

**TRANSCRIPTION RE:**

**CSUMB Founding Faculty  
Oral History Project 1995-98  
Rina Benmayor, Project Director**

**Interview with Juan José Gutiérrez, Professor of Anthropology  
School of Social Behavioral and Global Studies  
College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences**

**Interviewer, Rina Benmayor, Professor Emerita  
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**Narrator: Juan José Gutiérrez**  
**Interviewer: Rina Benmayor**

1           **Benmayor:** Okay. Today is October 4, 2019. I am Rina Benmayor and I am interviewing Juan José  
2 Gutiérrez for the CSUMB Founding Faculty Oral History Project. Juan, first of all, do we have your  
3 permission to record this interview?

4           **Gutiérrez:** Yes, you do.

5           **Benmayor:** Okay, great. So can we start by you stating your name and when you came to CSUMB  
6 and a little biography?

7           **Gutiérrez:** A little bit of the background. Yes. So I am Juan José Gutiérrez. Born and raised in  
8 Querétaro, México. My training was first as a philosopher then as an historian. Oral history, more  
9 specifically, an ethno-historian. Then I moved on to completing a degree in Anthropology at UC Santa  
10 Barbara from 1991 to '97. Then I finished the degree in '97. I was scheduled to go back and teach for  
11 Universidad de Querétaro de México, where I was already teaching. And I heard about this new university.  
12 A former professor of mine invited me to give it a try as a Lecturer. And I really liked the idea of the  
13 Vision of the University. And I figured why not? So in '96 I started teaching one course, this when I was  
14 finishing the dissertation. But I started teaching full time in '97.

15           **Benmayor:** Who was the professor who invited you to...?

16           **Gutiérrez:** I was working under Manuel Carlos as adviser for my dissertation. Manuel Carlos is  
17 one of the first founding faculty. I think he was probably one of the very first faculty ever hired at this  
18 University. Not the very first. So we had an NSF [National Science Foundation] funded project going on  
19 and I was one of the key grad students that he was ...I was going to say using but you don't say that, right?  
20 He was working, leaning on, he never used me. I think it was a very nice reciprocal relationship. But we

21 have a really organic relationship at all different levels. And he was my dissertation director. I learned early  
22 about the University from even before it opened. The University was something that was on my radar.

23 **Benmayor:** Okay. So can you – we all have stories about how we first arrived on the campus and  
24 what we saw [chuckles] and kind of the shock of it all. What was your first experience coming to the  
25 campus? Do you have any stories that you remember about that?

26 **[3:02] Gutiérrez:** When I was finishing the Ph.D. I was really longing to go back to México and teach  
27 there. So when I started coming to the University in the United States I never saw the place as a potential  
28 place for me to live. But I really felt it's an eerie place of sorts because of all the barracks. And I remember  
29 seeing the military personnel and tanks and vehicle. It was interesting. And probably the most important  
30 feeling that I had for those initial months and days and years was the feeling of isolation. It was kind of  
31 isolated, and to a certain extent a derelict place. The classrooms we were teaching at, some were old  
32 churches which was really, really interesting to go and teach in an old wooden church. That was very  
33 foreign to me, by the way, because I didn't grow up in a place with wooden structures as a main type of  
34 building. And then the smell of the carpet and the wood that's been seasoned for so many, I don't know,  
35 decades, all of that was really interesting. But all of that really came to a first, second, third, fourth place in  
36 terms of the issues compared to the vibrant environment that we had those days in terms of everything is to  
37 be created. And I think that, to me, was the most appealing part of it. We were creating software,  
38 instructional software. I think we were at that moment really advanced in that that was nothing. We were  
39 running servers out of our offices, our own server. Eventually the University reigned in on all these really  
40 horizontal space of multiple servers. For all the good and not so good reasons but the University had to  
41 have some level of security. But just to tell you, we were creating quizzes, electronic quizzes for the first  
42 time. We used software to create the quiz. It was a data based streaming. I'm an anthropologist, right? It  
43 was a very rich context to invent, create, experiment and we were doing it with so much energy. So that

44 was to me an extremely appealing factor when I made the decision to come back from Querétaro and come  
45 here. Yeah.

46 **Benmayor:** And who is the “we” when you say “we were”?

47 **Gutiérrez:** So the “we” is a number of “we’s.” From the immediate colleagues that I had. From  
48 Manuel, and back then there was Mike Gallegos who was the tech person in the Center – it was the Social  
49 and Behavioral Sciences Center back then. And we had a tech person just doing that for us. Mike also came  
50 from Santa Barbara. And so there was that sense of us a small clique of folks working on a really tight and  
51 shared vision of what education can be and tied to research. And then the “we” is also the campus. I think I  
52 felt an interconnection with so many folks. And I think, Rina, that’s the other thing that was just so  
53 appealing. I would be talking to biologists, earth science folks teaching with you. Teaching all these ideas.  
54 And the committees were small committees. You were creating learning outcomes and learning practices.  
55 Everything was in the making and it was phenomenal. With all its craziness and some of the things that  
56 never had too much of a trajectory but it was just fantastic. Really, really

57 **[7:25] Benmayor:** Do you remember any particular story or incident around that that sticks out in your  
58 mind?

59 **Gutiérrez:** Of ...?

60 **Benmayor:** That creative process?

61 **Gutiérrez:** Of that creative process. Well, the implementation of a lab dedicated to train students in  
62 ethnographic research. That was really exciting because I was part of the team that designed each of the  
63 modules that we have for the program with, not just the instructional part, the theory part, but the actual  
64 data that was there was real data that we had collected from the field most of which was, or a substantial  
65 part of it, came straight from research that I was doing. And so to see such a practical application of  
66 anthropological research, that was extremely exciting. Because, you know, back in those days what you  
67 would be hoping is that you would have a conference with some attendees, and share that information, have

68 some articles out, have some publications out, and teach that in relatively small groups of students. And  
69 here we were having this lavish laboratory filled with computers and electronic resources. And just seeing  
70 it implemented, and then just seeing the students experiencing, to a certain extent as much as you can in a  
71 virtual environment field research, many of whom would never go into the field but had a sense of what it  
72 was. And then some of which actually came to the field with us and they were superbly trained to engage in  
73 the field.

74 **Benmayor:** And were you interviewing people? I mean what was the work in the field?

75 **[9:20] Gutiérrez:** So the work in the field was mostly in – this is the time when ... when México was  
76 going through the second agrarian reform. This was late '90s. In 1994 the North American Free Trade  
77 Agreement gets enacted. And that generated a major structural change in the countryside. We knew that  
78 because of the new law millions of people would have to leave those communities. So we are interviewing  
79 folks as to what the new law was going to do to their lives.

80 **Benmayor:** So you were in México with students?

81 **Gutiérrez:** The research was, yeah, it was done in México with students.

82 **Benmayor:** Oh, you took CSUMB students to México?

83 **Gutiérrez:** The first international program for this University was our program in Querétaro.

84 **Benmayor:** And what year was that?

85 **Gutiérrez:** That was '97.

86 **Benmayor:** Oh, okay.

87 **Gutiérrez:** That early. Yeah. Because we were already doing it when I came. And that's part of the  
88 reason why I think I was recruited, because I was ready to hit the ground running. So anyways, it was a  
89 difficult decision for me to come to CSUMB. But there was a disconnect with Universidad de Querétaro in  
90 that I was expecting a tenure track position. The agreement that we had, a written agreement, was that I  
91 finish my Ph.D. and then they would provide me with a tenure track line and it wasn't happening. It was

92 personally difficult because I have a family. I had been subsidized by my wife for so long and she needed  
93 to get on with her studying. And I needed to have more of a stable context. So it was a very difficult  
94 decision, but one that I don't regret. It was difficult. In those days I never saw myself as a migrant. But I  
95 went through the hoop. I went through all of the motions and emotions. But it was a wonderful decision. I  
96 will never regret that we made that decision.

97 **Benmayor:** So in other words, coming to CSUMB established your residency in the United States  
98 for all these years?

99 **Gutiérrez:** [Chuckles] If I didn't have the vision to go back to México my natural pathway would  
100 have been to apply to a number of universities. And I was very much so interested in research more than in  
101 teaching, to be honest. So for me those first two years were really uncomfortable, first because I was here  
102 invited as a guest scholar of the program by one of the faculty members. But it wasn't a tenure track. So I  
103 realized that at first I wasn't going to stay here for a little while. And then I figured, "Oh, I'm not in the  
104 right spot for what I want to do. So I had a few years in which I had to transition from my, "Okay, this is  
105 just a gig for a few months," into "Oh, I need to have a plan. If I'm going to stay here I need to have  
106 another perspective," right? " and possibilities.

107 **[12:43] Benmayor:** So initially you came as a Lecturer. When did you get the tenure track line?

108 **Gutiérrez:** So after the second year, I was already infected with the CSUMB bug. The Otter bug.  
109 This is an incredible place of opportunity as an instructor and what not. So I already was embodying all the  
110 philosophy of the Vision, of the initial Vision. At the end of the second year I was offered to lead a Title IX  
111 funded, million dollar funded project on campus.

112 **Benmayor:** On what?

113 **Gutiérrez:** It was the Faculty Mentor Program.

114 **Benmayor:** Oh, right.

115           **Gutiérrez:** So this is a program that put together first generation, ill prepared students to come to  
116 the University and you connect them with faculty from the University on a one-on-one. And not just a  
117 connection but it's actually the process. The aim of the Program was to create a context rich in resources  
118 and in elements of process so that this can be very successful. And we did it in a way that we actually had  
119 to measure success. There was some research involved in it. Actual research, if you like. But then it was  
120 connecting with the Mexican population that I saw living in México because of the agrarian report. So to  
121 me it was also leading to the kind of research that I did locally later on. And it was to discover México in  
122 the U.S. And being a Mexican, a Mexican American and Chicano. For me of course I knew of that but it  
123 was never intense. It was very tangential, my knowledge of it. It wasn't my dissertation research at all. So  
124 for me, it was just to get to know it. And then to discover what was my position in that rich context. So I  
125 moved into that position which was not an academic position, but I did that only because they accepted that  
126 I would continue teaching at least one or two courses because I wanted to continue connected to the  
127 academia. And with the possibility that if a new position was to be open that I would be applying to that  
128 position. And yes, sure enough, the years from the time that I took over the Program a position opened and  
129 I applied and of course I did all my best. I remember telling my colleagues, "Don't you think that I take  
130 anything for granted. I know you like my work. I know you know me." But I really felt personally that I  
131 wanted to legitimize my stay in the University on my own footing, not just as a student of a professor from  
132 the program, right? And I think people understood what I wanted and were respectful of it. They were  
133 generous and they liked what I talked about and research and the publications that I had back then. So it  
134 was great. That's the way I got engaged with the University.

135 **[15:56] Benmayor:** So what year did you become tenure track?

136           **Gutiérrez:** I think it's 2001.

137           **Benmayor:** Oh. Um hmm.

138           **Gutiérrez:** But, the part that has been really interesting, and I know you want to get into that, is  
139 because of my somewhat tangential position in the program, in the University for these few years, I lived  
140 some of the big battles that were going on on the sidelines, but interestingly enough right in the middle of  
141 it. If I can explain this.

142           **Benmayor:** Yes. Please do.

143           **Gutiérrez:** There were two factions there. I was working under the supervision of the lead person  
144 of one of the factions, as my reporting authority. I had to report to this MPP [Administrator], right?  
145 Villanueva. He was always very gracious with me.

146           **Benmayor:** Villanueva?

147           **Gutiérrez:** Henry.

148           **Benmayor:** Oh. Henry Villanueva, wow.

149           **Gutiérrez:** He was my boss.

150           **Benmayor:** Oh, okay.

151           **Gutiérrez:** And personally and professionally I have no complaints. He was always very  
152 supportive. But I think I didn't give him any reason not to be happy with the work, because the project  
153 went really well. But, here's the thing. I was working directly under the advice and the signing authority of  
154 none other than my wonderful good friend, Ray González. So Ray González was my mentor. He was there  
155 when the grant was first obtained by the University. So he knew the grant up and down and he helped me  
156 put together my staff and the group. And we actually created a ... we fashioned a friendship that was well  
157 beyond what I had with Henry. With Henry it was professional, it was respectful, he was very supportive.  
158 But at times, I have to say this and if he was here I would say the same, I felt more like a pawn. Like I'd  
159 been used for a grander scheme. Whereas with Ray I was on firmer ground. It was collegial. It was  
160 friendship. It was kinship. It was ... many things.



161           **Benmayor:** And Ray González was a Lecturer? A faculty member in World Languages and  
162 Cultures, was he not?

163           **Gutiérrez:** Yeah. But he was doing all kinds of work in ... He was doing some administrative  
164 work aside from teaching. So he was combining.

165           **Benmayor:** So what was the conflict that you alluded to?

166 **[19:12] Gutiérrez:** I think the core of the conflict was the Vision of the University, the way I see it. And  
167 maybe I'm going to get a little philosophical here and I'm not going to give you as much detail as some  
168 other faculty will give you in terms of the *política* [politics] what was going on there. But it had a lot to do  
169 with what the University was set out to doing in a context like in the Tri-County area and *la vocación*, that  
170 is, what is the over arching mission and Vision of this University? And for me, what made this University  
171 appealing to me was that it was supposed to be a high quality institution of higher education but reachable  
172 for those that were working the lands and the kids of those who were working the lands surrounding us.  
173 And as filling an emptiness, filling a vacuum that was there because there were many other institutions of  
174 higher education that were unattainable for them. So our job, the daunting challenge that I see we had as an  
175 institution, was to generate a high quality experience that could be equivalent to any other university of  
176 comparable size and standing and to make that available to students who didn't have the conditions, the  
177 upbringing, and the opportunities to reach to the standards that we were asking them to have. The challenge  
178 was humongous because we didn't want to be doing remedial work. We wanted to reach them before the  
179 remedial work. So it was connecting with the local high schools. I remember my initial set of research  
180 conducted in the area, tied to my teaching, was Anthropology of Education, Bilingual Education, and going  
181 to the local schools and trying to understand what was going on. These are the years when California is  
182 voting against Bilingual Education. Was that Prop 229? I don't know if you remember it. I'm sure you do.  
183 And so the University was opening at the exact right time to catalyze all the wants and needs and  
184 possibilities and potentials of the communities. So I think that going back to your initial question what was

185 the contention? It was a Vision that was clearly investing on a group of people that have the wherewithal to  
186 connect with these communities in a very organic way as opposed to creating just another campus of the  
187 CSU system. So that was represented in hiring decisions, and hiring processes, and in who was holding  
188 what positions of relevance in the University. And then the University very much divided up not along  
189 racial lines, because it was never about race, like separating one race from another, Anglos on one side, I  
190 might just say it out loud, Anglos on one side and the Latinos on the other. It was never that. And I never  
191 perceived that. We had wonderful, complex, multicultural working groups that saw the Vision for what it  
192 was. It was a Vision tailored prominently to one population that was Spanish speaking, that was Latino  
193 without excluding any other types of populations. And I think we were so intentional, clever and capable  
194 of doing that. So the University was never the space of exclusion. It was never meant as a space where only  
195 certain minority groups would feel comfortable at the expense of other groups. Never. We were so pleased  
196 and happy to see that kids from Southern California and other places in California would come in and  
197 enrich, and give us the opportunity to have that standard that they were expecting in coming from richer  
198 environments and contexts and upbringing. They were absolutely necessary for the project to work. The  
199 students. Afro American students. The stories that you probably are recording will tell you how the  
200 University was perceived in a very negative fashion by the military community that remained after the  
201 closure of Fort Ord. So we also wanted to make sure that we were going to be able to connect with that  
202 community which was Pacific Islanders, African Americans. We did have a very sound understanding of  
203 what kind of University we wanted to create. But in that understanding it was clear that this group that  
204 really needed special attention for us to be successful, for the Tri-County to be successful was going to be  
205 the working farmers' families that were here. And that was the intention. It was never an ethnic divide. It  
206 was very much driven by a sense that we need to provide opportunities for certain classes of people that  
207 didn't have the opportunity. How do we make this institution high quality and accessible? An amazing  
208 challenge. A wonderful challenge. And that made it really vibrant. So when you start seeing decisions

209 coming from the top that would be detrimental to that Vision, then you start getting nervous and politically  
210 active. I think that's the fundamental nature of our political infight that we had in those days. But I think it  
211 was a battle that was worth fighting. In my particular position, I was an immigrant. I was processing my  
212 migration status. I was on a very shaky grounds personally. And Ray González and Henry Villanueva,  
213 everyone that was around me regarding of their camp they saw the potential of my work I think. And I felt  
214 very protected by everybody which was weird, right, because during the middle of this huge fight and we  
215 have all these really positive encouragements.

216 **[26:20] Benmayor:** The huge fight was over decisions of personnel or?

217 **Gutiérrez:** Yeah.

218 **Benmayor:** Or decisions on the program or...?

219 **Gutiérrez:** Yeah. It started really when I came the first Provost was – I don't know if he was fired  
220 or he resigned. I'm talking about ...

221 **Benmayor:** Steve Arvizu.

222 **Gutiérrez:** Steve Arvizu who I met a couple of times but he was on his way out when I came in.  
223 And I think that was part of these initial disagreements, these *deseuentros*. Having a sense that not  
224 everyone was hearing the same vision, the same sense of urgency. So that is the division. I was really  
225 marginal in terms of all the communications I was witnessing and curiously enough being sort of in the  
226 middle of it. But perhaps I was not the only one in such a position. I have been thinking about this. In that  
227 there were very many of us at the University that were not prominent in being part of the discussion and the  
228 deep disagreements that were there, but we were on a mission to build a University and we felt that our best  
229 way to contribute to that was to continue focus on the work that we were asked to do. And to me that's the  
230 way I felt. And sometimes I felt that I wish I had been more involved in the actual ...

231 **Benmayor:** Political action?

232           **Gutiérrez:** Political action. But on the other hand I don't think I would have been an effective  
233 member. Even I was living in the area, everything was so new to me. And so you feel vulnerable, right?

234           **Benmayor:** Yes, yes.

235           **Gutiérrez:** You are vulnerable.

236 **[28:32] Benmayor:** Let me just switch a little bit and ask you about the Vision. Can you make a direct  
237 connection between the philosophy of the Vision and how you actually implemented that in your teaching?

238           **Gutiérrez:** Yeah, and I think probably the best way of doing that would be -

239           **Benmayor:** Or maybe not just only in your teaching but your work in general on the campus.

240           **Gutiérrez:** Yeah. So I need to go back to address this question to the decisions that I made in terms  
241 of what was I going to be teaching. What was I going to be creating. And the kinds of programs, University  
242 programs that I was going to be involved with. So the teaching was, the most exciting part of it was that I  
243 was going to be able to tie my research to the teaching and that I was given, even as a Lecturer in those  
244 days, I was given an enormous latitude to create courses. We don't do that any longer. But back then I had  
245 that opportunity. I was expected, encouraged and endowed with all kinds of resources to do that. And I  
246 soon realized that I really wanted to move from my rural studies that I was doing in México and study out  
247 migration into studying in migration. And from that I also figured early that I wanted to understand and  
248 study what was it like to live in California as an immigrant, that is the local communities. To me the  
249 cultural – not wars- but the cultural issues were key and central, language was central, food, clothing,  
250 income, all of the factors together was something that we needed to talk about and conduct research about  
251 and then bring it to the classroom. Because if I was able to bring this to the classroom, to the students, I will  
252 be contributing in every intentional way to that kind of environment and training that we wanted to give all  
253 of the students, regardless of background and ethnic and nationality, whatever background. So for me the  
254 Vision was very immediate and it's been very real. It was my working agenda. It was not just something to  
255 aspire to, but it was my every day go to your desk and start typing some stuff. It was typing the Vision,

256 enacting the Vision the best way I could interpret the Vision. Right? I have the Vision right in front of me,  
257 the original one that we had framed. And as you read those paragraphs and then you are thinking about  
258 your courses. Okay, so, “How is that something that I can translate into a syllabus?” when you are teaching  
259 Anthropology?” That’s just incredibly rewarding and ... you know, it really energizes you.

260 **Benmayor:** So what are the parts of the Vision that spoke to you most?

261 **[31:55] Gutiérrez:** I think the fact that this University recognized the immediate social context in which it  
262 was growing, and the fact that it recognized that there were deficits in education in the richest state of the  
263 richest nation of the world. The fact that it acknowledged that the haves and have nots are not only  
264 between nations but within nations. And the fact that the Vision acknowledged that California was not  
265 going to be able to remain as a vibrant, rich, wealthy living state without addressing these striking gaps, to  
266 me that is the core of the Vision. There’s many other things in the Vision of course but to me that was it.  
267 I’m writing and becoming an anthropologist in the midst of the emergence of globalization as a historical  
268 fact, as an economic program, with all its gray and dark areas and brilliant areas. And from the Mexican  
269 perspective, I was really adamant against delivering a project that brought the Mexican countryside to its  
270 knees, but that was a historical fact. And so I think I looked at globalization not just as these constraining  
271 and impoverishing factors but I saw it as okay, so there is also some enabling going on here. There is some  
272 promise to globalization that we can really enact, an education that will train students to recognize  
273 privilege, deficits, potential shortcomings and what not. I mean it doesn’t get any better, if you ask me.

274 **Benmayor:** Okay. So since you arrived in 1996 the campus was what it was. Could you comment a  
275 little bit about the campus culture in those days in terms of workload and the committee work you did? And  
276 you were also situated with some administrative responsibilities, too. And so how was your work week?

277 [Laughs]

278 **[34:35] Gutiérrez:** I was just tallying all the committees that I had been in over the last 22 or 23 years that  
279 I've been here and I think I've done it all. [Laughs] But in the first two years I did a lot of work in terms of  
280 building our own program, hiring folks, curriculum development. . .

281 **Benmayor:** That's Social and Behavioral Sciences?

282 **Gutiérrez:** Yes. In Social and Behavioral Sciences. I did a lot of work in assessment. And I was  
283 really interested in keeping the focus on assessment as a way to prove that the crazy ideas that we were  
284 advancing were sound ideas. I had to admit that it was also in search for legitimization of what we were  
285 doing, right? But as a social scientist, I was committed to the facts and to collecting data. So I worked a lot  
286 in teaching and learning, as an associate for teaching and learning. And that was for me also a way to  
287 discovering teaching as something that I would enjoy more than I ever thought. Because again, I mean you  
288 finish your Ph.D. and they say, "Okay, go and teach!" And you go, "How do you do that," right? They  
289 don't train you to teach. But here, I got my training here. And I met Amy Driscoll. And I remember the  
290 initial meetings I was just really happy being part of. . . . At moments it felt like we were doing too much  
291 handholding of the students coming from a tradition both in México and Spain where students are just left  
292 out there to their own devices to this day. Here it was a lot of process and summative assessment, and  
293 testing. And to me that was at first like overwhelming. But I guess I was committed so I said, "Okay, I'm  
294 going to give it a run." I think just like with Service Learning, I came to understand the relevance of  
295 process in Methods in teaching, too. And dialoging to bring that back to – to the teaching in the classroom.  
296 And it gave me so many opportunities. Because as soon as I started doing assessment and the electronic  
297 classroom, I was invited to visit Iceland. And I was invited to Canada and all these places because we were  
298 really on the leading edge as a small university in California because all of these electronic applications to  
299 education were just happening. We were really out there doing really, I think, interesting stuff that now has  
300 become our way of doing things. We don't even think about it. Back then it was innovative. So the  
301 environment was, as a Mexican scholar, it was all so interesting. Because there is a culture of sharing

302 information that you don't necessarily have in other places. So going to conferences and sharing everything  
303 we know about one thing you're like, "Why would you share all this hard work that you've done for your  
304 students, why would you share that with other folks?" Why would you do that? But you share and you  
305 share and you share to the death. And there's coffee and donuts and you share and you keep on sharing.  
306 And eventually you understand how enriching it is to you on all different levels. So maybe this is not  
307 something that most people think of but coming from abroad to me that was kind of an interesting, new  
308 environment. The spirit in this University was so embracing. I remember being in committees with  
309 scientists, hard scientists. And we all had this something in common, regardless of disciplinary distances.  
310 We felt that this is a University that is in the middle of the agricultural fields. That was a very strong  
311 feeling that we had in every meeting. It was like that and that made me really close to so many folks that –  
312 like Joe Larkin, who just passed away. He was in Education. I think in another educational context I  
313 would have never even crossed a word with him. But here he was envisioning. He was bringing folks  
314 together. He was making sure that we would land all these ideas. Just a wonderful human being. Amazing  
315 human being. Like him, you get enriched in ways you don't even think. I worked with Human  
316 Communication. I worked with – you know, we were co-teaching or trying to co-teach. And we were doing  
317 all these crazy cross-hybridizations. It's just fantastic.

318 **Benmayor:** So what would you say were your greatest accomplishments, looking back over the  
319 years? Those early years. Things that you created. And positions that you – I mean what do you think was  
320 your biggest contribution?

321 **[40:04] Gutiérrez:** I think the biggest contribution has been the internationalization of our campus, I think  
322 in a very big way. I jumped at every single opportunity that I had and it worked out really well. I was the  
323 first faculty from our campus to be named Resident Director of an international program for the CSU  
324 system in Madrid and Granada. I did that for two years. I was a member of the Academic Council of  
325 International Programs at the CSU system level. Because I was at the right place at the right time, I created

326 the first international program for this University. It was with Manuel Carlos, the Querétaro project. We did  
327 the first international agreements. And back then there was nothing. And I remember bringing the  
328 Chancellor of the Mexican university, understanding the protocol, understanding how you handle that with  
329 diplomacy and Peter Smith just really not getting it.

330 **Benmayor:** Really what?

331 **Gutiérrez:** Peter Smith, the first President of this University, there was no finesse, there was no  
332 elegance in the way things were done. Because there was nothing, Chris Hasegawa was the leading person  
333 for ... what's the name of it, *Extensión universitaria*.

334 **Benmayor:** Oh, for Extended Ed.

335 **Gutiérrez:** For Extended Ed. So Chris Hasegawa was the leading person for Extended Ed. And on  
336 the side he was doing International Programs. But there was really nothing. And I was taking students  
337 down to México every year with all the potential risks of risk management and what not. So I had to create  
338 a safety net around my program on my own. And I think this experience I was able to pass on to the person  
339 who substituted Chris Hasegawa. I remember sitting with the new Dean of Extended and International  
340 Programs and really saying, "This is what I need, this is how we handle this," and he telling me, "I really  
341 want to work with you." So I think directly and indirectly that was my major contribution. I created one of  
342 the longest standing international summer programs that are self-sustaining, international programs in  
343 Spain that incorporate research and experience. It's what they call the "high impact educational  
344 experiences." And I made sure that it was available for students no matter what was the context.

345 **Benmayor:** Could you describe the program in Spain? What do students do or what did they do  
346 and what came out of that?

347 **[45:06] Gutiérrez:** Yes. So the program stems out of the work that we were doing in México and  
348 Querétaro from 1997 to 2010. And every summer we would take a group of students for research. And we  
349 would train students in ethnographic methods of data collection and analysis. And then they would come



350 back and write a report. And that was part of their curricular package. In 2010, I was hired by UC Santa  
351 Barbara to be the Director of their Summer Program. And so I combined the two programs. I took our  
352 students and UCSB students down to México. But unfortunately that year was the worst year, I don't know  
353 if you remember that, those are the years of the War on Drugs, that was just an ill-conceived war on drugs  
354 that heightened violence all over México. And Querétaro has always been a safe location. There are a lot of  
355 theories that is because the Narcos families live there and they have this *entente*.

356 **Benmayor:** [Laughs]

357 **Gutiérrez:** I don't know. I think there were a number of factors. But that is the local legend, right?  
358 We were there and unfortunately there was a shooting in the city. So the CSU system has a program still  
359 going on today. I talked to both the Director of International Programs at UC Santa Barbara and the folks  
360 here and I said, "I need to stop the program until things settle in Querétaro, so we can support UCSB  
361 program and our programs." And CSU cancelled the program, or set the program on pause, because things  
362 were getting really dicey. And for the first time having been born there in Querétaro, and knowing so many  
363 folks, I didn't feel comfortable. I didn't know the folks that were in charge at the state and local level. I  
364 said, "I want to be able to come back with all my students no matter what." So I stopped the program. Long  
365 story short. I went to Spain the following year because my wife is from Spain. And visited this rural area.  
366 And I saw the potential. I saw a place that would be good to continue the training. So that's the way the  
367 [Spain] program started. Initially the aim was to provide instruction in methods of data collection, right?  
368 Qualitative research. But then I started working with the local Red Cross. For self service, I wanted to have  
369 good friends because I was carrying a group of students so the Red Cross seemed like nice, good friends to  
370 have. If someone breaks a leg or whatever in a rural area, right? But we started to have a really good, solid  
371 relationship that first year and I said this is Service Learning. So Seth Pollack has always been so incredibly  
372 encouraging and supportive and he said, "Let's give it a try." So we opened up one of the first International  
373 Service Learning programs on campus. We've had many in Yucatan, in México. But this was one that we

374 opened. That was a wonderful program in that we brought the partners from Spain really within the bounds  
375 of the philosophy of Service Learning, which is not, “We will tell you what you need,” but it was a  
376 community and the university working together to create solutions and not more work for the community.  
377 But it is international. So it’s not like driving from Santa Cruz here. It was flying, right? And all the  
378 logistics and funding and what not. So, you know, this is just one of the reasons why ... And I think that  
379 International Programs bring so much to the students. I think 80% of the students who have come to this  
380 program were flying for the first time across the ocean. Or taking a plane for the first time. To me that’s the  
381 Vision. It’s a really good way to see the Vision enacted. So I think that’s my main contribution. Of course  
382 in this program, the concentration was Anthropology. I drafted and renew the program they crafted over the  
383 years. I think I have been a key player in the Academic Senate. I think I’ve been a key player in so many  
384 committees because I’ve been very invested in the community and in the mission of the University.

385         And here I am at my 23 and also feeling like the University is also aging gracefully as I am.  
386 [Chuckles] I’m having a feeling that of course the initial impetus is no longer there. It’s easier to sort of  
387 work within the confines of what is already established in the system, the CSU system. So I have seen  
388 many of the things that we built being dismantled. And sometimes with a language that feels offensive.  
389 I’ve heard so many times some of our admin individuals saying that “We need to clean this language.” And  
390 I said, “You don’t clean the language unless it was dirty. It was never dirty.” So when that happens, I know  
391 they mean well. I know they mean we need to gain clarity and what not. But it’s difficult to take on that  
392 kind of language. And I feel that this University is much more institutional, much more hierarchical. I have  
393 seen folks that I work with in very close quarters going from being very horizontal and creative into  
394 becoming this way hierarchical and comfortable with hierarchical positioning within the system in ways  
395 that I am no longer comfortable with. So I’m right now on a phase in which I’m feeling like I am switching  
396 gears and I want to refocus my energy. I still have some, hopefully some good energy in me to do more  
397 stuff, more research and more transformation, and positive transformation in places that I am in. And

398 sometimes I feel much more constrained than enabled. So that's among where I am. On the other hand, I  
399 am happy with what remained from that initial crazy impulse that we gave at the University. I am  
400 extremely proud to have been, I feel honored and privileged to have been part of a group initially in a very  
401 tangential sort of sideline kind of way but then really embedded in it, to create this University. Because it  
402 has personality just by the fact that it feels more and more – well, I have to say – sanitized by the system!  
403 But that it's still a wonderful University to work for and come to study.

404 **Benmayor:** So do you – do you feel that the things that you created have a legacy? Will they  
405 continue even if you are no longer here?

406 **[50:45] Gutiérrez:** Yeah. I certainly hope so. I think the way we structured the SBS, Social and Behavioral  
407 Sciences Program with the concentrations, will have a nice run after I leave the University. I think we have  
408 made inter and multidisciplinary connections in ways that I didn't think were possible because of working  
409 in close quarters with sociologists, geographers, historians. And that is embedded in the DNA of our  
410 program. The program will eventually transform, there is no doubt, and it's probably a good thing. But that  
411 DNA is in there and it's a very positive legacy. I think what this University has done in terms of  
412 International Programs, for example, the Academic Senate has now a committee International Programs  
413 that I created. And that's probably one of my proudest moments, when we got the vote in the Academic  
414 Senate to create that. And I left it and it's running, and it's running strong. And there's a lot of buy-in from  
415 folks from all over campus for internationalization of our education. That's a major legacy. It's not  
416 singlehanded, of course, but I played a singular role in it and I feel really, really proud of it. I wish I have  
417 had the opportunity to do more on that scenario, but that was not to be. And that's okay. I'm in a really  
418 good place and totally focusing my work on additional research. And now I am moving into projects of  
419 development, rural development which is where I first started back in 1994. We were working projects with  
420 the World Bank in rural communities in México. So I am kind of coming back to that in a different scenario

421 because now it's going to be in rural communities in Spain that are facing economic downturn and  
422 demographic 'winter,' as they call it.

423 **Benmayor:** Demographic Winter?

424 **Gutiérrez:** Yeah. They are really – in México the demographic pyramid is like this, right?  
425 [gesturing a pyramid] And in Spain it's like this [inverted].

426 **Benmayor:** Oh, my goodness.

427 **Gutiérrez:** I am young and in a place that I am going to work in for the next few years. So if that  
428 tells you I am kind of a youngling there. So I am really energized and happy to try to make a difference in  
429 they call that *la España vacía* [vacant Spain], you know? And I am hoping that we will be able to  
430 contribute to this ongoing conversation, "What to do?" And maybe it's not about developing but maybe  
431 it's about creating spaces of sustainability. And so I said, it's a new vision and working with the local  
432 government and helping with the local university there. So, it's just kind of exciting. I'm hoping that I will  
433 get away with continuing having CSUMB students for the foreseeable future being part of the Spain  
434 program, as it moves from just training and Service Learning program into a more encompassing Applied  
435 Social Sciences program in Spain.

436 **Benmayor:** So not to leave on a negative note but I am very curious in terms of the other side of  
437 the missed opportunities or the things that you wanted to create and weren't able to and the kinds of  
438 obstacles that you encountered. Does anything stand out for you?

439 **Gutiérrez:** You know, for the most part I had a wonderful run. Wonderful run. Everything that I  
440 set out to doing, actually did happen. I came here as a Lecturer for a little while. And then that became  
441 being part of creating an infrastructure of support for students. That happened in a very instrumental way.  
442 Then I set out to developing my professional career here as a tenure track professor. That happened. That  
443 was remarkable. And so I will be thankful for this University forever. Because they took me seriously,  
444 right? And then I set out to create opportunities and have international opportunities for students and for

445 me. That happened. So it has been an incredible environment for me. It is now in the last few years when  
446 the University is settling in ... in more, I don't know how to call this, administrative ways. It's a new phase  
447 in which creation is no longer central but it's more about sustaining and gradual growth and serenity. Not  
448 so much that energy that we had at first that I am somehow disenchanted. The big opportunity that I wish I  
449 had been given was to have more of a prominent role administratively for the development of international  
450 connections of the University and connections with the community through Extended Ed. That didn't  
451 happen and I have a feeling that I was not given an opportunity to make a good case for myself. And I am  
452 still, to this day, not really understanding what happened there. So that's probably the one thing that I have  
453 bitterness. And it's not just that I was not offered the opportunity to move into that position of leadership in  
454 the University but it is that I think it was handled poorly. That's what really hurt. And if you combine that  
455 disappointment with a new environment that I am feeling we have, I don't know if it is just the University ,  
456 but certainly in the College, in which everything is coming top down and in which you are no longer other  
457 than a laborer in the scheme of things, I am disenchanted. And I don't feel respected and that's something  
458 that really ... again, it's not the fact that I was not given the position. It's the fact that I am feeling that I am  
459 just being used and no longer appreciated for the creative capacity that we all had. Because we are highly  
460 trained individuals. And we get paid comparatively very decent salaries. And when I feel like I am not  
461 really appreciated and respected in my scholarship and my vision, I feel like it's time to let others recreate  
462 spaces. It's kind of a sad note but it really doesn't make me a bitter person. I'm really happy where I am.  
463 I'm really happy with the institution. So overall, yeah, we should not finish with this note, Rina. But here  
464 we are.

465 **Benmayor:** [Chuckles] Yeah. Well, with that I want to thank you, Juan, for a very, very interesting  
466 and candid interview. I will send you a copy of the interview immediately. And we want to thank you for  
467 making this contribution to the Founding Faculty Oral History Project.

