when your bobby pins are left anywhere. Just do it when you are finished with what you are working on and do it again when you are done getting ready.”

I hear my dad snoring on the couch—year after year he goes to sleep after we open our gifts. Listening to the next level of my brother’s new Xbox video game chime through the first floor of our house, my heart sinks—why am I doing this? Why don’t the boys have to help?

This is my first Christmas at home since going to college. I feel like the mirror that I have been staring at in my bathroom my whole life has been punched, shattered. How have I never realized that my life has been shaped by the patriarchal norms of my family? Every routine this holiday—and every day in my life—that I have known just collapsed.

As I pull together the appetizers for the Christmas party, I think about the gender norms of my mom’s side of the family. On my mom’s side of the family, a family deeply grounded in its Italian roots, the women are expected to be housewives, while the men are expected to be the breadwinners for the family. I have been groomed and expected to become a homemaker, like my mom, my aunt, my grandmothers, and essentially all of the significant women during the formative years of my life. I was taught that being a homemaker and caring for my husband and children is what I was designed to do as a
woman. My dad’s side of the family, likewise, possessed women who were not expected to hold jobs, and if they did, they only served their family TV dinners and did not know how to properly take care of their family. “Why are you trying to be like your dad’s side of the family by going to college? What’s the point in going?” I was asked by my maternal grandma, “Having a family to care for is the greatest role in life…” My eyes roll just thinking about this interaction as I place olives in a smaller bowl for the appetizers… Why didn’t I say anything back to her when she said this to me? I guess I never really thought of this being a familial taboo.

I am in college because I want to be. I love school. It is where I am meant to be. I want to be a teacher, but I also want to be a mom and take care of my family.

“Hey mom, why can’t the boys help clean the house? They aren’t doing anything right now.”

“Because it’s our job to do this. That’s our role as women, to take care of the men.”

I am twenty-one years old. I feel like I am caught in a loop each and every Christmas. It’s all the same. I feel like since starting college that as each year has gone by that I have moved further and further away from the expectations that my family has placed on me due to my gender. I plan to confront my mom this Christmas break about the struggles that I encountered during my years in secondary education in relation to my perception of my intelligence. Because I am preparing to begin my student teaching in the spring at the high school level, I have been grappling with the struggles that I faced mentally in relation to my beliefs about my intelligence. As we work on preparing the
components of the Christmas meal, just the two of us, I ask her, “Mom, since I am going to be teaching high school English this spring, I am wondering why I was never allowed to take Honors English or other advanced courses when I was in high school? I am able to teach these classes now, so I am curious about why I couldn’t be in them when I was younger. This has been something that has been bothering me for a while because I feel like I wasn’t as prepared to be an English major as my peers at college because I didn’t take those classes.”

“I just know my daughter and that you would have been too stressed out to take them. You were able to be placed in those classes since middle school, I just wanted to protect you.”

A red, hot rage boiled up inside my body. Time stopped. My vision blurred.

“What do you mean? I was able to be in those classes this entire time and YOU made the choice for me to not take them because of STRESS?! I was going to be stressed no matter what classes I was in, but at least I wouldn’t have felt dumb, or even been called stupid by some of the friends in my past because I wasn’t in those classes. You realize that my struggles with the ACT and fear of not getting into college because I had not taken an advanced course could have been completely avoided had you placed me in the appropriate courses?”

“Honey, I know you though and you would have been stressed.”

“Mom, I was bored! I was afraid of not doing well in school because I thought I was dumb. You realize that this decision really stifled me?”
'No, it didn’t. You are overreacting. This didn’t have any impact at all. You did well. You got all A’s. You got into a great university. Everything worked out, didn’t it?’

It didn’t.

This image is indicative of how I felt at this moment in my life. I felt as if I did not have a voice—even when I tried to speak out, I was silenced. My mouth, my voice, my perspective did not matter. My eyes have been opened, but yet I still do not have a voice, zero input.

Figure 3. Mrs. Nelson silenced.

I am thirteen years-old. “See you in science class!” My friend Jessica calls out to me as we exit social studies and she and three of my other close friends skip off to their advanced English class, then their advanced Spanish class, oh, and then their advanced
math class, until finally we are reunited in the afternoon for science. I feel so alone. I have friends in my classes, but my best friends are all in the same classes all day, the advanced classes. I wish that I would have scored higher on the assessment they had us take in fourth grade to place us in classes. My life would be so much better. Eighth grade has been so frustrating this year, especially because everyone is getting ready for high school next year. These last few years of school have been more frustrating than the others. I hate being separated from them. It makes me feel inadequate, dumb, and incompetent. Each time Jessica asks me in science class if I want help with the math formulas we are working in our physics unit, my blood boils. I feel like each time something like this is said to me, it shows me how unintelligent they think that I am. I feel like they think that I am lower than them just because I am not in the advanced classes. I hate feeling stupid. I know that I’m not, but every aspect of my life indicates that I am—am I only getting A’s because I am in classes at the regular level? This was the beginning of the end for me.

I am seventeen years-old. Fast forward to my junior year of high school, the year of the ACT. I am taking ACT preparatory classes before the school year begins. This test…the test of all tests that will determine by future…consumes every ounce of my being. I loathe standardized tests. I would give a million dollars to never have to take a standardized assessment ever again. What is the point of these tests? Why can’t universities know my abilities as a student from my grades in high school? I don’t get it. I feel so helpless because I have never been great at taking standardized assessments—that’s why I never was in advanced or Honors classes throughout school. The thought of
taking the ACT, this awful test, fills me with sadness. I have no future. I have no hope. No one seems to understand this frustration. Especially my family members. No one gets it.

As I sit at an empty desk in June, after my junior year has ended, I am about to take the ACT for the third time. My scores have still not reflected my abilities as a student. When I received my score from the first time I took the ACT, I had a panic attack. How could this happen? I have worked so hard!

This test holds a lot of weight for me: a. I don’t want to take the ACT again—I don’t know how many more times I can do this; b. During the college fair that I attended during the spring semester, the woman at the University of Illinois (U of I) table appeared skeptical that I would be admitted due to my ACT score and my non-existent Honors or Advanced Placement (AP) classes. Ever since middle school, I have dreamed of attending U of I—it is literally the only school I want to go to. My dad graduated from Northern Illinois University, so that was the only college I ever knew about until I met my favorite teacher in 7th grade who attended U of I. Since then, because I want to be a teacher, I have kept tabs on which of my teachers went to U of I to see if the education program is strong—I have loved all of my middle school and high school teachers that went there, so I think it’s the perfect choice for me.

Anyways, when I met with the U of I representative at the college fair this last spring, she told me that she is uncertain that I would be a quality candidate for U of I because of my ACT score and my lack of Honors and AP classes, even with my high GPA and participation in five different extracurriculars and societies. My heart sank to
the ground. I felt helpless. My dream school hanging in the balance—what if I don’t get in? Or even worse, what if no university wants me?

When I found out this devastating news, I decided to take hold of the elements that I could control—selecting AP courses and continuing to prepare for the ACT. During my class selection meeting with my counselor in the spring, I decided to enroll in three AP courses during my senior year of high school—AP English Language, AP Spanish, and AP Biology. My counselor was incredibly supportive of my decisions—he actually encouraged me. But then I told my parents. My mom replied, “Are you sure? I don’t think that is a good idea because you never took Honors classes.” And from my dad, “Well, those are weighted right? Well, you can finally get those C’s then that you never let yourself get.”

Really? That’s your reaction?

As I sit waiting to take the ACT for the third time, I recall these instances from this last semester. What if I don’t do well on the ACT? What will happen if I don’t do well in my AP classes? What if I don’t live up to the expectations I’ve set for myself? I try to shake these fears and feelings of insecurity, but I can’t seem to get them out of my mind…

I only score one point higher on the ACT—not good enough. But I can’t do this again.

As the fall semester of my senior year begins, I start applying for college—nine universities to be exact. I am terrified of not being accepted to college. I have worked so hard in school. I tried my hardest on the ACT. And I am taking three AP courses. I feel so
bogged down by the expectations I’ve placed on myself. My parents repeatedly tell me that they don’t care about my grade or which school I go to, but saying those things only makes my stress worse. Why does no one understand me? Why does no one care?

In December, I get accepted to U of I—Thank God!

I am twenty-three years old. I am finally not living in my parents’ house this holiday season, a little shake-up in the system. When I arrive at their house in the afternoon of Christmas day, I am met with the same chores and expectations that I am given each year. This year is different in another way though, my boyfriend is here and helping me. At the end of my college career, we started having more discussions about what we want for the future. As we peel the potatoes that will be mashed for dinner, I think about a conversation we had during a car ride in October 2011…

“What do you want for the future?”

“I want to eventually be a homemaker. I think I want to teach for several years and then take care of my family.”

“Why are you killing yourself each semester to get A’s, when you don’t plan to use your degree for the rest of your life?” he asked. I felt dumbfounded because I was groomed for that aspiration and that all men would value this path. “If you could do any job for the rest of your life, what would you want to do?” he then asked me.

“I want to teach for several years and then pursue my master’s and a doctorate to ultimately become a professor of education.”
“Then let’s try to get you there.” It was at that moment, at 22 years old, that I realized that my life-path was not set in stone, that I could change it, that I could have my dream career.

I am twenty-four years old. Wow, so much has changed since this time last year. My boyfriend and I are engaged and we are visiting Illinois for the first time since we started graduate school in Boston. Per usual, he and I are helping my mom prepare to have everyone over for Christmas while my brother and my dad relax in the other room. It has been particularly challenging to be staying at my parent’s house for a portion of this winter break. After living with him for the last few years, where we share the equal weight of household duties, it has been incredibly frustrating to watch how my dad treats my mom. I had been conditioned to believe that a man forcing his wife to make his meals was entirely normal—it’s not. My dad’s inability to do things for himself, even the most remedial things, it appalling to me. I don’t understand why he is so incapable. As we help my mom, I think about how much I have changed as a person over the last year.

Moving to Boston was the best pallet cleanser for me. When my boyfriend first got accepted to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), my heart stopped. I was in the middle of a musical rehearsal with my middle school students when he told me. Despite wanting to go to graduate school and aspiring to eventually become a professor, I loved my teaching job and I was terrified to leave it behind. Was this actually happening? Are we seriously moving to Boston? Crap, what am I going to do?! I haven’t even applied to any graduate schools out there! I’m not proud of it, but it took me a few days
to come to terms with the fact that we would be leaving our jobs and moving to Boston. I had to take the jump.

When I decided to leave the field, my mom cried because she wanted me to stay a teacher, get married, start a family, and not move to Boston. Her adamant pleas for me to not go to graduate school stick in my mind today. They frustrate me because, at the time, they made me heavily second-guess my decision out of fear that pursuing my graduate degree was wrong.

I am twenty-seven years old. This Christmas has been the most difficult Christmas of my entire life. Over the course of the last few years, there has been an ever-growing rift in my immediate family. This all began when my brother started having legal troubles in 2014—and they have not stopped since. My mother’s unwavering devotion to my brother, her inability to see the errors in his ways, even though the legal system does, has been a never-ending struggle for me because I believe that people must prove that they are willing to change and take initiatives to improve reshape their life prior to diving in head-first into a relationship again. Admittedly, my brother and I have not been close since I started my undergraduate career. We have a large age difference, so we were always at different stages throughout our lives. Although this is the case, my mother’s unflattering dedication to my brother and subsequent support from my father has caused me to move further away from my family and desire more than ever before to break away from my mother’s predicament. This year, I opted not to attend the traditional Christmas celebration with my family described in my previous journals. The toxic
masculinity ingrained in my family, grounded in phallogocentrism\textsuperscript{29}, has enabled the construction of a binary bound to the cultural reproduction of our identities that have made me the enemy and my brother the hero—he has a child, I do not; he has a wife who does not work, while I do. Even with his legal issues, he is deemed more favorable in the eyes of my family because he is a man and because he complies with the patriarchal norms of my family. I had to separate myself, at least for a moment.

Since getting married, I have created a life in which I do not feel confined by the patriarchal norms that dictated my upbringing. My husband and I are a team and share the collective weight of responsibilities in life and at home. I intend to have a career and to not allow motherhood and being a wife dictate my identity. Now that I am a wife, I frantically work to create a different kind of marriage than that of my parents, and more specifically my mother’s role in marriage. I am resentful toward my mother for much of her behavior both during my upbringing and in the present that I have come to understand as a lack of independence. Pushing against these norms through pursuing a career and possessing a balanced marriage are means through which I work in the present to challenge the norms of my youth.

\textsuperscript{29} In Butler’s (1990) text, \textit{Gender Trouble}, part of Butler’s inquiry “center[s] on—and decenter[s]—such defining institutions: phallogocentrism and compulsory heterosexuality” (xxix). Through doing so, Butler reveals that a stable notion of gender is troubled as our identities are unfixed.
**Journal of Chloe.** In *The Giver*, gender influences how individuals are placed into families, who people marry, and sometimes even what job a person is able to possess. I think that the way that the society dictates people’s lives based on their gender is an issue because it people are essentially not given any choice in how they wish to live their lives. Besides the control part in what your life looks like, I think it’s an issue that people are forced to be the gender that they are born. For me, I identify as both a boy and a girl, so would I be forced to be more like a girl in this society? That really bothers me because I think that people should be allowed to choose what they identify with more.

“*Tu eres una jovencita*” rings in my brain when I think about gender and my family unit. My mom always says that to me because I am about to be a teenager, so I am expected to act like a woman. It’s annoying to me because my brother, he’s just one year younger than me is able to go run around and do whatever he wants to while I have to cook and clean and act like a woman. I don’t understand why I am expected to always behave in a certain way, but my brother gets to act however he wants to. It’s frustrating to me because I identify as both a boy and a girl—my gender identity would be both.

Last summer, when we were visiting my family in Mexico, I was running around playing soccer and other sports with my brother and my boy cousin Mario, I was pulled aside by my grandma and my mom to talk. I have always run around with my brother and cousin ever summer when we visit Mexico since I can remember, so why did they want to talk to me right now and not to them? As my brother and cousin run off, continue to kick the soccer ball down the dirt path in the backyard of my uncle’s farmhouse, I hesitantly approach my mom and grandma.
“Chloe, why are you running around with the boys? I’ve told you this before, tu
eres una jovencita,” my mom asserts.

“Mom, why can’t I play with the boys? I always run around and play with them
just like I am right now. What makes this year different?”

“You are becoming a young lady, Chloe. You can’t be running around with the
boys. You aren’t like them. You should be sitting here with us watching them play. Look
at you, you have dirt all over your face! A young lady should never have dirt on her
face,” Grandma points out as she licks her finger to wipe the dirt from my face—I hate it
when she does this. Who wants spit on their face? It’s disgusting.

Repulsed by my grandma’s spit on my face, and disgusted even more so by the
beliefs of my grandma and mom, I slowly sit down on the chair next to them and watch
Miguel and Mario run past. What hurts even more is that Miguel and Mario keep running
around, keep playing, as if nothing happened. Can’t they see that my world just
shattered? Why don’t they care that I can’t play with them anymore? It’s not fair.

It is even worse when we are at home in Illinois. Every day, my mom is like, “oh
go do that, oh go clean the living room,” and I didn’t even do anything in there. And I’m
like, “Dad and Miguel are just sitting in there, it’s their house too, why can’t they do it?
You two live here too. You can do something.” But then the boys just sit there. It
seriously makes my blood boil when I think about all that I have to do compared to the
boys in my house. My dad and my brother sit in the living room, watching TV and never
lifting a finger to contribute to the housework. Each day, I have to do all the dishes, I
have to tidy the living room, I have to make my bed and my brother’s bed… I have to do
EVERYTHING. I find it completely obnoxious that I am required to make my brother’s bed EVERY. SINGLE. DAY. He has two hands and two legs, he is perfectly capable of making it himself. What frustrates me even more is that I am not allowed to participate in extracurricular activities after school, but my brother is allowed to. My parents told me that I have to come straight home right away after school to take care of my chores and help my mom prepare for dinner.

Don’t even get me started on cooking. Every night, I have to help my mom prepare dinner once I am done with my chores around the house. Depending on what we are having for dinner, I typically help my mom with chopping up the vegetables that she is using in her dish and stirring any sauces, rice, or soup that might be part of dinner. Don’t get me wrong, I don’t mind helping out my mom with cooking—I know that she would have zero support otherwise—however, I hate that I always have to be the person helping her. The people in my house definitely don’t carry an equal weight when it comes to taking care of things around the house. I don’t like it, but it’s the way that it is.

My brother has it so easy. For me, it’s just like, go clean. Go do everything and go take care of your sister and all of that. It’s annoying because my brother can just go and do his homework and watch TV and all that, while I have to do everything else. I’m like, “why can’t my brother do it?” And they’re like, “you have to learn how to do it.” And they won’t just let me do things. What’s really frustrating is they won’t let me do things just because they think of me as a girl.

I just wish that parents would let me do my own things. I love listening to music, drawing, and reading, but I never get the chance to do these things because someone is
always breathing down my neck when I am at home. That’s why I have to do all of these things at school. I can never relax. And so that’s why I have to bring everything to school—my music, my art supplies, any books that I want to read. And if any of those things get lost, then my parents blame me they’re like, “why did you bring it?” And I’m like, “well, you don’t give me time. I have to clean. I have to do everything.” It’s just not fair. I feel like I can never win. I would give anything to have a day at home where I didn’t have to do anything for anyone else. A day in which I could do whatever I want and not be worried that I am doing anything wrong. It’s frustrating because my friends are able to do whatever they want to at home. They all talk about the Snapchats that they sent the night before, but I never get to be part of that because my parents don’t even give me time to.

Because I am the oldest and I am in gifted, my mom always expects me to help my brother and my sister with their homework assignments, leaving me little time to work on my own homework. It really annoys me how my mom assumes that I know everything because I am in the gifted dual language class. Since my sister is in second grade, she is in the regular dual language classroom because gifted dual language classes don’t start until fourth grade. Because she is in the dual language class, my mom assumes that I know every single word in Spanish that my sister is expected to learn, except I don’t. Just because I am in gifted, doesn’t mean that I know every single word in English and Spanish. It doesn’t work that way. So, I get stuck helping my sister, ridiculed for not knowing certain vocabulary words, and then I am expected to help out with chores around the house. It’s not fun being in my shoes.
I am even discriminated against by my family for being a girl outside of our house as well. My dad, he’s a DJ and a photographer, and so I want to be his assistant because I think his job is really cool. My younger brother does not. He just wants the money. He could care less about helping my dad. He would rather stay home and play video games. But I really want to do what my dad does and I want to learn how to do it from him. This issue is, my dad never lets me help him or go with him on a job because I’m a girl. Two years ago was the first time that I asked my dad if I could come along and help him with his job. At the time, he told me that I was too young and that I also couldn’t come because I am a girl and girls do not do photography or DJ. He views his job as boys only—no girls allowed. But this year, my brother is just one year older than I was when I first asked, and he is allowed to help. It’s just because he is a boy. He didn’t even ask to help. My dad just told him that he had to come along and help him out with the lighting for his photographs, setting up the sound and lighting system at the wedding venue, and collecting the tips from the bride and groom at the end of the night. Those are all of the things that I wanted to help out with. It’s not fair.

Just this last weekend, I approached my dad again about helping him out at his job on Saturday afternoon and evening. I overheard him talking to one of his friends on the phone the other day about how large the wedding is and how nervous he is about being able to get everything done for his photography and DJ job. My brother has a birthday party on Saturday night, so I thought that this would be the perfect time for me to ask him about helping him out. On Thursday, before the wedding, I asked my dad if I could come
and help. Once again, he told me no. And I was like, “Fine. I’ll dress up like a boy and then I can come.”

And so, I did. I went upstairs and put on my brother’s clothes and put my hair up in a hat so that I would look like a boy. Plus, everyone always says that I look exactly like my brother, so how could this not work. I went downstairs and asked my dad if I could go now and he still said no. It was because I am still a girl! I don’t get it. I identify as both a boy and a girl, why doesn’t anyone see that? They only see me as a girl. Nothing else. What frustrates me even more is that one time when my brother went with him to help he dropped all of the money in the driveway and it started blowing away. He is so disorganized. Another time he even dropped the money at the venue and people started running up and just taking it off the floor. I know that I can do better than him because I actually care. Why would my dad want him there anyways? He’s a liability.

It’s annoying because I feel like my family doesn’t understand me. They just want me to be the type of girl that they expect me to be. The problem is that I don’t view myself as only a girl. I think that boys and girls are equal in society. Even though at home I am expected to take care of the house like the women in my family, I still think that both genders are equal. I just act the way that I want to and I think that everyone else should too. Thinking again back to this summer while my family and I were visiting our family in Mexico, I remember my grandma and mom not letting me have a sleepover with my brother and cousin in a tent in the backyard of my uncle’s farmhouse. As Miguel, Mario, and I were carrying our sleepover items outside—our tent, sleeping bags,
pillows, stuffed animals, flashlights, and snacks—my grandma pulled me aside as asked what I was doing.

“I am having a sleepover in the tent with Miguel and Mario. We do it every summer at the end of our visit,” I told her.

“Well, not this year. You are not allowed to have sleepovers with boys. You’re a girl,” my grandma asserted.

“What?! I am having a sleepover in the tent with my brother and my cousin! There is nothing wrong with that.”

“Yes, there is. You are a young lady, so you also should not be sleeping on the ground either.”

There was no reasoning with my grandma. She is super old school when it comes to our culture and what we are expected to do in relation to gender. It wasn’t worth wasting my breath arguing with her about this. I had no chance of winning. As Miguel and Mario continue carrying items outside, I walk out and pick up my sleeping bag and pillow and begin carrying them back inside.

“Chloe, where are you going?! Why are you bringing your sleeping stuff inside?” Miguel asked.

“Grandma won’t let me sleep outside with you guys tonight.”

“Why not?! Wait, are we still allowed to sleep outside? It’s just you who can’t, right?” Mario inquired.

“Yeah, it’s because I am a girl. Grandma says that I can’t sleep outside with you guys because I am a girl and because I shouldn’t be sleeping on the ground.”
“That’s bogus. But hey, at least we get to keep sleeping outside, Mario.”

“That’s true. Well, see you in the morning, Chloe!”

As Miguel and Mario run off to start their sleepover in the tent outside, I walk back into the house, much to my dismay. Is this how it is going to be for the rest of my life? Am I always going to be told what to do and never have the opportunity to make my own decisions? How come everyone only sees me as just a girl? I wish that everyone was treated the same. It would make life so much easier.

Sasha has told me about how at her house, everyone is treated the same and how the boys are expected to do the same chores as the girls. I envy the fact that she doesn’t have family members breathing down her neck every single day telling her how to behave and what to do—it’s so annoying! Maya and Sasha also always talk about how boys can wear makeup and dresses if they want to and that makeup is for girls and boys. I agree with them because I hate how gender tends to be so stereotyped when that’s not the way it is all the time. I am tired of feeling trapped. That is why my picture in this reflection says, “Live, Love, Design” and “If you think it, you can do it.” I am hopeful that I can break away from the expectations placed on me, it just may take some time…
Monday, April 23, 2018: Customs: Read Chapters 7-15 of *The Giver* & Journal

“Though Jonas had only become a Five the year that they acquired Lily and learned her name, he remembered the excitement, the conversations at home, wondering about her: how she would look, who she would be, how she would fit into their established family unit. He remembered climbing the steps to the stage with his parents, his father by his side that year instead of with the Nurturers, since it was the year that he would be given a new child of his own” (Lowry, 1993, p.16).

The morning announcements blare over the intercom as students are unpacking their backpacks and preparing for the school day.

“Please stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. *Yo prometo lealtad a la bandera de los estados Unidos de America, y a la Republica que representa, una Nación bajo Dios, entera, con libertad y justicia para todos.*”

Once students finish saying the Pledge of Allegiance, students are seated.

“Alright, everyone. We are going to get started. Please take out *The Giver* and open your
journal reflection from last week. Today, we will use the first few minutes of class to do a pair-and-share discussion of your journal reflection related to gender that you wrote last week. Please make a group of three or work in pairs at your table today. We will take around ten to fifteen minutes to share your reflections with your partner or group. While you all are sharing your work, I will come around to check in and hear what you have to say.”

Students begin pairing up or making groups of three with the peers at their table. Several students are moving slowly. After all, it is the first class period on a Monday—which is incredibly normal. As students begin discussing, Mrs. Nelson checks in with a group consisting of Chloe, Perla, and Sasha.

“What did you guys talk about in your journal,” Perla questions Chloe and Sasha.
“I talked a lot about how my family always expects girls to do everything around the house and take care of the men. While they do nothing.”

“Same!” Chloe replied. “It’s so annoying especially at our age now because I feel like we are expected to do even more stuff around the house just because that’s what they expect girls to do. I talked about how I identify as both a boy and a girl in my journal and how that frustrates me because my parents don’t acknowledge that at all.”

“That’s so frustrating!” Sasha exclaimed.

“Yeah, one time, I tried to convince my dad to help him at his job because he usually only lets my younger brother help him just because he is a boy and he wouldn’t let me. I am so much more responsible than my brother—you have no idea! When my dad said that I couldn’t go just because I am a girl I got super frustrated and ran upstairs
to mine and my brother’s room to put on his clothes. I even put my hair up into a hat. I then went downstairs and I was like, “dad, can I go now? I look like a boy.” And he was like, “no, you are still a girl no matter what you put on. You can’t help.” I ran upstairs crying and so infuriated that I couldn’t help just because they see me as a girl. It’s ridiculous!” Chloe began to have tears well up in her eyes as she finished telling her story. The two girls looked at her dumbfounded as to how to respond.

“I can’t believe that happened to you! That’s not fair at all. At my house, boys and girls are seen as the same, so we all have to do the same stuff around the house. My parents say that I can do whatever job I want to do,” Sasha shared.

“Not mine. It’s so annoying,” Chloe reflected.

“Alright, let’s take a few minutes to share out and discuss as a class what you guys wrote about in your journal last week. Are there any volunteers? Yes, Carlos.”

“Last week, someone in the class talked about how it was a problem that the main character is a boy and that the girls in the book don’t have any power. I think that the author decided to focus on a boy because the moms and girls are not that important to the story overall. They are probably doing normal things like what girls do in their present like clean, cook, and clean out bedrooms. The girls don’t have an impact on the story. They’re kinda like blank characters. By having a boy as the main character, it is more interesting because he is able to do more stuff in the community. Why would they give a girl the cool job? She probably couldn’t handle it anyway.”

“I don’t know about that. Plus, today’s time is different. Boys and girls are capable of doing the same things,” Maya refuted.
“Yeah, I don’t get why you don’t think that girls aren’t just as capable as boys to do things! We are much more than taking care of the home,” Sasha retorted.

:: The bell rings ::

“This is a great discussion. Let’s continue thinking about these elements as we continue reading the text and revisit this discussion tomorrow. This week, we are focusing on the central concepts of traditions and customs in relation to the world of *The Giver*. Once again, you can definitely get creative in your reflection and use Spanish or English in your writing. The prompt that you will be focusing on this week is the following: How does the community use laws as well as traditions to control its citizens? What role do customs and traditions play in your life? How might they have shaped who you are? I look forward to reading more about your personal connections with the text. For tonight, please read chapters 7-15. Alright, let’s put our books and computers away for today. We are going to transition to math.”

**Journal of Mrs. Nelson.** Within *The Giver*, the laws/rules and customs are utilized to control individuals within the community. These rules, oftentimes, work to hide the reality of the situation, like hiding the pain and mourning of death. The rules also work to shape individuals in an identical manner, thus giving everyone the same meaning to their lives because individuality and choice are not allowed. The customary ceremony each December places everyone in a specific age group on the same stepping stone, no matter when they were born during that calendar year, furthermore imposing control over the development of the citizens in this community. The laws and traditions work to assert control over the individuals in the text. These elements shape people emotionally,
behaviorally, and socially. Considering this aspect of the text highlights the importance of critically examining the shaping impact of laws and customs on one’s life—are these elements beneficial or detrimental?

*Figure 5. Mrs. Nelson’s identity tree.*
Journal of Chloe. In the book, the society in *The Giver* uses laws as well as traditions to control its citizens and enforce how individuals behave and interact with each other. I think that it is scary how much people are controlled by the laws of the community. It’s like they have no choice in how they live their lives. I would hate living in a world like this where people don’t have the ability to choose who they marry, can only have two kids, and have their jobs told to them. I don’t like the fact that people in the society don’t have any choice in how their life goes—it’s really sad. I also think that it’s weird that they only let the stronger babies live and that they “release” old people instead of letting them die on their own. It’s crazy to me that the community even determines when people are allowed to die. Even though the customs and traditions in my family are controlling, I think that the world in the book is way scarier than the one I live in.

Customs and traditions play a big role in my family. I was born here, but my parents are from Mexico and most of my family is still there. Because of that, my family runs like it would if we were still living in Mexico, which means that as a girl I have to do all of the work at home and I am expected to be like a girl in a pretty white dress that never gets messy all the time. I hate it. I talked a lot about my issues with gender last week already though, but it still really bothers me that boys and girls are treated so differently when we are all the same. I don’t get it.
Figure 6. Chloe’s perspective on language.

What I love most about my family is that we all speak Spanish with each other. This is a custom and tradition that I plan to keep going when I have a family because language plays a really important part in my life because it is a big part of my culture—that is why I wrote this in Spanish above. I learned Spanish first because it is my culture’s language. I like that I learned it because not much people use it, which makes it special because it means that I know more parts of my culture. Spanish is also really important to me because I speak a lot of Spanish in my house with my family. I feel like if I didn’t know how to speak Spanish, I would lose a side of my identity because it’s a way I can communicate with my own peeps. Speaking Spanish with family is a really big deal because it’s like our own special thing that not everyone has. I definitely think that being able to speak Spanish shows that I know where I am from originally. I think that if you are Hispanic that you have to be able to speak Spanish, otherwise you are letting down your culture. Because my family taught me Spanish growing up, I know that I must teach
my children Spanish too. I worry that if I do not teach my children Spanish that they will lose their culture, and even worse, that I am betraying my culture.

I know that my classmates feel the same, even Maya. She is both African American and Mexican, but she still calls herself Latina. She has told me about how she gets frustrated with people not thinking that she is Latina or that she speaks Spanish because of how she looks. Her mother is Mexican, so everyone assumes that she speaks Spanish, which she does, but because Maya is both African American and Mexican, people assume that she does not speak Spanish. She actually told me yesterday about her experience this week with her mother at a Mexican restaurant for her family’s Taco Tuesday. When she and her mother went up to the counter to order their tacos, the woman at the register spoke to her mother in Spanish, but when it was Maya’s turn to order, she asked her mother, in Spanish, what Maya would like to order. Maya told me that she felt so insulted and immediately responded to the woman in Spanish, “yo quiero dos tacos de pollo.” Maya said that it hurt her feelings that the woman assumed that she did not speak Spanish just because of what she looks like. She is a Latina and has been speaking Spanish since birth, just like I have, but just because she is also African American, she is not always viewed as part of our culture. I feel bad for her because I know that language is a huge part of my identity and my culture and I would feel so insulted if someone thought that I did not speak my first language from my culture.
Even though I only speak in Spanish at home with my family, I avoid using Spanish when I am not with my immediate family or with older family members. Caffy, Sasha, Perla, Sara, and I talk about this all the time. Even though Sara speaks English at home mostly, her family speaks Spanish during dinners, but she agrees with us too. Sasha and I have discussed how you have to talk in Spanish to older people because they aren’t comfortable with English. I definitely speak more English than Spanish at school—it feels the most comfortable language to use for me when I am not at home. That’s why I haven’t used much Spanish in these journals because I just don’t feel comfortable using it here. We are always supposed to use Spanish in math, but as Perla said during a discussion this week in class, we are in school for 5 to 6 hours a day using English, so we usually even use English in math class as well. It’s just more comfortable. What’s weird
about it though is that even though we love being able to speak Spanish and English, we end up losing our Spanish in our GATE classroom because it just doesn’t feel right to use it there. Thinking back to when I was in regular dual language classes before I switched to gifted in fourth-grade, my friends and I would definitely use more Spanish than we do now in the classroom.

Lizzac is the only person I know from our dual language gifted class that speak Spanish at school when we are not being forced to by our teacher. She never speaks in Spanish with the people in our class, but she speaks in Spanish with the kids in the regular dual language classes at school. I think it’s strange because we speak Spanish too. She says she does it because they’re basically all Mexican, so they speak in Spanish all the time, so she goes along with it because she is already comfortable with it and talking in Spanish with them. It’s weird because I am Mexican too, but I don’t feel the same way. She also says that she likes to speak Spanish outside of her house because it shows that she is Latina and that she is proud of it because there are racist people that might tell her that this is America and that she can’t speak Spanish. She likes to speak it so that she can stand up against that. I don’t know, I still hate using Spanish at school. It just feels weird to me. I do love being able to speak both languages though—which is why I handwrote Spanish and English with a heart because I love both languages and I am happy that I am able to speak both.
Monday, April 30, 2018: Individual: Chapters 16-23 of The Giver & Journal

“Our people made that choice, the choice to go to Sameness. Before my time, before the previous time, back and back and back. We relinquished color when we relinquished sunshine and did away with difference. We gained control of many things. But we had to let go of others” (Lowry, 1993, p. 120).

“Mrs. Nelson, I had the best weekend ever! I went to my cousin’s quinceañera on Saturday. We had so much fun! Her dress was so beautiful! It was white and super poofy. I can’t wait to wear that dress!” Sasha shares with Mrs. Nelson.

Chloe immediately jumps in to share her perspective. “I hate wearing dresses. Why are you excited about doing that and wearing a dress? I told my mom that I am going to wear a pantsuit that I design because I want to be a clothing designer when I grow up. I would feel so much more comfortable wearing a pantsuit I design than the fluffy type of dress that everyone else wears.”

“Is your mom gonna let you do that though?” Sasha asks.

“I don’t know, probably not. She is always trying to get me to wear dresses, but I think that I can maybe change her mind. It’s my day after all.”
“Either way, you guys will look great! I like that you are thinking about how you can make your quinceañera your own too,” Mrs. Nelson shares.

The morning announcement begins as students are putting away their items and preparing to start the day. “Please stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. Yo prometo lealtad a la bandera de los estados Unidos de America, y a la Republica que representa, una Nación bajo Dios, entera, con libertad y justicia para todos.”

“Alright, today I am looking for you guys to pair up with someone from a different table who you did not share your journal reflection with last week. We will take about ten to fifteen minutes to share your reflections.” Students begin partnering up. Mrs. Nelson stops by Chloe and Kate to hear what they are discussing.

“What did you talk about in your journal from last week?” Kate asked Chloe.

“I talked about how I am annoyed by the customs of my family related to gender because I don’t like how the girls have more expectations placed on them than the boys do. Is your house like that too?”

“Totally! Except for I push back against my parents when they try to treat me differently than my brothers. I don’t think I should be treated differently than boys are. It’s not right,” Kate noted.

Chloe contemplates Kate’s response. “Yeah, I try to do that, but my parents still don’t listen to me. You’re lucky. In my journal, I also talked about how important language is to me because it reflects my culture. I love that I learned Spanish first and then English. I think it’s my special thing with my family.”
“Oh, I totally feel the same way about speaking Spanish. Everyone in my family spoke English only at home until my abuela moved in with us when I was five and I was placed in dual language. I am so happy that she moved here because I know that I wouldn’t know Spanish without her. I think that we are so much closer to our Mexican culture now that we all speak Spanish at home,” Kate explains.

“Do you feel strange speaking Spanish at school too?”

“I thought that I was totally alone in feeling that way! I hate when we have to speak only in Spanish while we are in math. It just feels weird speaking in Spanish at school. We always end up speaking in English with one another anyways when we are in math and when we are in our other classes,” Chloe shared.

“Yeah, I just feel weird speaking in Spanish with you guys…”

“Let’s come back together,” Mrs. Nelson announces to the class. “I loved hearing about what you all had to say about the text. You have done a fantastic job reflecting on The Giver these last two weeks. I have been incredibly impressed by your thoughts on the book and the connections that you have made between your personal life and the content of The Giver. I am excited to see how you unpack the remainder of the text in your reflections next week. Definitely feel free to get creative in your reflection. Remember that you can also use English and Spanish in your reflection as well. I noticed that most of you stick to English in your reflections, and that’s ok, but I would like to see a bit more Spanish use since we are reading The Giver in Spanish. This week, the prompt is the following: What is the role of society in The Giver? Why does Jonas ultimately reject the society in The Giver where everyone is viewed as the same to take his own path in
life? What do you think ultimately drove him to question the society he lived in? Reflect on instances in which you have either reflected or challenged the expectations of your position as a student in society. What impact did it have on your life? Alright, let’s go ahead and pack up your English materials. It is time for math.”

**Journal of Mrs. Nelson.** The conclusion of *The Giver* exposes the importance of being one’s own individual by juxtaposing free-will with the rules and regulations that dictate the society in the text. Throughout the text, we see the impact of the rules placed on individuals within the society that dictate their profession, marriage, family life, emotions, birth, puberty, and even death. The regimented nature of this community exposes the shaping impact of the world around us on how we live our lives. We see how dependence on the society around us can impact who we become and how we view the world around us. Jonas’s development as an individual, one that matures beyond the dependence of the community, highlights the importance of stepping outside of the norms of the world around us to rethink how we interact with the world and the shaping impact of free-will. By rejecting a society where everyone is virtually the same to take his own path, we see the importance of following our own path and celebrating differences and diversity within society.

Throughout my elementary, secondary, and undergraduate career, I saw mathematics as being the most significant indicator of intelligence and that to be viewed as intelligent meant that I had to perform well in those areas, particularly on standardized assessments. This expectation, mirrored with my confidence in my scholastic abilities
through not being allowed to participate in advance coursework, shaped how I saw gifted and talented education when I entered the teaching profession.

Despite the fact that I am an English teacher, the dominant discourse related to scholastic abilities in the US education system shaped my perspective and how I came to view mathematics as an indicator of intelligence. I believe this is perspective played a role in me taking on the identity of a gatekeeper for GATE. My understanding of schooling and GATE was also significantly shaped by the curriculum and learning standards expectations placed on students and teachers. As a classroom teacher, I saw the mathematics scores on MAP assessments and state assessments being looked at more closely than student scores in ELA.

While participating in my GATE certification coursework, I learned about the Theory of Multiple Intelligences (Garner, 1983). Garner’s Theory opened up my eyes to the potential for individuals to be gifted outside of what we value within the US in relation to giftedness. Understanding that gifted and talented learners do not always fit this mold helped me come to understand that the field of GATE is flawed in how we view learners.
As a classroom teacher disseminating the normative curriculum and learning standards, my perspective on GATE was heavily shaped by learning standards and the expectations of my school district. I am only intelligible within the classroom space when I followed the expectations set by the state of Illinois and my school district. The image above is me in a goldfish bag being held, my movements controlled, by my male administrators. I have books placed next to me. These texts represent the traditional texts from the English canon that I passively implement into my classroom curriculum. My eyes are closed to reflect my desire to keep my eyes shut to the problematic standards and instructional practices I implement in my classroom.

With these expectations came literature choices that were not very diverse to meet the normative expectations for what advanced ELA curriculum looks like. With my
students, I read classic texts like *Macbeth*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *A Separate Peace*, *Night*, *Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde*, *Animal Farm*, *Lord of the Flies*, *Fahrenheit 451*, *The Giver*, etc. The only instances in which I stepped outside of the US normative gaze was when we read *Things Fall Apart* (which is commonly used in US English courses) and *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. My classroom texts, in conjunction with WWW, construct my classroom as a space where higher level learning is occurring as it is in accordance with what curriculum is expected and deemed worthy of use within an advanced classroom. Additionally, I also place value on Reading MAP assessments as indicators of student success and potential within the learning environment. Utilizing this curriculum and this assessment practice allows my classroom, myself, and ultimately my students, to be viewed as intelligible because we are engaging in learning and assessments that aligned with the scope of the US sociopolitical and cultural mold for GATE.

Even when I was asked to develop an assessment for GATE last school year, despite my desire to shift the access and equity of this learning space, I held true to the US expectations for what a gifted and talented learner looks like and is capable of doing—particularly due to the influence of my male administrators. This understanding was heavily grounded in the US normative practice, like writing an analysis of a challenging poem, causing me to systematically stop students who did not fit this mold from entering the GATE classroom. Becoming the gatekeeper for GATE came to be because I felt pressured, and still feel pressure, to fit within the expectations for GATE and education within my school district.
I wish that I could say that I subvert the expectations for GATE in my classroom practice, but I cannot. My curriculum, assessment practices, and standards selected were heavily correlated with US sociopolitical and cultural perspectives on GATE.

Journal of Chloe. Reading The Giver has been an eye-opening experience for me. Until reading this book, I had never thought about the importance of having free-will and not necessarily always being like what society or your parents expect you to be. In the book, we see how much people can be controlled by the norms in the society that they lose the ability to think for themselves. I really admire Jonas because he sees how important it is to be an individual and make your own choices. I like that he saves Gabriel at the end of the book because Gabriel didn’t deserve to die. After reading this book, I now see how important it is to not necessarily be what others expect me to be like because I am my own person and I can make my own choices.

Throughout my life, I have always been expected to be the smart one—especially when I was tested to be in gifted. Before that, it was always annoying during math class because I felt like people were always comparing themselves to me, which was awkward. Sasha and I have had similar experiences. She told me about how everyone in her second-grade class expected her to be smart and whenever she was the last person to finish the math test, people would be like, “oh, maybe she’s not gonna get a high score.” But then she would beat everyone still. I’m not as good at math as she is, but I have had similar frustrations. Everyone always thinks that being good at math means that you’re intelligent or gifted. It has always been that way in school for me. That’s why it’s
frustrating that math is so hard this year, but it’s also a good thing that it’s hard because I have gone up in my Math MAP scores a ton this year!

Thinking back on my time in school, I feel like all of my teachers only valued math and didn’t put much focus on language arts and reading—in both English and Spanish. I don’t understand why they always placed so much focus on math. I feel like most of my teachers never cared about teaching us grammar or having us improve our writing. I can only think of one teacher who placed any value on my language learning. Mrs. Juniper invested in our learning in all content areas, not just math. She helped show me that it is important to know more than just math. Although she helped me understand that other subjects are important, I am still having a tough time not always valuing math when I am at school.

Being gifted, everyone thinks that we know everything in every subject. I actually really agree with Sasha that it’s even harder to be Latina and gifted because you’re expected to know things in both languages, and when you don’t, you feel embarrassed. She told me last week about a time when her mom said, “how are you in gifted and you don’t know this?” She then told me about how it’s frustrating adding the fact of knowing Spanish because people are like, “how are you gifted, and know Spanish, and you can’t pronounce certain words?” I agree with her because people sometimes assume stuff about you just because you are Latina and gifted. It reminds me of how my mom always assumes that I know all the Spanish and English vocabulary words that my sister is expected to learn, and when I don’t, she kinda makes fun of me for not knowing them. It’s not fair because I am still a kid. I am still learning.
Even though it is frustrating to be both Latina and gifted sometimes, I do like it. Kate described what it’s like in a cool way once. She said that being gifted and Latina is like stretching out your brain because you have to remember all the Spanish words in your head and all the English words and try to not get them all confused. It’s like stretching out your brain just a little bit more and that’s what I think is what makes you gifted because you’re more advanced than other students. It’s so true. I like thinking about being Latina and gifted this way because I like thinking about my brain as a space that is constantly growing, changing, shifting, and stretching. It makes learning seem more dynamic. I like thinking about learning as growing because, as I’ve said before, I hate when people assume that I know things just because I am gifted.

Figure 10. Advantages of bilingualism.

Even though it can sometimes be frustrating to be both Latina and gifted, I love that I am because I know that I will have a great future. I see being Latina and gifted as an asset because I am able to speak a different language, get a really good job, and I can help many people because I speak more than just English. I think that I also have more opportunities for jobs and that I can get better jobs because I speak two languages and I
know about both the American and Mexican culture. My mom always talks about how she read a newspaper article that said that there are more opportunities for people who are Latina and speak both languages. She tells me that I have a huge advantage because I am also gifted. Language also takes time to learn, so I think that being able to speak both is a big deal and shows that someone is intelligent if they are fluent in both.

I think that I challenge what it means to be a student, and more specifically a gifted student because even though I am good at math, I am good at other things too that I think are also important and show that someone is gifted. Sasha and I have talked about this before. She said that being gifted is not just knowing what $x+5=7$ is. It’s also about knowing your surroundings and how to properly think. Knowing how to do an equation is just a plus. I agree with her that being gifted is knowing your surroundings and thinking outside the box, which is more than knowing a certain equation. Thinking deeper about things and being able to communicate well with others is way more important. I think that being gifted means more than just doing well on tests, like MAP. I don’t understand why everyone always just assumes that just because you do well on a test that it means that you are gifted. That is definitely not true. My school sometimes makes me feel like tests indicate that someone is gifted because we take tests all the time and because a test was used to let us into the gifted class. I wonder why they place so much focus on tests…

Even though my school values tests, I know that everyone has different specialties that make them gifted in different ways. Not everyone in the world is the same, which means that not everyone is gifted in the same things. Some people are gifted in music, some are gifted in sports, others are gifted in language, and some are gifted in solving
problems. In my class, Maya, Kate, Sara, Caffy, and I all play instruments, so I feel like music-wise, we are able to think in a different way with that too. I feel like that’s better than just being gifted in one thing.

I also think that being able to speak two languages, like English and Spanish, shows that someone is gifted because I can switch my brain to work in both languages. It is hard to explain, but depending on who I am speaking to, I change my brain to think and speak in the language that is best for me to use with that person. I like that my brain is able to do this because I love that I can interact with more people since I can speak two languages. This will be helpful for getting a job in the future too! My mom has told me a million times that being able to speak both English and Spanish fluently is an asset because future employers will like that I can interact with everyone, not just Spanish or English speakers. She has told me that I will have more job opportunities and that I might even be able to make more money just because I am able to speak two languages. I love being able to speak both languages and I think that it’s cool that I might have more opportunities in the future because I am fluent in both.

Even though I know that being able to speak English and Spanish is a sign of giftedness, other people see it as problematic that we speak Spanish still in the US. I have overheard people talking on the news about how immigrants who have come to the US should speak English and not their home language any longer. I feel like Spanish and people from Mexico have definitely been targeted since Trump became president. Lizzac thinks that a lot of people think that just because we are Latinas we can’t succeed in life or that we are not capable of doing something. This is frustrating because it is not true at
all whatsoever. She thinks that being Latina and gifted is really special because we are able to show that we are capable of doing a lot of things and that we are smart. I couldn’t agree more. I think that continuing to speak two languages fluently and participating in our gifted class can help people see that we are smart and capable of learning in a gifted classroom. This image of me has a lot of textures to show the many layers that I have as an individual.

Figure 11. Chloe’s self-portrait.
Part III

Author Note

In Part III, three doctoral students, Amber, Michelle, and Michael employ the theories of Butler to dissect Parts I and II for a course assignment. Each student was asked to read these texts and bring two images that they believe embody the experiences and/or identities of Mrs. Nelson and the Latina learners—Maya, Angela, Caffy, Chloe, and their fellow classmates. Reflecting on the subjectivities of these individuals, the students come to understand the complexities of identity and their socially constructed nature.

Unraveling the text: Graduate student analysis. As the sun began to set outside, students piled into Dr. Lansbury’s Monday night doctoral English course at Loyola University Chicago, Transnational Exchanges, Collaborations, and Appropriations. This course consists of doctoral students focusing on various periods within the literary canon. The participating doctoral students do not have previous experience as classroom teachers. They have transitioned seamlessly from their undergraduate degree to their master’s degree, and now to their doctorate.

“Good evening, everyone. I hope that you all had a wonderful and restful weekend. Last week, I asked you to create a small group of three people, preferably a

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30 Since this dissertation employs post qualitative inquiry, instead of providing a traditional academic synthesis of Parts I and II, I decided to use a narrative discussion between the English doctoral students. Through using this technique I was able to move away from conventional qualitative inquiry and remain true to the dynamic, unconventional nature of post qualitative inquiry.
group consisting of individuals from a similar field and to select the scholarship of a theorist we have considered this semester to analyze the classroom narratives handed out in class. In addition to selecting a theorist, you were to bring at least two photos/images that you believe reflect or represent the experiences presented by Mrs. Nelson, Chloe, Maya, Angela, and Caffy. Engaging in this visual analysis ought to extend your inquiry. We are going to take our time together this evening to meet in our small groups and to discuss your image selections and your analysis through the perspective of your theorist. Are there any questions? Alright, go ahead and get together with your small group and begin discussing.”

Following Dr. Lansbury’s prompting, students begin to get together with their peers. Amber, Michelle, and Michael form their small group of three. Last week, they selected Judith Butler as their theorist for considering the narrative given in class.

“I’m still not fully onboard with this assignment. I don’t get why we are looking at the experiences of fifth-graders and a teacher” Amber remarked as she began taking *Gender Trouble* out of her backpack.

Michael had similar feelings last night, “yeah, why aren’t we analyzing literature? What could some fifth-grader say that someone like Edward Said or Edith Warton couldn’t say better?”

“I don’t know. I really liked using Butler and thinking differently. I enjoyed looking at a school setting and thinking about how complex a classroom actually is,” Michelle retorts.
“Well, why don’t you get us started then, Michelle. What images/photos did you bring?”

Michelle opens her orange folder and displays three images on her desk…

![Image of Lake Michigan](image)

*Figure 12. Icy waters of Lake Michigan.*

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Cutcher (2013) presents the value of considering multiple media to extend our normalized text-based means for constructing and presenting knowledge to push against traditional means for producing and presenting knowledge. In reference to arts-based research, Cutcher (2013) contends that “making meaning of one’s own life through aesthetic modalities can be powerfully revealing and productive. Arts-based inquiry eschews categorization; it relies on experience and connection and subjectivity—all things that academic [...] traditions abjure” (p. 34). I have decided to include arts-based inquiry in this section to further push back against conventional qualitative inquiry and (re)presentation of qualitative research.

The use of the photos in this section of the dissertation highlights the creative capacity of visual art to enrich and enhance inquiry beyond the conventional text-only means for interrogating and presenting research. Looking to Cutcher (2013), I extend my inquiry through aesthetic modalities. I found this experience powerful and eye-opening in my examination of the content.
Figure 13. Open waters of Lake Michigan.

Figure 14. Ice castle wall.

“These are great! Why did you select these images?”
“Thank you. I chose the first two images to reflect Mrs. Nelson and the ice image to reflect Chloe. I find that the images of the open water and the ice cracking in the water are indicative of the experiences of Mrs. Nelson. The first image of the ice cracking represents the cracking of the societal norms, heavily impacted by the power structures of heterosexism and phallogocentrism, both in her childhood and in her professional career, that have shaped Mrs. Nelson. I find that the ice cracking shows how she is breaking from the solid foundation for how she should behave and what her life should look like that the world around her had constructed.

“In her response, it is evident that, in some aspects of her identity, Mrs. Nelson embodies normative expectations of her gender,” Michelle notes. “Considering Butler (1990) on page 527, ‘gender reality is performative which means […] that it is real only to the extent that it is performed […] Certain kinds of acts are usually interpreted as expressive of a gender core or identity, and that these acts either conform to an expected gender identity or contest that expectation in some way’ (Butler, 1990, p. 527). I think that because gender is a performance as opposed to the expression of a prior reality, Mrs. Nelson shows how gender is discursively constructed within society.”

“That’s a good point. It makes me think of the fact that the repeated actions of Mrs. Nelson each Christmas that are prescribed to her by her mother, but not the males in the family, like cooking and cleaning, further work to show how gender is not only discursively constructed, but it is also politically instituted through the cultural norms and discursive acts that dictate as well as shape what it means to be a ‘woman,’” Amber highlights. “In this example, it is valuable to also consider Butler’s notion of embodiment
to resolve the concept of the historical signing of the body with the concept of the performative. We need to think about how we style our bodies is not dependent on nature (sex) or culture (gender norms), but it relies on how we ‘perform’ or ‘do’ gender” (Butler, 1990).

“Yeah, I believe that we have to remember what Butler (1990) says about the body as a medium that gives discursively constructed signs of gender bodily significance. Here, look at this quote from Butler (1990) on page 136 that notes that our acts and desire construct the ‘effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this on the surface of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause’ (Butler, 1990, p. 136),” Michael shares.

“Keeping Butler’s perspective in mind, I think that we can see how Mrs. Nelson habitually embodies the female gender through working as a caregiver at home and enacting the expected actions of her gender. Her actions demonstrate how her gender is regulated, performed, and embodied in her home life."

“I think that all of these points are true,” Michelle notes. “To further progress our discussion of Mrs. Nelson, let’s think about how the image is cracking as well. The juxtaposition of the cracking ice and the open waters further work to represent Mrs. Nelson’s breaking away from the societal norms and expectations that were placed on her throughout her life. Cracking the once solid surface and shifting to the open water also displays the possibility for endless opportunities for Mrs. Nelson. The open water is vast and full of open potential. It shows the world as being full of open potential and the shift
in the mindset of Mrs. Nelson. The images display how she goes from being trapped in a stagnant state of being to having the opportunity to explore new horizons.”

“Yeah, I can see how that might relate to Butler’s (1990) conception of subversion because in Mrs. Nelson’s responses, she considers the gender-based norms prescribed to her throughout her life and, in certain instances, interjects her desire to push against these norms. It is clear that each Christmas process shared becomes increasingly painful for Mrs. Nelson to participate in the ritualistic expectations for the females in her home,” Michael discusses. “Mrs. Nelson’s experiences make me think of how Butler (1992) defines subversion as a complicated concept. We have to remember that subversion is complex because it is dependent on time, place, and context and the means through which social norms are repeated and what occurs to displace these normative patterns offer the potential to destabilize naturalized constructions of gender that complicate such norms (Butler, 1990).”

“I think that Mrs. Nelson has learned to repeat oppressive social norms from her mother and other women in her family and in her desire to remain intelligible as a female within this space, her actions are shaped by these norms. You do, however, see Mrs. Nelson internally questioning the practices.” Michelle then points to the text for support. “I also think that the following quote from Mrs. Nelson highlights her dissonance: ‘Now that I am a wife, I frantically work to create a different kind of marriage than that of my parents, and more specifically my mother’s role within marriage. I am resentful toward my mother for much of her behavior both during my upbringing and the present […]’ Pushing against these norms through pursuing a career and possessing a balanced
marriage are means through which I work in the present to challenge the norms of my youth.’”

“This quote stuck out to me immensely as well, particularly in her point about feeling resentful towards her mother,” Amber shares. “I think that in her points about being a wife that it is evident that Mrs. Nelson frantically searches for a means through which she can create a different type of marriage than her parents/mother had without resisting marriage altogether. For Mrs. Nelson, she recollects her resentment towards her mother’s unwavering reliance and devotion to the men in her family and attempts to resist the gender and heterosexual restrictions engrained in her upbringing”

“I also think that a central means through which Mrs. Nelson failed to follow a set of normative gender roles can be seen in her desire to pursue her education, which is a subversive act. I find it valuable to consider Butler’s (1990) point that agency ‘is located within the possibility of variation on repetition’ (p. 145),” Michelle interjects. “Through schooling, she is able to challenge the normative expectations for female students prescribed by her family. Even with her parents working to enforce their constructions of gender on her within the scholastic environment by barring her from advanced coursework and encouraging her to perform poorly, Mrs. Nelson ultimately subverts these gender-dependent notions.”

“I agree and see that to be true also in her second response. In her drawing, Mrs. Nelson maintains some of her roots but ultimately embodies characteristics that may be deemed more masculine within her upbringing—scholar, educator, language. Through
pushing against the traditional roles for women in her family, Mrs. Nelson engages in acts of subversion related to her discursively constructed gender.”

“I think that it is also valuable to note that Mrs. Nelson acknowledges her desire to have subverted the expectations for GATE in her teaching. She notes, ‘I wish that I could say that I subvert the expectations for GATE in my classroom practice, but I cannot. My curriculum, assessment practices, and standards selected were heavily correlated with US sociopolitical and cultural perspectives on GATE,’” Michael highlights. “I understand Mrs. Nelson’s desire for intelligibility—it places her in a precarious position professionally that I hope she finds a way to navigate. Alright, why did you select your image for Chloe?” Michael inquires.

The three students shift their gaze away from the images of the cracked ice on the lake and the open water to the image of the wall of ice.

“As for the third photo, the imagery of the wall of ice reflects the cold, dark, and dense experiences of Chloe in relation to her feelings about how she has been socially constructed. The ice reflects patriarchal expectations as they are intended to be strong, unwavering, and unbreakable. These standards leave Chloe in a dark place where she feels trapped and desires melt the thick, unwavering ice—to chip away at these expectations and envision a new life for herself,” Michelle shares.

Amber pipes in eagerly, “I think that this is an incredibly thought-provoking image. I find that considering the perspectives of Chloe and the other students presented in the text that the regulator nature of societal norms for gender is evident. Much like Mrs. Nelson, the students in this text possess similar experiences in relation to the need to
uphold the expectations for their gender prescribed on their bodies through the sociocultural gender norms dictated by their family.”

“Exactly, I think that in embodying and reiterating what a model Latina looks like to their family, these students style their bodies to comply with the expectations at home and in society for their gender. These expectations are prescribed by the family and they are not identical, nor are they embodied identically by each student. For example, in the first response, Chloe discusses her experiences with her family and alludes to how her identity is discursively constructed by her family. It broke my heart to hear her story about how she dressed up as a boy to help her father and she was not allowed to because she is a girl and how she identifies as both genders. I hate that part of her identity goes unacknowledged,” Michael notes. “Conversely, we hear also hear about Sasha’s home experience where ‘everyone is treated the same and […] the boys are expected to do the same chores as the girls’ and how Chloe envies ‘the fact that [Sasha] doesn’t have family members breathing down her neck every single day telling her how to behave and what to do’. The life experiences of all individuals are diverse, making it evident that constructing a single group as Latina problematic. The means through which our subjectivities are shaped are diverse, non-normative, and socially constructed. I also think that the desire to subvert or challenge societal norms, as exhibited by Chloe, particularly related to gender, also highlight the impossibility of constructing a stagnant notion of both ‘female’ and Latina identity.”

“I agree. I think that this further highlights the impossibility to view racial, gender, cultural, etc. groups as collective units. We also see this with the experiences of
Maya. As both African American and Latina, Maya encounters additional experiences that her Latina peers may never encounter because she is biracial. As recollected in the response, Maya has experienced frustrations due to the color of her skin. Maya shares how she has been frustrated by the fact that ‘her mother is Mexican, so everyone assumes that she speaks Spanish, which she does, but because Maya is both African American and Mexican, people assume that she does not speak Spanish.’ It is dangerous to possess a monolithic perspective of groups, like Latina students identified as gifted and talented, because their experiences are not alike. Butler (1990) also complicates our understanding of the category of ‘women’ typically found in feminist theories, which I think can also be considered here, through contending that there is more intricacy to this category than is commonly addressed. As we know, Butler (1990) contends that the term ‘women’ commonly utilized in feminist theories is inadequate as it essentializes a gender binary and does not acknowledge the fact that sex and gender are social constructs. I appreciate Butler’s (1990) point on page 3 that reads, ‘if one is ‘woman’ that is surely not all one is’ because ‘the term fails to be exhaustive, not because a pregendered ‘person’ transcends the paraphernalia of its gender, but because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constructed identities’ (Butler, 1990, p. 3). Our conceptions of gender are socially and culturally developed, causing there to not be a doer behind the deed, but in fact, the doer is constructed in and through the deed (Butler, 1990). For these reasons, we cannot possess a generalized lens
when considering the experiences of this group of individuals because they are not the same,” Michelle exclaims.

Michelle, Amber, and Michael take a moment to reflect on what Michelle just shared. They think about how their own biases and perceptions of individuals are discursively socio-politically and culturally constructed through their interactions with others. They contemplate times in their lives when they have generalized a population of individuals as monolithic—why do we work to characterize groups of individuals into collective units?

Breaking them from their daze, Michelle inquires, “Should we move onto some new images?”

“Yeah, I can go next,” Michael volunteered. “Here are the images that I brought for today.”

Figure 15. Waves stretching over Chicago.
“I chose the image of the massive waves crashing against the shore to reflect Mrs. Nelson. The waves represent the discursively constructed social norms pushed on Mrs. Nelson that shape her identity. Mrs. Nelson is represented by the shore. With each crashing wave, she is being shaped, molded by its force.”

“That’s a fantastic point,” Amber interjects. “I think that your photo can also be compared to the image included in Mrs. Nelson’s third response that shows her trapped within a goldfish bag. The fact that a male is holding the bag reflects the control of her male administrators to maintain their expectations for the curriculum and for what a female teacher looks like. Mrs. Nelson’s desire to be intelligible within the classroom environment is shaped by these expectations.”

“I agree. I think that both images show how Mrs. Nelson embodies the role of a female classroom practitioner because she performs the role of a classroom teacher through habitually embodying the norms of her role out of the desire to be viewed as
intelligible within the scholastic space. Following the desires of her male administrators and curricular expectations, Mrs. Nelson habitually embodies her assumed role as a female teacher through her lack of subversive actions as a classroom teacher,” Michelle shares.

“Yeah, I think we can see these things in her writing as well,” Michael points out. “In her third response she notes, ‘utilizing [the desired] curriculum and [the] assessment practice[s] allow[ed] [her] classroom, [herself], and ultimately [her] students, to be viewed as intelligible because [they] [were] engaging in learning and assessments that aligned with the scope of the US sociopolitical and cultural mold for GATE.’ I believe that in her curricular and assessment decisions, Mrs. Nelson habitually embodies her role as a female teacher. This spirals into her assumption of the role of the gatekeeper for GATE. It seems like she desired intelligibility and maintained her identity through her curricular and assessment decisions, which in turn work to outwardly further style her body as a female classroom teacher—someone who did not push back and followed the patriarchal, normative expectations of the US education system and her male administrators.”

“I actually also see how this image relates to her experiences with her family and performativity theory (Butler, 1990) in how Mrs. Nelson’s gender was discursively constructed because gender is a series of stylized performances by an individual that causes gender to be an embodied action. Because of this, gender ‘does not exist outside of its ‘doings’; rather, its performance is also a reiteration of previous ‘doings’ that become intelligible as gender norms’ (Nayak & Kehily, 2006, p. 467). I think that the
waves reflect the discursively constructed norms from Mrs. Nelson’s family that she felt compelled to embody during much of her life in order to be viewed as intelligible. Mrs. Nelson’s resistance towards the normative expectations for what it means to be a wife and a traditional mother within her family highlights her desire to break away from her mother’s predicament—the waves of expectations that have been washing over her body, shaping her identity. While she has worked to move away from these discursive constructions, she remains shaped and impacted by them, much like the rocks on the shore,” Amber points out.

“That’s such a good point,” Michelle notes. “I like the imagery of her being shaped and the waves washing over her. This image definitely connects to performativity theory and subversion. Alright, Michael, why did you choose the CITGO sign image? Where is that from?”

“When I lived in Boston during my Master’s program, every time I crossed the river from Cambridge to Boston, the CITGO sign always caught my attention,” Michael reflects.

“Oh, that’s where it’s from! I knew I recognized it!”

Michael continues his reflection, “Yeah, so as you can see, the CITGO sign stretches above the other buildings and the nature around the sign. I feel as if it reigns over that part of the river’s edge. The sign is on display for everyone to be able to see it, making it appear powerful or empowered to me. Looking at the sign, I think of the Latina students in their acts of subversion, as particularly seen in the actions of Chloe as seen in her responses in relation to her family, her gender, and the scholastic environment.”
“I completely agree,” Amber interjects. “I think that Chloe engages in subversive acts in the text. Being born as a female, feminine norms of society and her culture have been prescribed on her body since birth. While only one instance of dressing in drag is shared, it is evident through her assertion that she identifies as both a male and a female that enacting or performing the female gender on a daily basis is a painful process. I think that it is valuable to consider how Butler (1992) notes that the performative repetition of gender norms can be both oppressive and painful. I find Chloe’s attempts to displace or subvert the naturalized notions of gender that enable masculinist hegemony to highlight her desire to break the male/female or Subject-‘Other’ boundaries to envision herself differently. Such can be considered in her decision to dress in drag.”

“Definitely. For Butler (2014), ‘drag is subversive to the extent that it reflects on the imitative structure by which hegemonic gender is itself produced and disputes heterosexuality’s claim on naturalness and originality’ (p. 125). Because Chloe only attempts to subvert her gender identity through drag once, I think that an analysis of this singular event is problematic,” Michelle highlights. “However, through identifying as both genders, yet embodying the female gender due to the insistence of her family, it is clear that performing the female gender is a struggle for Chloe as she is, ultimately, forced to outwardly embody the female gender on a daily basis as her attempt at subversion is not accepted. This instance highlights the powerful constructs of heterosexism and phallogocentrism as Chloe’s family works to condition her to align with these norms. In my opinion, I think that Chloe’s desire for intelligibility as a male
ultimately makes her unintelligible to others, like her father, because they do not allow her to escape the socially constructed norms of the female gender.”

“I agree,” Michael shares. “But I do think that Chloe, as well as the other female students described in her responses and in the classroom scenarios, are successful in subversion as seen in how these students challenge or subvert the US sociopolitical and cultural expectations for being a Latina student in a GATE classroom as well as in their notions of giftedness. For example, the students frequently push against mathematics as being the dominant indicator of intelligence through their consideration of language. In disrupting the ready-made construction of giftedness, these students expose that giftedness is more complex than test scores and mathematics. One quote that stuck out to me in Chloe’s responses is when she stated, ‘everyone has different specialties. Some people are gifted in music, people are gifted in sports, people are gifted in language, people are gifted in solving problems. I think that being able to speak two languages, like English and Spanish, shows that someone is gifted because I can switch my brain to work in both languages—this will be helpful for getting a job in the future too! I feel like that’s better than just being gifted in one thing.’ I think back to when I was a student and everyone always placed more emphasis on mathematics and science, not on the areas listed by Chloe. Subverting the US sociopolitical and cultural norms of the school system by pushing against our normative perceptions of giftedness, we can see that giftedness, much like identity, is not normative.”

“That’s so true. I remember everyone always thinking that being good at mathematics showed that you were intelligent, or even gifted. This always annoyed me
because I, probably like you two because we are getting our doctorate in English, was better at language.” Michael and Michelle nod in agreement. “Her point about being able to speak two languages and ‘switch [her] brain to work in both languages’ as an indicator of giftedness struck me because being able to codeswitch and converse in more than one language fluently is intelligent. Additionally, as indicated in Chloe’s third response, both her and her friend Lizzac indicate a desire to push back against the socially constructed normative perception of being Latina and gifted.”

“That stuck out to me as well,” Michelle interjects. “The part that struck me from that response is when Chloe discussed how her and Lizzac believe that because they are participating in the GATE classroom that they are able to challenge the idea that ‘just because [they] are Latinas [they] can’t succeed in life or that [they] are not capable of doing something’ and highlight that they are ‘capable of doing a lot of things and that [they] are smart.’ I think that this assertion by Chloe and Lizzac exposes the desires of these students to negate the sociocultural norms prescribed to their identity as being Latina within the scholastic environment. Subverting such expectations enables these students to further undo normative identity constructions. I particularly appreciate Chloe’s image of herself following this response as well as the quote from the first response reading, ‘if you can think it, you can do it,’ because I find that these elements display her confidence in who she is, individually.”

Suddenly, Dr. Lansbury claps her hands and gets the attention of the class. “Alright everyone, we have about fifteen-minutes left. If you have not started discussing the final set of pictures, please move onto the last person in your group’s images.”
“Oh, I guess we need to move onto the last one. Alright, I guess I am up next. Here are my photos,” Amber presents her photos on her desk.

Figure 17. Wildflowers and the Chicago skyline.

Figure 18. Chicago’s Grant Park.
“The photo of the wildflowers with the Chicago skyline in the background reflects the separation of the Spanish language from the scholastic identities of the Latina learners. The flowers that appear alone represent the separation of the Latina learners from the Spanish language. While they look the same, just as these yellow flowers appear the same as the other flowers, the move away from the use of Spanish within the GATE learning environment separates them from their fellow Spanish speaking peers who are not in the GATE classroom. This made me think of Butler’s (1990, 2003, & 2004) interrogations of the concept of loss and mourning through psychoanalysis to grapple with identity construction. Working off of Freud’s (1957) concepts of mourning and melancholia, Butler considers loss and mourning and the shaping impact this has on identity,” Amber presents.

“I remember reading about that this semester and learning about it when I previously studied Butler,” Michelle shares. “I think another valuable point to bring up is that for Butler (2004), ‘when we lose some of these ties by which we are constituted, we do not know who we are or what to do’ (p. 22). I think that this indicates that when we are dependent on the Other and desire to exist in relation to the Other, we are placed into a problematic predicament because we can never be completely reflected in the Other due to the complexities of our ever-shifting identities. This causes us to be ‘never fully identified with any collective ‘we’’ (Butler, 2001, p. 93). I think that this shows that when elements like family, culture, or language are lost, the construction of one’s identity is variably shaped and impacted.”
“That makes me think of Chloe’s third response,” Michael interjects. “In it, she discusses how the Latina learners in her classroom avoid using Spanish within the GATE learning environment. Throughout their schooling, the learners have been heavily shaped by and influenced through the cultural and patriarchal practices of the US school system, which has been further complicated by the heavily-Westernized nature of the GATE classroom. When we experience loss, like the loss of language, we lose the ability to construct a complete narrative, causing us to develop a speculative one. This highlights how our ‘narrative capacity constitutes a precondition’ for accounting for oneself and ‘assuming responsibility for one’s actions through that means’ (Butler, 2005, p. 12). Therefore, it can be assumed that how we share our narratives will play a role in how we respond to specific events. Because of this, the events we encounter, particularly related to loss, implicate us in our connection to the experience and shape us due to the fact that we are socially constructed. The means through which we respond to a specific loss impacts our stance and perspective. Ultimately, amidst the sociocultural and historical constructions of our identity, in our narration of our experiences, we must become accountable for our narration. This action helps us come to understand how we can come to live with the repercussions of loss. I think that for the Latina learners, the loss of the Spanish language within the learning environment relates to them taking account of the social conditions of the US school system amidst their lack of control over their experiences in the GATE classroom.”

“Those are great points. How about we consider the experiences Chloe?” Michelle questions.
“Ok. I chose this image of Grant Park and its winding pathways in juxtaposition with the straight streets that we have in Chicago. Notice how the paths and the streets never intersect—the pathway either stops or it stretches over the street as a bridge. They remain separate. Looking at this image, I view the pathways as reflecting the Spanish language and the streets as reflecting the English Language. Just like how the pathways and the streets do not impede each other’s space, within the GATE classroom Spanish and English do not cross paths for these learners. Both languages exist and serve as a path for where these students would like to go, but English is given the more dominant structure for these learners when it comes to the US classroom—which is why it is the wide street.”

“I definitely agree with you. I think that this image does a nice job describing the dichotomy between English and Spanish depicted by Chloe in her work,” Michael shares.

“This is actually making me think back to the idea of loss and mourning for these students. The student reflections, and most specifically Chloe’s, highlight the desire of these students to embody the US norms of the advanced GATE learning environment, despite the fact that they push back against the US normative perceptions for what it means to be gifted” Michelle posits. “Despite participating in a dual language GATE classroom where speaking Spanish is encouraged, and oftentimes, required, these learners actively work to negate that expectation by speaking in English within the learning environment. Growing up in a home where the Spanish language is a means for communication while interacting within a scholastic space where the English language is
more heavily valued by the students, the idea of the use of Spanish within their schooling has been undone, in my opinion.”

“That makes me think of Chloe’s point, that she wrote using her handwriting that notes that language ‘juga una parte muy importante porque mi familia hable mucho español y expanol va con me culture,’” Michael shares, “Chloe contends that language, particularly Spanish, plays an important role in her identity because her family speaks it often and Spanish is part of her culture. Despite this notion, her negation of the Spanish language within the GATE classroom further shows how her identity is unraveling through the loss of Spanish in the classroom. For Butler (2004), coming undone works to ‘interrupt the self-conscious account of ourselves we might try to provide’ (p. 23).

Growing up in a space in which Spanish was the normative practice and being placed into the English-dominant US school system has caused these learners to virtually lose a sense of themselves. I think that through negotiating the English practices of the US GATE classroom, the linguistic practices of these learners can be seen as performative acts that are forcibly reiterated as these language and social norms both ‘precede and exceed the subject’” (Butler, 2005, p. 17).

“Yeah, I see it as the students, or the subject, do not freely determine or negotiate their deed. Instead, the deed is a set of social norms constructed through various norms and discourses that shape their identities,” Amber points out. “I think that the students’ loss of Spanish within the GATE learning space highlights the fact that agency is ultimately a ‘spectral fantasy’ which is a fantasy that we come to comprehend as we work to give an account of ourselves because we cannot construct a comprehensive ‘narrative
reconstruction of the prehistory of the speaking ‘I’ (Butler, 2005, p. 78). The minimal control that students have over “the very notions of [themselves] as autonomous and in control” (Butler, 2014, p. 23) exposes the fact that agency is a ‘spectral fantasy.’ The loss of the Spanish languages is a means for intelligibility within the GATE classroom that forces these learners to negate their home language—an aspect of their cultural identity.”

“I find that the loss of language discussed can also be considered in relation to Butler and her perspective on mourning—whether or not mourning can ever be considered fully complete,” Michelle posits. “Thinking back to Freud’s (1923) initial theory on the theory of mourning, which articulates the ego as being constructed through the remnants of rejected object-cathexes, causing the process of mourning to not be possible without melancholia. For Butler (2004), she does not believe that the completion of the process of mourning allows for one to reconfigure oneself with a replacement because ‘one mourns when one accepts that by the loss one undergoes one will be changed, possibly forever’ (p. 21). Because mourning is a complex process, without certainties, individuals must submit to the transformations that will occur without certainty of knowing what the future will hold (Butler, 2014). In my opinion, the loss of language and cultural identity within the US school system for these students is an unexpected process, due to the dual language nature of their classrooms throughout their scholastic experience.”

“I agree. I also think that if we look at the experiences articulated by these learners it appears, as Butler contends, that they have submitted to the mourning as they continue to grapple with the loss of their language within the US school system.” Michael
then thinks back to Chloe’s responses. “The portion that struck me was Chloe’s handwritten elements in her second response. She writes, ‘language means where you were from originally’ and places a heart next to ‘Spanish’ and ‘English.’ Despite Spanish being a significant part of her identity, Chloe grapples with the fact that both English and Spanish play a significant role in her identity. This makes the loss of the Spanish language further troubling because it is significant to who she is.”

“The part of her reflection that was particularly striking to me was Chloe’s discussion of how she and her peers avoid using Spanish when they are not with their immediate family or with older family members. I thought that because they are in a dual language classroom, that they would speak eagerly in both languages at school since both are being fostered within the classroom. I was surprised by Chloe saying that she and her classmates primarily use English at school and that they feel uncomfortable speaking in Spanish or writing in Spanish at school,” Amber reflects. “I think that it is evident in the insights presented that these students are shaped by the social context of their learning environment, as well as by the curriculum because they have systematically discontinued the use of the Spanish language within the confines of their advanced coursework and in their GATE classroom.”

“I was thinking about that as well. Reflecting on the fact that they are reading The Giver, a text that reflects a virtually homogenous population and is traditionally used within English classrooms across the US further continues the conception that texts from the traditional canon are the central texts of value within GATE. This is seen in Mrs. Nelson’s third response as well. She discusses the standardized texts, in addition to The
*Giver*, that are being used with these students. I think that the curriculum and assessment practices heavily reflect the US normative, patriarchal ideologies for education within this classroom because it is gifted and talented, which creates a dissonance for the students because they come to view these standardized methods as a means for intelligibility within the classroom,” Michael shares.

“Which I think leads to the loss and mourning of the Spanish language,” Michelle posits.

“So, how can we pull all of these ideas together?” Amber asks. “For me, I think that using Butler to unpack the experiences of Mrs. Nelson, Chloe, and the Latina students offer the opportunity to contextualize the fact that literary theory can be applied to everyday life—outside of traditional literature. As we know, I was skeptical of this assignment, but chatting with you both tonight helped me conceptualize this idea.”

“I agree,” Michael shares. “I too was skeptical, but this discussion helped me better understand how we can consider traditional literary theory within dynamic spaces. I found it valuable to consider the means through which these individuals interrogated their social identities and the subjectivities within their social, cultural, and personal experiences. For me, this highlighted the manners through which identities are constructed, complicated, embodied, and positioned within society. In my opinion, it is evident that Mrs. Nelson, Chloe, and the students are constructed through diverse means and are more complex than I initially anticipated.”

“Even though we did not delve into it deeply, I think that using Butler to deconstruct the text *The Giver* would also be a fruitful inquiry as poststructuralist though
could be used to critique the static notions of identity within the text, examine the socially constructed rituals and customs and the impact that they have, or do not have, on the characters, as well as an investigation into the experience of loss and mourning when Jonas leaves his community,” Michelle posits.

“Oh, I can definitely see doing that,” Amber replies.

“Overall, I think that in relation to the reflections presented, for Mrs. Nelson, her subjectivities play an influential role in the construction of her identity and practices as a teacher, which in turn, impact the curriculum and assessment practices utilized within her learning environment. I find that these decisions, like favoring the traditional English canon and molding her classroom to mirror the normative advanced GATE classroom within the US, in turn, has had an impact on the subjectivities of her students. The loss of language in conjunction with the intersubjectivities discussed in relation to Chloe and her peers expose how identities are shaped to and through social discursive acts. I believe that through subversive acts, the individuals presented in this content are able to engage in new discursive positions that expose how gender, and identity, can ultimately be “rendered thoroughly and radically incredible” (Butler, 1990, p. 141).

“Ok, we are going to stop here for today. Excellent discussions, everyone!” Mrs. Lansbury halts the conversation. “Since we did not have a chance to reflect as a class today, we will use our time together on Wednesday to discuss the various lenses in which each of the groups considered the classroom setting text. Keep tabs on what you discussed today and please bring your images with you again on Wednesday. I hope that you have a wonderful night!”
As the students file out of the classroom, Michelle, Michael, and Amber continue to think about their discussion this evening, each coming to a similar question, who knew how complex our identities were? Who knew how complicated a classroom could be?
CHAPTER IV

ACT III: REFLECTION AND ENDURING CONVERSATIONS

Ongoing Exploration

Using post qualitative inquiry as opposed to humanist qualitative inquiry enabled me to move beyond traditional practices of qualitative inquiry, like coding for themes, and engage in an eye-opening inquiry using autobiographical inquiry and fiction writing to construct my understanding of my work. Admittedly, I was hesitant to dive into post qualitative inquiry because this inquiry requires “a very lengthy preparation, yet no method, no rule, nor recipes” (St. Pierre, 2017, p. 1). Engaging in research in this manner felt backward to the means I had been taught to examine a topic through research. I ultimately have come to find this method invigorating and freeing, almost as if blinders have been removed from my eyes and I can see my material in new and interesting ways.

Presenting my research and analyzing my topic through the lens of post qualitative inquiry enabled me to (re)present my research through a new means—scriptwriting, visual media, narratives, and journaling. Through post qualitative inquiry, I was able to interrogate the experiences of the students and myself through the use of Butler without being confined by only considering conventional qualitative methods like data, interviews, or classroom observations. In thinking beyond the traditional methods
used in qualitative research in my inquiry, I was able to think about memories and my personal history and how these elements interact with the experiences of the Latina learners (St. Pierre, 2017). Post qualitative inquiry and the theories of Butler are embedded in the representation of and consideration of my research. I found post qualitative inquiry eye-opening and exciting because I was able to interrogate the content through diverse and alternative methods. Cautiously utilizing writing as a method of inquiry to deconstruct my inquiry, and working to dismantle modes for presenting research, I found utilizing my various forms of representation, like scriptwriting, visual art, narratives, and journaling valuable to interrogating my inquiry.

Embarking on this dissertation journey was an arduous, confusing, and, at times, painful endeavor. Recollecting formative, and not so formative, aspects of my life has helped me come to truly understand the shaping impact of society and discursive acts on an individual. Considering decisions that others have made for me, the decisions that I have made in my personal life, and the decisions I made when I worked as a classroom teacher all have been socially shaped as “there need not be a ‘doer behind the deed’, but that the ‘doer’ is variably constructed in and through the deed” (Butler, 1990, p. 142). Grounding my investigation in the theoretical perspectives of Butler in conjunction with post qualitative inquiry, I have been able to engage in a novel inquiry that remains true theory and is not clouded by humanist qualitative inquiry. In this section, I provide three themes while bearing in mind that like the identities of the individuals discussed in this dissertation, they are not static, but are subject to change.
Student and Teacher Subjectivity are impacted by US Norms

Engaging in this inquiry as a former student, classroom teacher, and a current teacher educator was an eye-opening experience that shed light on the impact of the normative scholastic practices in US schools on teacher subjectivity, student subjectivity, classroom curriculum, assessment, and practice. As a teacher and as a teacher educator, I always have strived to create an open, reciprocal learning environment in which knowledge is not disseminated by me, but it is constructed collectively through the experiences and perspectives of the students in my classroom. In spite of this perception, this inquiry has caused me to further problematize my practices and come to understand how, no matter the space I am teaching in, my identity and my practices are always being discursively shaped through sociocultural and political norms.

We can consider Butler’s perspective on subjectivity within the school setting to highlight the role that this perspective can play on conceptualizing the educational environment (Nayak & Kehily, 2006). Because the scholastic environment assumes that sex categories are known and gender subjectivity is absolute, “teachers and students both contribute to and sustain the fiction of gender identity as real and significant in foundational terms. The effort expended in giving substance to the insubstantial suggests that the notion of gender identity occupies a kind of comfort zone for both parties, a settled certainty of the educative experience” (Nayak & Kehily, 2006, p. 470). The educational space does not blur these areas of recognizability, causing teachers and students to continuously enact their normative gender roles.
Since these norms are readily maintained and are consistently reiterated, even when shifts in curriculum occur to address changes to educational policy or curricular innovation, “notions of gender identity appear as an unassailable presence, a constant of the educational experience the turmoil of reform and new initiatives” (Nayak & Kehily, 2006, p. 470). In this constant need to maintain appropriate gender norms, teachers and students inscribe the normative gender roles within the curricular fabric of the US education system.

**Teacher subjectivity.** Thinking about my experiences articulated, I continuously am drawn to Butler’s (1990) notion that there is no doer before the deed, but the doer is variably shaped by the deed. Because there is no doer before the deed, educators, and in turn, their decisions are mediated by and shaped by discursively constructed sociocultural and political norms. Considering the complexity of teacher subjectivity, as our identities are not static, but dynamic, it becomes clear how teachers are unable to separate themselves from these ever-changing, influential constructions of their identity within the learning environment. Educators are “in-the-making in the sense that our pedagogical, professional selves—our multiply infected and constructed identities as gendered, raced, classed selves [...] are always ‘sites of disunity and conflict,’ unfinished and incomplete” as we are forced to “respond to differing and disunified contexts, individuals, and historical moments at the same time that we often are required to respond to normative demands for similar and ‘acceptable’ performances of our students’ and our own selves” (Miller, 2005, p. 229). Because educators are in-the-making, their subjectivity
significantly impacts their classroom identity and pedagogical practices, thus playing a large role in shaping the learning environment and course content.

Throughout my educational career, whether it has been as a student, as a teacher, or as a teacher educator, I see the shaping impact that social constructions have on the decision making of classroom teachers. As a student, in Act I, I recalled instances in which teachers worked to avoid or correct the non-English or informal Spanish practices of my peers. Much like my former classroom teachers, I too was bound to the normative constructions of what a US classroom ought to look like and enforcing a curriculum, assessment techniques, and teaching practices that enabled the need to embody an educator identity that aligned with these norms.

Our identity is not only discursively constructed within the learning environment, but it is also influenced by our experiences and interactions with others outside of the classroom context. For example, I engaged in acts of embodiment and acts of subversion in relation to the socially constructed expectations for my gender prescribed to me throughout my life. I was constructed in relation to the power regimes of heterosexism and phallogocentrism both in my personal life and in my life as an educator. Reflecting on my time as a classroom teacher and on my experiences as a student not participating in advance coursework, when I was given the opportunity to teach advanced learners, I constructed this learning space off of the patriarchal US constructions of an advanced classroom. Implementing traditional literature from the English canon, Latin and Greek vocabulary words, and regularly assessing my students using standardized practices was a means for me to construct a classroom that would be intelligible as a space for higher
learning within the US. These norms, ultimately, also constructed me as the gatekeeper for the GATE program at my school because my expectations were shaped by the sociocultural and political norms of what a US gifted and talented student ought to look like. Through these experiences and my interactions with the Latina learners described in Act I, however, my subjectivity was impacted as I ultimately left the teaching profession on the pursuit of rethinking the field of GATE for culturally and linguistically diverse learners, which ultimately made me unintelligible as an educator in my former district.

On a daily basis, classroom teachers reiterate acts that allow them to be viewed as comprehensible and intelligible according to US norms for the scholastic environment. These actions work to “simultaneously helps explain the persistence of teaching as narrow repertoire of actions recognizable as ‘teaching’, and the policing of conformity to teaching thus embodied […] In performatively accomplished ‘subjectivity,’ this repertoire is unstable and ambiguous and thus open to change and disruption” (Vick & Martinez, 2009, p. 166). Considering the relationship between teachers as subjects and teaching as a performative practice, we can acknowledge how the actions taken by teachers in teaching considers both the teacher as the subject and the teaching practice without placing more value on one over the other. Looking to Butler, we can come to acknowledge that “teaching, understanding performatively, can be seen simultaneously, practically, and discursively to shape the subject and to (re)constitute teaching through the moment-by-moment mobilizing, by the teacher as [she] is already (discursively, performatively) constituted, of particular possibilities, for both self and pedagogy” (Vick & Martinez, 2009, p. 177). Through this understanding, we can consider the tensions
teachers experience in relation to their identity as a teacher and enacting the teaching practice.

Although I was not the classroom teacher of the students highlighted in my dissertation, my curricular, assessment, and teaching practices for my GATE students aligned, almost identically, with the practices of their current classroom teacher. While the classroom that I taught in was not dual language, I believe that the like-practices and curriculum utilized within this learning environment to an English-only GATE classroom further works to highlight the shaping impact of the discursively constructed sociocultural and historical expectations for an advanced learning environment. The means through which a classroom teacher embodies and reiterates these ideologies through his/her curriculum, assessment, and teaching practices can have a shaping impact on student identity construction. Engaging in a learning space in which one is prescribed normative content and expectations, without the possibility to subvert these norms out of fear of failure and intelligibility, it is evident that the learning space in which educators create shapes student identity. The articulation of the negation of or loss of the Spanish language within the confines of the GATE learning space exposes the influential role that curriculum, assessment, and teaching practices can have on student identity.

**Student subjectivity.** Student subjectivity is variably shaped by the classroom context, curriculum, and teaching practices of the learning environment in which they are participating as well as by greater society. The intersubjectivities of classroom teachers play a shaping role on the curriculum and teaching that students engage in within the classroom. The impact of US normative expectations for GATE work to further construct
Considering the experiences articulated by Chloe, and her peers, in relation to language and their negation of the Spanish language within the GATE learning environment highlight the shaping role of socially constructed norms for GATE. Additionally, as seen in the recollection of the experiences of loss and mourning by the Latina learners, we are able to see the shaping role that discourse can have on our experiences and the construction of our identities. The events we encounter, particularly in relation to loss, implicate us in our connection to the experience and shape us because we are socially constructed. The means through which we respond to a specific loss impacts our stance and perspective. The loss of one’s family, language, and/or culture play a shaping role in the construction of one’s identity.

The development of course content and expectations for students, students are shaped by the classroom curriculum. Classroom expectations, such as those outlined in a syllabus, “work to construct a [student] subject who is the master of certain [classroom] practice and yet must submit to the regulation of the use of these practices” (Honan, 2002, p. 3). Students are required to submit to the expected curricular actions to be intelligible. The curriculum works to complicate the identity of students as the subject through trapping them in this dichotomous bind. In fostering and promoting these juxtaposed entities, students are forced to become a simultaneous ‘mastering/submitting subject’ (Honan, 2002, p. 5). In constructing this paradoxical subject, educators maintain opposing practices in their classrooms. Through developing this dual subjectivity, students are only recognizable when they simultaneously master the classroom content
and submit to the practices of the classroom in an effort to align with the expectations of the syllabus, ultimately complicating the identities of learners.

Within the classroom context, students are situated in the classroom in a binary of power/powerlessness in relation to curriculum and pedagogy. In the classroom, a teacher’s power is invisible within the everyday practices of teaching. The imposition of expectations for intelligibility on learners within the classroom impact student subjectivity within the classroom (Davies & Hunt, 1994). Because learning is typically viewed as an individual activity that is continually assessed, as subjects within the learning environment, students consistently strive to align with the learning expectations of the classroom teacher, and the normative scholastic practices of the US. This dynamic creates and sustains relations of power. Aligning with the expectations of the classroom setting to be intelligible, students strive to be viewed as successful in relation to their ability to master the course content. When students are not able to effectively meet the expectations of the classroom, they run the risk of coming undone or deemed inappropriate within the confines of the curricular expectations of the classroom and the teacher. Because of this, students must display the right mastery of the curriculum to be intelligible.

The public school system has long “too often separate[d] the child from his parents and widens that old gulf between fathers and sons which is never so cruel and so wide as it is between immigrants who come to this country and their children who have gone to the public school” (Addams, 1908, p. 41). The loss of their home language within the GATE classroom shared by the Latina learners insights mourning for these learners as
they are socially constructed to negate their home language and employ the *more favorable* English language within the learning environment. Such is instigated by their desire to display the idealized mastery of the curriculum to be intelligible within the US education system. As previously noted, Butler (2004) contends that the process of mourning enables the individual to reconfigure oneself with a replacement, and for these students, this is the English language. Being shaped by the social context of their learning environment and the advanced coursework of their GATE classroom, the Latina learners have systematically discontinued the use of the Spanish language in an effort to align with expectations of their socially constructed identity as a GATE student.

**Troubling Collective Identity**

As was noted earlier in this dissertation, the goal of this inquiry is to go beyond recognition and inclusion models to reframe US norms discursively embedded in GATE. Considering the tenets of psychoanalysis, Butler (1993) posits, “that theoretical gesture of pathos in with exclusions are simply affirmed as sad necessities of signification” (p. 53). Britzman (1998) partly applies Butler’s perspective to education by suggesting that we cannot merely insert the voices of *marginalized* groups in the curriculum. We ought to not simply create a space for individuals in which the curriculum excludes as doing so further affirms our need for signification through juxtaposing ourselves against those who are not like us (Britzman, 1998). Haphazardly asserting the voices of groups of individuals, like the *Latinx* community, that have traditionally been left out of the GATE curriculum also leads to potentially constructing a collective identity for a population of students. The problematic nature and impossibility of creating and representing a
collective identity will be interrogated further through the perspectives of the student participants in this inquiry.

Articulated in the experiences of Chloe, Maya, Angela, Caffy, and the perspectives of the fellow peers who identify as Latina and are gifted and talented, engaging in subversive acts push against the normative expectations that have been placed on them, particularly related to being a Latina student in a GATE classroom and being gifted. Extant research indicates that student racial identifications are constructed in relation to other bodies/subjects and these identifiers are articulated in student struggles related to racialized territories in their space in schools. These experiences highlight the “pain of not being recognized as a subject, as being reduced merely to one’s visible racial difference” (Thomas, 2009, p. 17). The subject takes up the social norms/categories and the body is only recognizable in relation to social meanings.

The experiences shared by these students expose the reality that not all Latina students and/or members of the Latinx community are normative. Every individual possesses different rituals, cultural ideologies, linguistic practices, etc. that construct how they perceive the world around them. Currently, much of the curriculum used in this classroom tends to be standardized around the collective perceptions of Latinx identity related to food, culture-based celebrations, and adolescent experiences. Despite this attempt to construct a culturally relevant classroom for students made by the actual classroom teacher of these students, each of the students indicated that they have never felt like they could see themselves reflected in the ELA content. Additionally, students reveal that Latina identity is not fixed. These students share contrasting stories about
societal assumptions related to appearance and linguistic abilities. While one student, Angela, finds that one’s appearance in relation to one’s ability to speak Spanish ought to be viewed as a point of pride. Maya, the student who identifies as African American and Mexican finds societal assumptions that she does not speak Spanish hurtful and insulting. These contrasting perceptions highlight why Latina students ought not to be seen as a cohesive unit, but as a dynamic population of learners with individual histories and stories that ought to be valued within the learning environment.

The Latina learners in this study, particularly Chloe and Lizzac, push against the socially constructed normative perception of what it means to be Latina and gifted. Through challenging the discursively constructed perception that Latinas are unintelligent and not capable of being successful in life, Chloe and Lizzac subvert and proliferate what it means to be Latina. Reimagining what it means to be an ‘appropriate’ or ‘normal’ Latina through subversive acts, these students further highlight the powerful role of acts of subversion on student identity. I find that this assertion exposes the yearnings of these learners to negate the sociocultural norms prescribed to their identity as being Latina within the scholastic environment. Through the acts of subversion presented in the reflections, it is evident that it is impossible to construct a collective ‘we’ as notions of giftedness and Latina identity are not static across all members of society. The subversion of such expectations allows these students to further undo normative identity constructions.

The interrelationality of subjectivities is also beneficial to consider as there is no doer before actual interactions among subjects (Butler, 1990). When considering the
construction of identity, we ought to acknowledge that a static notion of subjectivity is impossible prior to subjects interacting with one another (Todd, 2009). Contemplating the interrelationality of subjectivities highlights how one’s identity is socially and discursively constructed and constantly being reshaped and reiterated. Butler (2009a) pushes back against the assumption of a fixed, collective “we” in relation to the conceptualization of a shared identity to expose the impossibility of identity as a pregiven, stable construction. Through engaging in this inquiry, it is evident that the means in which the identities of the Latina learners is constructed that identities are socio-politically constructed in relation to specific contexts. The complex interrelationality of subjectivities further exposes the impossibility of constructing a stable notion of Latina identity or a collective identity construction (Moon, 2016). Miller (2006) further interrogates the malleability and fluidity of identity through fostering the refusal of stable categories of identity. In relation to poststructural feminist thought, it is evident that there is “no coherent ‘self’; that predates stories about identities, about ‘who’ is; nor [can we] claim any possibility of a unified, stable immutable self who can remember everything that has happened in the past” (Miller, 2006, p. 45). The opacity of identity and the complexity of the interrelationality of our subjectivities reinforces the impossibility of constructing a stable, collective notion of Latina identity.

By recognizing the diverse, discursively constructed experiences of students, we can challenge the universalized identities of Latina learners. Through examining how the identities of adolescent Latina learners identified as gifted and talented are constructed, complicated, and undone through discourse in relation to gifted education, we are able to
understand how Latina students disrupt ready-made constructions of Latina identity in GATE.

**Giftedness is Not Normative; It is a Discursive Construction**

According to The National Association for Gifted Children (2015), “giftedness, intelligence, and talent are fluid concepts and may look different in different contexts and cultures.” While it is valuable to acknowledge that definitions of giftedness, intelligence, and talent appear differently in different cultures and contexts, the normative educational landscape of the US does not reflect this fact as giftedness is a social construct (Sapon-Shevin, 1994). As we see particularly in Chloe’s discussion that she believes that “everyone has different specialties. Some people are gifted in music, people are gifted in sports, people are gifted in language, people are gifted in solving problems. [And] being able to speak two languages, like English and Spanish, shows that someone is gifted because [one] can switch [one’s] brain to work in both languages.” Moving away from the Westernized perspective of intelligence that places value on one’s ability to perform well on standardized assessment is integral undoing our conventional perceptions on giftedness within the US. It is valuable to reimagine how we perceive giftedness within the US.

The experiences of the Latina learners exposes how what it means to be gifted is not standardized, but students are complex. As Borland (1997) highlights, within the field of education within the US, we ought to acknowledge that giftedness is a social construction that we have created over time and that “we confer on children, not something we discover in children” (p. 18). Teacher talk and implicit curricular decisions
influence student perceptions of what it means to be intelligent and are significantly shaped by our socially constructed notions of giftedness within the US. The previous learning experiences of students, like Chloe and Angela, exposes the emphasis placed on mathematics in the lower grades as well. For these students, strong mathematics performance on standardized assessments has been and continues to be, a marker of intelligence. It is evident that the experiences of these students within the school system have constructed this notion. While value is placed on mathematics, these students also indicate that being proficient in more than one language is powerful and indicative of future success. These contrasting messages further complicate student notions about what it means to be gifted.

The students in this study disrupt the ready-made construction of giftedness through placing value on language as an indicator of giftedness and the ability to be bilingual in their future career pursuits, as particularly highlighted in the experiences of Maya, Angela, and Chloe. Extant research has found that GATE teachers find the ability to speak another language as one of the least important traits of students participating in a gifted program, despite the fact that being able to speak more than one language requires profound cognitive ability (Brice, Shaunessy, Hughes, McHatton, & Ratliff, 2008; Bianco & Harris, 2014). Through acknowledging the powerful role of speaking more than one language, these students subvert the US normative expectation of giftedness being associated with mathematics and performance on standardized assessment.

The conceptualization of bilingualism as a marker of giftedness is complicated, however, as we see in Chloe’s discussion of how she and her classmates avoid speaking
in Spanish when they are in the GATE learning environment. The US school system regularly involves “subtracting one’s original culture and language” and “whenever [Latinx] youth emerge from the schooling process as monolingual individuals who are [not] equipped to function competently in the mainstream of the United States, subtraction can be said to have occurred” (Valenzuela, 1998, p. 292). The intricate relationship that these students have with their bilingualism is complex because they silence the Spanish language within the classroom, thus leading to the loss and mourning of the Spanish language—an unfortunate outcome of subtractive schooling. This decision exposes how these learners are shaped by the sociocultural context of their learning environment, as well as by the curriculum since they have methodically discontinued the use of the Spanish language in their advanced coursework within the GATE classroom. Although the students point to the loss of Spanish as betraying one’s culture, this perspective is not considered within the confines of the GATE classroom. These complicated interactions with language impact student subjectivity and expose the challenging relationship these learners have with their linguistic abilities. These perspectives further expose how giftedness cannot be viewed as normative as students construct giftedness differently when working with the curriculum, interacting with others outside of the classroom, or considering the asset of bilingualism for their future.

**Considerations for Curriculum and Instruction**

Individuals are variably constructed by and shaped in discursive acts that are grounded in sociopolitical and cultural norms. Through this inquiry, I highlight the diverse means through our subjectivities are constructed to expose the impossibility of
constructing a collective ‘we’ as well as the ever-evolving nature of identity. My project highlights the instability of teacher and student identity and exposes the shaping role of subjectivity within the learning environment. The field of education ought to be viewed as in-the-making as we understand that the classroom setting possesses “textual as well as contextual contradictions, gaps, changes, and silences in students’ and teachers’ daily constructions of meaning” (Miller, 2005, p. 229). We must come to comprehend teacher and student position within the classroom as something that we cannot accept as ‘natural’. We ought to instead consider how they are constructed by the dynamics of the learning environment.

Because our identities are fluid and constantly being shaped, we must accept that our subjectivity is continuously being constructed by the sociopolitical, cultural, and economic contexts of our society (Miller, 2006). Within the field of education, both teacher and student subjectivity possess the ability to assume responsibility for the meanings they construct. It is integral to also acknowledge how our individualized conceptualizations of meanings each day may be shifted through discourse. Through this understanding, individual experience will be considered, which can never exist outside of discourse (Miller, 2005). Considering how identity and the field of education are both in-the-making enables us to contemplate the role that identity complexities play within the learning environment. Miller (2006) posits that it is important to theorize our ‘selves’ and the field of education as incomplete and ever-changing. Particularly in relation to curriculum, Pinar (1994) asserts that “curriculum is not comprised of subjects, but of Subjects, of subjectivity. The running of the course (currere) is the building of the self,
the lived experience of subjectivity” (p. 220). Viewing education as in-the-making, as Miller (2000) acknowledges that curriculum and teaching, as well as teacher and student identity, are constantly in flux and dependent on unique contexts, discursive acts, and sociocultural and political norms. Each classroom environment possesses a complex interaction of identities that impact learning and curriculum, thus exposing how we cannot conceive curriculum and teaching “as technologies constantly driving toward definitive, repeatable strategies” but instead we must consider curriculum and teaching as “performative acts that make a difference in the moment and of the moment” (Miller, 2000, p. 45). Much like identities, curriculum and instruction cannot be perceived as static constructions as each iteration and interaction within any given classroom is unique and unrepeatable.

Furthermore, through this inquiry, it is evident that teacher subjectivity and student subjectivity are interrelated and are both shaped by their interactions within the norms of the US education system. We must consider the complicated subjectivities of teachers and students to identify the role that the interrelatedness of these parties play in the construction of curriculum and pedagogy. Such is valuable as it allows us to reconsider curriculum development in advanced ELA classrooms and to push back against normative identity constructions within the GATE learning space. It is evident that we ought to avoid normalizing populations of learners within the curriculum. Not all individuals that identify with the same racial category (i.e., Latina) are identical. Every person possesses a diverse background, personal experiences, and linguistic practices that make each individual unique. Ultimately, we are each in-the-making, much like the field
of education, because we are discursively shaped by our daily interactions with others and by our interactions with the curriculum and practice we encounter in the classroom.

Additionally, this inquiry further highlights not only the means through which Latina identity is discursively constructed through sociocultural and political norms within advanced GATE classrooms, but also exposes the means through which Latina learners identified as gifted and talented disrupt a ready-made construction of Latina identity. As educators, we must rethink how we classify giftedness as well as what we consider as markers of giftedness in an effort to undo our Westernized, patriarchal construction of gifted and talented. From this work, I have highlighted how our US notions of giftedness are heavily engrained in our curriculum, teacher talk, and in our perspectives towards what content areas are more valuable. These values, in turn, are prescribed to students. Being critical of teacher talk and curriculum valuing particularly during the elementary and middle grades years of schooling in which students are typically with the same classroom teacher for each content area, is valuable to target to begin to reshape how we present markers of giftedness to our students. Placing an equal weight on competency across the content areas, as well as bilingualism and areas such as the arts, we can begin to slowly deconstruct our Westernized notions of giftedness, just like these Latina learners, and come to understand that indicators of giftedness expand far beyond those readily acknowledged within the US school system.

Considering Butler’s conceptualization of cultural translation, I suggest we ought to reframe the current frame of giftedness and the ELA curriculum within GATE. According to Butler (2009), frames are what defines the recognizability and grievability
of subjects. Butler (2004) argues for looking towards new ways of thinking about *cultural translation* to open the potential for a temporary alliance of politics centered on various means for communicating, understanding, and conceptualizing the subject. Butler (2004) articulates *cultural translation* as an obligation where, “I cannot muster the ‘we’ except by finding the way in which I am tied to ‘you,’ by trying to translate but finding that my own language must break up and yield if I am to know you. You are what I gain through this disorientation and loss. This is how the human comes into being, again and again, as that which we have yet to know” (p. 49). For Butler, *cultural translation* offers malleability and mobility by looking towards the cultural and social boundaries of universal concepts. To interrogate this concept, in her text *Frames of War*, Butler (2009a) inquires whose life is deemed as grievable and livable, and whose life is precarious. She challenges the means through which ‘universal’ norms work and construct some subjects as recognizable, while others as unrecognizable. In the violent construction of grievability and precarity, we create *frames* to determine the intelligibility of individuals. Through this understanding, we construct an alternative means for the recognition of life that is not the same as recognizability. Recognition, for Butler (2009), is not something that is not inherent for every person and is between subjects. As Butler (2009) notes, as a *frame*, recognizability, however, denotes the general *frames* that “prepare or shape a subject for recognition” (p. 5), causing it to precede and exceed recognition. For Butler (2009), the issue is “not merely how to include more people within existing norms, but to consider how existing norms allocate recognition differentially” and she calls for us to “ask how such norms operate to produce certain subjects as ‘recognizable’ persons and to
make others decidedly more difficult to recognize” (p. 6). Butler (2009) posits that it is vital to move beyond considering what appears inside or outside of the frame, and to instead investigate the frame to identify the purpose “for recognizing a subject as grievable or not” (Moon, 2016, p. 4).

Thinking about Butler’s concept of recognizability and looking towards her conceptualization of cultural translation, we can begin to rethink universal frames that form the recognizability and precariousness of subjects in relation to giftedness and the ELA curriculum within GATE. Butler looks for us to contemplate collective notions and to construct new vocabulary to consider current norms that enable intelligibility. Through dismantling our current understanding giftedness and the ELA curriculum within GATE, we can begin to consider recognizability differently. The malleability of language enables individuals to develop meanings, across and within diverse settings, to undo hegemonic notions of what it means to be gifted and what content is deemed intelligible within the ELA curriculum in GATE.

Looking towards cultural translation, I posit that we can reframe our vocabulary to develop a new translation of giftedness and the ELA curriculum in GATE. Currently, our framing of giftedness and the ELA curriculum in GATE are grounded in US notions. This perspective dictates who/what is deemed as intelligible and who/what is deemed as precarious (Moon, 2012). The fixed notion of giftedness that we traditionally see in the US constructs a self/Other, or a gifted/Other, dichotomy that is centered around who meets the set criteria that enables them for identification, and who does not. In this binary, those who are marked as gifted are viewed as intelligible within the GATE
context, while those who do not align with the static standards of giftedness are deemed unintelligible. This understanding does not take into consideration complex sociopolitical, economic, or cultural interactions in the US (Moon, 2012). Therefore, the label “gifted” is problematic as it works to streamline the meaning of giftedness by creating a simple binary of opposition. Furthermore, this dichotomy runs the risk of possibly repeating hegemonic structures that might marginalize individuals within the group who may not be viewed as intelligible within dominant discourses (Pillow, 2003).

Our preconceived notions of giftedness within the US typically recognize White and Asian students as gifted and Other populations of students as not gifted. Giftedness cannot be universalized by a fixed conception of racial, gender, or cultural identity (Moon, 2012). Due to this binary of gifted/Other within the US, Latina learners, even when they are identified as gifted and talented, may be viewed as the Other because they do not align with the predetermined understanding of giftedness. Therefore, to interrogate the dominant discourse that excludes individuals from recognition, it becomes necessary that we dismantle the US discourse and hegemony of giftedness to construct a new frame and a new vocabulary through cultural translation.

Similarly, the ELA curriculum in GATE within the US is constructed on a fixed binary of recognition/nonrecognition as ELA curriculum that is deemed as intelligible within the GATE classroom is typically perceived as the literature of the English canon. For example, the literature implemented in the dual language GATE classroom that I worked with, like their English-only counterparts in the district, utilized the mandated Junior Great Books series. The Junior Great Books series is a collection of fiction and
nonfiction “Great Books” that have been selected for grades K-5 in an effort to “boost reading comprehension, critical thinking, speaking and listening, and writing skills” (Great Books Foundation, 2018). These “Great Books” create a dichotomy between literature that is intelligible within the GATE classroom and literature that is unintelligible. Inherent in the name “Great Books”, this series further discursively constructs a binary between great/not great literature. In the US, literature that is typically deemed as intelligible within GATE is traditionally that of the English canon, causing the authors to typically be White and male. To highlight this understanding in the mandated GATE ELA curriculum, I broke down the race, gender, and/or cultural identity of the authors present in book one and book two of the fifth-grade Junior Great Books (2006) series. As seen in Figure 19, the majority of the authors present in the ELA curriculum are White and/or male, illustrating the US universalized understanding of recognizable, or valuable literature. Although I am highlighting the recognition/nonrecognition binary and the racial and gender divide in relation to the ELA curriculum in GATE classrooms, I am not calling for the haphazard implementation of literature written by diverse populations whose voices are not regularly present in the GATE ELA curriculum. Rather, I suggest that we must develop a new frame and a new vocabulary through cultural translation to move beyond recognition and the language of the recognizable English canon.
Through dismantling the dominant discourses and hegemony of giftedness and the ELA curriculum in GATE, we can complicate the meaning of these concepts by constructing a new vocabulary that is unable to be explained through the use of “predetermined concepts of knowledge, self/other, and culture” (Moon, 2012). Through cultural translation, educators and curriculum theorists can begin to rethink these static concepts, which once constructed me as the gatekeeper, by creating a new lexicon. In doing so, giftedness and the ELA curriculum in GATE can begin to consider groups that are marginalized within the dominant discourses of giftedness and the ELA curriculum in GATE to challenge the inherent binaries that dictate our framing of these concepts in the US.

The work of Butler plays a significant role in this dissertation for interrogating the experiences of adolescent Latina learners participating in GATE as well as for understanding how we can reframe the frames of GATE discursively. The underpinnings of performativity theory and the reframing of GATE both consider inclusionary and
exclusionary language that work to discursively shape individuals through socially constructed norms. For Butler (2010), the body is where we come across perceptions that may not reflect that of our own. She contends that “how I am encountered, and how I am sustained, depends fundamentally on the social and political networks in which this body lives, how I am regarded and treated, and how that regard and treatment facilitates this life or fails to make it livable. So a set of sociopolitical norms of my gender through which I come to understand myself or my survivability are not made by be alone” (Butler, 2010, p. 53). The materiality of the body is not recognizable apart from the existence of regulatory norms. Both theoretical frameworks are grounded in the construction of socially constructed markers that shape and define the body.

Within the field of GATE, it is valuable for teachers to interrogate the in-between space between performativity theory and the reframing of GATE to rethink static notions of gender and giftedness that discursively shape students. Examining the frames of recognition that mark precarity and intelligibility in relation to gender and giftedness, educators might be able to move beyond our socially constructed collective notions of gender and gifted identity by questioning the means through which we come to determine self-other as a “relevant, appropriate, or obligatory act” (Butler, 2009, p. 20). Through engaging in this inquiry, educators can move beyond the examination of discursively constructed binaries of male/female or gifted/non-gifted to interrogate the frames that construct recognizability as “self” or “Other” (Moon, 2012). By investigating the socially constructed frames that determine differences in recognition, teachers can begin to question the reasoning behind why some individuals are recognizable, while others are
viewed as precarious as well as interrogate the social norms that categorize and shape individuals in the “self” or “Other” binary. By challenging teachers to envision more complex versions of gender and giftedness as well as rethink the power operations that impact these areas, I suggest that educators can come to further understand the complexities of Latina student identity. Engaging in this inquiry might, furthermore, work to enrich the opportunities for teachers challenging the trap of creating a static, essentialized notion of these learners by allowing them to extend the frames of recognition.

**Considerations for Educational Research**

As previously discussed, I was hesitant to engage in post qualitative inquiry in my dissertation. After years of schooling, I had become so conditioned by the traditional practices utilized for engaging in qualitative inquiry, that considering methods or practices outside of these convention practices seemed terrifying. I worried if my dissertation would not be viewed as “legitimate” or that my ideas would not hold as much weight as inquiries that had utilized the prescribed strategies for qualitative inquiry. I was terrified of people reading my dissertation and thinking that my inquiry was not valid because I did not choose to code my data for themes, but to instead partially employ writing as a method of inquiry to process my ideas. Although I was nervous about engaging in post qualitative inquiry, I ultimately found it freeing, much like St. Pierre (2017a).

Employing post qualitative inquiry within the field of educational research has the potential to enable theorists within the field to push against the expectations of
conventional SBR that continue to plague both research as well as curriculum and assessment. This would enable us to reimagine modes for engaging in research that is not dictated by prescriptive norms (St. Pierre, 2014). No longer being trapped by the prescribed norms of conventional humanist qualitative research, educational researchers can better ground their research in the true perspectives of a theoretical framework (i.e., poststructural, feminist, postmodern, etc.) without being bogged down these traditional practices. Post qualitative inquiry enables researchers to no longer feel conflicted by the mismatches between the theoretical framework that they are working with and the practices of conventional humanist qualitative methodology. As we steadily move towards a time in which research is not heavily dictated by a selection of prescribed standards for validity and intelligibility within the world of educational research, I posit that educational researchers consider employing post qualitative inquiry to engage in research that better aligns with their theoretical perspective. In doing so, we can begin to break the underpinnings of traditional humanist qualitative inquiry and expand our practices and modes of inquiry. Doing so may open up the space for new inquiries that we may have never imagined possible.

When engaging in this dissertation study, I felt conflicted in my mode of inquiry because I felt as if conventional humanist qualitative research methods did not enable me to interrogate and complicate Latina subjectivity in my research. Upon encountering post qualitative inquiry, I no longer felt inhibited by the requirement of considering formal data points (i.e., interview data, classroom observations, field notes, etc.) to contemplate this topic. Through opening my inquiry to consider memories, informal interactions, and
emotions, I found that my investigation enabled me to better interrogate Butler’s various theories and construct an improved understanding of the complexities subjectivity. As previously discussed, although I initially found engaging in post qualitative inquiry daunting, I have found the freedom and malleability of post qualitative inquiry life-changing for myself as an educational researcher. Reflecting on my dissertation inquiry, I would not change the path that I embarked on to arrive at my decision to use post qualitative inquiry, nor can I imagine ever engaging in traditional qualitative research ever again. I feel as if my brain has been released from the box that it was confined in for decades, and it refuses to be trapped by traditional SBR again.

Particularly when engaging in research related to identity, I find the use of post qualitative inquiry integral to contemplating the complicated nature of identity as it opens the researcher up to a broader lens for considering the inquiry that is not dictated by a set of conventional norms. Much like identity, research cannot be viewed as a static construction or practice. As the field of educational research has developed from the valuing of quantitative inquiry, to qualitative inquiry, to mixed methods, I find it valuable to once again shift our paradigm and our mindset as educational researchers through considering post qualitative inquiry. In acknowledging that we cannot and should not possess a collective conceptualization of educational research, we can begin to (re)imagine and discover inquiries that we may not have been able to conceive otherwise.

**Considerations for Future Research**

In my future research, I intend to continue working with this group of students in a longitudinal study. As these learners move from elementary, to middle school, to high
school, and beyond, I plan to continue my inquiry with these students at various points of their academic career. While these students move through the various levels of schooling and as they mature, their perspectives about these topics as well as their personal understanding of themselves may evolve and change. I think that engaging in a longitudinal project with these learners would be a valuable endeavor as it would further highlight the complex, ever-changing subjectivities of these learners.

I also plan to extend the theory and practice of post qualitative inquiry within my research on education. As previously discussed, post qualitative inquiry is an emerging research space, causing there to be limited literature about the processes of those who have engaged in this method of inquiry. Although post qualitative inquiry is dynamic and does not possess concrete rules or steps for engaging in this form of research, I believe that creating more spaces for post qualitative inquiry could help advance the field of educational research by encouraging others to take the a similar metaphorical leap as I showed in this inquiry. As a researcher, I notice the value of engaging in the unknown space of post qualitative inquiry as this unfamiliar inquiry may expose educational researchers to new ways of thinking about and doing research.
As opposed to saying the conventional “The End” or “Fin” at the end of this dissertation, I have chosen to include an ellipses to allude to the ongoing, ever-shifting nature of inquiry, particularly inquiry that is considers the construction of identity.
REFERENCE LIST


VITA

Jenna Nelson was born and raised in Mundelein, Illinois, a northern suburb of Illinois. She currently resides with her husband in Chicago, Illinois.

Jenna Nelson attended public school throughout her elementary and secondary career. She graduated from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2012 with a Bachelor of Arts in English with a minor in Secondary Education. In 2015, she earned her Master of Education degree from Boston University.

Jenna Nelson has worked in the field of education as a seventh- and eighth-grade English and Gifted and Talented Humanities classroom teacher. She has also taught at the university level at Boston University and at Loyola University Chicago. While at Boston University, she taught undergraduate courses on social and civic education. During her time at Loyola University Chicago, she has worked as an adjunct professor for the School of Education at the undergraduate and graduate level in various courses focused on literacy, culturally responsive teaching, data-based decision-making, and curriculum design.

Jenna Nelson was an active member of the Loyola community. She served on various committees and regularly engaged with faculty on research during her time as a graduate assistant.

Jenna Nelson is currently a Visiting Assistant Professor of Curriculum and Instruction at Concordia University Chicago. She instructs courses on curriculum design,
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