

Patricia Zavella

Patricia Zavella: Reflections on a Career in Chicana/o Studies

Chicana/o Studies Oral History Project

Interviews conducted by
Todd Holmes
in 2021

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Patricia Zavella

Abstract

Patricia Zavella is professor emerita of Latin American and Latino studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Born in Tampa, Florida and raised in Ontario, California, Professor Zavella received her PhD in anthropology from UC Berkeley in 1982. She taught courses in Chicano studies at UC Berkeley and UC Santa Barbara before joining the faculty of UC Santa Cruz in 1983. At UC Santa Cruz she served as Director of the Chicano / Latino Research Center and was among the founding faculty of the Department of Latin American and Latino Studies. She is widely considered one of the early scholars of Chicana studies, whose work in the social sciences has focused on the nexus of race and gender. She is the author of numerous publications in the field of Chicana/o studies, including: *Women's Work and Chicano Families: Cannery Workers of the Santa Clara Valley* (1987); "The Problematic Relationship of Feminism and Chicana Studies" (1989); "Reflections on Diversity Among Chicanas" (1991); *Sunbelt Working Mothers: Reconciling Family and Factory* (1993); *Telling to Live: Latina Feminist Testimonios* (2001); *Chicana Feminisms: A Critical Reader* (2003); *Women and Migrations in the US-Mexico Borderlands: A Reader* (2007); *I'm Neither Here nor There: Mexican Quotidian Struggles with Migration and Poverty* (2011); and *The Movement for Reproductive Justice: Empowering Women of Color through Social Activism* (2020). Her contribution to Chicana studies has earned her numerous awards, such as: NACCS Scholar of the Year; Distinguished Career Achievement in the Critical Study of North America; The Association of Latina and Latino Anthropologist Distinguished Career Award; and the Gender Equity in Anthropology Award. In this interview, Professor Zavella discusses: her family background and upbringing; her educational journey from high school to undergraduate studies at Chaffey Community College and Pitzer College; her graduate experience at UC Berkeley as one of the first Chicana students in anthropology; her participation in the Political Economy Collective and the Chicana Colectiva; joining the faculty at UC Santa Cruz and establishing herself in the profession; her reflections on the state of Chicana/o studies and how the field evolved over her career; the struggle for Chicanas to create a space in the field; the aims and contributions of her scholarship in the field; the reception of Chicana/o studies at UC Santa Cruz and in the academy; as well as her thoughts on important works, themes, and high points in the field's development over the last fifty years.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| Project History | vii |
| Advisory Council | ix |
| Interview 1: April 6, 2021 | |
| Hour 1 | 1 |
| Birth in Tampa, Florida — Father's military background — Mother as a homemaker — Extended family — Maternal grandmother's drive to Colorado Springs — Spanish versus English conversations in the household — Childhood responsibilities — Move to Ontario, California at age ten — Early interest in reading — Finding a Mexican community in Ontario — Chaffey High School, 1964 to 1968 — Mother and grandmother's discussions of race — Lack of Mexican American history in school curriculums — Experience as a first generation college student — Chicano activism at Chaffey College — Julian Nava's Chicano studies class — Decision to major in anthropology at Pitzer College — Professor José Cuellar's mentorship — Chicano community at Pitzer — Attending Chicano studies conferences in college — Américo Paredes and other notable scholars — Academic journals — Chicano Political Economy Collective (ChPEC) — Relationship with anthropology as an academic field — Move to the Bay Area — Graduate work at UC Berkeley — Lack of support in the anthropology program — ChPEC and the Chicana Collective — Development of ethnic studies department | |
| Hour 2 | 16 |
| Dissertation advisor at UC Berkeley — Discrimination against mothers in academia — Writing process, support from Carlos Arce — Dissertation on Chicano cannery workers in the Santa Clara Valley — Research process, interviewing and working with labor organizers — Intersection between activism and academia — Reflections on the interviews — 1976 paper on women and the Chicano family — Limits of previous scholarship on Chicano family dynamics — Women as cannery workers — Vicki Ruiz's dissertation, <i>Cannery Women, Cannery Lives</i> — Relationship with Ruiz, simultaneous research — Publication and reception of <i>Women's Work and Chicano Families: Cannery Workers of the Santa Clara Valley</i> | |
| Interview 2: April 7, 2021 | |
| Hour 1 | 27 |
| Lectureship at UC Berkeley with Beatriz Pesquera — Lectureship and fellowship at UC Santa Barbara, 1980 to 1981 — Balance between academic work and childcare — Post-doctoral fellowship at Stanford's Chicano Research Center — | |

Dissertation revisions and other research at Stanford — Post-doc job market — Accepting job at UC Santa Cruz, 1983 — Bill Friedland and the community studies department — Culture, demographics, and teaching ethos at Santa Cruz — Issues with the hiring process, attempts to diversify — Chicano faculty — Receiving tenure at Santa Cruz, 1989 — Intersection of Chicana studies and feminist studies — Limitations of the white feminist movement — "Reflections on Diversity" article — Differences in cultural upbringings among Chicanos — Research in Albuquerque with Louise Lamphere, Peter Evans, and Felipe Gonzales — Publication of *Sunbelt Working Mothers*, 1993 — Research findings, changes for factory workers in the 1980s — Anti-union tactics — Development of the Chicano/Latino Research Center at UC Santa Cruz — Founding directors Norma Klahn and Pedro Castillo — Emerging Latin American and Latino studies department — Funding issues — Research clusters at the Center

Hour 2

42

Goals as the Center's director — Undergraduate Research Apprenticeship Program (URAP) — Conflict within the department — Transfer from community studies to Latin American and Latino Studies (LALS) — Establishment of LALS — Transnational and interdisciplinary approach — Rosa-Linda Fregoso's push for graduate students — Reception of the LALS doctoral program — Limited funding across departments — Mentorship style — Aida Hurtado and Louise Lamphere as mentors — *Telling to Live: Latina Feminist Testimonios*, 2001 — Testimonies and shared experiences — Reception of *Telling to Live* — "Sexuality and Risk" article with Xóchitl Castañeda — Sexually transmitted infection (STI) knowledge in Chicana communities — 2003 *Chicana Feminisms* anthology, interdisciplinary approach — Lake Chapala conference in Mexico — *Women and Migration in the US Mexican Borderlands* anthology, 2007 — Need for transnational research — Demographic change in Santa Cruz county — Interviews with Mexican immigrants in Santa Cruz — Peripheral vision theory — *The Movement for Reproductive Justice*, 2020 — Women of color in reproductive justice — Honors and awards — Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social (MALCS) — Latina/o Studies Association, shift towards transnationalism — Latinx legislators in California — Notable scholars in Chicano and Latino studies

Project History

By Todd Holmes
Berkeley, California

Over fifty years ago, UC Berkeley anthropologist Octavio Romano founded the publication, *El Grito: A Journal of Contemporary Mexican-American Thought*. In many respects, it was one of many actions of the time that sought to channel the educational aims of the Mexican American civil rights movement into the corridors of higher education. And in the years that followed, scholars on campuses throughout California and the West built upon those objectives, ultimately establishing the academic discipline that became known as Chicana/o studies.

The Chicana/o Studies Oral History Project was established in 2017 with the goal of commemorating fifty years of Chicana/o studies and documenting the formation of the field through in-depth interviews with the first generation of scholars who shaped it. As a research unit of The Bancroft Library, the Oral History Center has enjoyed rare access to the academy since its founding in 1953, compiling one of the richest collections on higher education and intellectual history in the country. Interviews with Nobel laureates and university presidents fill this collection, as do those with renowned poets and leading scientists. Thus, oral histories with the founding generation of scholars in the field of Chicana/o studies were a fitting addition. Moreover, documenting the formation of an academic field aimed at studying the Mexican American experience was a rare and special opportunity all its own.

The importance of the project was without question; the reality of executing a project of this size and complexity, however, ushered forth a host of logistical challenges. To that end, we at the Oral History Center forged partnerships with scholars and universities across the country, establishing what could be considered an unprecedented collaboration to document the history of Chicana/o studies and celebrate the scholars who played a vital role in its formation. I first created an advisory council composed of recognized junior faculty in the field. Establishing the council was important, as it not only brought a larger, community voice into decisions on the project's scope and direction, but also seasoned expertise to the nomination process for interviewees—a procedure that likely proved much lengthier and more complicated than anyone anticipated. Ultimately, the council helped develop a list of over twenty-five prominent and pioneering scholars to be interviewed for the project.

The second part of this collaboration developed with universities. The Oral History Center is an independent, soft-money research unit at UC Berkeley, which means the office receives very little direct support from the university. Endowments and fundraising underwrite the OHC's operations. For the Chicana/o Studies Oral History Project, a generous consortium of deans, provosts, chancellors, and presidents stepped forward to extend support. Stanford University sponsored the first two interviews, with the University of California Office of the President raising the bar by pledging to fund all UC-related interviews. The pledge not only sought to highlight the role of UC campuses in the field, but also served as a call to arms for other universities in the West to follow suit. Many university administrators answered that call. Deans at UT Austin, Arizona State, and the University of Arizona pledged support, as did administrators at Loyola Marymount, Gonzaga University, UT San Antonio, Brigham Young University, and the University of Houston, among others. Again, highlighting the leading role of

California in the field, the California State University system agreed to fund all CSU-related interviews for the project. The outpouring of support behind the Chicana/o Studies project stands as an inspiring collaboration within the academy.

The scholars included in this project represent some of the most influential writers, educators, and activists in the field of Chicana/o studies. To be sure, their contributions to the field are many, from teaching and scholarship to mentoring and administration, with each playing a unique and significant role in advancing the study of the Mexican American experience from a mere idea in the late 1960s to a mainstay on college campuses across the country five decades later. I'm indebted to each for their generosity and participation in this project. They not only opened up their homes and offices for the interviews, but shared their work and experiences with sincerity and candor. They also exhibited a noteworthy level of humility, as each would be among the first to call this project far from complete. Projects are often imperfect, and this oral history series is no different. Some of those we wished to include, such as Juan Gómez-Quiñones, passed away before they could be interviewed, just as funding complications have delayed the inclusion of others. Thus, as the first installment of this project goes to press, we remember those who passed before they could participate and look forward to the new additions to be made in the years to come.

This project significantly advances our understanding of the development and evolution of the field of Chicana/o studies. Yet the development of Chicana/o studies, as captured in these interviews, is more than just the story of a discipline. It is the story of a generation of scholars who broke through barriers to take their place in the nation's universities, and spent their careers documenting the history and experience of their community. It is the story of educational reform, where scholars of color demanded that America's curriculum equally include all its citizens. In many respects, it is also a story that highlights another side of the civil rights movement, one where actions in the classroom, rather than those in the streets, proved the long-lasting vector of social change. It is my hope that this project does justice to that legacy.

Advisory Council

Miroslava Chávez-García [University of California, Santa Barbara]

Raúl Coronado [University of California, Berkeley]

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Irene Vásquez [University of New Mexico]

Interview 1: April 6, 2021

01-00:00:00

Holmes:

This is Todd Holmes with the Oral History Center at UC Berkeley. Today's date is April 6, 2021 and I have the pleasure of sitting down virtually via Zoom with Patricia Zavella. She's a professor of Latin American and Latino studies at UC Santa Cruz and this interview is our first of two sessions for the Chicana/o Studies Oral History Project. Pat, thank you so much for taking the time to sit down with me this morning and participate in the project.

01-00:00:56

Zavella:

I'm totally happy to be here.

01-00:01:00

Holmes:

Well, this project's going to discuss your life and your career and experience and observations on the field of Chicana and Chicano studies, a field that you have participated in and contributed to for now a number of decades. But I'd like to start off actually with a little discussion about yourself and your family background.

01-00:01:29

Zavella:

Right. So my father was in the Air Force and got transferred a lot, as most military men do. So we moved all over the place. I was born in Tampa, Florida because my dad was stationed there but we've lived in Maine, South Dakota. Colorado Springs was where my grandmother lived and so that was like our home base. And eventually we moved to California when I was ten and I'm the oldest of twelve children.

01-00:02:00

Holmes:

Twelve children. That's a lot of brothers and sisters, a lot of siblings.

01-00:02:05

Zavella:

Yeah. And as the oldest I sort of became like a second mom and so I was very much responsible for looking after them and I learned to cook early, and I have very warm feelings particularly towards the younger kids who I feel like I helped raise.

01-00:02:24

Holmes:

Tell us a little bit about your parents. You were mentioning your father was in the Air Force. What about your mother?

01-00:02:32

Zavella:

So my mother, after she graduated from high school, she worked as a sales clerk at Cress. In fact, that's where she met my father. And then she, I found out years later, she always aspired to having a large family and so when she met my dad and they married she was happy to stay home and raise her children. And one of my favorite photos is of her with a whole bunch of us teaching us to make cookies. So she was a very warm loving person.

01-00:03:04

Holmes:

Maybe, if you wouldn't mind, discuss a little bit about your extended family and family background on both sides.

01-00:03:14

Zavella:

So my father was born in Laredo, Texas, and his family was from Nuevo Laredo on the other side of the border and he was orphaned as a child, so he was raised by an older sister and we never met his family with the exception of one of his brothers. But the rest of the family, we never met until his death. So I don't know that side of the family at all. On my mom's side, my mom was born in Aurora, Colorado and my grandfather is from Trujillo Creek in Southern Colorado—they're part of the great migration of Mexican families from northern New Mexico to southern Colorado in the late nineteenth century. And so my grandmother is buried in Trujillo Creek near where the house was where they grew up.

One of the stories that my family likes to tell is the great move to the city. So my grandmother was widowed at a young age and she had five children and she couldn't make a go of it on the farm by herself, so she sold the property to one of her brothers, packed up a Model A car with all her kids and the dog and a neighbor kid and drove to Colorado Springs. There, she found a job in one of the World War II factories. Eventually she became a full-time employee doing different kinds of jobs and managed to buy a tiny little house that we all knew as my grandmother's home and that was home base. For years it was this big story of a saga and it wasn't until, as an adult, I went back and drove that same route—it's only a few hours away by car. But emotionally it was a big change for women to live on their own, work full-time, raise a family, and her proudest accomplishment was that all of her children graduated from Catholic school. So she was quite a determined, strong woman and one of my role models.

01-00:05:35

Holmes:

Oh, wow. Yeah. That's amazing. Maybe discuss a little bit about the family environment growing up. If there's anything that you would like to share in regards to the rhythms of the household or other memories.

01-00:05:52

Zavella:

Yeah. So I always say that my family trained me from an early age to become an anthropologist. Because one of the things I noticed early on is whenever my aunts and uncles and grandmother and my mom started speaking in Spanish, that's when they were talking about sensitive topics. And so we were English speakers. We heard Spanish but we were raised speaking English, in part because my mother had the horrible experience of having her mouth washed out with soap for speaking Spanish on the schoolground. And so she was determined that we would never have that kind of experience. So every time Spanish was spoken, like I knew something interesting was being said. I remember as a child like playing near where the adults were talking, trying to figure out what they were talking about and they were bilingual so

occasionally I would hear a phrase here or there. And I realized they were talking about racism, not being allowed to go into cafes or into swimming pools, for example, the struggles to find jobs. The open, nasty comments that were made to people. And I feel like learning to listen and hear sort of the stories that get told was really something that was very interesting to me.

I also had a lot of responsibilities, cooking and cleaning and sharing a room with several sisters. So I feel like it really helped me to develop management skills. Like I'm very good at figuring out what needs to happen and how we're going to organize ourselves. And that happened early on.

01-00:07:38

Holmes:

I bet. I only have two siblings and that seemed enough for me. Well, maybe discuss a little bit about growing up in Florida and your experience and then the move to Ontario because, as you said, your father being in the Air Force, you finally settled in Ontario at the age of ten.

01-00:08:00

Zavella:

Right.

01-00:08:00

Holmes:

Discuss that experience before and then finally being able to settle and not move.

01-00:08:07

Zavella:

We actually lived in Florida twice for about a year when I was born and then after that I believe we went back to Colorado. So I don't remember anything about Florida. They moved back there when my second sister was born. But in between that we would move to lots of places. So from Maine, what I remember is we were driving there as a family and stopping to have lunch and our kitty got out of the car and ran away and that was the end of our cat. We never found her again. We also spent two years at different points in time living in South Dakota. I remember New Underwood, South Dakota vividly, in part because we were one of two Mexican families in the entire small town. I felt like we really stuck out. So my childhood was a time of travel. I didn't spend an entire year in school until I got to Ontario at age 10 and started going to school there. And to us, driving to California, it seemed so exotic. We heard stories of cactus and palm trees and warm weather. And coming from Colorado, that sounded really lovely. So we were happy to go to California.

01-00:09:30

Holmes:

Once you settled in Ontario, what was the neighborhood and community like? What was that experience for you?

01-00:09:40

Zavella:

So we lived in Mexican barrios, working class neighborhoods. We also moved around within Ontario and then to Cucamonga, which is a small town right next to Ontario, which has now become Rancho Cucamonga. So low-income communities, places where lots of people lived in small homes. Again, lots of

family responsibilities and lightened by visits by my grandmother from Colorado or my aunt and uncle who lived in San Diego. Just really sort of a very active family life. That seemed to be my entire world. I very early on became what they called a scholarship girl in the sense that I loved to read. We weren't allowed to go very many places. You know, proper young Mexican women, you go to church and you go to school. But I was allowed to go to the library. So I would go once a week, take out a stack of books, bring them home, read them all and then take them back. So that was in many ways sort of an escape. My sisters say they remember me as a child like always having my face in a book. I remember my childhood as always like doing dishes and running after kids and trying to keep track of things.

01-00:11:10
Holmes:

I know in other interviews you had mentioned that it really wasn't until the family settled in Ontario that you felt like you had other Mexican American families that you could identify with and associate with. Was there any kind of conflict in regards to race relations in previous places that you lived and how did that also compare to what you experienced in Ontario?

01-00:11:46
Zavella:

So in other places where I lived, being one of very few Mexican students, I felt very much like an outsider and I also felt like teachers had low expectations. And so there was a repeated pattern of I would do well on something and teachers were surprised and they would say things like, "You're so different." And I never understood that. Like what does that mean? Where was that coming from? And kids can be mean and I have instances of young thugs on the playground calling me bad names, names I really don't want to repeat here, and not understanding that, particularly when they would use the N word. Like I was taught very clearly that you're respectful of other people and you're warm and gracious towards everyone and so I just didn't understand why they were being so nasty and why they were calling me that word because it was very clear that my heritage is Mexican.

Coming to California, the dynamic shifted in the sense that there were plenty of other Mexican or Latino kids but I often got singled out as sort of the teacher's pet. I loved to read, loved school. School was a distraction really. So I was a very good student. And I got teased for that by my fellow students. I also got teased for not knowing much Spanish. And so it was this odd situation where my fellow students were Spanish speakers for the most part and they would say something in Spanish and then they wouldn't believe me when I told them I didn't understand what they said. So it was a different set of challenges.

01-00:13:41
Holmes:

Well, you started high school there in Ontario and attended high school from 1964 through '68 and as a US historian I see those dates as a vibrant and very exciting time to be in high school, with many things going on. Say the rise in civil rights, anti-war sentiment is also starting to rise. Even the blowouts, the

school blowouts by your senior year in '68 in Los Angeles, as well as the United Farmworkers Movement was also picking up steam. What was the environment like at your school? Were you aware of these political dynamics happening?

01-00:14:37

Zavella:

So my school was super large. I went to Chaffey High School. At the time I went there they were building another high school in South Ontario but we were overcrowded and literally my senior graduating class was seven hundred students. So I took college prep classes. And, again, I was the only Mexican in the class. High school's not a pleasant experience for many people. Mine was an experience of loneliness, not feeling like I was seen or heard in my college prep classes. And I remember hearing vaguely about anti-war demonstrations and the civil rights movement and being really interested in that. But it wasn't anything that was close. It was something that was really far away. It wasn't until I started college that I began to hear more about it and learn more about it and got involved.

01-00:15:37

Holmes:

Were politics discussed in the house among your parents and even larger family?

01-00:15:49

Zavella:

They were discussed by my mother and my grandmother and that generation in terms of race politics and class. So my grandmother, who worked at that point cleaning homes, she was very clear that she was treated inappropriately by some of her employers and very critical of that and stood up for herself. It became a story of how people are strong and make do and do what they have to do to support their family. Within my nuclear family, my father was very conservative and he really didn't have a whole lot to say. He didn't really appreciate the demonstrations that were happening around the war. He had been to Korea when he was in the Air Force and even was wounded. And he didn't say much about the Chicano organizing or the civil rights organizing until I started getting involved. And then it was more like, "You need to be careful, I don't want you to get hurt," that kind of cautionary language.

01-00:17:02

Holmes:

You were saying you were taking college prep classes. Did you see, particularly in say the classes on US history, did you see that there was a gulf between maybe some of the histories you heard at home versus those taught in the classroom, particularly in regard to the Mexican American experience?

01-00:17:27

Zavella:

Yeah. There was virtually nothing about the Mexican American experience in my high school classes. Maybe a brief mention of the US-Mexico War. But at that point I didn't have any relatives who lived in Mexico and we were based in Southern Colorado. So Mexico seemed like a foreign country. Like it didn't particularly impress me that there was the war. It wasn't until I went to college

and started taking classes that I realized there's a whole new dimension to American history that I was never taught. I took an African American history class and it was such a revelation. And then eventually started taking some Chicano history classes and just opened up a whole world to me that was new.

01-00:18:19

Holmes:

Well, I'd like to get into your college years, particularly now focusing on your undergraduate. You attended Chaffey Community College and graduated with your associate's in 1971 and then went and finished up your bachelor's at Pitzer College and graduated in 1973. Were you the first of your family to attend college?

01-00:18:48

Zavella:

I was the first in my family to attend college. I had a high school counselor who wasn't particularly interested in or didn't have the wherewithal to guide me toward becoming a college student. I remember I got an award my frosh year in high school for getting a 4.0 and my counselor suggested that I take business classes. So I took typing and stenography and he wanted me to take business math because he thought I'd be a good secretary. And I really had to sort of insist, "No, I want to go to college." But at that point, first generation, you don't even know what questions to ask. You don't know what the experience is going to be like. And so I told him I didn't want to go to a big school. And so he ended up directing me to apply to what was then called La Verne College and I got accepted. But then the idea of moving and living in the dorm; it was a predominantly white, Protestant college, while I had been raised strictly Catholic. I just couldn't see myself doing that. So even though I received a scholarship that would have funded four years of my education, I put it on reserve and went to the community college because that's where my friends were going, my friends who were not in the college prep classes. And I could live at home. I could drive. It wasn't that far away. It seemed more accessible. And in many ways, I've been very unhappy that I made that decision for years and years. But in many ways, it was a good experience for me.

One of the things I loved about Chaffey was I was surrounded by other Mexican kids who were smart and interested in schooling and that was a new experience for me. But moreover, this was 1968 so the Chicano movement was starting to happen. People were talking about it. I just learned so much from my friends and colleagues in addition to the classes I was taking. And so I gained a lot of confidence. I did well in my classes. One of my best classes was intro to biology. Who knew that was going to be a fun class? And I really got involved in all the Chicano organizing that was happening at Chaffey College.

One of the first things I got involved with was we really wanted to support the United Farmworkers and so we started going to demonstrations. The grape boycott was happening. We would go support the boycott. I learned that there

were grape fields near where I lived where people were working that I hadn't really paid attention to. So it was a huge coming to political consciousness for me. We also organized United Mexican American Students. That later became MEChA. And we pressured the administration that we wanted some kind of support services for Chicano students and eventually they did give in and they hired a full-time counselor, Delia Segovia, to work with Chicano students. And they organized what they called an Actuation Center, which was basically a student support center and it was run by Irma Welsh, a Chicana who had been active in the community and where I got my first job in college. I was a secretary there. And so there was a lot of activity on campus and we also petitioned for a Chicano studies course, the first one to be taught there. Professor Julian Nava came and taught it and I got to take a class and begin to learn about the Chicano experience.

I'll never forget the class that he taught. There were only a few of us and the book he used was called *Mexican Americans: Past, Present and Future* and it was about a hundred pages and it was just so interesting and compelling. We talked a lot about what was going on in the community. And now I look back and see that since then the field of Chicana and Chicano studies has grown dramatically. But at that point there was actually very little for us to read in our first class.

01-00:23:13

Holmes:

Well, that's amazing. Yeah. There's been a number of scholars over the years I've had the privilege of speaking with, in the West especially, who had the similar experience of community college proving to be such a fertile ground of growth for their later careers. I was one of those as well. You began to major in anthropology by the time you got to Pitzer. What drew you to that major?

01-00:23:48

Zavella:

Well, I started off as a psych major. Didn't like the Theories of Psychology course or the instructor. I actually had a challenging experience where, when I took my first exam, she called me in and she wanted to know what references I had used. And I had never been taught to include a bibliography with an exam. So I told her, "Well, the two course books and my notes." So she made me go back and redo it and enter those. And she wanted to know because the exam was so good that she assumed I had plagiarized. And so I had to explain to her, "No. No, no, no. I used my notes. I'm a good student. I took really good notes. I read the book." So I had to prove myself. I was really upset by that experience but also I realized that psychology wasn't really what was interesting to me. And I happened to take a course on social linguistics and wrote a paper on bilingualism and I loved the way in which that course really got us to contextualize language use and looking at what now I understand is all about class and segregation and racialization of languages. So I took more anthropology classes and just was very, very interested in theories of evolution, the way in which biological and archeological courses would go in

to trying to understand the origins of mankind. In one of my archeology classes, we actually had to make stone tools, which was so interesting and illuminating. But it was the social/cultural classes that really were interesting, in part because I began to see the notion of cultural coherence and the ways in which there are so many different cultures around the world which help me put my own cultural experience in perspective. Anthropology very much had this value of cultural relativity where you're not supposed to critique people's rituals or ceremonies or norms. And I also liked the idea of going out and spending time, what we call participant observation, with people.

I eventually transferred from Chaffey College to Pitzer and Pitzer had gone through its own experience of student organizing. They had their own MEChA. They had a student outreach group that literally went to Chaffey and talked to us about transferring and helped make that happen. And then when I got to Pitzer they were offering courses in Chicano studies and one of the first courses I took was Chicano anthropology. And it was taught by José Cuellar, who some people may know as Dr. Loco. He ran a band, Dr. Loco and the Rocking Jalapenos, for years and years. And that course happened to be on death and dying in the Chicano community and it was fascinating just to read the material. But also one of the assignments was we had to go out and do field research on rituals related to death and dying and we were trained about the ethics and you need to be unobtrusive and respectful. And so I ended up going to a funeral of someone that I didn't know—well, I knew sort of distantly—and I was very respectful. I gave my condolences to the family. I explained why I was there. They were so appreciative that we cared, that we were respectful, that we were there, that it was just really a beautiful experience. And I just felt like I learned so much.

So I began to take more Chicano anthropology courses and began to do more field research. My next project was going to East LA and going door to door talking to people about political attitudes. Another class I went and did observations of court and the ways in which young people were treated in court settings. It was so interesting. And then part of the work was you needed to theorize your participant observation and so I remember reading, trying to find appropriate readings and being outraged at what I felt like were incredibly racist comments that some of these theorists would make about Mexicans in particular. I remember vividly sitting in the basement of the library finding some really old article in which a scholar critiqued Mexican families for being patriarchal and that women appreciated when their husbands were abusive towards them. I just didn't buy it. That was not something that I had ever seen. And so I wrote this scathing critique how this is racist. And my professor, [José B.] Cuellar, told me, "Yeah, it is. But a more telling critique, a more powerful critique, is to critique them on their own terms." Like what are the shortcomings in the methodology? What are the theoretical problems with this approach? So I began to learn to do that. He also really trained us well to learn how to read materials, what is the purpose, what is the theoretical orientation, the methodology, the findings, the

significance, and we would have to submit these reading abstracts like week after week.

So I felt like I gained excellent training but also it really sort of honed my analytical skills and I began to read more Chicano anthropology at the time and realize that I wasn't alone. There was a whole cohort of scholars out there who were critical of anthropologists, in particular those who had written these very limited perspectives on Mexican culture, that saw it as sort of insulated, dysfunctional. There were all these negative values, present time orientation, for example, and some of them used notions like culture of poverty in relations to Mexicans in ways that I found really troubling. So I decided that I really loved academia and I wanted to go on and I had a meeting with José Cuellar and told him, "I think what I want to do is go become a teacher and teach for five years and save up enough money and then I'll apply to graduate school." And he counseled me, "That's probably not a good idea. It would be really hard to make that transition. If you really want to go to graduate school you should apply now." And so I did. I took the GRE. I applied to two universities, UCLA and UC Berkeley. I got in to both of them. Berkeley was my first choice and they gave me better financial aid so it was like an easy decision. And so I transferred to Berkeley.

01-00:31:16

Holmes:

Before we get into your graduate years, I wanted to talk a little bit about Pitzer College. One hand people may have the perspective of Pitzer College as a private liberal arts college, one of the Claremont Colleges in Southern California—thus to most people, it's probably lily white, offering no classes on the Chicano and Chicana experience. And what you describe at the time you show up there in the mid-1970s is that was not true at all. That actually there was a very robust Chicana and Chicano student activity there as well as diversity in the classes.

01-00:32:15

Zavella:

Yeah. So Pitzer had been an all-women's college and by the time I got there it had been co-ed for a few years, so it was overwhelmingly women. But across the Claremont Colleges there was enough of a critical mass of Chicano students that they were able to get classes and have this recruitment process. One of the things that they did was they were able to organize suites in the dorms that were Chicano focused. And so one of my favorite experiences of Pitzer is I got to live in the Chicana suite. There were eight women that lived in this suite that had two bathrooms and a living room and then bedrooms around. And it was such an amazing learning experience. We became very close friends. Women went on to become quite successful in different fields and it was sort of where we came back to process what it was like going to the Claremont Colleges. So it was still predominantly white. That's where I learned what class means. During spring break when all of my friends were staying in the dorms because this was our first time living away from home. It was such a pleasure. First time I had my own room. It was an incredible

privilege. And my classmates were going skiing in Europe and doing all kinds of crazy things that were never even on our radar. So that was a really interesting experience.

01-00:33:49

Pitzer provided an excellent education. I had excellent professors and I learned a lot. And it was really good for me. But I think what was a saving grace was the Chicana suite and being involved in MEChA. While I was there I joined a Mexican dance group and that was a lot of fun. We traveled and performed and it was a lot of fun. So I have great memories of Pitzer. I feel like it's a very good school. And now I have colleagues who teach in the Claremont Colleges and it seems to be very different. They've changed quite a bit over the years.

01-00:34:28

Holmes:

Well, as you were referencing in regard to not just the environment but particularly a lot of the classes that you were able to take there at Pitzer, the state of Chicana and Chicano studies was really developing by the time that you were there. Discuss what you recall from that time, your observations of the field and how you saw this taking shape.

01-00:35:01

Zavella:

I graduated from Pitzer in '73. So at that point there had been several conferences that were happening in Southern California in relation to social activism. So I went to some of those conferences and learned about women's issues, which were so interesting to me, so compelling. *La Nueva Chicana*, the New Chicana, was the language that was used at that point. And there were also conferences around the internal colonialism model, the way in which different scholars were calling for paying attention to the power relations involved for Mexicans as subject to conquest and the US/Mexico War and the way in which racial segregation had very much kept many of us living in low-income neighborhoods and going to segregated schools. And there were also a number of really important critiques published about anthropology in particular that I found compelling. So there was this real sense of we needed to establish a Chicano perspective, a Chicano and Chicana perspective on scholarship but also how to transform the world. Part of that work was certainly codified in the *Plan de Santa Bárbara*, which I remember we read very carefully and went over and tried to talk about what are the implications. There was even sort of a mini-conference in Santa Barbara the year after *El Plan* was released and which a bunch of us students came and talked through the Plan and how it could be fine-tuned so it would be even more appropriate for implementing in our community. And that kind of political discourse very much shaped the formation of the Association for Chicano Social Scientists, I believe it was initially. That eventually became the National Association for Chicana and Chicano studies, which continues today.

I remember going to the first conference, which was held, I believe, in Austin, Texas. We drove. So José Cuellar got two vans and he took a bunch of

students to the first conference and I remember it vividly because Américo Paredes was given the first NACCS Scholar award and he was so gracious and so articulate and he talked about how meaningful it was to him to see this association formed and that this was his life's dream. It really made an impression on me, that there was this burgeoning field of Chicana and Chicano studies, and it was male dominated definitely, but it was also a field where I felt like this is where I could work. This is something that feels like it's a good place for me. So that was a really beautiful experience for me.

01-00:38:10

It was also an experience where we experienced racial animus in Texas. So we went to one of the great barbeque restaurants in San Antonio and they wouldn't serve us because they "were out of food," but it was very clear that a carful of Mexican young people, they weren't going to serve us. So that was terrible but also, I had never experienced that first-hand, so that was eye-opening.

01-00:37:40

Holmes:

You mentioned Américo Paredes. Maybe if you could, talk a bit your observations on some of the scholars that really struck you in your early studies, whose work inspired you or at least that you came across like Américo's, that were significant.

01-00:39:05

Zavella:

So Américo Paredes's work was so critical for my own developing understanding of Chicana and Chicano studies. He wrote this piece about conducting field research in minority communities that very much was this dry satirical critique of anthropology in particular, and the way in which they took people literally and didn't understand when people were making indirect humorous comments; the way in which they were looking for cultural determination as opposed to the way in which people negotiate the kinds of values and norms and expectations. It was very, very influential on me. It helped me to develop my critique that I had been developing of some of those same anthropological texts. And then I also was very taken by the work of Nick Vaca and Octavio Romano, who had even further scathing critiques of anthropology. I remember at one point, José Cuellar started calling himself a behavioral scientist because he didn't want to claim that he was an anthropologist because anthropology was getting a bad rap in the community. And I understood that but, I don't know, I guess I was inspired by Américo in particular. He wrote this amazing book and all of his work was really about capturing the folklore, the experiences, the stories, the jokes, all of that from the point of view of Mexicans as opposed to the point of view of the dominant society and the way in which they understood completely how extreme violence was directed against them. They figured out ways to get around the Texas Rangers, for example. They celebrated historic figures who were able to assert their own desires and push back, fight back. And that seemed really empowering to me. That seemed like an important project that I wanted to be a part of.

01-00:41:23

Holmes:

Now, I know you were focusing within the social sciences as an anthropologist. If we look at some of the early journals in the field of Chicana/o studies: *El Grito*, which I think was broadly interdisciplinary and emerges in 1967; *Aztlán: The Chicano Journal of Social Sciences and the Arts*, which was also interdisciplinary; then we also had the *Journal of Mexican American History*; and even the *Pacific Historic Review* did special issues. From your early studies, both at Pitzer but then later ongoing in graduate school at Berkeley, were there certain journals or publications that you gravitated towards and found inspiring, cutting-edge research in?

01-00:42:23

Zavella:

So definitely *Aztlán*. I think all of the journals you mentioned I was familiar with at the time. There was also one, *El Grito del Norte*, I remember reading pieces in that, as well. And I found the new Chicano history really interesting. I mean, I read a lot of the work but it wasn't what I wanted to do. I wanted to be an ethnographer really. But one of the things it did was it helped me to place people's experience in historical context and it's something that, particularly when I finished my dissertation, I realized I really needed to do. Anthropologists tended to be very present oriented and I wanted to sort of situate the Mexican experience in history and within structural inequalities. And Chicano history was very helpful for that.

01-00:43:24

Holmes:

I had the pleasure of actually spending a lot of time with anthropologists when I was in graduate school, with James C. Scott and the Agrarian Studies Program at Yale. And one of the things that always struck me as really interdisciplinary is that anthropologists often read work outside their areas of specialty to look at methodologies or other theories to help them think. While you were focused on North America, were there other social scientists whose work you found inspiring in other parts of the world or other theories that helped you refine your thinking?

01-00:44:09

Zavella:

I had a brief flirtation with Goffman and social interaction. I took a graduate seminar in social interaction so I was very interested in the ways in which there's sort of the public presentation of self and the way in which in the background something very different might be going on. And as a graduate student, I became part of the Chicano Political Economy Collective (ChPEC) and we read a lot of Marxist theory and historical sociology and that was a really important experience for me to understand the material basis of Chicano history. Some people like David Montejano, Tomás Almaguer, Felipe Gonzales, Jorge Chapa, they all wrote pieces while we were part of that collective that eventually became their lives work. So it was very important for me to be a part of ChPEC and even though I had some discomfort it was also a really important learning experience. And I think one of the most important things about it was it provided an alternative to the anthropology department.

So my first year in graduate school I was really unhappy. I seriously thought of transferring out and moving to sociology. I literally took out the paperwork and was going to transfer in part because there was a core number of mainly men, Chicano graduate students, Chicano and Chicana, but mainly men in sociology and they were the ones that formed the Chicano Political Economy Collective that really sort of became very intensive once David Montejano arrived at Berkeley. But in the end, I decided to stay in anthropology in part because there were two other Chicana graduate students at the time, Velia Garcia and Nadine Robles and they both counseled me, "You can do the kind of work you want to do in anthropology. It's not going to be any better in sociology and why start over? Just try to find a committee that will help you do the kind of work that you want to do." So I ended up staying.

Over the years I always called myself an agnostic anthropologist because I felt like so much of how I was trained wasn't appropriate for what I was doing but yet I always would go to the AAA [American Anthropological Association] conferences every year because I felt like I needed to keep a handle on what the discipline was doing. And ironically, over time I now find myself feeling more and more comfortable as an anthropologist, in part because the discipline has changed dramatically. So we now have less focus on small scale communities or cultures, less of a focus on sort of bounded notions of culture. We're now paying attention to power dynamics and inequalities even within remote isolated communities. Anthropology is much more diverse. We're paying a lot of attention to the power relations involved in participant observation between the ethnographer and people with whom she's working. There's a lot of attention to human rights and ethics. So I feel like the discipline has shifted to a place where I feel more comfortable and there is now a critical mass of Latinx anthropologists that help us refine the kind of work that we want to do with Latinx peoples around the world.

01-00:48:03

Holmes:

You mentioned the Chicano Political Collective and I want to get back to that here in just a minute because I know other graduate students, as well as David Montejano, have discussed that group in a similar way that you just did, as very inspiring, very impactful on creating a space within Berkeley to foster that kind of work.

But before we get there, let's discuss your transition to Berkeley. On a personal level, how was the move to Berkeley? Because you're trading in Southern California for the Bay Area and particularly during this time it's very vibrant. There's a lot of activism. So before we get into the academic side of things, such as your experience as a graduate student at Berkeley and your scholarship, maybe discuss a little bit on the personal level the move to the Bay Area and your observations and experience within that.

01-00:49:10

Zavella:

So one of the reasons why Berkeley was my first choice was precisely because of all the activism going on there. When I did a visit before accepting admission I just loved all the vibrancy. You go to campus and there are all these performers and people speaking, and there was just so many things to do, all kinds of demonstrations. I was attracted to that. I really felt like that was interesting and compelling. So the move to Berkeley was lovely. I was really dying to go. And in many ways it was a process of letting go of all of the family responsibilities that I had. So when I was at Pitzer I lived five miles away from my family and got lots of calls. There was some crisis. What did I think of this or that? I could go home easily. Going to Berkeley I couldn't be as involved. I really had a lot more work but also I was just gone. I couldn't go home very often. And that was a source of a lot of guilt and also a privilege. But it was the beginning of letting go of this second mom kind of role that I had had for so many years. I loved living in the Bay Area. There was so many things to do. There were so many important places, like La Pena Cultural Center, for example.

But one of the things that happened at Berkeley was I realized very quickly that all of the political foment that was going on around was not necessarily happening directly in anthropology. And so I was part of a large entering cohort—there were thirty-three of us. Which now, as someone who's designed a doctoral program—our first cohort was four students—that seems crazy. And we had this required curriculum we had to take and during our first theory course we had to copy our papers and distribute them to all our fellow students before class every week. As you can imagine, by the end of the quarter we all sounded alike. We were worried that somehow we were sticking out. But one of the dynamics was anthropology was going through this whole process of rethinking the colonial heritage where it had been people from colonizer countries going to developing countries and studying the folk, sort of mainly white males, there were some women, but mainly white people and that had begun to shift. Just as in Chicana and Chicano studies we had native anthropologists, that happened in African American studies, in Native American studies, in Asian American studies. And feminists and queer people, they begin to question the enterprise of anthropology. And there were huge debates in anthropology, particularly when some anthropologists would do research that was of benefit to the CIA in Thailand, for example.

So that kind of critique was going on in the discipline, it was going on at Berkeley and one of the things that happened was the department was really polarized. And so I was part of this large cohort that was apparently the most diverse they had ever had and we were raising the same kinds of questions and the professors didn't want to hear it. We were literally told by our theory professors, "If you want to change the world, go become an activist. Anthropology is all about scholarship." And so one of the things I learned very quickly was I had two worlds. The world that I was interested in around politics and my classes, which were very narrowly focused and I just needed

to do my work and do well. My goal was, get my degree and get out of there, and then do something that would combine the two and so that was my approach to anthropology.

01-00:53:22

Holmes:

Let's talk a little bit about that environment. As you said, you had two worlds you were trying to navigate and balance while in graduate school. But broadly speaking, what kind of environment was Berkeley for a Chicana scholar? The Academy largely was still very male dominated at this time, and anthropology, if we were going to take a field, certainly fit within that kind of male-dominated demographic. What was Berkeley like for a Chicana graduate student?

01-00:54:09

Zavella:

As a student it was pretty alienating. So, for example, Berkeley was in this process of shifting towards diversifying its student and its faculty populations and one of the things they did was they set up this mentoring program. And so students of color were paired up with faculty and over the summer, before classes started, we were supposed to meet and do readings and produce a paper. Well, the professor I met with was a specialist in Thailand and why he agreed to be part of this program I have no idea. But the first thing he did was he asked to read my senior thesis from college. So of course, I shared it. And it had been a Chicana perspective on the Chicana experience and I used the internal colonialism model. I was very much critiquing the male dominance within Chicana/Chicano studies at that point. And so the first thing he said to me was, "I don't like students like you from schools like Pitzer." I didn't know what that meant. I, of course, was devastated. I had been proud of my thesis. It was a lot of work to put together. And so, he proceeded to advise me like an anthropologist and he had me read all the work of George Foster, who has done a lot of work in rural villages in Mexico. He wanted me to write a paper on the shortcomings and the contributions of George Foster. So, I did that. I didn't think it was all that interesting an assignment.

But that was the beginning of this "two worlds" kind of thing. What I was really interested in was not happening within the discipline but I needed to sort of toe the line. And then it got worse when I started taking the required theory classes that were all about British social anthropologists or American anthropology. Very stilted and very male dominated and overwhelmingly white. So here began this process of students of color and feminists within anthropology, we would debrief after class and we would criticize and bemoan what was going on. But we all felt like there was no challenging this and whenever you did challenge it you got shutdown very quickly. Within the cohort there really became this process of many of us feeling like we were marginalized and certain other students getting identified as they're going to go someplace, they're going to get really good jobs and become good anthropologists. So in that context, ChPEC became really an important place for me. It sort of saved me in many ways.

01-00:56:58

But ChPEC had its own internal dynamics that were very competitive and very male dominant, and the women that were in the group, we kept raising issues of we wanted to talk about gender and the men really didn't want to do that. And there also weren't a lot of sources for us to read to begin with. So many of the women then began to form an alternative collective. We called it the Chicana Collective. We invited other graduate students from other departments and we started meeting. So I was going to these two sets of meetings in addition to taking my classes. And the Chicana Collective was really also a revelation. We were sort of an emotional support group for one another, helping to get through your exams. It turned out several of us had children while we were graduate students and so that became something really challenging to navigate. And then also we realized there really is not a lot of work on women, on Mexican women, so we began to do a research project and eventually put together a slideshow that was on Mexican history and really sort of began to try to finetune what a Chicana perspective looks like in relation to the experiences of Mexican women. So that was also really foundational for me, too, and helped me survive getting a degree in anthropology.

01-00:58:38

Holmes:

At the same time that you were there, the ethnic studies department, particularly the Chicana and Chicano studies program there at Berkeley, had just been formed a few years before you arrived. Did you have any interaction with that program or the scholars from that department?

01-00:59:00

Zavella:

Yeah, So Velia Garcia, who was part of my cohort, was an instructor in Chicano studies and eventually I believe my first TAship was for Velia. And I TA'd for other classes. Ron Takaki, Mario Barrera. So it was a great learning experience to literally take these classes that were new to me but also to learn how to become an instructor and how to help students navigate being a student at Berkeley. So it was a great experience being a TA and I got to see the way in which Chicano studies was in formation. So at that point they were in the process of solidifying a program that eventually became part of the ethnic studies department. I heard plenty of drama around how challenging that was. But also, it was inspiring to see that formation happening. And the Third World strike had really been a demand for ethnic studies and so the whole idea that activism and paying attention to social movements was integral to the formation of Chicano studies, that was very much part of what eventually became the program and the department of ethnic studies. So that was really important for me to see happening.

01-01:00:26

Holmes:

Well, I'm sure, too, as we'll discuss in our next session, that experience also perhaps offered some insight and lessons for later on in Santa Cruz in regard to some of the centers and programs that you helped develop there. And particularly I'm thinking of the Latin American and Latino studies PhD and

research center. But I had another question on that front. Mentors and advisors. You were just discussing maybe the feeling of isolation a little bit there at Berkeley. Who were some of the mentors and advisors that helped you along the way in finishing the PhD?

01-01:01:19

Zavella:

So one of the reasons I wanted to go to Berkeley was I wanted to work with Octavio Romano. But first-gen, I didn't realize it probably would have been good to contact him beforehand. I didn't anyway. I showed up in Berkeley. First thing I did was reach out to him and he informed me he wasn't working with anthropology students. He had some kind of fallout with the department. I'm not sure what that was about. But anyway, he wasn't going to work with me. And I was devastated. I really felt like my world had fallen apart. So I had to scramble to find a mentor, an advisor within the department. And eventually I asked Burton Benedict to be my dissertation advisor. Benedict was a British anthropologist and self-described Anglophile who had a pince-nez and smoked a pipe and wore tweeds. He was a very British acting American. The reason I asked him to be my advisor was that he was one of the few anthropologists who actually asked me helpful questions. So I took lots of classes and I did okay in my classes but every year they do an annual review and one of the things I heard over and over again is, "She's more theoretically oriented than most. Her interests are not directly centered in the discipline. She's kind of quiet." All of which were indications that I didn't feel centrally located in the department. And Burton Benedict asked good questions so I eventually asked him to be my advisor.

But one of the things I should mention is because I became pregnant during my second year of graduate school, the department actually had to decide whether I could continue being a student and keep my fellowship. And so there was a question raised about whether I was truly committed to my career if I had gotten pregnant. And so Burton Benedict assured me, "We had this faculty meeting and at the end we practically affirmed motherhood and apple pie and so you're fine. You can stay. You can keep your scholarship." The big thing that he didn't say and what no one else said was that there were plenty of male students who had children and no one questioned their commitment to academia. So I very much felt singled out as a woman and resolved I was going to try even harder to demonstrate that I was a good student.

By the same token, I had a similar experience. I applied for a Ford Foundation scholarship, which is one of the best scholarships you can get. Same thing. Somebody who was on the selection committee informed me that people had raised questions about my commitment to academia because I was pregnant and she had to defend me and say, well, she had children when she was a student and she did fine. So I became aware that, in fact, there are backroom conversations that are really important and that we needed more diverse faculty who could be there to defend people who seem a little different than

the typical white male scholars who are given these kinds of awards. So those were really important lessons for me.

Burton Benedict was a quite distracted advisor. To this day I'm not sure he read my entire dissertation. Let's put it this way: there were no comments on many of the chapters of my dissertation. He had a big project that he was doing. He had a museum exhibition and a deadline that coincided with when I needed to file and so it was very much a hands-off process. But I had the good fortune of at that point I was living in Albuquerque. I wrote my dissertation while I was away. And out of the blue I got a phone call from Carlos Arce, who ran the Chicano Dissertation Completion Project out of the University of Michigan. He heard I was completing the dissertation and he invited me to come to the University of Michigan, spend a month there working with editors to finish the dissertation and then they would enter my manuscript on to a computer, which in those days were mainframes, and then they would produce two copies of it for me. And I was working with a typewriter so this sounded phenomenal. So I was very happy to go.

01-01:06:04

At that point I had had my second child. My son was an infant so I packed up all our stuff and took Anthony and we went to Michigan and I spent a month in Michigan and finished my dissertation. And that was a beautiful experience, in part because the editors that worked with me said, "This is fine." I had been really nervous about my writing in part because I didn't get much feedback from my advisors so I didn't know if it was terrible, am I off-mark, what's going on here. And the editor said, "You're fine. You can tweak it here and there but it's okay." Then they would produce these printouts and I could go through and copy edit and they would make changes for me. I didn't have to type them over and over again, which is what I had been doing. And actually, Carlos offered me a spare bedroom in his home with his family, so I got to stay in this really nice house with my son. And all of my friends were there. Aída Hurtado was the project director. Tomás Almaguer was there; Chris Sierra and others. So I had people to hang out with. We could socialize and just support one another as we finished up this process. So it was an amazing experience, and I was able to get the dissertation done. I came back to Berkeley and filed and Burton Benedict invited me to lunch and he made a comment. First of all, he said I can call him Burton instead of Professor Benedict. But then he made a comment to the effect that it was clear to him that I became a Chicana while writing my dissertation. I just felt like he really doesn't know me. He has no idea who I am if he sees that this work, which was on cannery workers in San Jose and looked at labor organizing, very much was informed by my whole political coming of age during the Chicano movement and my activism with the United Farmworkers and my interest in doing Chicano ethnography. None of that registered with him. And I was fine with it. I was like, "Okay. I'm done." I'm leaving. I'm glad this chapter is over.

01-01:08:28

Holmes:

Why don't we shift to talking about the dissertation. So the dissertation, "Women, Work and Family in the Chicano Community: Cannery Workers in the Santa Clara Valley," which five years later was published as *Women's Work and Chicano Families: Cannery Workers of the Santa Clara Valley*. Give us some more background on the genesis of this project. You're focusing in on not just an area that was close, if we were looking at Berkeley, but this is a long-time agricultural area that many people today are probably going to identify more with Silicon Valley and Stanford versus cannery workers and agricultural factories of fruits and vegetables. What attracted you to look at the Chicana experience in this setting?

01-01:09:27

Zavella:

So when I moved to San Jose I had wanted to do something on families and I was thinking of doing a cross-class kind of analysis because there were professionals, Chicano professionals, living in San Jose. But one of the first meetings I had with a friend, a fellow graduate student who happened to live in San Jose, was that her husband was a labor organizer with the Teamsters. He was a lawyer and he told me all about the struggle that they were going through and I was just totally taken with that struggle. They had filed a race and sex discrimination lawsuit against the canneries and had won, and the consent decree meant that they needed to provide opportunities for women and minorities, especially Mexicans, to begin to move up the job ladder. And that was the product of years of organizing and agitation. At the moment when I had moved to San Jose they were involved in the union democracy campaign, trying to shift so that the Teamsters union would acknowledge and pay attention to the predominantly Mexican labor force. So at that point they were pushing for things like translating the contract into Spanish and having translators when you had presentations made to the workers. Things like that.

So I was just so taken with this story that I decided to focus in on that and began doing interviews and just became totally drawn into the labor organizing that was happening. So Jaime Gallardo was his name and I started going to meetings. It was called *El Comité de Trabajadores de Canerías*, the Cannery Workers Committee. And I would go to meetings and I would do interviews with participants and it was a huge learning experience for me, both doing the interviews and learning about women's experiences being stuck in seasonal positions, the kind of gender and racial segregation that happened there, and also the work culture that women would construct. After you've worked in a cannery for thirty-two years you become friends with people. You have potlucks, celebrations. You know everybody. It was a very vibrant social setting.

But also I begin to learn more about labor organizing and one of the things I learned was that they didn't necessarily need me to do things like pass out flyers or speak at meetings or at demonstrations. But they needed someone who spoke English to order food for the event or to talk to somebody who

wasn't a Spanish speaker. And to type things up. Like I would take notes and share them if need be. So that was an interesting experience for me. It wasn't this impetus of you go out and do the community work. It was sort of navigating the difference between academic work and community activism.

And I should back up a minute and say that over the course of being a graduate student, the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies sort of shifted and one of the things they did was they developed their mission statement or their platform of principles. One of them was that we should all be doing research that was relevant to our community. So they really sort of wanted us to move away from abstract theorization and more get involved in problems that our communities face and how we can develop policies or practices that would somehow make things better. I think I learned in my cannery research that sometimes telling the story itself is an important part of being of service to the community.

01-01:13:34

So I had an experience over and over again of doing interviews with cannery workers and them talking about how they had loved school, they wanted to become a lawyer or a teacher or whatever, never were able to do that and when they heard that I was writing a dissertation and hopefully a book on cannery workers, they were thrilled. It was like, "Oh, my gosh. Let me tell you more about my experience." I even had one man who wanted to be a lawyer and he got totally excited and he ran and he brought me a book that he had found that was a history of Mexicans in the United States. I can't remember who wrote it but he was thrilled that there was a book on Mexicans. He had migrated from Mexicans many, many years before and it was the first one he had seen. So I realized that doing academic work was actually something that was of great value to our community. So it sort of helped me create a position of being a Chicana scholar that very much paid attention to what was going on in the community but also to embrace being a scholar a little more fully. And that felt really good.

01-01:14:43

Holmes:

Now, you were conducting fieldwork and getting involved with the labor activism, which, as you mentioned, you had had experience with the United Farmworkers Movement prior to coming to Berkeley. You conducted interviews with about twenty-four workers or something like for your source based on this. Discuss your experience doing this type of fieldwork and how this fit, as you were saying, an activism and academic kind of mix within the community, but also how this compared to the methodologies things you were learning at Berkeley. What was different? What did you see as new here?

01-01:15:44

Zavella:

So one of the things at Berkeley that I learned was that methodology was very informal. Like I remember the opening day in which we talked about methodology the professor said, "Bring lots of pencils and notebooks," because you're going to be taking lots of notes. It was supposed to be a joke.

Ethnography is all about deep hanging out. And so when I started doing deep hanging out I very much felt like I'm not quite sure what I'm supposed to be doing here but I'm going to take lots of notes. But I really had to begin to navigate what it means to be someone who's not a cannery worker hanging out with activists and at that point someone who was young. And so there was a lot of taking me under their wing kind of thing. Particularly some of the older activist women, they were like, "Mija, let me tell you about this," which was really wonderful. There was a lot of elder men who were a little patronizing to me as a young woman. And then there were things like some of the men activists would be happy to do an interview but they didn't want it to happen in front of their wives. Like let's set aside a time when we can have an interview and then when it was getting late, "I've got to go home because my wife will be expecting me." And trying to figure out how to navigate within that situation was challenging.

01-01:17:18

I think the other thing that was most surprising for me was I had this sense—now it seems really naïve but this was a long time ago, I was young. I had a sense that these are my people. People are going to be very welcoming. And, in fact, what the women talked about in particular were the differences between us. So at that point I had more than a college education. I was fluent in English. It was my first language. I was comfortable going to Berkeley. And these were Mexican women, predominantly Spanish speakers, some bilingual, who maybe had completed some high school, many had not. They saw tremendous class differences and educational differences between us. So it took some time to sort of navigate that. And in the end, I think I had very cordial relationships with the women. But I eventually wrote about them, the way in which native anthropologists were always sort of outside the central part of the discipline but also not completely insiders within our own communities. So all the worry that had been directed at native anthropologists was really misplaced. Like if anything, I think many of us sort of bend over backwards to try to be good anthropologists but also very much use our knowledge of what's appropriate within cultural settings to behave in a manner that's appropriate. So you defer to your elders. If an older gentleman that you're doing an interview with calls you "mija", that's not necessarily something that's inappropriate. It's something that is very acceptable within his social world. And so it really meant that you're negotiating lots of different kinds of expectations.

01-01:19:23

Holmes:

You mentioned one of the focuses of this study is not just telling the story of this labor struggle but is very much also a focus on the Chicanas and Mexican women who are working in this environment. And we see this also in your later work, the focus on the family, the dual roles that women often have to play both as wage earners as well as mothers and wives at home. And this also brings me to even a paper that I think that you presented in 1976 at the NACCS conference on "Towards a Perspective on Chicanas and the Chicano

Family". Maybe discuss a little bit of how this type of thinking, this perspective arose. We feel like we have such a better understanding now of the Chicana experience and the dual roles of talking about family. But if we're going back when you're doing this research in the late 1970s, there's not really much literature at all on this subject and both you as well as Vicki Ruiz are breaking new ground on this. Discuss a little bit how you're thinking on this focus, of talking about Chicanas at the workplace but also their roles within the family and balancing that, how that was beginning to take shape through your readings and research.

01-01:21:10
Zavella:

Yeah. So what little scholarship there was on Chicano families was, as I mentioned, pretty limited. Very culturally deterministic and highlighted the patriarchy that was involved. Patriarchy certainly is a part of Chicano families. But in my own family, my grandmother was the matriarch of the extended family. And even though my father was quite a patriarch, my mother had a quiet strength. So much of what happened in our family she was running. She was cooking and cleaning and organizing and directing and socializing us. My father was pretty hands-off when we were growing up. And so in many ways there were different kinds of power relations and Maxine Baca Zinn in particular has theorized the way in which some families will give a public kind of deference and respect towards men but privately families might be quite matricentric or even matrifocal and that seemed to resonate with my experience.

In doing the research with cannery workers it became clear that sometimes that kind of public facing presentation becomes solidified. So I would do interviews with women who had worked in the canneries for over three decades who would literally say, "I'm not a full-time worker." When the cannery season's going, you're not working eight hours a day. You're working ten, maybe twelve hours a day every day. You're lucky if you get a day off during the week. It's incredibly intense, pressured work. And so for a woman to say that she wasn't a worker, that was all about, "Well, my husband's the worker. He's the one that supports us. He's the one that goes out into the world. I'm the homemaker, mother, organizer of the home who happens to work in the cannery for the summers every year for thirty-two years." It was this very interesting logic that maintained that public facing patriarchal kind of values. Behind that there was this incredible diversity in terms of how family life was organized.

And it seemed to shift with the lifecycle. So the kids are all grown and it's just a cannery worker and her husband. He might be doing half the housework or he might be doing all the laundry. Whatever it was, it was very, very different than when they were a young family and they had lots of kids and it was just a very demanding situation. By the same token, women who had been at canneries for ten, fifteen, twenty, thirty years began to move up the ladder and made as much if not more than their husbands. So that shifted family

dynamics and couples began to be able to afford to go on vacation over and over again, really nice vacations. The whole household dynamic shifted very much in relation to women working even if they didn't see themselves as workers and families changed over time. What might at one point look like a very traditional patriarchal kind of family might shift dramatically once the kids grew up and left the home. So that was really helpful to me to begin to try to understand these different kinds of dynamics among Mexicans.

01-01:24:50

Holmes:

Your book came out the same year as Vicki Ruiz's work on cannery women. And I've talked to Vicki about this, too. I always thought it was just fascinating. Here we have two groundbreaking books, both on women cannery workers coming out at the same year. And here we're referencing Vicki Ruiz's book *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives*. How did you feel about this and did you cross paths with Vicki during your dissertation research?

01-01:25:20

Zavella:

So while I was a graduate student we organized another collective of women graduate students who were at Stanford. So Vicki Ruiz was part of that, Laurie Coyle, Gail Hershatter, some other women, some of whom became historians and filmmakers. And we would meet periodically and talk about things. So I knew about Vicki early on. I remember her history and she had come to Stanford to work with Al Camarillo. As I was putting together my revised proposal for my dissertation someone told me that Vicki was working on cannery workers and I was like, "Oh, no." I knew Vicki was really smart. She was very accomplished. She was like moving through her program really quickly. And I thought, "Oh, no. What am I going to do about it?" At that point I had already decided to work on cannery workers. So I reached out to Vicki and she was very enthusiastic and supportive.

It turned out that one of the people I did an oral history with for my research, Lucio Bernabé, had been an activist going way back to the thirties and I happened to mention this to Vicki and she was really interested. And so I asked her, "Would you like to be part of this oral history that I'm going to do?" and she was totally excited. We figured out some questions. She came to my apartment in San Jose. Lucio came and I think we did two interviews with him. And he was an amazing person. Very, very sweet. He had the habit of dressing in a suit with a tie. Very formally dressed. At one point we asked him about that and he said he had been treated so badly when he was a farmworker and a cannery worker and as soon as they saw him dirty, coming home from work, they treated him really badly. So he made it a point to wear a suit whenever he could because he wanted to be treated with respect and that really stayed with me. It was really sort of an important lesson. So we both completed our dissertations. I think Vicki completed hers before mine. And then we sort of shared. We would periodically have conversations. I remember reading her dissertation really carefully when I was revising mine for publication. It was super helpful and over the years we've kept in touch.

Vicki's a good friend and colleague. I think we've had some real parallel experiences. She has a skill for administrative work and she became the president of the historical association. That's not my *métier*. I'm more interested in the research and the teaching. But I have a lot of admiration and respect and affection for Vicki. And our books got reviewed over and over again together so that was good for both of us.

01-01:28:29

Holmes:

Well, it is. It really goes to show, particularly young scholars who may be reading this or watching this video years down the road, there's always room. There's always room.

01-01:28:43

Zavella:

Exactly.

01-01:28:43

Holmes:

And that's always important to remember. No matter how competitive the graduate environment may seem at times.

01-01:28:53

Zavella:

Yeah, yeah. And you reminded me, at one point we had a conversation in which we very carefully delineated that my work might go back as far as 1965. Her work probably might go to early sixties. But we sort of clarified the boundaries between our work. So I think that made both of us feel better. But also like our work really resonates. When you read them together you really get a fuller picture of what happened with cannery workers. So that was really helpful.

01-01:29:26

Holmes:

They did. That was one of the things I wanted to mention, too, is they pair so well together. And I think a lot of the reviews that put them together made that point over and over again. It's almost like yours is the sequel, after she sets the historical foundation and you can see where the story went from there. I think you're absolutely right, they're just wonderful to pair together. Regarding your book, I always like to ask scholars this: one has an idea of what the aims and contributions of their work will be when they begin or kind of a rough kind of sketch. How did that compare to once the work was finished, the findings, the contributions of what you set out to do in this important work, how did that match up with where you saw it going when you first started? It's always good for young scholars to hear because we think we have it all figured out in the first chapter and we really don't.

01-01:30:41

Zavella:

No, we don't at all. So when I was writing my book I think the primary motivation was I wanted to write a book that I wanted to read. Like I kept thinking about all those years where there was very little scholarship and what there was very male oriented. We didn't hear much about women. Certainly not much about families. I really wanted to write a book that I would have wanted to read as a student. Really sort of lay out some form of the Chicana

experience. And I remember when I completed the book, right before I sent it to press and I read it cover to cover and I just had this huge feeling of, "Wow. That's what I did." I wrote the book that I wanted to read. So I felt really good about that. The second thing was I was really lucky. At the time that I was beginning to revise my dissertation, Roger Sanjek, who taught at CUNY, I believe, for many years, he was starting a new publication series with Cornell University Press on the anthropology of contemporary issues and he really wanted to target young scholars, sort of first books kind of publication strategy. And so he was publishing a fellow graduate student's work and she told him about my dissertation and so he reached out to me. He said, "Are you interested?" And so I said, "Of course I am." So I sent in my dissertation with a wing and a prayer. I was nervous. And he liked it and he sent it out for a review. There was only one review, which these days sometimes it's two or three. It's usually two, sometimes three. And the review was one paragraph and later I found out who it was. A very distinguished senior scholar who wrote this very concise, one long paragraph, "You should publish this book and this is the reason why." I was so grateful, so appreciative. This was someone who was a Latin Americanist and had written about women and labor in Latin America. So Roger gave me feedback on my dissertation and I had spent a year on a post-doc at the Stanford Center for Chicano Research right after I finished my dissertation and while I was there Renato Rosaldo read my dissertation. That was a really hard year for him because that was the year that Shelley had died and so he was on leave and he was not around. But he read the dissertation and he gave me some written comments and I believe we met once. And it was so helpful because the thing that Renato advised me very carefully was to historicize my work. Like what happened in the 1970s was very much shaped by things that had happened previously and to the extent that I can I need to trace that history but also place the 1970s in a broader context. And that's a lesson I have kept to this day and I use with my graduate students. Historicizing something is so important.

01-01:34:16

So my book was published. It came out the same year that Vicki's did. They were reviewed together. We actually both received the same award for our first book and they had an award ceremony in San Francisco in which we both got to go and say a few remarks. It was the closest thing that academics get to an Academy Award series where you get to dress up and get your award. It was really a lot of fun. I was so pleased because my book—so one of the shortcomings of my book is it didn't have a chapter on labor organizing. I was up for tenure in a department in which that was a question. I had a senior faculty member who very much opposed my hiring and so it made me really nervous about getting tenure. So I wanted my book to come out so I would have enough publications with my articles that I'd have a good case. And tenure was fine. But that meant that I pushed to get the book published before I had finished writing up about the labor organizing. So I wrote that part in an article. So I always regret that that whole story of labor organizing wasn't in the cannery book itself. But that's the way it goes.

But one of the things that was so wonderful and unexpected about my book was that as it got out there and it sold really well, to my surprise, people taught it. I began to hear stories from people. "My mom was a cannery worker. You totally captured her story. This was my mom's life. I bought your book and gave it to my mother." Things like that that were just so beautiful. So something I never anticipated was really quite lovely.

01-01:36:09

Holmes:

Well, Pat, I think that's a great note to end on for this first session and, again, thank you so much for your time and wonderful work. We'll pick this up in our next session and so I'll stop the session and we'll touch base here off-line.

01-01:36:28

Zavella:

Okay.

Interview 2: April 7, 2021

02-00:00:00

Holmes:

All right. This is Todd Holmes with the Oral History Center at UC Berkeley. Today's date is April 7, 2021 and I have the privilege of sitting down for our second session with Patricia Zavella, Professor of Latin American and Latino studies at UC Santa Cruz. And this is for the Chicana/o Studies Oral History Project. We are meeting via Zoom since we are still having to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. So unfortunately, we're not able to be in the same room but luckily through technology, as we did in our first session, we're able to conduct this oral history via Zoom. Pat, thanks again for taking the time to meet and have this interview today.

02-00:01:06

Zavella:

My pleasure.

02-00:01:10

Holmes:

So in our first session we talked a lot about your life and your early education throughout graduate school. And here I wanted to start off talking about some of the academic appointments you held in graduate school and a little bit after which led up to, of course, your current appointment at UC Santa Cruz. I always like to see how these different academic appointments offer a great vantage point to discuss Chicana/o studies in the field at different universities and the different experiences you had. And first, I guess we should start off with a lectureship you held at UC Berkeley in the Department of Chicano Studies at that time. Maybe discuss a little bit how that opportunity arose and your experience there.

02-00:02:07

Zavella:

So that was a course entitled La Chicana and I co-taught it with Beatriz Pesquera. We were both doctoral candidates. And a class opened up and so we were provided the opportunity to apply and teach it. And so we co-taught it. It was a little nerve-wracking because one of the faculty in the department, Alex Zaragoza, decided to audit it. So in addition to the students we had Professor Zaragoza sitting in the room, which made us nervous. But it was a wonderful experience. I enjoyed working with Beatriz. She had more teaching experience than I did and we sort of worked with one another very easily. So I remember that experience well. It was a lot of fun.

02-00:03:00

Holmes:

Well, after that you had a lectureship again in the Department of Chicano Studies but this time at UC Santa Barbara in the academic year of 1980 and '81. Talk a little bit about your experience there and how that opportunity arose. I know teaching Chicano studies even at your home institution of UC Berkeley, as you were just saying, could be a little nerve-wracking. But going to a different university, and especially a department that's considered one of the core departments within the field, could be even more so. Discuss a little bit again how that opportunity arose and what was your experience?

02-00:03:35

Zavella:

So I had the privilege of being awarded the Dissertation Completion Project fellowship at the Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies at UC Santa Barbara. The conditions were that in exchange for a year of support you needed to be in residence and then teach two courses. I believe now they only require recipients to teach one course. So I can't remember which courses I taught but I remember they were small. They sort of protected the enrollment. And I believe one was a follow-up to the first one. So there were even fewer students. And that was a good experience. I had moved by myself. At that point I was a single parent, so it was kind of challenging. I was trying to finish my dissertation while designing these two new courses and at the time the department was undergoing changes. I don't really remember what the issues were but I remember, for example, going to the department offices and like no one was around. So there might have been some leaves happening. Anyway, I didn't really see much of the faculty. Occasionally there would be social things and I would get together with people to go out to dinner or get together for a drink or whatever. But it was a fairly isolating experience. At the time I was trying to finish my dissertation so I didn't mind that too much. I was really focusing on getting the writing done. And it was very hard to write my dissertation. My advisor, as I mentioned last time, was kind of hands-off and so I really felt like I was trying to figure it out on my own. After I completed that fellowship, I moved to Albuquerque where I had my second child and then completed the dissertation finally.

02-00:05:38

Holmes:

You've mentioned your children a few times here and I wonder if I could ask—talk a little bit about that balance between family and graduate work. As a father of three myself during graduate school I know that struggle but I also know times were different, as you were mentioning in our last session. So, if you wouldn't mind, maybe share that experience of having to balance those two roles, which in many ways fits with your scholarship, as well.

02-00:06:16

Zavella:

Yeah, it sure does. I think having children offers incredible numbers of challenges, particularly the inevitable nights when they get sick and you're staying up late and that delays turning in papers, those kinds of things. So it definitely increased the anxiety. One of the unexpected things was that it was also really wonderful to forget about my classes and my writing and all of that and to focus on my child. My daughter Laura was a beautiful little girl who was really into artistic expression so she was always drawing and always paying attention to flowers and the birds and things like that. I remember thinking this is so great. I don't have to worry right now. I can focus on my child. And that's something that I tell other women who are going to have children when they're students: it's hard but you can manage it, particularly if you have someone who's supportive and will be there to help you take care of the child but also to figure out resources like daycare centers or daycare providers and those kinds of things.

02-00:07:35

Holmes:

Yeah. Thank you for sharing that. Well, you mentioned you did most of your writing in Albuquerque and you also discussed your time in Michigan, I believe it was, in our last session. You also then had a post-doctoral fellowship at Stanford's Chicano Research Center. Discuss that change of environment, both Stanford University itself but also maybe some of the research that you conducted there and how that opportunity arose for you.

02-00:08:12

Zavella:

So that was another one of the lucky moments in my life in which the person who had had the post-doc at Stanford's Center for Chicano Research, it was a one-year post-doc and he was leaving. That was Tomas Almaguer, who was a friend of mine and colleague. And he knew of the Dissertation Completion Project and that several of us were finishing up and so he told Albert Camarillo. And so I got a call from Albert Camarillo saying, "We have this post-doc. Are you interested in applying?" And I was like, "Are you kidding? I would be delighted to apply." And fortunately, I received it, and so I packed up my family and moved to Stanford. Stanford was a real eye-opener. It reminded me a lot of Pitzer in the sense that it was private and predominantly white and so many students came from wealthy families. In addition, Stanford had this layer of—it very deliberately presented itself as having the best faculty in the world. The best historian of Chicano history, et cetera, et cetera. And so you heard that over and over again and everyone seemed to have liked the Kool-Aid because even students would say that. It was a little annoying but also interesting to see how well they marketed themselves.

At the time Al Camarillo was on sabbatical and so the associate director Armando Valdez was running the center. He was interested in Chicanos in Mountainview, those who lived close to Stanford. And at that point there hadn't been any research. So while we were there we conducted a research project on Chicanos in Mountainview. I was directed to lead it and supervise the student researchers and then write up the report. I'm not sure if anything came of that report but it was definitely time consuming and at the time, it's so often the case when you finish your dissertation you sort of need a little break. So at that point I had been doing research with Louise Lamphere and Peter Evans in Albuquerque while I was there. I got hired as a research assistant and helped do all of this at ethnographic research. And Louise and Peter Evans, the co-PIs, very generously offered to have me become a co-author of a book they were planning to write. So at Stanford is when I began to look at the data from Albuquerque and I drafted an article that got published. I think that was my first publication. So it was really kind of nice to step back from the dissertation, focus on some other project, and then I was really well-mentored by Louise Lamphere. So that was a really nice learning experience.

Then, of course, as I mentioned, when I was at Stanford Renato Rosaldo read my dissertation and gave me such great advice. So I had a sense of the kind of

revisions I wanted to do. And I did work on revising the dissertation while I was there.

02-00:11:43

Holmes:

Yeah, that's a great experience. As one who's also had a post-doc at Stanford, I can understand all that. They do market themselves that way. I will also say Yale does the same thing. It's a little overwhelming. There's a lot of Kool-Aid being passed around, warranted or not. [laughs]

Well, from Stanford, of course, you went on the job market and were hired at UC Santa Cruz in the Department of Community Studies. And UC Santa Cruz has been your home institution since. I believe you were hired in 1983. Discuss that experience of going on the market. You have mentored so many graduate students over the years and, of course, there's always angst about the job market and what people's experience was, and what it wasn't. Maybe discuss a little bit of your experience of going on the market and being hired at Santa Cruz. Were you on the market as an anthropologist, a social science scholar, a Chicana scholar? How did you market yourself within academia and what kind of jobs were you looking at?

02-00:13:11

Zavella:

So to begin with, I really wanted to narrow my search and stay in the Southwest. So that meant there were a number of jobs I didn't even apply for. And I was presenting myself as an anthropologist who emphasized North America, the United States, and Chicana and Chicano studies. And at that point that was an emerging field. So there weren't a lot of jobs in Chicana and Chicano studies. I actually got a job offer at the University of Denver in the anthropology department and I called up community studies and I said, "Hey, I have this job offer. What's happening?" Because I hadn't heard from them. So they very quickly made me an offer and it was for a one-year visiting position. David Montejano had been teaching there and he was leaving and so they wanted someone to teach for one year and they were going to do a search while I was there. So it worked out and I took the job.

I think what was attractive about community studies was it was a department that focused on social change. The goal was to train students to do field research, in other words ethnographic research, and they could go anywhere in the world but they had to be there full-time for six months, conduct research and come back and write a senior thesis that focused on some issue related to social change. So I thought that was really interesting and the person who founded the program, Bill Friedland, had been a labor organizer and very much an open socialist. And so I thought, "Well, this is interesting." I noticed there was only one woman faculty member at the time. It was clear they needed to diversify their faculty. And I really felt like this is one of the few programs where I could be who I was, someone interested in Chicana and Chicano studies and would be valued for my training in anthropology. So I

accepted the position and moved my family to Santa Cruz and surprisingly was there my entire career.

02-00:15:34

I have to say I did receive three different job offers over the years and each time you do the pros and the cons and the balance sheet, and in the end decided to stay at Santa Cruz after I was made generous counteroffers. And I've been fairly happy at Santa Cruz. Some things get under my skin but for the most part I was happy that I stayed at Santa Cruz my entire career.

02-00:16:00

Holmes:

I'm glad you mentioned that because you actually answered a question I had about community studies—the department there is very unique and so I'm glad you discussed that a bit. I did want to ask if you could talk about the student and faculty environment there at UC Santa Cruz and maybe how did that compare? You've spent time at a number of universities before coming to Santa Cruz, from Pitzer as an undergraduate and Berkeley as a graduate, to Stanford and UC Santa Barbara. Maybe discuss a little bit about the student and faculty environment of Santa Cruz and what really sticks out to you.

02-00:16:50

Zavella:

So, I should mention that I took a summer session class at UC Santa Cruz when I was an undergraduate and I fell in love with the campus and the approach and so when I got the job offer I thought, "Oh, my gosh, this is a dream come true." I was delighted to be in Santa Cruz but I very quickly came up on—it was different than I expected. Santa Cruz at that time offered only narrative evaluations, which work really well if you have small classes but over the years classes have gotten larger and larger and in the end the faculty voted to switch to grades. So the narratives were a huge piece of work. There was also an ethos where there was a lot of informality between faculty and students. Everyone called their professors by their first name. The goal was to have small seminars and you had sort of this open exchange of ideas and certainly that happened in the early years when I taught. But over time I've taught seminars of forty students. That makes it really hard to have an informal open discussion about something.

And then the other thing that was really surprising to me was the student body and the faculty were overwhelmingly white and the faculty were overwhelmingly white men. At one point I looked up the percentages and I was shocked by—over 80 percent of the faculty were white men. I remember saying something to that effect. When new faculty come to a campus often there's a local newspaper article and the reporter just honed in on that. And I told her, "Well, I got my degree at Berkeley. It's an incredibly diverse place and to come to Santa Cruz," where at that point there weren't even that many Latinos living in the city, it was just kind of stunning.

02-00:18:54

And then the other thing was the students in community studies, I call them intrepid, they would go so many places. Northern Thailand, rural Mexico. You name it. They went all over the world, often by themselves, and lived for six months, sometimes in challenging conditions. And I really appreciated the students. On the other hand, they were overwhelmingly white and in the training, particularly the preparation for field research, which is really a methodology course, sometimes there was pushback when I was really trying to get them to interrogate their own privilege related to class or race or coming from the United States and going to the Global South. Those kinds of issues. So it was definitely challenging. Sometimes students were incredibly appreciative. Sometimes they were like, "Why do we have to even do this?" with some of the exercises that we would have in class. So that was definitely something that I hadn't expected.

02-00:20:03

Holmes:

As you were saying, one of the aspects that attracted you to UC Santa Cruz was that—versus, say, an anthropology department—community studies allowed you to really bring your focus and research as a Chicana scholar and to really bring the Chicana experience as well as the overall Latino experience to the table. What was the reception of your research and teaching focus there, both in the department as well as in the university.

02-00:20:43

Zavella:

Yeah. So it was kind of a mixed response. On the one hand, the department was sort of very self-consciously trying to diversify the faculty. When they did the national search in which I was hired, it was sort of unstated but it was clear that they would have liked to hire a woman and ideally a woman of color. And they had a huge number of applicants and it was a very competitive job. I had the really unfortunate experience of teaching there while they conducted the search and they allowed undergraduate students to serve on the search committee. Undergraduate students don't fully understand the importance of confidentiality so sometimes they would tell me things that were said at the search committee meetings that I really didn't need to know. That was painful to hear that. So I sort of found myself withdrawing. I just need to teach my classes. When they're through with the search then hopefully things will turn out okay.

And I had been given some assurance that my candidacy was very strong so I was trying to be optimistic. I also should tell you that I applied for a job in the Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies at UC Berkeley and eventually received that job offer. So I had these two searches going on at the same time, both of which were a little nerve-wracking. But I had this really unusual experience where when the department decided to make me the offer they invited me to a meeting with the faculty and they didn't tell me why and they asked that I not share that we were meeting with anyone else and so I had no idea what was going on. And I got the phone call inviting me like nine o'clock at night. "Show up the next morning." An hour later I get a phone call from

UC Berkeley offering me the job in Chicana/Chicano studies. And the person who was offering me the job was at a conference. He apologized for calling so late but he wanted me to know. So I go in to this meeting with the community studies faculty knowing that I had this job offer and they proceeded to critique my dissertation. And their critique was that I wrote as if nobody had written about these issues before, that the tone was somehow inappropriate. Like we're trained to offer critiques and accept critiques so at first I was like giving the rationale. This is why I was doing this and why I was doing that. And in the end it became clear that it wasn't set up to be an opportunity to defend my work, it was set up as an opportunity for them to critique my work. So by the end of the meeting I was reduced to tears. I was devastated. At the end they said, "So you know what we think of your work. And if you can accept that then we're offering the job." I was flabbergasted. I couldn't believe that this had happened. I went home, cried my eyes out, and then I got angry and so I dried my eyes, put my makeup on, went back to campus and pretended like nothing had happened. Oh, and the other thing they said in the meeting was they knew I had the offer from Chicano studies at Berkeley. And how they knew that I have no idea because I hadn't told anyone. So clearly, they had some source of information to Berkeley.

02-00:24:37

So for the next week or so, as I thought about it, I went on, taught my classes, went to meetings, et cetera and every single faculty member in that department privately pulled me aside and said, "We had no idea that's what was going to happen." The chair of the department, David Wellman, had insisted that the only way he would allow the department to make the offer is if we had a session raising our concerns about your dissertation. By the way, one of the concerns was that I had too few research subjects and this was by someone who, himself, had written a book that focused on five research subjects. So I had way more than he did. It was a setup. Every single one of the faculty members apologized. They told me it got out of hand. They were very upset. Except for the chair. He never apologized. Ever. So I thought about it and I weighed the different prospects and in the end I decided to accept the job in community studies in part because I felt comfortable, I liked the students, I liked being at Santa Cruz, et cetera. And I had had enough experience at Berkeley as a teaching assistant, and as an instructor, to hear the inside gossip and the conflicts and tensions. And a big red flag during my interview was I kept getting asked over and over again if I would be willing to be chair within a few years. In other words, as a pre-tenured assistant professor. That just sounded crazy to me. If the program is so unstable that they're going to ask an assistant professor to chair, they have problems.

So in the end I decided to accept the job at Santa Cruz. And I'll never forget when I went in to the office and informed the chair. He almost fell out of his chair. He thought I was going to turn it down. So it seemed apparent to me that this was a strategy. He managed to get his preferred candidate hired, as well, so at that point there were two women of color who were hired. But it set

up sort of an odd tension among the faculty. Periodically there were efforts to nudge him to not be so cunning—he would go off on tangents and people would try to reign him in. And then there were tensions within the faculty over which candidate they had favored. I just really felt like this is not a good way to invite someone to be hired and so I made a point at department meetings—often they felt like pro forma. Like it felt like the faculty had talked about everything and then at the meeting we were supposed to decide on what they had decided informally. And so I made it a point to ask questions, to get the logic of decision-making, like to just make it a point that I am not here to rubberstamp everything that you guys are doing. It felt a little worrisome to do that, but by the same token my mentor, officially assigned to me, was Bill Friedland, who was the founder of the department, the most senior person, had so much prestige and respect. And he was advising me. "You're doing well. Just get some publications. Your teaching looks good." So he sort of gave me the sense that it's okay if I ask questions and sort of stir the water a little bit.

02-00:28:30

Holmes:

Outside of the department, what was the environment like overall across the university as a Chicano scholar? Again, I think it's important to point out that, I mean, this is the early 1980s. As you were just saying, there was only one other woman of color in just that department, let alone what it would have been across the university. Were there other experiences you'd like to share in regards to as a Chicana scholar there at UC Santa Cruz?

02-00:29:10

Zavella:

So when I was given the job offer, there was a small number of Chicano faculty on campus. Gini Matute-Bianchi, Pedro Castillo in particular, and they threw a reception, a welcoming reception at Gini's house. And at the same time Aida Hurtado was made an offer in the department of psychology. And so they had this big open reception in honor of Aida and my appointment and invited all the faculty and staff. So that was, at least in my experience, the beginning of an effort that happened periodically to try to pull together the Chicano and Chicana faculty, and the staff on campus. At one point there was even a faculty/staff association that was formed and it had a short history. But it was just really wonderful to see people. Santa Cruz is in the middle of the redwoods. We have all these separate colleges. So you can easily not see and not even know people who are hired around campus. So that was really nice.

And then Pedro Castillo, he put together a list of all the Chicana and Chicano studies courses that were offered on campus and by my second year in community studies I was offering my own class in Chicano studies. And so there weren't that many but they would circulate the flyer so students would know to take other people's classes and the faculty could refer students to one another. And so that became sort of an important institution building process that eventually culminated in the formation of the Latin American and Latino studies department. And then we socialized. So Pedro and his wife Shirley

would have an annual tamalada and invite everybody to come and party. And so I felt like there was a growing sense of community at Santa Cruz and that really made all the difference.

02-00:31:11

Holmes:

Well, you received tenure in 1989 and as you were saying, you got your book out in time for that. What was your reaction or experience that you recall receiving tenure? I know that was one of the things Al Camarillo shares, that when he started at Stanford, it was very important for faculty of color especially, to make sure you get tenure, to set yourself up for success and get tenure. What do you recall about that process and then finally receiving tenure?

02-00:32:04

Zavella:

My book was published before I went up for tenure and I had other publications and good teaching evaluations. So I was told I had a very strong case. At some level that helped quite a bit. And then the other criterion for tenure is you had to have evidence of a new research project in formation. Since I had published on the research in Albuquerque, that was an indication. So on paper I knew that going in I was strong. Emotionally it was really hard. I worried if the chair was going to oppose it. They send your file out for review anonymously and you get to recommend some people but the department selects their own. There are cases where some departments select somebody that is biased or inappropriate or uninformed and they can write really critical letters. But fortunately, none of that happened. It actually turned out to be a relatively smooth process and I was thrilled. [One of the reviewers even wrote that if community studies didn't give me tenure, they would see to it that I got an offer in their department!] This was back in the day when you got formal written letters. They addressed it to Associate Professor Zavella, so I knew immediately that I got tenure. So I was really pleased. But I have to say, going through the process, I kept saying it felt like I took a flying leap off of a cliff and hopefully the parachute was going to open. You just feel like you're in limbo for a really long period of time. It was pretty stressful.

02-00:33:51

Holmes:

Well, you received tenure at Santa Cruz really right at an important juncture in the development and maturation of the field of Chicana and Chicano studies. If you could, maybe reflect a little bit on the field and the works of that early generation. I know we spoke a little bit in our last session about some of the early scholars. If we think about kind of the early generation of the seventies and eighties, of which you were also a part, what really struck you about these works and if there was any significant works that continued to stand out to you?

02-00:34:27

Zavella:

Yeah. So as I mentioned, I read Vicki Ruiz's work very carefully and there were other scholars, Rosaura Sánchez, for example, whose work was really interesting. But there were also some parallel developments going on in

feminist studies, women's studies, and also within anthropology. And in particular sort of growing respect and appreciation for anthropologists who worked in North America but also sort of the emerging field of feminist anthropology. And one of the initiatives was led by Sandy Morgan and it was a project to try to understand sort of what the book that was eventually published was called, *Women and the Politics of Empowerment*. So looking at efforts at labor organizing or organizing community members around health issues, et cetera. And I was invited to publish something in what became that anthology and it was a really nice iterative process where we would send drafts and would have different people give us feedback and they have one meeting. So it felt like I was part of an emerging shift that was happening within feminist anthropology and it felt really great to be a part of that.

I also feel like at the time in feminist studies it was the beginning of taking seriously the critiques by women of color around paying attention to difference among women and difference in relation to race and sexuality. And so I wrote a piece, "The Problematic Relationship of Feminism and Chicana Studies" that tried to characterize how we see this difference. Where's this difference come from? And in part that came out of talks that I was invited to give in various diversifying the curriculum projects within women's studies, but also teaching a course on women of color in the United States where the feminist studies program seemed to be this dynamic of women of color talking about certain kind of issues in one way and then white women sort of looking at issues around difference, and race in particular, very differently. So I was trying to clarify what that meant and at some level I really wanted to point out that women of color are paying attention to historical inequalities, the way in which racism intersects with class and inequality and is a product of colonialism. And also the way in which our cultural and spiritual traditions shape how we view things like families.

Some of this came out of some of the feminist meetings that I would go to in the Bay Area where many of the Chicana participants, we often felt a little uncomfortable because several of us had children when we were graduate students and we would go to meetings and the whole talk was about women have the right to a career, get an education and get an abortion, which of course we supported. But there didn't seem to be any discussion at that point in the Bay Area around women need support for balancing families and work and how do we provide quality daycare to our children and those kinds of issues. So I was trying to illustrate those kinds of tensions. And I think that in many ways that perspective of paying attention to the intersecting forms of inequalities and privileges is something that has stayed with me throughout my career.

02-00:38:14
Holmes:

Well, you mentioned your article, "The Problematic Relationship of Feminism and Chicana Studies." And you followed that up with a piece "Reflections on Diversity Among Chicanos." And this was published in the *Journal of*

Women's Studies. Was that a continuing dialogue that you started with the first piece? I know it kind of dovetails with some of your other research you were conducting at the time, which we'll get to here in just a minute. But maybe talk a little bit about the genesis of that and the continued development and shaping of your thinking on that subject. Because as you were saying, it does dovetail really with the maturation of not just Chicana and Chicano studies but also feminist studies. And you've done such a great job in your career of merging those two fields. So maybe discuss a little bit of that article as we get down to your scholarship and how your thinking was developing on that.

02-00:39:18
Zavella:

So "Reflections on Diversity" came out of those trainings, again, that I did in women's studies but also out of my own research where I was finding these nuanced differences among Chicanas, and also the research that we did in Albuquerque where there's sort of a very different set of dynamics that stems out of Hispanos being very culturally distinct from Native Americans and Anglos and claiming a particular kind of identity. And also my classes, where a lot of Chicana and Chicano students were coming from East LA at the time when I was teaching and they would come to Santa Cruz and it was like it's so rural, it's so beautiful, it's so quiet, those kinds of things. It was really sort of coming to terms with differences among Chicano and Chicana students. So I was really trying to sort of pay attention to those intersecting forms but also pay attention to the history of some of those differences. For example, at that point, Latinos from Southern California often had a very Mexican heritage. Many of them were the children of immigrants. It's different from today where it's much more diverse.

I'm born in the United States and fifth generation. My grandmother and great-grandparents were all born in what in the 1800s was part of Mexico and after the US-Mexico War became northern New Mexico and then they moved to southern Colorado. So my experience growing up was incredibly different from other Mexicans who grew up bilingually and had relatives in Mexico and all of that. My grandmother, for example, she was born and raised here, went to high school. She was an English speaker. I spoke in English to my grandmother. So there was a way in which that created very different kinds of dynamics. So I used my own experience to sort of try to talk about what it means to be Chicana having that kind of background and calling for us to pay attention to other kinds of differences. Racial differences, differences in political consciousness and identity, language use, et cetera.

I think at the time there was also the beginning of publishing the ongoing critiques about how Chicanismo had been not only male dominated but had sort of a narrow sense of what it meant to be Chicano. Not paying enough attention to differences related to language use or gender or region, those kinds of things. So there were other scholars, Rosa-Linda Fregoso, Angie Chabram, et cetera, who really sort of asked us to think critically about

Chicano nationalism, and by implication looking very carefully for nuanced differences among Chicanas and Chicanos.

02-00:42:36

Holmes:

Well, you followed those two articles up with a book, as you just mentioned that you co-authored with Louise Lamphere, Felipe Gonzales, and Peter Evans. This was in 1993 titled *Sunbelt Working Mothers: Reconciling Family and Factory*. And in many respects, if we look at the maturation of the field of Chicana and Chicano studies during this time, the case studies outside of just California and Texas began to broaden. So you fit right in this, of looking at New Mexico as other scholars were also looking at the Midwest. But you also kind of dovetail as well with the development of the borderlands as a space and lens, which you would also explore a bit in your later work. Talk about the genesis of this book. You've mentioned that it started before your move to Santa Cruz. Discuss how this project took shape.

02-00:43:45

Zavella:

Felipe Gonzales and I were brought on as research assistants for the project and we would conduct bilingual interviews with Hispanos, Mexican Americans who were born and raised in New Mexico. And Louise conducted the interviews with the Anglo families. I was doing transcripts and coding data and all of this. We would have conversations about what was happening and it was a really helpful process for me because at the time I was finishing my dissertation. So we would make all these comparisons. And Louise invited me and Felipe to join with them as co-authors and we sort of divided up the work, who would do what, and at that point Felipe had a post-doc so he was in Albuquerque. So he did a lot of organizing the data so that we could figure out what was going on. And eventually we produced the book that became *Sunbelt Working Mothers* and it was really helpful to think about how even within New Mexico, Albuquerque is really sort of part of northern New Mexico. It's very different than the border region and the southern part of the state. Many of the Hispano interviewees had come from small communities around Albuquerque, so there was a real rural tenor—particularly the kinship activities and ceremonial activities. So that was interesting.

When I lived in New Mexico, at that time there was a real strong anti-California sentiment. At one point some guy on the street yelled at me, "Go back to California," because I had a car with California license plate. But I never fully understood where it came from. But that idea that I'm from California and therefore I was different than the women that I was interviewing, came up again and again. And so I wrote about it as an attempt to both trouble this whole notion that insider anthropologists have a different perspective on what's going on compared to Anglos, which is what Américo Paredes and others had done so brilliantly. But at that point they hadn't paid enough attention to regional differences and to gender. So I wanted to trouble that perspective, and also sort of lay out the differences in being a Chicana anthropologist working with Hispana research subjects. I quoted one woman

at length. She really didn't want to claim an identity but if you looked at her kinship relations and her ceremonial activities, her last name, she was Chicana or Hispana in all shapes and forms but she didn't want to say that. And that was really different than cannery workers who had joined a race and sex discrimination lawsuit and were like, "We were discriminated against as Mexicans." It was really different than students who had claimed a Chicana identity and were really involved in developing a field of Chicana and Chicano studies. So I felt that it was helpful to sort of lay that out. So that's where that work was coming from.

02-00:47:23

Holmes:

Well, in this work, again to set it up for those who have yet to read the book, this is based in the recession of the 1980s, comparing the experiences of Mexican Americans as well as white mothers employed, again at the time when we still had factories in the United States, right, in the apparel and electronic factories based there in Albuquerque. And in this book, you and your fellow authors do a great job of really exploring the competing demands of family and work, but also laying out the support networks and kinship networks that many of these women workers formed. You also look at married mothers versus single mothers and those kind of experiences. It covers so much ground. One of the questions I had particularly in reviewing this work was what were some of the findings that most surprised you in this research, that you really were taken aback, that you weren't expecting?

02-00:48:55

Zavella:

So not only were there factories but they were factories that at that point in time were really trying to implement management strategies that were very much based on having workers help manage the workforce. So a lot of these factories had like circles where all of the workers would comment on each other's work and help keep those who were straying from the norms and keep them in the fold and occasionally making decisions about if somebody got fired. So that was unexpected and hard. This was also a time when they were experimenting with alternative ways of organizing work. So they would do things like you work for twelve hours a day but you don't work five days a week. You work maybe four days and then have three days off. And for some women that was totally wonderful because you got three days off. For other women, particularly single mothers, like that was incredibly challenging and you couldn't select out of it. It was sort of like these are the conditions of your work.

I think the other thing that was really shocking and worrisome was there was a unionization effort at one of the factories and the factory very clearly targeted the labor organizers, fired some of them, took down union informational flyers, made it really clear that workers should not vote in favor of the union, all of which are not allowed by the National Labor Relations Board. And so it was a moment of great intimidation and not too surprising the union lost the vote. And there was even some court cases where women really felt like they

had been fired inappropriately. So I was just shocked to see how brazen the anti-union tactics were. And now that we see unionizing campaigns happening in places like Amazon, I always wonder how much is management covertly trying to sabotage this and how much are they doing it overtly because apparently one of the things we found out was the law firm that the company hired, that was their specialty, was in preventing unionization efforts. They had it down to a science on how to prevent this from happening. So I was shocked by all of that.

02-00:51:30

Holmes:

Well, following this book you, of course, continued as a tenured professor and then later as full professor there in the department of community studies at UC Santa Cruz. And in that new avenues began to open up. As you were saying, the community that was very small in the beginning among Chicana and Chicano faculty and staff began to grow a bit. And I think it was in 1992, there was the development of the Chicano/Latino Research Center. You served as director of that in 1999. Discuss the development of this center, the move to push that finally at Santa Cruz, that we should have a very unique research center like this. And your experience in both working with that center and serving as director.

02-00:52:38

Zavella:

Within the UC system they had these multi-campus research programs and one of them was funded to support the development of research that focused on policy related to Chicanos and Chicanas. This was the basis of Senate Concurrent Resolution 43, where Latino legislators really wanted more research findings on Latino communities to come out of the UC system. And so they funded this research call and all the UC campuses were invited to submit proposals. Norma Klahn and Pedro Castillo submitted a proposal from Santa Cruz, and in the process they asked all of us to contribute a short paragraph about how our research related to this call and help them finish up their proposal. And we got funded. One of the requirements was that there were some matching funds from the campus. They were the founding directors and opened up the research center and the theme was cross-border perspectives linking the Americas. So they very much wanted to put Chicana and Chicano studies in conversation with what was going on in Latin America.

So I was the director who stepped in after they stepped down. And I really enjoyed being director. This was at a moment in the UC system when funds were relatively flush for Chicana and Chicano research. At least they were flush in Santa Cruz terms. Some of the other campuses, like Berkeley and UCLA and Santa Barbara, had much higher matching funds than we did at Santa Cruz. So the overwhelming majority of the budget that we had come from this system-wide enterprise. But we had enough funds that we could do all kinds of things. We would sponsor individual faculty research projects. We funded research clusters where faculty and graduate students would get

together around a theme. We sponsored conferences and workshops. We really were interested in the conversation that was happening at the time, in part funded by the Ford Foundation's Crossing Borders initiative that was asking scholars to rethink the borders between disciplines. In other words, they were looking for interdisciplinary collaboration. But also to rethink borders around area studies and so Latin American studies in particular was one in which they were interested in how do we rethink Latin American studies. And so here you had this funding coming that was interested in Chicana and Chicano research and policy research in particular and this crossing borders initiative that was looking for a broader scope.

What we did at Santa Cruz very much fit those two calls but also was really organic to what we were doing, since from the beginning when Pedro Castillo put together the list of Chicana and Chicano courses, he would add the Latin American studies courses, as well. People could take classes on Mexico or wherever. And so the interdisciplinary collaboration and the bringing together of Chicana and Chicano studies and Latin American studies was happening already in the course listings. It began to be focused in the Chicano/Latino Research Center and particularly with this theorizing. Then over time we applied for grants from other places to sort of broaden our understanding of what does it mean to do cross-border research in the Americas and how does that shape how we think about new courses and the possibility of a program in Latin American and Latino studies.

02-00:56:48

We had a Chicano dean, Eugene Garcia, and he was very supportive. He saw what was happening at the research center as informing the movement toward developing a program and he said, "This is a really innovative way of conceptualizing this and I want to support you," and so he eventually enabled the formation of the Latin American and Latino studies department.

02-00:57:14

Holmes:

Well, I want to get to the story of the department here in a minute. But before we get there, maybe discuss a little bit of the Center's activities and its interaction both with the community on-campus and off and were there any obstacles in the operation of the Center? Academic campuses, organic communities as they are, sometimes there's turf wars. Some of the early movements to create a Chicana and Chicano studies department, for instance, sparked turf wars with the Spanish departments depending on the campuses. Did you guys experience any of those kind of obstacles? And, again, what were some of the interactions with different programs on campus?

02-00:58:05

Zavella:

So the obstacle, I'll go first, the main one was funding. We had funding from deans of social sciences and humanities, and at a pretty minimal level. And at least in the social sciences, he committed funding for a long period of time. In the humanities it was a much shorter period of time and eventually they withdrew it. So there was incredible pressure to write grants to external

sources, which we did, and in particular we wrote one to the Rockefeller Foundation that would have given us like a five-year project and visiting post-docs and all of that and we got excellent marks on our proposal but they said the Santa Cruz campus needs to provide more matching funds. I spoke with the vice chancellor of research and he just wasn't willing to do that. So there was a way in which we were sort of starved as a research center despite multiple efforts to get external funding. We had some really generous donors. But to build a world class research center you need a buy-in from the university to begin with and that never happened.

02-00:59:20

The Center was magnificent. I mean it was so incredibly interdisciplinary and it really became sort of like a social and intellectual center. So we had colloquia all year long and people would come to see the talks, unlike other campuses where the norm is that nobody comes to colloquia. At Santa Cruz everybody came and they came over and over again because not only did you learn about new developments in the field, but you got to see people who were scattered all over these colleges, and some people are commuting from the Bay Area. So you get to see your colleagues and check-in and socialize and, of course, there are always refreshments and then you take the speaker out to dinner afterwards so a small group would get to go. It was just a lovely set of interactions.

And then the research clusters were phenomenal. So one that I remember, actually two, really, great research clusters. One on Chicana feminisms, very much influenced by Aida Hurtado's class on Chicana feminisms. We brought in, I don't know, nine, ten guest speakers and recorded them all and we had these wonderful conversations about the developing field of Chicana studies and in the end decided to invite some of them as well as ourselves to contribute to an edited volume, *Chicana Feminisms: A Critical Reader*. And some of the participants initially were graduate students who eventually had to drop off because of their own work. But it was just a wonderful interdisciplinary conversation and I feel like many of us learned a lot.

We also had a cluster on transnational popular cultures and that was sort of graduate student heavy. We would present our work to one another. We would go to conferences together. We went to a conference, a NACCS conference in Guadalajara that was so much fun. And in addition to reading about and writing about transnational popular culture we would go to concerts and presentations. So it was fun. And all of the students from that cluster finished their dissertations and produced really original work. It was sort of like with a very small amount of resources you could get a lot of work done and it could be really fun.

02-01:01:42

Holmes:

That sounds wonderful. Talk a little bit about your experience as director. Being director is a full plate. You're not only trying to run a research center,

but you still have your own research and teaching responsibilities. Talk a little bit about your experience of balancing all of that and what were some of your goals as director that you wanted to try to pursue for the Center?

02-01:02:17

Zavella:

Well, one goal was to increase funding, which I definitely worked on that. To keep the intellectual vibrancy going and that was definitely something that happened. I felt the strain. It was rough. The only compensation was a course relief to run the Center. People talk now about when I was director as sort of the golden days in part because things have changed so much at Santa Cruz. The research center now is really struggling to keep the doors open. So I had a full-time staff person which the current director does not and she was excellent. Evelyn Parada, and she really was very helpful in getting things organized. But I felt the strain.

One of the things that, with the help of the advisory board, we decided to do was to organize what we called the undergraduate research apprenticeship program, URAP. And the purpose was to have faculty invite a promising undergraduate student to serve as a paid research assistant so that we would get help on our research and they would learn skills like coding surveys, transcribing interviews, doing library research, and see firsthand how we did our research. In exchange you would have regular mentoring sessions, including giving them feedback on their own developing work. The students would also be trained separately on different issues. How to go to a conference, how to present, writing exercises, things like that. So we ran the URAP program the entire time I was director and it continued a few years after that. And it turned into a really wonderful bonding experience by the students and by the graduate student who was running the URAP program. It was so sweet to see. At the end of the year students would present their research projects and they got a lot done. It was an incredibly demystifying process for them to see how faculty worked. And, of course, we were very interdisciplinary so that was also eye-opening for them, as well, to hear from their fellow students how social scientists were compared to people in the humanities.

02-01:04:30

Holmes:

Yeah. Those experiences, particularly for students are really eye-opening, and invaluable. And I think you can see how faculty themselves benefit from that. Well, at the same time in 2001, I believe, you moved from the Community Studies Department to the newly formed Latin American and Latino Studies Department. And this was created in 1994. Before we get to maybe this discussion of the department's development and your work within that, maybe discuss your own decision to move from community studies, where you've been since 1983, to a new department on campus.

02-01:05:30

Zavella:

So it was a very easy decision. When it came time for me to go up for a promotion to full professor the faculty member who had been chair and

opposed my appointment opposed my promotion to full. Since there were only two full professors, and the other professor didn't oppose it, they had to convene a special personnel committee of faculty from outside the department to evaluate my case. And ironically the outside committee not only supported my promotion to full professor, but they argued that I had been appointed at too low a step when I was initially appointed and that therefore I had been underpaid for all those years. So that was incredibly frustrating to see that happening. And increasingly there was open conflict and snide comments in department meetings that were really unnecessary.

At the same time this is going on, the formation of Latin American/Latino studies was happening. The research center had already happened. So I was going to talks and faculty meetings and meeting with graduate students and really enjoying it. I really felt like this is why I wanted to become a professor. This is what I trained to do. So there was really no question. When they decided to move from a program to a department, you needed to have a certain number of ladder faculty and so they put out a call. Who wants to transfer your FTE? And I was like sign me up immediately. There were snide remarks from community studies. Some of the senior faculty were like, "Why are you leaving? We don't get to leave!" By then conflict in the department was becoming pretty open and I just felt like, "I wish you the best. This is the best thing for me and I'm out of here." I stopped going to community studies faculty meetings and just sort of disappeared.

02-01:07:33

Holmes:

Maybe give us a little bit of the experience of forming a new department. It's not always the easiest thing to go from program to department. There's usually a lot of debates on campus or within even the university administration about this. A lot of legwork needs to be done. Maybe discuss, from your observations, that experience of the formation of the Latin American and Latino studies department. It's really one of the few departments, particularly at this time when it was formed, that bridged those two fields and brought it together, similar to the research center.

02-01:08:17

Zavella:

Right. So the formation of the department was relatively seamless actually. It sort of solidified out of a program that had been running very successfully. The program hired two senior faculty, Manuel Pastor, who became the first chair and Jonathan Fox. And so they wrote the actual proposal and shepherded it through and then we hired Gabriela Arredondo, who at that time was ABD when we hired her but we really liked her work and wanted her to come in. When they put the invitation out, a few of us transferred over and so we had enough faculty. It was very interdisciplinary. We were careful to balance those who worked in Latin America, like Wally Goldfrank, his work was in Chile, and those who worked in Chicana and Chicano, Latina and Latino studies, which, of course, I was one of them. Gabriela was one of them. So it worked out. And the dean, Eugene Garcia, was very supportive.

At that point there wasn't a lot of opposition that I remember to the formation of the department. Santa Cruz had gone through a process of requiring an ethnic diversity requirement. I remember vividly Michael Omi was a doctoral student at the time. He spoke at a faculty senate meeting maybe in my first year in which he made the case why this should be a requirement at UC Santa Cruz and it was passed. So I think LALS was seen as one of the departments that could offer plenty of courses that would satisfy this E requirement. There were others, of course. But the university went through this whole process where you had to designate all your courses and which requirements it fulfilled. I think that was part of what made LALS look shiny at that moment.

[I think it is important to point out that the relatively smooth transition to integrating interdisciplinary faculty coming from social sciences, humanities, Chicana/o and Latin American studies was particular to Santa Cruz. We had done the conceptual work of thinking through crossing borders and figured out what we had in common: an appreciation of interdisciplinary approaches, an understanding that globalization and transnationalism disrupts national borders so the Chicana/o community increasingly included more migrants from throughout the Americas. We were progressive faculty who supported efforts to challenge power relations in this hemisphere. And we had a structure where faculty in other departments like Literature or Art could become Participating Faculty and we would cross-list their courses and invite them to department events. We had carefully created a collaborate space that did not threaten other departments.]

02-01:10:21

Holmes:

In 2013, LALS also launched a PhD program. You were a part of putting that together, as were the other faculty of the department. Maybe discuss the decision first to establish the PhD, which is not easy, but also the experience of putting that together with curriculum.

02-01:11:00

Zavella:

Yeah. So that whole process of writing the proposal and shepherding it through the statewide approval process—I was chair at the time and I was the lead author of the proposal. But it sort of started before I became chair. Rosa-Linda Fregoso had been chair and she had a very frank conversation with the dean and she made it clear to him that we didn't want to be an undergraduate department. We wanted to work with graduate students. We all had been working with graduate students from other departments and enjoyed it tremendously. And at that point the field of Chicana/Latina/Latino studies was really sort of developing across the nation and so you could really make the case that this was a formation that made sense for Santa Cruz.

So in writing the proposal not only did we invite participation by all the faculty in the research center, most of whom were participating in the program, and we would cross-list their courses and occasionally they would teach for us, but also we invited them to meetings to brainstorm different

aspects of the doctoral program. The program has four themes and each of those themes had a working group and we would write drafts and they would send them to me and I would sort of put it all into a proposal. And then we had the dean's support. So at that point he began to see that not only was this a developing field but we could really put Santa Cruz on the map by having the first PhD program in Latin American and Latino studies. And then that happened to coincide with a system-wide effort to really grow doctoral programs, particularly at the smaller campuses like Santa Cruz. So there were promises of lots of resources to support hiring faculty and supporting graduate students that, even when we pressed, they said, "Yes, absolutely. There will be resources." Well, of course, that was better said than done. But at the time we submitted and got approval, that's what it looked like.

We were very excited about this program. We designed our flyer and very much retained the cross-border perspectives linking the Americas, the transnational approach, which at the time was unusual for programs in Chicana and Chicano studies or Latina/Latino studies. And we argued that we were at the forefront in part because we had these many years of experience at the research center where we hashed out different issues, like what does race mean in the United States compared to what it means in Chile or in Bolivia or other places. So we felt like intellectually we were on strong ground to propose it and it was approved and we had our first cohorts come in. And this year students from that first cohort are writing their dissertations. I'm working with two of them. And hopefully they'll finish up in the very near future.

02-01:14:20

Holmes:

Oh, that's wonderful. Sometimes there's, again, not really turf wars but apprehensions about another PhD program on campus. What was the reception of the program across the university? Was it well received and not much pushback?

02-01:14:43

Zavella:

Part of the process for launching a doctoral program is you have to share the proposal with any department in which there might be a potential conflict. So for us that was anthropology and literature and a bunch of departments. All the chairs of those departments had to write a letter stating any objections or endorsing the program. We got unanimous endorsement. And I think, even though it was a pain, it was actually a helpful process because I would go to all these chair meetings and a lot of people really didn't know: what is Latin American and Latino studies? And so reading the proposal they not only understood what it was but actually how interesting and exciting it was. So that was a good process.

There were definitely tensions around faculty appointments. As time went on—the UC has perennial budget crises—but the one that happened when I was chair, there were a lot of snippy comments in chair meetings about the dean's priority for future hires. And so LALS, we had our doctoral program

approved, that meant we were one of the departments that received priority and we got to do some searches. Some other departments were livid. They felt like we need someone in x-specialization and we've needed it for years and we should be able to hire. So there were some tense moments there.

The other tension was campus-wide, there are some really nice graduate fellowships, the Cota-Robles, and it provides five years of support and it's based on merit. It's a very competitive process. And some of our students were able to get a Cota-Robles Fellowship, which means then the department has more resources to fund other students that you're admitting. But there were just never enough fellowships for all the graduate students on campus. So if our student got one somebody else didn't get one and they were unhappy about that, too. So definitely tension around that. Graduate student funding needs to be increased dramatically.

02-01:17:04

And then over time, after we started admitting our students, it turns out there wasn't plenty of resources for faculty hires or for graduate student support. So the department is basically the same size that it has been for years. Ten faculty, which is small if you've got a doctoral program. And graduate students get support but they don't get generous support by any means and so one of the things that happen is we lose students who want to come to Santa Cruz but they get better offers elsewhere and so they go someplace else. So I'm really disappointed about that. Once the university decided to support the doctoral program, then they should truly support it.

02-01:17:50

Holmes:

Yeah. Well, especially within the public university systems, in California and other states, it's always a struggle for good funds.

02-01:18:05

Zavella:

Absolutely.

02-01:18:06

Holmes:

Well, speaking of graduate students, I wanted to talk a little bit about mentoring the second and third generations of Chicana and Chicano scholars who had the privilege to work with you. Talk about your experience here and even how it's impacted you with the new directions of scholarship.

02-01:18:28

Zavella:

So I always say that I want to be the mentor I never had and so when I sign on with a student I am committed to reading their work carefully and giving them honest feedback, which includes pointing out where something just is not working. It needs to be supported, it needs to be stronger. Hopefully diplomatically and with some compassion about how hard it is to hear that. But I really enjoy mentoring. In fact, now that I'm retired, that's one of the things I miss. I used to have lovely undergraduate and graduate students. I still have some graduate students and I very much enjoy working with them. But

it's been interesting to see students go on and become professors in their own right. One of my first graduate students just got promoted to full professor and she's got another book in press and her work is amazing. Several graduate students, Maylei Blackwell, Deborah Vargas, Sarita Gaytan, just a whole cohort of people who have done really excellent work and it's been such a pleasure working with them. And then undergraduate students. So I just got contacted by a student who I worked with maybe twelve years ago who's going to go to graduate school, did an excellent thesis and she got accepted to her school of choice.

So mentoring is a lot of work. It also ideally should be dedicated work. I've heard some real horror stories about mentors who don't treat students right and you really need to put in the effort and try to be supportive so that students can take your critiques and hopefully do something even stronger with it. And mentoring happens in lots of venues. So it's not just my students from Santa Cruz but post-docs from other universities. I'm part of the Association of Latina and Latino Anthropologists that are part of the American Anthropological Association and they have a mentoring program where they pair up doctoral students with faculty. So I've been working with Andrea Bolivar for years, reading her work. She finished her dissertation. She's an assistant professor at the University of Michigan. I've given her feedback on her book in progress. And one of the nice things about that kind of intensive work is you become friends with your former students and your former post-docs and so you share with them all the complaining about the challenges of being in academia but also some of the good things. One of the things, this was something I learned from Aida Hurtado—we're trained really well to critique things and point out their shortcomings. Not so much in pointing out the contributions and what's really superb about some work. So she and I have sort of informally agreed that we're going to try to be positive. When someone's doing really great work, particularly if they're an assistant professor or a graduate student, really highlight that so that people will develop some confidence and be able to move forward. I want to say this is one of the things I learned from Louise Lamphere. When I applied to jobs and to the Stanford post-doc, she wrote letters of recommendation and she shared her letter with me. Up to that point I had never seen my letters of recommendation and I was blown away by hers. It was a beautiful letter. Very much pointed out my strengths in a way that no one had ever told me and it changed my life and so I try to do that with my graduate students. When they're finishing up and they're going on the job market or applying for post-docs, I share my letter so that they get a sense of this is your public reputation and you should own it.

02-01:22:34

Holmes:

That's very nice. Well, I want to turn again to your scholarship and discuss a few more of your works, particularly works that you've produced now since—well, I guess we say in the new millennium, in the twenty-first century. And the first was published in 2001, *Telling to Live: Latina Feminist Testimonios*. You co-authored this with a Latina Feminist Group. Tell us a little bit about

this group, as well as the work that you produced here and what its aim and contributions were.

02-01:23:16

Zavella:

So this is one of my favorite projects. The Latina Feminist Group is composed of eighteen Latinas of quite diverse national, ethnic, racial gender identities, you name it, and schools that we went to. At the time some were graduate students and some were senior faculty. Twenty years later everyone has completed their dissertations, although not everyone works in higher education. And the project began as a comparative research study of different Latino groups, Puerto Ricans and Mexicans and Dominicans and Cubans, et cetera. But the initial meeting that I was not at—sort of part of the write-up of the book and part of the story of this group—that initial meeting did not go well and there were all kinds of tension around how to approach this. People's feelings got hurt. So in the second or the third iteration of the group, they very consciously reached out and invited people, and that's when I got invited.

In our early discussions we realized that before we could even move forward to try to figure out what we were going to do, we needed to introduce ourselves fully and really tell something of our life experience. And someone said, "That sounds like testimonios," the life stories that are famously known—like one by Rigoberta Menchú. She told her life story for the purpose of informing the world of what was going on in terms of genocide and brutality. So someone said, "Well, let's do testimonios with one another. And on the spot we designed a process where we would ask the same questions. We'd break up into small groups, diverse by ethnic, national heritage, and we would answer the same questions. It was amazing not only because we had different experiences—some came from Cuba, one was born in Puerto Rico—but there were amazing parallels in our experiences. Virtually all of us were scholarship girls, for example. Loved reading and were recognized early on and were supported for that. And we also had some sessions of testimonios that were very painful around our relations with family members and experiences in higher education. So I shared the story of my experience in the community studies department and unfortunately so many other women had similar kinds of very painful experiences. Sexual harassment, sexual assault, name calling, devaluation of their work, et cetera.

02-01:26:08

So we tried to figure out what are we going to do with these stories and we decided we would put together a book that was based on us taking our oral histories, our testimonios, and turning them into a written narrative. For most of us, what we wrote was very close to what we spoke. But some of the stories we decided would be anonymous. *Latina Anónima*. And the point was that women still had jobs in some of these departments where they were treated badly, didn't want to jeopardize their careers. And people had familial experiences that were also very painful to disclose publicly.

And so we produced *Telling to Live*. It was organized into four sections. The first emphasized the process of how we became scholars—virtually all of us were first generation working class, had to really struggle to make it through what we call "Genealogies of Empowerment." Another section was "Alchemies of Erasure" that looked at challenging experiences we had in our lives but particularly in higher education. "The Body Remembers," looks at the ways in which some of these traumas that we experienced get somatized and we can experience them in the forms of chronic illnesses or conditions. And then we really wanted to also balance the painful things with a section on celebration. So what keeps us coming back? What do we enjoy? Why are we in academia as opposed to any other place and where do we find joy and celebration?

02-01:28:51

So those are the four sections. And the book has been remarkable. I taught it in my Latino families class for many years and students loved the stories, particularly because they were demystifying the process of becoming an academic but also so many of them had similar kinds of experiences. One of our assertions was that using experience is a basis for theorizing Latinas identities and different kinds of activities, *Latinidades*, different kinds of cultural expressions. And that whole idea of using storytelling as a method was something that has really been picked up within the field of Chicana/Latino studies and you can see it in lots of publications but also in conferences.

So we were really pleased with the reception. It continues to be taught in courses, continues to sell. So that's incredibly gratifying. We were able to do a number of book launches, including one in Puerto Rico and that was amazing. We had a fifteen-year celebration at the University of Notre Dame and then this year somebody reminded us it's the twenty-year anniversary and so we literally have started meeting by Zoom to try to figure out what our twenty-year celebration is going to look like. And it's so wonderful to reconnect with these women. Incredibly smart and creative and sweet, nurturing. It's been an incredible pleasure.

02-01:30:30

Holmes:

Oh, that's wonderful. I know when I was thinking about this project, this book and others were recommended. It's just a great resource of—as you were saying, demystifying the academic process but also kind of a *testimonio* of scholars in the field that in a sense offers their history behind not just the work they've produced but also their experience. As I've always said, oral history matched with intellectual history, it's the thing that you won't find in book reviews or literature reviews. It's kind of that hidden transcript, if you will.

02-01:31:10

Zavella:

Yeah, yeah. Totally.

02-01:31:12

Holmes:

I wanted to then move to an article you published a few years later, "Sexuality and Risk: Gender Discourses about Virginity and Disease Among Young Women of Mexican Origin" and this is something you co-authored with Xóchitl Castañeda. And this was published in *Latino Studies*. Discuss the genesis of this article. I've seen this cited so many times and it's been republished a number of times, as well. Discuss the genesis of this article and some of the findings and challenges that you wanted to discuss.

02-01:31:52

Zavella:

So I happened to serve on a review committee that Xóchitl Castañeda had submitted a proposal to and I was just taken with her work. And when we met at a conference we just struck up a friendship. It turned out she's an anthropologist who was trained in Mexico and then moved here after becoming a professor. And it turned out we had very similar issues. At that point I had begun to do research on Chicana/Latina sexuality. The article that I published in *Chicana Feminisms* very much explored some of those issues and took a transnational approach. And so I wanted to continue that work and Xóchitl, she was in public health. She wanted to apply for funding that would enable us to look at the risks that women face at that point for HIV and so we wrote a proposal and we got funding and we were able to do this research project. It was based on doing focus groups but also interviews with Mexican migrant women.

02-01:33:03

The focus groups were fascinating, in part because we said this is confidential, you're not supposed to share the information, we won't use your names, it became sort of something of a safe place and women very openly talked about that they were at risk for HIV if their partners had migrated before them and had had their own sexual encounters. One of the devices we did for those focus groups is we showed a film, *La Vida Sigue*, that was based on women's potential risk for HIV when they partnered with men who had migrated and returned to Mexico. So we asked the women to talk about this film and then talk about what does it mean in terms of your own lives and they were well aware of the risks. They had seen enough on television and heard enough stories. But also, the cultural logic around you don't ask your husband to wear a condom because that's going to raise all kinds of questions. That was very prevalent, as well. And so we very much then came to an understanding of the way in which, to do outreach to women around sexually transmitted infections, you couldn't just assume that putting together public health campaigns and translating them into Spanish was going to be what was appropriate. Like you had to have an entirely different approach that really paid attention to women's daily lives and what they were aware of and what they were trying to do to negotiate the kinds of risks that they were facing.

02-01:34:43

Holmes:

You've already discussed this a bit, but a few years before that, in 2003, you're part of an anthology *Chicana Feminisms: A Critical Reader*. You worked with

a number of amazing Chicana scholars on this. Discuss the genesis of this collection, the idea of bringing this together and how the project arose.

02-01:35:21

Zavella:

So, as I mentioned, this began as a research cluster through the Chicano/Latina Research Center and the speaker series that happened. But as the research cluster decided to put together the book we would meet and read things that were just out in the field and critique them. We very much were aware that we were at the intersection of feminist studies and Chicana and Chicano studies and we were trying to understand what does it mean to do Chicana feminist scholarship that pays attention to the troubles in those respective fields, that draws from them and finds them helpful, but also take a different perspective. And so we described to use the metaphor of a *glorieta* or a roundabout, which suggests that it's not just these two fields but there are all kinds of other fields that we're in conversation with and all kinds of other issues in our communities that are brought to bear when we talk about Chicanas' lives. And so we had this lovely interdisciplinary group of faculty, humanities, social sciences, psychology, anthropology, history, literature, bilingual, and we all produced pieces that were really interesting. Then we got detailed commentary by the co-authors, and in the end, I think that piece just really benefited from that kind of attention. We then invited key interlocutors who wrote responses to the essays and are included in the books and these illustrated how interdisciplinary dialogues are compelling. That's one of my publications that I feel really good about. I feel like I was trying to make an intervention and I think I did. As any collaborative process, sometimes there are tensions and we had to work through them. But there were also some really lovely closeness that came out of that. Some of us actually went on vacation together. The artists, the cover work completely captured what we were trying to do. So that was a really nice project.

02-01:37:32

Holmes:

Well, a few years later you published another co-edited anthology with Denise Segura, *Women and Migration in the US Mexican Borderlands: A Reader*, in 2007. Discuss the development of this project and what you and Denise were trying to achieve with this collection.

02-01:37:58

Zavella:

So this project received funding from UC MEXUS and at the time they were seeding projects that would bring together scholars from Mexico and from the United States and there hadn't been a project on women. So we reached out to some people that we knew in Mexico and we wrote this proposal and got funding and invited in some scholars from Mexico who were working on women in Mexico or Mexican women in the United States to come and present their work. The women who were interested in women's issues at UC Santa Cruz were invited to present their work at this two-day conference, as well. We had some graduate students so they got to sit in and that was really a great experience for them. We had this very productive conversation. And I should point out we invited a couple of men because at that point Leo Chavez

and Jonathan Inda were also working on women's issues. So we really wanted to have a very full conversation and we had a very productive meeting. We began to think about we should put this together in an anthology. And the funding had been for another year of a meeting so one of the organizers invited us to go to Lake Chapala in Mexico, to a research institute there, and have a second conference where we would present our research and scholars from Mexico would present theirs.

02-01:39:28

The second one had a lot of tension. I don't fully understand but from what I gathered there were their own set of issues around who was seen as one of the main scholars in the field of women's studies in Mexico and so she was invited to give the keynote talk. She was someone who I didn't find particularly illuminating and some of my Chicana colleagues didn't either. And then the conversation was really stilted and to me felt uninformed. So at one point, for example, somebody said, "There's really no research on poverty in the United States," and I knew that wasn't true because there's plenty of research on poverty in the United States. Somebody else said in the course of talking about her work on Mexican immigrant women in Southern California, there are no publications on Mexican women in the United States and all of the Chicanas in the room, we looked at each other like, "What do you mean? We've all published work on Mexican women in the United States." So it just became clear that in Mexico they were aware of the scholarship produced by Mexican scholars but not the scholarship produced by Chicanas in the United States.

02-01:40:52

So Denise Segura and I decided to put together this anthology and to include work from scholars in Mexico that had been really important. Some of those pieces were written in Spanish so we had to have them translated and then we had to go over the translation and then we had to send it to them so they could go over the translation. In the end we actually ended up having one fewer than we had planned because one of the contributors got really sick and she just couldn't participate. And so the introduction was really an effort to place the experience of Mexican women in transnational context. You can't really talk about Mexican women, even women of multiple generations like me, without talking about migration from Mexico and what it means to be racialized as Mexican in the United States. And by the same token, what's going on in Mexico around the Maquilas, for example, very much is shaped by what is happening in relation to labor needs in the United States. So this was a continuation of the focus on transnationalism that we had developed in putting together the Chicano/Latino Research Center and the Latin American and Latino Studies Department but it was very much a focus on women and migration. I think the book was helpful. I've heard appreciative comments about the book.

02-01:42:20

Holmes:

Well, your next work, which came out in 2011, *I'm Neither Here nor There: Mexican Quotidian Struggles with Migration and Poverty*. This is based off of long-term ethnographic research that you conducted, exploring the experience of poor and working-class Mexican Americans and migrants in California's Central Coast. And in many respects, it's kind of almost coming back full circle to where your first work started in some ways, of looking at, of course, the central part of California, the coastal areas and the experience of those of Mexican heritage. Discuss how this project developed and your experience in putting this together, also your long-term research.

02-01:43:15

Zavella:

So I think one of the motivations was after spending some time in Santa Cruz it became clear that the Latinization of Santa Cruz county was happening rapidly. There's a neighborhood, Beach Flats, near the boardwalk where a lot of Mexican immigrants live. But suddenly there seemed to be Mexicans everywhere, particularly in South County and Watsonville. And so I was interested in that process. Then right after I finished my research in the canneries in the Santa Clara Valley, many of them closed down and they moved to places like Watsonville. In the early eighties Watsonville was the frozen food capital of the world, so that was interesting to me. And then not too long afterwards there was a big strike, 1985 to '86, over proposed wage cuts which eventually happened, led by Mexican women. And then the canneries started closing down. When they had to pay higher salaries, higher wages, they started closing down and relocating to Mexico. So I was very interested in the restructuring of the economy, the way in which that meant movement toward production of fresh produce—for strawberries, for example, or other fruits and vegetables—and how that served as a magnet for workers. You began to have huge numbers of immigrants coming to Santa Cruz county and that migrant stream began to shift. So at the beginning there were hardly any indigenous migrants. By the end of my research there was a real critical mass of indigenous migrants in Santa Cruz county.

02-01:44:58

So I wanted to look at those dynamics but also the dynamics of mixed status families and the way in which some families are US citizens, some are legal permanent residents, some are undocumented. What does that mean in terms of life opportunities, their experiences, their identities and how does migration shape a region? In Santa Cruz, going from being overwhelmingly white to now a sizable number of Latinx migrants. What does that mean? So I conducted this research at the same time that I was doing other publications and teaching and being chair and directing the research center. So part of it taking so long was I had a day job that was incredibly demanding. But it was also so interesting because to drive from my neighborhood to Watsonville, for example, it was sometimes like going to Mexico. Some of the mini barrios in South County had unpaved streets and brightly painted homes and everyone speaking Spanish and you could go to the little store and buy all the Mexican products you want. It felt very familiar compared to the research I had done in

Mexico. And also the plaza, the central park where they would have concerts and stuff. It became a place where people would hang out and you had more Spanish language businesses. So I was very interested in that whole process.

The process of conducting the interviews was much more challenging than I had expected, in part because some of the people I interviewed were displaced cannery workers devastated by losing what were good jobs, good union jobs to scrounging what they could. And part of it was particular circumstances, like a single mother whose partner was deported or someone whose children couldn't get in to a school for special needs. So those kinds of things. It took me a while to realize that conducting interviews with very vulnerable subjects, I mean not only do you have to take extraordinary care not to disclose information if they're undocumented, for example, or working under the table or things like that, but also to be sensitive to the kinds of things that would be helpful to them apart from speaking in an interview. So I started coming with brochures, for example, telling people about food banks and things like that. But also coming to understand that speaking with a stranger about things that are challenging can actually feel really good. It can be very therapeutic, even if people are crying and very upset. That in the umbrella of confidentiality, you can sort of spill and if you trust that that person is not going to hurt you, then you begin to get a little bit of perspective on your life. So that was actually really a helpful lesson, something that I've kept in mind since then and talked to my students about, as well.

02-01:48:32

Holmes:

That's a very good point. I wanted to ask, in this work you use the theory peripheral vision to describe the sense of displacement and instability within this population and its vulnerability within this transformation. Maybe discuss how this term arose in your thinking and how you began to use it in your work.

02-01:48:57

Zavella:

So I had done a few research projects in west-central Mexico looking at where the canneries went to and how that changed the local political economy there. While doing that research, I remember this very vividly, at one point there was a little Saints Day celebration in one of the villages. It was at night and there was music and dancing and I was hanging out with one of the women, one of the activists. And there was a comet, "Hale-Bopp," and she said, "Oh, I wonder what this looks like from your house in California." I was like, "Oh, yeah. That's interesting." And then for some reason that trip, like lots of people began to point out things they knew about California. So there was a famous instance where there was some huge storm and a house crashed and fell into the sea and so people would ask me, "Is your house near there? Are you in trouble with your house?" So I begin to realize that in Mexico people hear the news. They have relatives. They know all the things that are going on. And by the same token, we had heard something like that in the United States, as I had done all these interviews. Like people were in contact with

their relatives. They listened to Spanish language radio and television and the news. They were very aware, particularly of political kinds of changes. So this whole idea that you're paying attention to what's going on in multiple places sort of came in to being and I talk about how it's very much a sense of being displaced and being marginalized. So being Mexican, being marginalized in relation to the United States and particularly NAFTA, the way in which that placed Mexico in a vulnerable position. But also within the United States. So if you're an undocumented Mexican farmworker who doesn't speak English, there are all kinds of challenges that you face in your daily life.

02-01:50:51

But I also wanted to talk about peripheral vision in terms of sort of the positive kinds of connections and the sense of identity and links that people have in relation to cross-border. So the way in which people would say, "Well, yeah, I've lived here thirty years but I'm still very Mexican and I'm going to go back to Mexico when I retire." Or "I'm still involved in home town associations or Mexican dance class." "As a young woman, I worry about what will my relatives in Mexico think?" Well, they're in rural Mexico. They're not even going to know. But she's thinking about what it means to be a Mexican woman in relation to what's going on in the United States.

Then even US born Mexican Americans who didn't have strong ties to Mexico often phrased their identity in relation to what people think about Mexico, all the stereotypes and how they're trying to not be those stereotypes. So peripheral vision then was a concept that was trying to capture all these multi-layered kinds of imaginary but also real material connections that people have.

02-01:52:00

Holmes:

Oh, that's great. I want to conclude our discussion on your scholarship with your most recent work that was just published last year in 2020, *The Movement for Reproductive Justice: Empowering Women of Color through Social Activism*. This was also based on long-term ethnographic research. Discuss the genesis of this book. How did this project arise and what was your experience and methodology in this work?

02-01:52:43

Zavella:

I always say the movement for reproductive justice found me. So I was literally finishing up my previous book. I was feeling kind of down because immigration politics were so horrible and I got an email inviting me to a presentation on reproductive justice by young women and young men in Fresno, which, of course, there are lots of farmworkers in the Fresno region. And so these young people were probably the children of immigrants or immigrants themselves, low income. So I was just really taken by the whole idea of reproductive justice. Unfortunately I dumped that email but the idea stayed in the back of my head and eventually I started doing some research.

At the time there wasn't a lot of scholarship on the movement and so I designed a project that really was trying to look at how do women of color

negotiate collaboration and the politicized identity of women of color, while at the same time, of the over thirty reproductive justice organizations in the United States, many of them are racially specific. So Black Women for Wellness, California Latinas for Reproductive Justice, Tewa Women United, et cetera. So how do they negotiate that tension around organizing in a racially ethnically specific manner but also having this public women of color political discourse?

So I did the research. I did mainly interviews, also focus groups and participant observation. I went to a lot of events, lot of conferences. And towards the end of the research they started putting out webinars, which at the time it wasn't that common to do internet-based research. So I sort of felt like is this really participant observation or not? Well, it's great information. I'm learning a lot. So I'm taking good notes. Then I began to put together the book and I got invited to a research cluster at UC Berkeley, at the law school that was focusing on reproductive justice, run by Zakiya Luna and Kristin Luker. And so I joined the group. I was very excited to join the group. It was very interdisciplinary. People from all different fields, including doulas and social workers, graduate students. We were doing readings and talking about them but also sharing our own work. By the last meeting some of us shared our writings. So the first piece I ever wrote from the movement I shared with them.

02-01:55:25

Putting together the book was pretty challenging. I always say doing this research, in my mind I have this image of those circus acts where people are balancing plates on poles and they're like running back and forth. That's how it felt. I mean almost every day I would get an email about some event, some perspective on something. I was going to all of these conferences. I had all of these interviews and focus groups set up. So it was really intense research at the same time that I had my day job as a professor and at one point for a year I was chair of the department again. So it was pretty crazy. And going to places like Denver and Albuquerque and Portland and South Texas and New York, Washington, DC. Like big trips. It was very intense.

After a while I begin to see there's some real things here and I really wanted to begin to address them. And the book that I put together tries to illustrate how this social movement very explicitly uses the framework of intersectionality, which pays attention to differences among women of color and within social categories. It also very explicitly uses the framework of human rights, arguing that low income women of color have the human right to healthcare but also healthcare with dignity and quality healthcare and healthcare that's culturally sensitive. And this movement goes further and argues that low income women of color have the human right to wellness, to live in conditions in which they have access to clean air and clean water and quality food and paved roads and things like that. So I try to focus in on sort of the genesis of the movement.

One area of work that they do is what they call culture shift work, where they critique stereotypes and pejorative representations of women of color and argue the opposite and pay attention to the strength and resiliency and creativity of communities of color, and they do that through campaigns. I try to focus in on the policy advocacy work that this movement does both at the municipal, state, national and international level and then try to look at the grassroots organizing that happens and the way in which there's a process of consciousness raising and political socialization of often poor undocumented women who don't speak English who, over a period of months and even years, come to embrace intersectionality and human rights and embrace the discourse of we are powerful women. So part of this culture shift that this movement is doing, is to argue that we're powerful and we need to learn how to use our power and to mobilize our power.

02-01:58:35

So the analytic framework is *poder* or power and it builds on the early feminist anthropological scholarship on women and the politics of empowerment and tries to look at the process of consciousness raising and training of women of color. It also talks about how women of color aren't just readily available to be trained to be good soldiers in the movement. In fact, they're quite willing to push back and question and bring in their own perspective and sometimes that means things like we're going to pray before a meeting, or sometimes it means we're going to act totally silly or whatever. So this is sort of a civic engagement form of power. It's a way of enabling people who are often not heard in political debates, often aren't paid attention to, often suffer years, decades of poor conditions, how they come to see themselves as a political force and are willing to go public with that and to give their life stories, to lobby to Congress, to write up pieces, to participate in films, to engage in research, to go to Geneva and testify at the United Nations. The way in which this movement has been active for some of them as long as thirty years. And surprisingly, we hear little about them. One of the things that happens is often the mainstream reproductive rights organizations get credit for some of the work that reproductive justice organizations have been involved with. So my book was also an effort to point out these women have been there, they've been doing impressive work and some of the things they've done is truly meaningful.

02-02:00:34

Holmes:

Yes. It's great to hear you articulate and really distill that work. Again, it was just published last year and so I think it actually has a lot of legs and will certainly receive the attention it deserves, as it already has. And speaking of attention, so this is one of the parts, as we're coming towards the end of our interview, that I would like to list some of the awards and honors that you've been bestowed with here. Mostly because many scholars are too humble to want to say it themselves and I always think it's important to read it into the record. In 2003 you received the Scholar of the Year Award by the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies. In 2010 you received the

Distinguished Career Achievement in the Critical Study of North America by the Society for the Anthropology of North America. In 2016 you were the recipient of the Distinguished Career Award by the Association of Latina and Latino Anthropologists. And that same year you were also the recipient of the Gender Equity and Anthropology Award by the American Anthropological Association. Pat, I know I can't get you probably to speak a lot about those awards but maybe, if there was a memory or two associated with receiving those, particularly after such a long and distinguished career. Does anything come to mind about those awards?

02-02:02:18
Zavella:

Well, first of all, I am incredibly proud of those awards and so appreciative. They really mean a lot to me. The NACCS Award happened to be at the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles, which is a place where they had had a conference previously when I was much younger and I took my kids who were much younger, and that's when my kids decided they really liked nice hotels. So we remember the Biltmore Hotel always when we go to hotels. But my mother got to come and see me accept the award, and my son was living with his father in Albuquerque and he, unknown to me, flew in and showed up at the conference, to my great surprise. So it was really sweet to receive that award. One of the nice things is every time you go to the next conference your badge says, "Scholar of the Year" and the year that you received it. So people that you meet for the first time get to know that.

The other award that is really meaningful to me is the Association of Latina and Latino Anthropologists Distinguished Career Award. So that happened at the AAA Conference at an ALLA meeting and it began with a lovely introduction by Gina Pérez, who is one of my former students. I was on her dissertation committee. She got her degree at Northwestern. She took a semester to go to University of Michigan when I taught there one term so she could take a graduate seminar with me on Latino ethnographies. So it was great to see her introduce me. And then they had all of these photographs, that I was like, "Where did you guys get these?" because some of them went way back. So it was really lovely to sort of have these images of my life up there on the board. And then ALLA is such a special place for me. So every year I actually really enjoy going to the AAA meetings, not only for the work but there are all these really smart, accomplished young anthropologists, Latinx anthropologists coming up and producing great work. So it's just a joy to see that happening.

02-02:04:34
Holmes:

Well, before we end, I wanted to get your thoughts and reflections on, of course, the evolution of the field of Chicana and Chicano studies that you have participated and contributed in now for decades. The field has obviously grown and matured since your early days at Chaffey College, seen in the rise of ethnic studies departments, Chicana and Chicano studies departments, and

other programs. In your view, what have been some of the major developments in the field that really strike you and stick out in your memory?

02-02:05:14

Zavella:

One of them is the formation of *Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social* or MALCS, which is an association of Chicana, Latina and indigenous women and it has a summer institute every year and it's a place to present your scholarship. One of the things I love about presenting at MALCS is it's an informed audience and so you don't have to define everything. You don't have to explain everything. Like people get what you're trying to do. And MALCS is also a place where there's a lot of professional development happening. So workshops on how to write your dissertation, how to be on the job search, those kinds of things. It's a really lovely social environment. To be in a room with hundreds of other Latinas is just so empowering. You feel normalized. It's unlike all the other times in which you're the only woman of color in the room. So that's a really important development. And MALCS has its own journal, the *Chicana/Latina Studies* that I actually happen to serve on the national advisory board right now. They're producing really nice work and it's very interdisciplinary and takes care to include artists. So every cover has a piece of artwork that's just lovely. And it's a place where it's good to get your book reviewed. I hope mine gets reviewed there in the very near future because it reaches people who are likely to teach my work. You just learn things that you wouldn't have learned going to disciplinary conferences.

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I think the other development is the formation of the Latina/o Studies Association and that is relatively new, maybe four or five years old. They've had two conferences. That was an association that came out of a number of Latinx scholars who were frustrated with the Latin American Studies Association and in particular the way that association at one point suspended the Latino section. And the suspension didn't last long. This happened at the conference in Rio, which I happened to be attending. I remember walking to the conference and people telling me, "They just disbanded us. We don't exist anymore. This is terrible." We managed to get reinstated but it felt really bad. We really felt like that's an incredible insensitivity. If anything, Latin American studies should be paying attention to the work we've been doing because so many people in Latin America migrated to the United States. So Deb Vargas, Raúl Coronado, and other scholars really took leadership in forming the Latina/o Studies Association and I've gone to, I believe, two of the conferences and they've been excellent. Very interdisciplinary but in an interesting way. So not necessarily interdisciplinary in the same panel. You'll have a panel of sociologists and a panel of anthropologists and people in literary studies, which is interesting. But also just really well done. Really excellent scholarship. And a nice vibe. So there are panels on publishing strategies, for example, and people can talk frankly and helpfully about how to navigate academia. So I'm really excited about that association.

And then one of the things you see happening is that programs that used to be Puerto Rican studies or Chicana/Chicano studies have changed and become more transnational and more Latinx. So, for example, at CUNY in New York, where one of my friends, Iris López, teaches, they now have Latin American and Latino studies. It used to be sort of a few classes here and there that mainly focused on Puerto Ricans. But as you may know, Latinxs in the New York area are incredibly diverse these days, so you really need to pay attention to that. By the same token, there are programs and Latin American and Latino studies in Chicago and in other places around the country.

I think another reflection of the maturation of the field is we see doctoral programs at UC Santa Barbara in Chicana and Chicano studies. At the Chicana/o and Central American Studies Department at UCLA they have a PhD program. Of course LALS here at Santa Cruz. And then you have some disciplines that are beginning to have doctoral programs in Latin American and Latino studies. You're also seeing in some of the disciplines a recognition of the need for scholars who work in Latinx studies. So someone who works in Latinx anthropology, for example, there were actually several searches in the past few years.

02-02:10:35

In some ways I think that these disciplines are understanding that the demographics of the United States have changed dramatically. The AAA in particular had a conference a few years ago that focused on border crossings and many Latinx scholars participated in that. We've been talking about borders and border crossings for a really long time and so I think in some ways some of the disciplines are beginning to see the value of the interdisciplinary conversations we've been having.

Then the final thing I'll say, at least in California, there's a growing recognition of the value of ethnic studies. So we just passed legislation that ethnic studies will be a requirement at the university level. That's so helpful for those programs that maybe don't have as many enrollments as they would like or want to hire more faculty. But also it's just good for students. I can't tell you how many white students have learned so much about issues around race and class and difference, that in a class setting is very different than when you're confronted out in the real work. When you're in a class and you get to read and think and learn and talk through and hear different points of view, that is incredibly helpful for when you go out in the real world and need to contend with some of these differences. So I'm really pleased to see that the ethnic studies requirement passed and that we're seeing now really a shift, at least in California, in which we have a critical mass of Latinx legislators. They're really becoming a powerful force for shifting and passing legislation that will be helpful for all Californians.

But read between the lines, that particularly means helping the Latinx population, some of whom are incredibly vulnerable. And you see progressive

legislation happening in ways that you don't see happening in other states. In fact, during my research on the movement for reproductive justice, people would say things like, "Hey, what are you all doing in California and can you bring it here because we're in big trouble." I think some of that formal political power, by having state legislators, comes from people who got degrees in which they were exposed to Latin American and Latino studies and learned that, like one of the things we need to do is to have policies that really address the problems within our communities. So in some ways I think we are seeing the culmination of some of the ideas that were fomented during the Chicana/o movement and at the time sort of seemed kind of idealistic. Well, not so much if you've got a critical mass and you've got people in power and you've got sort of good ways to think about policies that will benefit everyone.

02-02:13:40

Holmes:

Oh, Pat, that was so well put. You checked so many of the questions on my list that there's not many I could follow-up to that without muddying the waters. I wanted to ask you, before we end, we all stand on the shoulders of others. Usually I like ask at the end of these interviews if there were scholars in the field who had passed or that they thought should be recognized or wanted to give a nod to. Are there those that you would like to mention?

02-02:14:14

Zavella:

There are so many. Fortunately, none of the ones I'm going to mention have passed. They're all alive and in our faces in a good way. My dear friend and colleague, Ramón Gutiérrez, who is a historian of colonial Americas and what became the Southwest has been an incredible mentor, incredibly helpful, and a wonderful person to bounce ideas off of. Louise Lamphere, feminist anthropologist who in many ways was the real dissertation advisor that I didn't have. She didn't read much of my dissertation but we talked through so many of the issues I was dealing with. She was incredibly helpful and has mentored me since then. Renato Rosaldo, who read my dissertation at an incredibly trying time and who wrote this book, *Culture and Truth*, that I found really helpful. Really sort of does a nice critique of conventional anthropology and articulate this perspective of border crossings and sort of the complex intersections of cultural and other kinds of powerful forces. That was really influential to me.

And then there are so many other more junior scholars from whom I've learned an incredible amount. I'll just mention a small group. Gina Pérez and Alex Chávez convened a group that began as a AAA panel that we put together sort of looking at the post-Trump era and what does that mean for Latinxs and wrote a proposal to the School for Advanced Research in Santa Fe and convened a working group and we all came together and shared our work and did some readings and gave feedback to one another. And so we are publishing an anthology called *Ethnographic Refusals/Unruly Latinidades*. We're really trying to refuse the conventions of ethnographic research and complicate it in a way that pays attention not just to the power of relations to

the ethnographer and the people with whom she works but also all different other kinds of power relations, including imperialism and migration and things like that. But also really complicate Latinidades and how we can pay attention to differences between different national, ethnic, Latino groups but also within social categories. It's been an incredibly productive conversation and hopefully that book will be out next year.

02-02:16:58

Holmes:

Well, Pat, thank you again for your time and contributions to the field, but also the consideration of time you took to sit down and contribute your oral history here. Any final thoughts before we sign off?

02-02:17:14

Zavella:

I just want to thank you for the questions that you asked, for reining me in when sometimes I was going off on little tangents. That was really helpful. But also putting together this project. It's an incredible resource for scholars and as some of us are aging and will no longer be here in the not too distant future, it'll be really helpful for people who want to understand the field of Chicano and Latino studies, Chicana/Latina studies and to try to push it in new directions. So thank you.

02-02:17:50

Holmes:

Oh, it's truly my pleasure.

[End of Interview]