Chapter 8

I Didn't Know Where I Was Going But I Got Here Anyway

My Life's Journey Through the Labyrinth of Solitude

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Solitude—the feeling and knowledge that one is alone, alienated from the world and oneself. . . . All men, at some moment in their lives, feel themselves to be alone. And they are. To live is to be separated from what we were in order to approach what we are going to be in the mysterious future. Solitude is the profoundest fact of the human condition. Man [sic] is the only being who knows he is alone, and the only one who seeks out another. His nature—if that word can be used in reference to man, who has "invented" himself by saying "No" to nature—consists in his longing to realize himself in another. Man is nostalgia and a search for communion. Therefore, when he is aware of himself he is aware of his lack of another, that is, of his solitude.

—Octavio Paz (1961, p. 195)

WRITING THIS CHAPTER has been one of the most difficult tasks that I have undertaken in my career. I managed to finish two other chapters and an article before I forced myself to sit down and write this one. Except for short "biobibs," I have never written about myself for the purpose of publication and, for that matter, any purpose. While I'm not a shy person, I highly

value my privacy, and so sharing my life experiences, and in particular those that relate to my family, is not something I easily do; furthermore, my cultural upbringing underscored the fact that one should not go around "bragging" about one's personal achievements. These reasons aside, I think that the major reason for my seeking to avoid writing this chapter was having to face the emotions, especially the negative ones, that are an inherent part of one's solitary journey through the labyrinth of life.

Having undertaken the task to write this chapter I have opted to examine different pathways in my life's journey that, directly or indirectly, brought me to the place in which I presently find myself. I believe that the journey that I have undertaken has been extremely challenging in more ways than one. The paths that I have followed have been bilingual and bicultural, if not tricultural, in nature; they have richly encompassed racial, ethnic, and sexual orientation perspectives. It is my hope that as you read this chapter you will interpret my journey through life from the perspective of such challenges and experiences.

As I begin writing, I am faced with the reality that it is too easy to ramble when one is reminiscing about, remembering, and/or reconstructing the past in relationship to one's self. Given the limitations of length, in this chapter, I selectively present memories and recollections of my life in chronological progression. The ones that I have chosen to present are those that I believe have had the most significant impact in getting me here to this place in life in which I presently find myself. From a reflective perspective, as I pondered my choice of memories and tried to understand the rationale for my choices, I was reminded of Paz's (1961) cautionary remarks regarding one's historical assessment of self:

> History helps us to understand certain traits of our character, provided we are capable of isolating and defining them beforehand. We are the only persons who can answer the questions asked us by reality and our own being. (p. 73)

Before sharing my life's journey, it should be noted that many of the early descriptions of my life are based on memories provided by my mother in an interview conducted by my niece for a writing project that she was required to conduct for a graduate-level class two years before my mother's death in 1996.

INFANCY AND CHILDHOOD

I was born in Mexico and, if I were to simplistically describe myself from a racial/ethnic perspective, the easy way out would be to say that I am a mestizo. But to do so is to put myself in a melting-pot blender that would result in a destruction of all the unique cultural, social, racial, and ethnic

parts that represent my essence. Given the lack of historical/family facts and the physical features that are shared by both my immediate and extended family, I can only surmise that upon arrival of the racially and ethnically diverse Spaniards, my ancestry came to proudly reflect a racial and cultural mixture of the "old" European world, the North African world, and the "new" indigenous one. From a romanticized perspective I have often wondered whether my ancestors were part of the ingenious yet vanquished peoples of Mexico, like the Toltecs, Aztecs, and/or Mayans. While I continue to wonder, what I do know in reference to my more recent indigenous ancestors is that my maternal great-grandparents came from the heartland of the state of Jalisco, where a good number of the people share ancestry with the Huicholes. My paternal great-grandmother was Apache, having been saved by Mexican wagon masters from U.S. cavalry raids on her village and subsequently taken to Mexico where she was raised by my great-grandfather's family. As an aside, something that ties me historically to California, the state in which I have lived, for what I would consider, all of my life, is the fact that in the 1800s my paternal great-grandfather spent a major portion of his life driving a wagon train from the central northern part of Mexico to Sacramento and back again.

Having provided you with a glimpse of my ancestry, I now direct attention to myself. Working from the perspective of mythological time (Paz, 1961), I take the position *that once upon a time* I was born into a family of three (my mother, Elvira, my father, Cruz, and my sister, Carmen, who was 6 at the time) in a small town named La Fundición de Avalos located about eight miles south of the city of Chihuahua in the state of Chihuahua, Mexico. This city is located approximately 350 miles south of El Paso, Texas. My maternal and paternal grandparents and my aunts and uncles (15 on my mother's side and 12 on my father's side) also spent a good portion of their lives in Avalos. Their love and identification with this town is such that to this day, even though the town no longer stands, my few remaining aunts and uncles still reminisce and talk about Avalos as *their* town, the town in which my paternal grandfather was the sheriff.

Avalos was a company-built town owned by the American Smelting and Refining Company (ASARCO), a U.S.-owned company that refined ores like silver, copper, and lead. From the time of my birth onward, I was exposed to the reality of racism and segregation between so-called Americans and Mexicans. The town of Avalos comprised two separate and unequal communities. There was the open community where the Mexicans lived and the secluded, walled-off community where the American "bosses" lived. To enter "their" community one had to be admitted through a guarded gateway. Their homes were to be envied, for they all had running water and bathrooms. The Mexican part of town was composed of rows of small apartment units, 10 per row, some with bathrooms but most without (public showers and toilets were located on alternate rows of the town). Because my father had a trade (i.e., welder), the apartment house that

I was born in was one of the better units in the town. It had two bedrooms, a living room, a dining room, a small kitchen, and, most important of all, a toilet and shower.

For the first 3 years of my life I lived in that apartment along with my mother, father, and older sister, surrounded by aunts, uncles, and cousins. My life with my extended family was so positively enmeshed during those first years of my life that to this day, regardless of the paths that each of us took individually in the labyrinth of our lives, we continue to stay in touch and to help one another in whatever manner possible.

IMMIGRATION FROM MEXICO TO THE UNITED STATES

Although, in general, my family was economically stable, the advent of World War II and its impact on Mexico as well as the tumultuous nature of Mexican sociopolitical conditions convinced my father that in order to give me and my sister the opportunity to become "all that we could be," it would be necessary to immigrate to the United States, where many of our relatives were already living. Another extremely important fact that convinced my father that leaving Mexico was the right thing to do was the reality that the early 1940s was one of those historical periods when labor shortage in the United States was such that Mexican blue-collar workers and laborers, while not actually welcomed in America, were needed to fuel the wartime economy.

Since I was only 3 when we left Mexico in 1945, I do not remember the emotionality of leaving my homeland and my extended family that had pampered me from the day of my birth and who continue to do so to this day. Years later, I was able to capture some of the feelings involved from my mother's perspective:

> Your father, who was very well-read and could speak a little English, thought it was a good time to leave Mexico and go to another place that offered more opportunities and a better way of life, without the worry of revolution, uprisings, etc. It was extremely difficult for me to buy into this 100%; however, he had always taken good care of all of us and so we started to make our plans. It was hard to sell all our furniture and say goodbye to family and friends, never knowing if we would see them again. We packed several suitcases and came to the United States. We crossed the border at El Paso and continued on the train across New Mexico, Arizona, and then we found ourselves going through grove after grove of orange trees. The train went past San Bernardino and, while it did not stop there, your Aunt Luz and your cousin Teresa were standing alongside the track to wave us through as we made our way north to Los Angeles. We stayed overnight in Los Angeles in a hotel that was not in the best part of town, thus we did not venture far from our room. The next day we continued to Crockett, California, where we were met by your Aunt Maria and your

> Uncle Jesús. Your father got a job the following day with ASARCO, the same company that he had worked for in Mexico.

One aspect of our journey from Mexico that I recall, or about which I have heard over the years, and which has had a tremendous impact on me throughout my life, was the fact that in El Paso, Texas, we could not use the bathrooms and drinking fountains that were designated for "White" persons only. We had to search for those services that were relegated to persons of "color" or, to be more specific with the term used during that time, Negroes. This was my introduction to discrimination in the land that was destined to be my home. Numerous subsequent experiences came soon thereafter, and since then, they have not stopped coming in one form or another. To this point, although my father had a job, finding suitable housing became quite a challenge. Once more I turn to my mother who provided a good description of our early experiences in this country:

> Your aunt and uncle lived in Tormey, a small town adjacent to Crockett, and had three rooms in their basement. These rooms became our home. As when I was a child, I was back to having nothing of a material nature, no furniture, no linens, no dishes, etc. Since the U.S. was at war, many things were scarce. As we did not have a car, we would trade our gasoline stamp rations for other things we needed. Tormey was also a company town, but much smaller and with less commodities than Avalos. Your sister started school in a two-room school house. One room was for Grades 1 to 3, the other for 4 to 6. We started looking for a house to live in. There were very few available because the influx of people to California had been tremendous, as men were being shipped overseas from this coast, ships were being built, and many of their families had come west with them. Not only was this a problem, we were Mexicans. No one wanted to rent to Mexicans because they said we were dirty people and did not know how to take care of homes. Eventually we found a landlord that took a chance on us.

We moved to Rodeo, a small blue-collar working town on San Pablo Bay that was adjacent to Tormey. Most of the residents of this town were either Portuguese or Italian and not immune to the prevailing prejudices and discriminatory practices directed at Mexicans and Blacks. To this point, most of the Mexicans lived in one large square town block while the Blacks were relegated to the "projects" that were located on the outskirts of town. During the 1940s and early 1950s social contact between the groups was, for all intents and purposes, nonexistent. This separation of racial/ethnic groups was my introduction to what I now would define as living in a ghetto. But so as not to mislead you, I must admit that in general when contact between persons of the varied groups was made, the process and outcome tended to be positive. I have very fond memories of living in my "ghetto." Very strong friendships among families were formed, friendships that have lasted to this day. In the mid-1950s, my sister, after finishing secretarial school (though an outstanding student, family finances did not enable her to go to

college), began to work full-time and helped my parents buy a small house in a more integrated neighborhood. Her willingness to help the family in such a way, as well as helping me in any way possible to prepare for college, further implanted in me the importance of family, the importance and responsibility of caring for and loving one another, and the importance of demonstrating such caring and loving not solely through words but through actions.

MY EARLY EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

My earliest educational experiences were not very positive; in fact, they were quite aversive. At home, we spoke only Spanish. This was a decision made by my parents to ensure that we would not lose our Mexican culture as conveyed through the richness of our language. In addition, my parents did not want us to lose the ability to communicate with our grandparents and the numerous other family members who continued to live in Mexico. In retrospect and in the long run, my sister and I are grateful for this decision; we are both fluently bilingual and can more easily identify and interact with those persons with whom we share a common heritage, whether in the United States, in Mexico, or in any of the major Spanish-speaking countries of the world. In the short run, people's reactions to our being monolingual Spanish-speaking took their toll on us as children in a variety of ways (e.g., self-esteem, self-efficacy, expectations, aspirations, etc.) just as they continue to do so on a large number of Spanish-speaking children. I should add that all was not negative. With our parents' support and encouragement, we developed an "I'll show you" and "do you one better" attitude. Which in retrospect, we did.

Because I was monolingual Spanish-speaking, I was not allowed to attend kindergarten. The explanation provided by school administrators regarding this decision was that I should stay home and learn English before entering grammar school. DUH! The problem was that my mother, with whom I would spend the major portion of the day, did not speak English. There was no TV that I might have used as a vehicle to pick up English words and phrases. Most of the neighbors also spoke Spanish. My parents, not familiar with the U.S. educational system and their rights relative to this system, did not challenge the decision. Unfortunately, decisions such as the one described herein continue to be made on a daily basis, and too many Spanish-speaking parents continue to be kept ignorant and/or deprived of their rights as they relate to the education of their children.

Well, I finally entered first grade, the law saying I had to be admitted into the first grade regardless of the language I spoke. My parents, despite the fact that they only had a sixth-grade education, had a great respect and enthusiasm for learning and began priming me with their enthusiasm very early on. My sister also pitched in. She was in the fifth grade and after dinner

would teach me English words that she had learned during the day. On the first day of school, my mother, along with a limited-English-speaking friend, walked me and a friend to school, got me to my classroom, and left. As I entered the classroom, I experienced the kind of aloneness, fear, and alienation that if it were in my power to fix, no other child would ever have to experience. No one looked like me. No one spoke my language. I couldn't communicate with anyone, including the teacher. To solve this communication problem, the teacher came up with a unique and intellectually challenged strategy. I would be seated in the back of the room—not the bus, the room—where I could listen and, with time, eventually pick up the English language.

While not being fully and actively involved in all the learning activities that went on during the day during the first and second grade, I was still required to complete the workbook assignments that were the focus of the day's learning activities. However, for me to complete such assignments required help from someone who was more knowledgeable in English than I was. Such help was not forthcoming from the school. The cooperative learning solution that my family came up with was that my sister and father would tutor me in the evenings. More specifically, my sister would help me through the workbook exercises by lightly writing in the answers, explaining them to me, and then I would erase her writing and copy the answers in my own "handwriting," a process that today would be called learning by imitation and modeling. I was learning slowly but surely. However, one day I forgot to fully erase my sister's writing, and the teacher figured out what we were doing and labeled it "cheating." While I was learning through a family cooperative venue, she was set on my learning through the traditional individualistic and "mission impossible" approach. My parents were called and had to come to the school to deal with this accusation of cheating. Embarrassingly, they responded to the accusation by providing, as well as they could, the rationale for what we were doing as a family to educate ourselves. In spite of, or maybe because of these early educational experiences, with the help of my family, my sister and I developed the tenacity, the determination, and the perseverance to succeed in whatever path we chose to follow.

ADOLESCENCE AND SECONDARY SCHOOL

With advice and direction from my teachers and my family, I took both vocational and college prep courses in high school and did quite well in both areas. The rationale for taking vocational courses was to increase the probability of my finding a job in the blue-collar community in which I lived should I not go on to college. My taking college-oriented courses was to leave the door open for me to go on to higher education to get a professional degree, family and economic conditions permitting.

While attending college to further my education seemed a possibility, I had no clear direction with respect to career goals. Career counseling, for all intents and purposes, did not exist in my school. You could take the Strong Interest Inventory and have it interpreted for you, and that was it. In retrospect, I marvel at the wide array of career options I considered and explored on my own initiative. From the onset, for whatever reason, I never wanted to be a "scientist," but at one time or another I did entertain the notion of being an artist (I was and continue to be a fairly good sketch artist), a high-level dress designer, an architect, a lawyer, a foreign diplomat, or a priest. Being a teacher, a professor, or a psychologist never entered my mind.

During my four years in a high school with a population of approximately 400 students, I was quite involved in extracurricular activities (i.e., the drama club, the school newspaper, the tennis team, class president, editor of the school yearbook, and, most important of all, cheerleader). I have very fond memories of my high school years. I had come to understand and appreciate who I was as a multicultural person, and I had a very ethnically and racially diverse group of friends. Mirroring what I had learned from my parents that friends are developed for life, I still maintain contact with a good number of these friends.

GOING ON TO COLLEGE?

I graduated at the top of my class. Unlike most, if not all, of my friends with whom I grew up from childhood, I took all the required college entrance exams and filled out all the admissions materials. At this time, I still wasn't sure whether or not I should go to college (the short-term rewards of getting a job in one of the surrounding industries were quite enticing). Furthermore, I was well aware of the fact that because of economic conditions and concomitant family responsibilities I might not be able to enroll in just any college, at least not full-time. Two events and one circumstance were quite influential in my deciding to take the path of pursuing a degree in higher education. The first event was the fact that in order for me to go to college I had to work during the summer months in whatever local industry might hire me. Upon graduation, I lucked out and got a job at the local brickyard. Enough said, after working eight hours, day after day, unloading bricks taken out of the kilns and loading them onto railroad cars, I knew that I was not physically able nor did I have any desire to assume the role of Prometheus: While he perpetually pushed a rock up a hill, I perpetually unloaded and loaded rocks. This work experience helped consolidate my respect and support for the hard-working laborers of this country that make the world we take for granted possible, the majority of whom are men and women from racial/ethnic minority groups. Throughout my tenure in college, I continued to work in the summers; however, I was fortunate to move from the brickyard to the local sugar refinery . . . not great but better. The

other important event that made it possible for me to go to college was my being admitted to the University of California at Berkeley, which was only approximately 35 miles from where I lived (distance and being close to my family and not prestige were the important variables here in my decision-making process). My going to this university meant that, for economical and family needs, I could live at home and, since neither myself or my family had a car, commute by Greyhound and leave the driving to them. The circumstance that made my attending UC more feasible was the fact that my sister was working in Oakland, a city adjacent to Berkeley. She was part of a driving pool and so, at no cost, every morning I was dropped off just off the Berkeley freeway offramp where I caught a city bus and made my way to the university. In the evening, I would take the city bus into Oakland and meet my sister at her office. Talk about determination.

My stint at UC Berkeley comprised both positive and negative experiences and feelings. Given my need to commute as well as help out at home, I was unable to partake in any extracurricular activities on campus. I did not see the university as a place for me to go and have a "good time." Instead, I saw it as a place to go to learn, study, and prepare myself for my chosen career. I attended UC prior to the establishment of Affirmative Action and concomitant financial aid. Consequently, there were very few racial/ethnic minority students on the campus. Given this situation, I often found myself feeling pretty much alone and estranged from the majority of students who were non-Hispanic White. During my four years at Berkeley, I met very few Hispanic students with whom I shared similar life experiences. Interestingly enough, the place on campus in which I felt most comfortable was International House where many of the foreign students lived and/or hung out.

THE UNIVERSITY: CHOOSING A MAJOR AND DECIDING ON A CAREER

I enrolled in one of the leading public universities in the world knowing that I wanted to get a college degree but having no idea what I would major in or what career paths I should pursue. While I did take advantage of the limited career counseling that was available, I never really felt that the counseling I received was very helpful. So through the process of elimination I eventually decided to major in political science with a specialization in international affairs and minor in Spanish. I believed that both the major and the minor would allow me to pursue a career in the foreign service, a career that would draw on my cultural and linguistic strengths, my interests in studying and understanding other cultures, as well as my desire to travel and live throughout Latin America.

In the short run, I felt that my decision was the right one. I took classes that I enjoyed very much and studied under some of the best political

scientists and philosophers in the nation. In the long run, my decision as it related to the career I wanted to pursue was not on target. In my senior year when I started to fill out the forms to take the exam for entrance into the foreign service, I was brought to the rude awakening that my decision had taken me down a dead-end career path. To be considered for a position in the foreign service, one had to be a citizen of the United States for at least 10 years. I was a permanent resident of this country with a green card. The advice I got from the career counselor was that I become a citizen, wait 10 years, and then take the exam. Did someone forget to give me the right directions for my journey, or did I forget to ask for them? A lesson learned. In future I would not make important decisions on my own without first getting all necessary information from all available resources, a lesson I now persistently pass on to my students.

ALTERNATIVE PATHS

Finding myself at this point on my life's path, I felt somewhat betrayed by the educational/advising system at Berkeley and quite alone in deciding what I would or could do with my B.A. (i.e., I had no mentors, and given my need to commute as well as the size of the classes at Berkeley and the concomitant impersonal teaching/advising approaches used in such classes, I had not developed any close working relationship with any faculty member). Again, making a personal assessment of my interests, needs, and resources, I directed myself toward two possible careers: law or teaching. My choice of law as a career was based on my background in the field of political science/philosophy and my interest in working through the legal system to protect and/or expand the rights of low-income, disenfranchised Hispanic families. My choice of teaching as a career was based on my strong interest in working with children and adolescents who might share similar sociocultural backgrounds like my own as well as the very positive educational experiences that I had had during my middle- and high school years. Again, given my family needs and limited resources, I applied to only three "local" schools: Hastings Law School in San Francisco, Boalt Law School at UC Berkeley, and the Graduate School of Education also at UC Berkeley. I did not score high enough on the law entrance exam to be admitted into either law school but was welcomed with open arms into the School of Education's one-year secondary school credential program. Putting this welcome into a sociohistorical perspective, one must remember that the Vietnam War was at its initial stages during the mid 1960s, the United States was strongly competing with the Soviet Union for world dominance, and, for varied reasons, some tied to the war and others to the competition with the Soviet Union, there was a shortage of teachers, especially so in the sciences and foreign languages (at that time, students in middle schools in California had to take a foreign language). Whereas my being monolingual

Spanish-speaking was held against me as a child, now my ability to speak and teach Spanish was considered an asset. After getting my credential, I had no difficulty finding a job anywhere in the state but opted to take a position that would allow me to continue living at home and, in turn, help my parents financially and otherwise.

I taught middle school (English, social studies, reading, and Spanish) for three years and high school (Spanish) for two years. While I had some very good colleagues and friends in the middle school, I was somewhat isolated. Aside from the janitor, I was the only Hispanic working in a school setting that was, at the least, 97% non-Hispanic White. At the high school level, there was another Hispanic Spanish teacher. We immediately bonded and became the best of friends.

At either level, I was not your traditional teacher who taught by the book. I knew the goals and objectives that my students had to attain within each of my respective classes and would develop creative lesson plans and activities to complement, as much as possible, the learning styles of the students. For instance, I once had to teach a "beginning" Spanish class to a group of educationally and behaviorally challenged boys. Needless to say, I soon learned that teaching by the book was not going to work for any one of us, so I turned the class into "pseudo" gym class, in which we could all participate, and used a variety of sports activities to teach basic words, concepts, and phrases: "corre, corre"—run, run.

The five years that I worked as a teacher were a very rewarding part of my life. To this day, I still maintain contact with some of my students. However, during this period I also came to the realization that teaching subject matter was not what I found to be most rewarding about my job. I came to discover that what I truly enjoyed was working in the capacity of counselor/adviser with high-risk kids and families that were confronted with a variety of social/educational challenges. Consequently, when I took the opportunity to move into high school, in addition to teaching I began working two periods as a counselor while taking night courses in counseling at California State University, San Francisco. I soon realized that for me to move quicker toward the end of my counseling path, I would need to get into a full-time counseling program. But to do this, I would be faced with a lot of financial challenges.

A NEW DIRECTION

Quite serendipitously, I took the right turn at the right time in the labyrinth of my life—a turn that played a most significant role in helping me get

Hispanic issues and students. (Today he is President of Nogales Partners, a major national consulting firm.) In his interview, Luis emphasized how Stanford had a commitment to increasing the number of Hispanic students admitted to the university. He also stated that to this end Stanford had specific resources that could facilitate such admissions and subsequent attendance. He ended his interview by inviting those Hispanics who wanted to attend Stanford and who believed they had the qualifications to give him a call. Enough said. From my past experiences in life I had learned that if I were going to get to where I wanted to go, I had to take the initiative, get all the information necessary to plan out the most expeditious path to reach my destination(s), and take advantage of all the resources available to facilitate my journey. GO FOR IT. So, the next morning I picked up the phone and called Luis. For those of you who know me, the rest is history.

I made an appointment to meet with Luis and, with his help and guidance, applied for admission to the one-year M.A. counseling program in the Graduate School of Education, which was earmarked for practitioners. I also applied to the counseling program at UC Berkeley. I was admitted to both programs; however, Stanford offered me the better deal by guaranteeing full payment of tuition. It should be noted, from a historical perspective, that my admission and the funds offered me were made possible because of money provided by the federal government for increasing the number of counselors working in schools located in low-income, high-risk communities. Again, the impetus for providing such money was to maintain our educational competitiveness with the Soviet Union as well as addressing the needs that were becoming more evident as a result of the Civil Rights Movement. I enrolled at Stanford and for the first time in my life moved away from home and into a small apartment adjacent to the campus. I was introduced to my advisers, John Krumboltz and Carl Thoresen, two individuals who came to play a very important part in my life and for whom I came to develop great respect. Although I was the only Hispanic in the entering class, I did not feel isolated, the faculty was extremely supportive, and my fellow students from across the nation were a joy to work with. To this day, I still maintain contact with some of them. By living near campus I was able to be a part of "college" life, an experience that, as noted above, had been denied me as an undergraduate. The experience was so enjoyable and fulfilling that, at the end of the one-year program, I did not want to leave Stanford to reenter the "real" world of work. An offshoot of this experience was a vow I made to myself to do whatever I could to help students from a background like my own have the opportunity to attend college and experience, if they so desired, college life not as an outsider, a visitor, but as an insider, a resident. I conferred with John and discussed the possibility of my being admitted into the Ph.D. program. He reminded me that I had come to the M.A. program because of a strong desire to work directly with at-risk students and that the Ph.D. program was earmarked not for practitioners per se but for researchers and future academicians. Through our

discussions we came to the mutually acceptable agreement that I would go out and work as a full-time counselor for one year (a side path in my life's journey), and if at the end of that year I still wanted to enter the Ph.D. program and direct my energies toward research, I would be welcome to do so.

During the M.A. program, one of my practicums was at a community college. I found that practicum to be quite challenging. So when I started my job search, I concentrated on community colleges. Again, I had no trouble finding jobs. I took a rather challenging one at Laney Community College in Oakland, California. This college was, and I believe still is, composed predominantly of Black and Hispanic students. While seeking to prepare some of the students to go on to a 4-year college, Laney also had some very outstanding vocational programs. The challenges I encountered during my one-year tenure at Laney were not only tied to the job and the extensive needs of the students but also came from the sociopolitical environment in which I was working. The early 1970s in Oakland was a period in which the Black Panther Movement was at its peak. To refresh your memory, this movement included such well-known participants as Angela Davis, Eldridge Cleaver, and Huey Newton. The political scene at Laney was very turbulent. There were times when the administrative building in which I worked was surrounded and closed off from the rest of the campus by the Black Panthers until their demands for social and educational justice were met. My experiences at Laney were eye-opening. They forced me to come to terms with, and more often than not accept, the measures, sometimes a bit extreme, that disenfranchised people (e.g., racial/ethnic minorities, gays, and lesbians) feel necessary to take in order to attain all the rights and privileges to which they are entitled.

In Spring of my year at Laney I met with John Krumboltz, we revisited our agreement, and I was given the go-ahead to proceed to take the necessary steps to be admitted into the doctoral program in counseling psychology at Stanford University. While I was determined to go on and get a Ph.D. (the first ever in my entire extended family—to this day, I'm still the only one), I had to face the very real economic obstacle that was in my path. I had to come up with a financial aid package that would enable me to return to the university. To this end, I made use of all my counseling skills, those decision-making and exploratory skills that I had taught my counselees to use in identifying all the resources that would enable them to move along their respective educational paths. In my search for financial aid, I fortuitously came across information regarding the fact that the Ford Foundation, addressing the dearth of Hispanic professionals in all fields, was launching an initiative to provide fellowships to Hispanic persons interested in and qualified for pursuing a Ph.D. in education and related fields. That was me. Filled with hope and with the glow of religious candles that were lit by my mother to help light my way, I requested all the necessary application information and forms and applied. I was quite fortunate in receiving a three- to four-year Ford Fellowship that not only covered my tuition but also

provided me with a monthly living stipend and a budget for buying my books and educational supplies. With such support, I enrolled in the program, becoming the first Hispanic to do so and eventually would become the first Hispanic to graduate from the program.

In retrospect, given the availability of the Ford Fellowships, I and others look back at this time (i.e., the 1970s) as the "golden age" for producing Hispanic educators. While I was at Stanford, there were at least 10 to 11 other Hispanic students in education supported by the Ford Foundation. Most of these students finished their Ph.D.s and went on to successful academic positions (e.g., including myself, at least four are full professors at major universities in the Southwest). Having such a camaraderie of Hispanic peers as well as the outstanding peers whom I worked with directly in the counseling program made my second stint at Stanford even more enjoyable than the first.

From an academic perspective, I was quite fortunate to work with some outstanding professors who helped ground me both academically and professionally. John Krumboltz and Carl Thoresen provided me with a strong basis in a variety of applied and research areas encompassed within the field of counseling psychology (e.g., career counseling, stress management, and self-management). The pioneer Alfredo Castañeda, the first Hispanic professor I had ever met, introduced me to the field of multicultural research when such research was in its embryonic stage. Richard Snow went out of his way to help a non-quantitative-oriented mind learn statistics and, in particular, regression analysis and also introduced me to the area of research relative to aptitude treatment interaction. Albert Bandura, in a very amicable way while walking together in the mornings from the parking lot to our respective offices, introduced me to social learning theory and, more important, its practical uses with at-risk families and children. Richard Gross engendered in me through his dynamic teaching style an interest in the interrelated histories of education and psychology (histories I thought I would never teach but have actually been teaching for the past 20 years). I learned a lot of academic material from each of these professors, but most important of all, through their interactions with me, I learned what it means to be a good teacher and a caring, thoughtful person, attributes that I try to emulate today with the persons with whom I interact in the variety of roles I play.

While enjoying my academic pursuits at Stanford, I also had to deal with the facts that I had begun my Ph.D. in my early 30s and felt the need to move as quickly as possible toward my chosen career, more specifically to do something with my life. With this in mind, I made a contract with my adviser, John Krumboltz, that I would go to school year-round so that I could finish my degree within 3 years. Being able to set such a contract helps me to empathize with my students who, given all of the present APA requirements, are not able to finish in such a short time span. While I may not have taken all the courses they are required to take, I'm not sure that my career

accomplishments have been negatively impacted by my not having taken them. Food for thought.

In the early 1970s there was no such thing as multicultural counseling courses or specializations, so with the support of my advisers I developed my own program that, while meeting general requirements, allowed me to study and do research in areas that focused on Mexican American families and children. This arrangement was fine until I had to decide on a dissertation topic. I originally wanted to do a study that was very focused on Mexican American children and families. However, after agonizing discussions with my advisers, I was convinced that I would be more "marketable" if I did a more "traditional" study that was based on the counseling application of some of the emerging cognitive behavioral therapies. Given the times, I now look back and think that the advice I was given was quite appropriate. So I opted to do a very sterile study comparing two mediational self-control techniques for the treatment of speech anxiety. This study was based on a model proposed by Goldfried, Decenteceo, and Weinberg (1974). Again, given my past learning experiences, my work was facilitated because I took the initiative to contact Dr. Goldfried by telephone to get his support and, most important, his therapeutic training manual.

Before completing my doctorate, I began what I considered my final job search. I was on top of the world: a Hispanic male with a Ph.D. in counseling psychology from Stanford University. Because of my need to be close to my family, I sought jobs solely in the Southwest, California in particular. I had made it, or so I thought. I did get quite a few job offers. I won't go into detail relative to these offers, but I want to share with you one that is imprinted in my mind because it once more put me in my place: I was a Mexican American with a degree, not a so-called American with a degree. To this point, I went to the University of Texas at Austin for an interview for a counseling psychology faculty position. After two days of interviews, I was taken by the interviewing faculty to a quite informal farewell dinner. At this rather relaxed event, I was able to ask questions I had not asked previously. Foremost in my mind was why during my two days in Austin I had not had any exposure to the Hispanic population of the community. I wanted to know where they lived. I wanted to have a sense of their living conditions. The response I got sent me running back to California. Relative to my question regarding where Hispanics lived, I was told by a non-Hispanic White male that I would have no problems finding living accommodations in Austin because I did not look like one of them (i.e., Mexicans). Enough said. I took a job at the Counseling and Psychological Services Center at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA).

I was the first racial/ethnic minority psychologist hired at this Center. While there was a psychologist from China and one from Chile, they concentrated their work on foreign students—first things first. When I was hired, I was given the charge of being responsible for working with students from diverse backgrounds (i.e., race and ethnicity) and lifestyles (i.e., gays

and lesbians). Within a couple of days of my being employed, I once more blatantly faced the reality of society's perspective of me. A senior social worker employed at the Center, the wife of a former chair of the Department of Social Welfare at UCLA, came into my office and directly asked me "What are you?" Being a "smart ass," I decided to milk that question to the fullest. I responded by stating the obvious: "I'm a human being. I'm a male." That was not the answer she was seeking, so she must have felt the need to be more specific: "No, what ethnic group do you belong to?" "You don't look or talk like one of them (i.e., Mexicans) and you have a Ph.D." This was my welcome to the working world of intellectuals and professionals in higher education.

Given my lack of tolerance for any kind of discrimination, I soon took steps to end my being designated as the principal psychologist to work with persons from racial/ethnic and cultural minority groups. As persons from such groups became aware of my existence on campus, I came to have an endless list of appointments. In contrast, some of my non-Hispanic White counterparts, having less appointments, had the luxury during the workday to read the newspaper and/or journal articles. Needless to say, this situation did not last long. I went to the director of the Center and took a strong position regarding the fact that I was carrying a bigger workload than many of my colleagues and, more important, that the reason for this was that they did not feel competent to work with racial/ethnic minority persons and as such these persons were shuffled over to me, even if it meant putting them on a waiting list. My position was that this was a discriminatory practice that had to be addressed or else I would make a public issue of the matter in the process of resigning my position. Things changed. Multicultural-cultural training for the staff was instituted shortly thereafter.

I never really wanted to be a full-time researcher, but I had spent so much time learning to be one I could not let my research skills fall by the wayside, so I negotiated with the Counseling Center director to allow me to spend one day a week working as a consultant/researcher at the Spanish-Speaking Mental Health Research Center, which, at the time, was the place where most of the social/behavioral research on Hispanics was being conducted and/or gathered. It was at this Center where I had the opportunity and privilege to meet and work with some of the principal founding persons of Chicano psychology: Amado Padilla, Rene Ruiz, and Marta Bernal. While at UCLA I also had the great privilege and honor to meet and work with Evelyn Hooker, a person who helped me broaden my perspectives of who I was and what I could do for persons like myself.

My stint at UCLA was short-lived. As previously mentioned, one of my primary purposes for pursuing a Ph.D. was to provide me with the means for getting into positions that might help me work more effectively and efficiently with at-risk Hispanic children and more specifically to do whatever I could to increase the opportunities for Hispanic children to pursue their dreams via higher education. At UCLA, I soon discovered that a "staff"

person has little or no power to impact or bring about change in the institution, especially as it relates to students in general and to racial/ethnic minority students in particular. The power lies in the academic faculty. So after two years, I once more initiated a job search for a faculty position. Because of my attachment to my family, I concentrated on jobs in California and was fortunate to land a position as Assistant Professor at the University of California at Santa Barbara—which has been my home base since 1977.

When I started at Santa Barbara, the counseling program consisted of three professors, Don Atkinson, Ray Hosford, and me. We offered both M.A. and Ph.D. degrees. The program that we offered, though quite solid, was generic in nature and did not have a unique emphasis. Over the years, our program became an APA accredited counseling psychology program, grew in size, increased its visibility, established a very strong academic reputation, developed a strong multicultural emphasis, and graduated some very distinguished scholars who are found in institutions across the nation, including but not limited to Joe Ponterotto, Fordham University; Bruce Wampold, University of Wisconsin at Madison; Mike Furlong, University of California at Santa Barbara; Cindy Juntunen, University of North Dakota at Grand Forks; José Abreu, University of Southern California; and Bryan Kim, University of Maryland. With help and direction from colleagues, I pursued my own, rather erratic multicultural research path, giving special attention to Chicano families and children. My pursuits resulted in numerous publications that I hope have been of help to young scholars. My research, publication, and editorial interests enabled me to work with some very notable colleagues, including but not limited to Amado Padilla, Rene Ruiz, Marta Bernal, Melba Vasquez, Paul Pedersen, Joe Ponterotto, Joe Trimble, Esteban Olmedo, Derald Sue, Lillian Comas-Díaz, Puncky Heppner, and Christine Iijima Hall. My efforts were well rewarded in 1998 when, along with Amado Padilla, Marta Bernal, and Manuel Ramirez, I was honored by the Julian Samora Research Institute, Michigan State University, as one of the founding persons of Chicano psychology.

WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

I didn't know where I was going, but I got here anyway. As you can tell from the paths that I have followed in the labyrinth of my life, I did not have a set blueprint that would tell me how and where to go in order to get to this point. I knew that I wanted to get to that position where I worked with and for those persons with whom I most identified: the disenfranchised, immigrants, racial/ethnic minorities, and gays and lesbians. While I hope that I have not reached the end of my life's journey, I gratifyingly state that I am quite satisfied traveling down the path on which I presently find myself. I continue to be quite productive in my academic pursuits: Along with my colleague, Mike Furlong, we have managed to help bring a significant

amount of grant money close to the County of Santa Barbara for the development of therapeutic and educational interventions for high-risk children, I co-chair the Chancellor's Outreach Advisory Board that annually oversees the distribution of $2.3 million earmarked for increasing the diversity of students eligible for applying to the University of California, and, most important of all, I have the time to stop and help serve breakfast to children at my local Head Start preschool, the majority of whom are monolingual Spanish-speaking. Looking to the future, I once more turn to Octavio Paz (1961), who strongly asserts that "at the exit from the labyrinth of solitude we will find reunion (which is repose and happiness), and plenitude, and harmony with the world" (p. 196). I look forward to moving from here and following the path that gets me to that future place in my life.

RELEVANT PUBLICATIONS

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