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Santa Barbara

Learning to Heal, Healing to Learn:
Sacred Pedagogies and the Aesthetics of a Teaching-Healing Praxis among Chicana and Chicano Educators in Southern California

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the
Doctor of Philosophy
in Chicana and Chicano Studies

by

Silvia Esther Toscano

Committee in charge:
Professor Tara J. Yosso, Chair
Professor Inés Talamantez,
Professor Richard Durán,

December 2016

This dissertation of Silvia Esther Toscano is approved.

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Inés M. Talamantez

_____

Richard Durán

_____

Tara J. Yosso, Committee Chair

December 2016

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To acknowledge, I include an excerpt from a poem I wrote, “Los cuatro elementos viven en mi,” published in

Seeds of Resistance
Flor y Canto Issue no. 3
“E4rth is my Flesh”
2015

Wind...
Breath of Life.
The Ancestors
have spoken me
into existence.
They continue to speak
to me
in my dreams.
DreamTime breathing,
traversing time--
past, present, future
collapse
into that
rhythmic breathing
of *mis sueños*.

The Ancestors and I
acknowledge each other
in tobacco offerings
made to the Mountains--
facing North and
the Wind,
the Breath
of the Earth
allows me to greet my relatives,
the Winged Ones
whose feathers
offer blessings
sweeping away
all that does not belong to me
while renewing my Spirit,
my Prayers,
My Breath of Life. *Aliento de Vida*.

VITA OF SILVIA ESTHER TOSCANO
December 2016

EDUCATION

Ph.D. Chicana & Chicano Studies—Department of Chicana & Chicano Studies University of California, Santa Bárbara

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Learning to Heal, Healing to Learn: Sacred Pedagogies and the Aesthetics of a Teaching-Healing Praxis among Chicana and Chicano Educators in Southern California

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M.A. Chicana & Chicano Studies—Department of Chicana & Chicano Studies. University of California, Santa Bárbara. June 2013

M.A. Mexican American Studies—Department of Chicano Studies. California State University, Los Angeles. June 2011

M.A. English Literature—Department of English. California State University, Los Angeles. September 2001

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Pasadena City College, Pasadena, CA 2005 to Present
Assistant Professor, English & Chicano Studies.
School of Humanities and Social Sciences.

University of California, Santa Bárbara, Santa Bárbara, CA 2012 to 2013
Graduate Teaching Assistant.
Department of Chicana & Chicano Studies.

East Los Angeles Community College, Monterey Park, CA 2002-2004
Adjunct English Instructor.
English Department.

California State University, Los Angeles, L.A., CA 2000-2002
Adjunct English Lecturer.
Department of English

COURSES TAUGHT

Mexican and Chicano/a Literature

Native American Literature

Postcolonial Literature

Studies in Chicano/a Behavior

English Composition (Developmental to Advanced Critical Thinking)

COMMUNITY COLLEGE GRANT AWARDS

Student Equity Professional Speaker Series at Pasadena City College 2016-2017
Funds Allocated for the following event:

Indigenous Pedagogies for Critical Consciousness, Student Engagement and Success across the Chicana & Chicano Educational Pipeline

Student Services Grant at Pasadena City College 2016-2017
Funds Allocated for the following event:

(Re)Envisioning a Chicana and Chicano Studies A.A. degree that Bridges Classroom, Student Support, and Community—(a transdisciplinary dialogue and planning session)

Student Equity Professional Speaker Series at Pasadena City College 2015-2016
Funds allocated for the following events:

Innovative Collaborations: Closing the Achievement Gap through Culturally Competent Pedagogies & High Impact Practices along the Chicana & Chicano Educational Pipeline, fall 2015

Overcoming Institutional Barriers: Professional Insights on how Power & Privilege Widen the Equity Gap for Underrepresented Students, spring 2016

Student Services Grant at Pasadena City College on behalf of the Campus Diversity Initiative 2014-2015
Funds allocated for the following events:

10/2/14 Interactive Workshop & Altar-building Ceremony with Maestra *Lea Arellano, "RESILIENT! Beyond What You Know." In conjunction with Pasadena City College Pathways Program & One Book, One College Speaker Series*

11/13/14 Living Indigenous Epistemologies with Dr. Roberto "Cintli" Rodríguez', Nin Tonantzin Non Centeotl*: Our Sacred Maiz is our Mother--Indigeneity & Belonging in the Americas*

11/20/14 San Gabriel Valley Premier Documentary Screening, Intercultural Exchange, Community Fundraiser for Huicholes*: The Last Peyote Guardians--winner for Best Documentary by Red Nation Film Festival, fall 2014.*

PUBLICATIONS

Toscano, S. (2015). "Los 4 elementos viven en mi." *Seeds of Resistance Flor y Canto*: *Earth is my Flesh*. Issue 3. March 2015.

Villanueva, S.T. (2013). Teaching as a healing craft: decolonizing the classroom and creating spaces of hopeful resistance through Chicano-Indigenous pedagogical praxis. *The Urban Review*. V. 45. Issue 1. (27-40).

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RECENT CONFERENCE & PANEL PRESENTATIONS

Co-panelist at *Ethnic Studies Summit*. Panel discussion on "Decolonizing Pedagogies" with Peter McLaren, Martín Sean Arce, and Paolo Magcalas. April 16, 2016. Chapman University, CA.

Presenter at 2nd Annual PILAS (People's Intervention for Liberation, Autonomy, and Self-Determination) Summit. Summit Theme: *Salud y Revolución—Communal Healing and Self-Care*. Presentation Title: "Learning to Heal—Healing to Learn." November 18, 2016. Fullerton College, CA.

Invited speaker at professional panel to open for Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Dr. Rigoberta Menchú Tum. Event title: *Bringing Back Community Voice in Service Professions: Lessons from César Chávez, Rigoberta Menchú, and Other Freedom Fighters*. April 22, 2015. California State University, Fullerton.

Co-presenter at NACCS—National Association of Chicana and Chicano Studies. Conference Theme: *Chicana/o In/Civilities Contestation y Lucha: Cornerstones of Chicana/Chicano Studies*. April 18, 2015. Panel presentation title: "Decolonizing Methodology through Indigenous Based Pedagogy: The Impact of Indigenous Healing Circles on Historical Trauma and Identity Development." San Francisco, CA.

Co-presenter and facilitator at CA-NAME (California Chapter of the National Association of Multicultural Education). Conference Theme: Education as a Human Right. January 10, 2015. Knox Middle School. Workshop title: “Education as a Human Right: Connection, Healing, and Resiliency through Indigenous Pedagogy.” Chula Vista, CA

"Restoring Our Sacred Balance: Honoring Indigena Modalities of Wholeness in Urban Classrooms." RAZA STUDIES NOW! 3rd Annual Conference. August 2014. Pico Youth & Family Center. On Panel with Dr. Juana Mora (Rio Hondo Community College Chican@ Studies Chair), Kitaro Webb (Samohi Ethnic Studies Instructor), Ron Espiritu (South LA Animo HS African American & Chican@ Studies Instructor), & Keynote address by Sean Arce (XITO- Xican@ Institute for Teaching and Organizing, former director of Mexican American Studies Dept.)—“Ethnic Studies Update on the 9th District Court of Appeals Case & The Xican@ Paradigm, a Methodology for Liberation." Santa Monica, CA.

PROFESSIONAL/COMMUNITY AFFILIATIONS

-A.R.E. (Association of Raza Educators)
-Raza Studies Now!
-Ethnic Studies Now!
-NACCS

FELLOWSHIPS/ NOMINATIONS/AWARDS

Dean’s Fellowship, 2013-2014. University of California, Santa Bárbara. Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies.

Dean’s Fellowship, 2011-2012. University of California, Santa Bárbara. Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies.

Nominated for Risser Outstanding Teacher Award. May 9th, 2014. Pasadena City College

Abstract

Learning to Heal, Healing to Learn: Sacred Pedagogies and the Aesthetics of a Teaching-Healing Praxis among Chicana and Chicano Educators in Southern California

by

Silvia E. Toscano

This dissertation unearths insights that urban Chicana and Chicano educators, in Southern California, teaching at the upper levels of the pipeline (levels 9-16 and beyond), have gained from Indigenous ceremonial practices. The study also explores evidence of how these insights have shaped teaching methods and practice/praxis, proving that Indigenous epistemologies are vibrant, alive, and thriving amongst Chicana and Chicano educators in Southern California.

The first chapter examines the impact of five hundred plus years of colonizing, missioning, and assimilating *his*tory and its impact on the persistence of historical trauma—as related to Chicanas and Chicanos, particularly for those with origins from México and Guatemala. It also provides a comprehensive definition of decolonization that is pertinent to this project. The second chapter is grounded in affirming the need for humanizing, healing, and transformative pedagogies. It delves deeply into three overlapping lenses from which to analyze the roles that racism *and* colonialism play in current, mainstream educational institutions: Chicanas and Chicanos along the Educational Pipeline and CRT in Education, Ethnic Identity Development among Chicanas and Chicanos, and Decolonizing Indigenous Pedagogies. The literature review seeks to highlight intersections existing among Indigenous pedagogical practices throughout the Southern and Northern Traditions of this Hemisphere.

These literatures provide strategies that are hopeful for those seeking decolonial models of education for liberation. This study follows the principles of decolonial methodologies as well as methodologies that honor the spirit, resulting in a qualitative study with six urban Chicana and Chicano educators that are also Indigenous-identified, rooting them to their ancestral places of origin. The findings of this study are drawn from the narratives of the educators, focusing on their ethnic and spiritual identity development. Their rich narratives provide insights about the complexity of learning that involves: the intersections among familial education, the assimilationist tendencies of schooling, the hopeful resistance that is cultivated through Chicano and Chicana as well as Ethnic Studies, and the embodied teaching that arises from being immersed within a ceremonial discourse.

The final section of the dissertation highlights the ways in which a ceremonial discourse guides pedagogical practice and curriculum design in particular. Critical reflections are provided that offer insights about the future of Ethnic Studies in public schools in California and the possibilities that are emerging for a Chicana and Chicano Decolonizing Indigenous Pedagogical Framework.

Keywords: Chicana and Chicano educators, Decolonizing Indigenous Pedagogies, Teaching as a Healing Craft, Chicana and Chicano Decolonizing Indigenous Pedagogical Framework, Ceremonial Discourse.

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~Sacred Communications~
A Preliminary Discourse in how History Speaks while Ancestors Teach

"What has been lost and what has been gained by participating in a system of education that does not stem from one that really honors our unique Indigenous perspectives?"

"How far can we go in adapting to such a system before that system literally educates us out of our cultural existence?"

-Gregory Cajete, "Decolonizing Indigenous Education in a Twenty-first Century World" (2012)

"To kill our native culture is to kill our native capacity to heal ourselves and this is equated with Corporate American efforts to colonize US."

-Samuelin MarTinez, *The Indian Dream: Surviving the American Holocaust* (2013)

"I am searching for ways in which I can make my teachinglearning a spiritual endeavor by essentially applying a nonlinear nontraditional pedagogy. I am situating my pedagogy in an untraversed process where traditional pedagogy becomes linear and spiritual pedagogy becomes serpentine."

-Maria Figueroa, "Toward a Spiritual Pedagogy along the Borderlands" (2014)

Introduction to the Study:

Reflections of Indigenous Ancestral Wisdom Traditions

in Chicana and Chicano Pedagogies

A parallel reading of the words of these three authors captures the essence of this dissertation. This project affirms that a serpentine spiritual pedagogy has emerged among Chicana and Chicano educators in what is now recognized/named as Southern California. This serpentine spiritual pedagogy has emerged as a direct result of the educators' native capacity to heal themselves, demonstrating the resilience of their own cultural existence by

embodying their unique Indigenous perspectives.[1] These particular Indigenous perspectives are rooted in the connections that the educators, highlighted in this study, have to the individual places of their ancestral origin, which include the following:

- *Quiché Maya, Guatemala*
- *Ixtlahuacán de los Membrillos, Jalisco, México*
- *Huichol, Sierras de Jalisco, México*
- *Zacatecas* and *Michoacán, México*
- *P'urhépecha, Arteaga, Michoacán, México*
- *Otomie, Guanajuato* and *Queretaro, México*[2]

I ask permission of each these ancestral connections and sacred geographical spaces, including what I know of my own, from *Tepehuanes del Sur, Durango, México*; *Nahuas of Coálcoman, Michoácan, México*, and *Raramuri, Chihuahua, México* to tell a story of reclamation.

[1] I embrace Patrisia Gonzales' (2012) definition of Indigenous in *Red medicine: Indigenous rites of birthing and healing*, which ''emanates from the concept of being so linked to a place that one's being, identity, and origin come from the entrails of the earth''(p. 135). I also align with Jennie Luna's (2012) use of the term, in her doctoral dissertation, *Danza Mexica: Indigenous identity, spirituality, activism, and performance*, to identify the ''original peoples of the western hemisphere and other land bases, interchangeably with Native Peoples, First Nations, Fourth World Peoples, or People of this Land'' (p. 2; n4). I also choose to capitalize Indigenous as a way to acknowledge both the living and the ancestral presence of the Original spirits despite repeated efforts across space, time, and history to exterminate them. For a discussion of what makes the logic of genocide (of Indigenous peoples), the second pillar of white supremacy, see Andrea Smith's (2006) "Heteropatriarchy and the three pillars of white supremacy: Rethinking women of color organizing" published in *Color of violence: The incite! anthology*.

[2] I italicize all non-English words in this dissertation to acknowledge and emphasize the alternative ontologies and epistemologies they represent.

These ancestral connections and sacred geographies have shaped the identities of the six educators who make up this study. However, their identity formations were not always as grounded and centered as they are now. Their Indigenous connections to these ancestral origins were subjected to the assimilationist tendencies of attending schools in the United States, specifically in the region of Southern California. The inherent coloniality of power (Quijano, 2000) existent within the normative educational system (amongst other social systems) caused injury (by way of disruptions and disconnections), in some ways, to these ancestral connections. In direct response to both the early and continued colonizing forces in both *México* and *Guatemala* respectively and the subsequent manifestations that have also taken place in the United States, this project examines the decolonizing process for these educators and analyzes the ways in which re-Indigenization has occurred as a result of the ceremonial discourse that has shaped them. Collectively, these multiple stories tell one story. It is a story of ancestral reclamation, of spiritual resistance through ceremonial practice, and the resiliency required to uphold an authentic identity that remains influx. The determination needed to endure this process and engender this story is in need of documentation. The project seeks to document the personal activism that necessitated this process. Furthermore, it seeks to capture how that personal activism has and continues to impact the students who cross paths with these educators (through the perspectives of the educators). The pedagogical and curricular interventions of the six educators involved in this study play a significant role in halting further injury for future generations of Chicanas and Chicanos who find themselves living in the United States and even abroad.[3]

[3] I am hopeful that this study will also hold relevance for scholars, researchers, educators, students, and community organizers living outside of the United States who have been and continue to be subjected to the extant coloniality of power that perpetuates at a global scale.

This research study examined Chicana and Chicano urban educators in Southern California who integrate Indigenous ancestral wisdom traditions into their pedagogical practice. Weaving together theoretical insights from Tara J. Yosso (2005), Elena Avila (2000), and Patrisia Gonzales (2012), I studied a small and purposeful selected sample of six educators who practice Indigenous ancestral wisdom traditions[4] and who engage in processes of decolonization in their classrooms. In order to fully appreciate the depth and breadth of this concept—decolonization—and to gain a fuller understanding and thorough definition of it, a grounding is needed in order to appreciate the various facets that make-up the concept, especially with respect to the educators highlighted in this study. This is especially relevant for those who may lack familiarity with the thematic focus and transdisciplinarity of this study. The organization—of the following thirteen[5] terms—is intentional as each concept builds upon the other, so as to offer readers a conceptual bridge that will place their mindset in alignment with the content (and intentions) of the dissertation.

[4] Although the educators are aware of their ancestral origins, they have not all necessarily had access to practice those traditions pertaining directly to their ancestral Indigenous traditions. Later discussions related to de-tribalizaton, de-Indianization, de-Indigenization, and de-ceremonialization will help elucidate this point. However, it should also be noted that this disconnect has also been exacerbated by the educators living in the United States and not in their respective geographical locations of origin, *México* and *Guatemala* respectively. Because of this, their exposure to ancestral Indigenous traditions has been limited to those more locally available to them, primarily *Lakota* and *Mexica/Nahua*. The Indigenous ancestral wisdom traditions that emerged during the interview process, included: *Danza Azteca* Ceremonies, Sun Dance Ceremonies, Sweat Lodge Ceremonies (*Temazkal* and/or *Inipi)*, Spiritual/Ceremonial Running, Talking/Healing Circles, Consuming and/or Preparing Sacred/Ceremonial Foods, Receiving Origin Stories, Meditating at Sacred Sites, and Honoring Dreaming as Sacred Sight/Site.

[5] From my understanding, thirteen is considered a sacred number because it reflects the cyclical nature of the Moon cycle when it offers us thirteen full moons in most years. From this point forward, it should be noted that I do make reference to teachings I have received over the years and have internalized as "common" knowledge from my perspective and experience. I am well aware of the multiple teachings that exist for various groups of people. It is not my intention to cause offense, and I apologize in advance if this is to occur. I accept responsibility for all errors or miscommunications and want to acknowledge my openness and commitment to continued learning.

In this way, I hope that readers will, ultimately, be able to think with the intelligence of their heart-mind[6] rather than just their "rational" mind.

When Thirteen Become One—Toward a More Thorough Understanding of the Multiple Facets of Decolonization within the Context of Chicana and Chicano Indigeneity

Indigenous

Incorporating an Indigenous-identified Chicana and Chicano subjectivity in the classroom is a unique and yet understudied practice that requires close examination, especially if it is occurring within institutionalized spaces (e.g. schools) that have historically been designed to discourage cultural differences in favor of assimilationist tendencies. Although previously footnoted, it is important to reiterate the ways in which this term is being defined in this study. In this respect, Jennie Luna (2012) contributes to this project through her own definition of Indigenous, which pertains to ''original peoples of the western hemisphere and other land bases, interchangeably with Native Peoples, First Nations, Fourth World Peoples, or People of this Land''(p. 2). Gonzales (2012) has also written that Indigenous ''emanates from the concept of being so linked to a place that one's being, identity, and origins come from the entrails of the earth''(p. 135). Both definitions specify the importance of recognizing origins of place/land. This study will explore the extent to which a rootedness to a particular place/land and/or the particularity of teachings associated with a particular place/land impacts the ways in which Chicana and Chicano educators

[6] Although I am uncertain about the exact origins of the teaching, I recall being instructed that the heart has intelligence and that it is this intelligence that is guided by one's spirit and is therefore intuitive and trustworthy.

choose to assert their Indigenous identities, particularly within the context of classroom spaces.

De-tribalization/de-Indianization/de-Indigenization

With this in mind, several scholars have succinctly described the ways in which Chicanas and Chicanos have been *denied* access to their Indigenous ancestral wisdom traditions. Particularly, I emphasize Avila's (2000) key intervention as her ability to recognize the necessity of providing healing modalities to, what she refers to as, "de-tribalization"—an intergenerational inheritance of colonial domination that has continued to suppress, if not, deny Chicanas and Chicanos access to their Indigenous ancestral wisdom traditions (p. 29). Although intergenerational historical trauma—as a theoretical concept—was introduced by and for American Indian/Native American populations in the United States (Clearing Sky as cited in Torres, 2003, p. 13; Braveheart, 2005, p.4), it is also applicable to ethnic Mexicans (Torres, 2003, p. 11) as various scholars have illustrated.

Additional studies range from Guillermo Bonfil Batalla's (1996) anthropological discussion of the "de-Indianization" of Mexican identity as a result of colonial and imperial forces to Martha Menchaca's (1993) historical analysis of "Chicano Indianism" that highlighted the racial repression experienced by people of Mexican origin in the U.S. legal system from 1848 to 1947 who were of predominantly Indian descent. In addition, Cherríe Moraga (2003) has asserted that a majority of Chicanas and Chicanos have been denied direct information regarding their Indigenous affiliations (2003, p. 268). She also explained that since their origins are generally "in the Southwest and *México*, Chicanos' Indian roots encompass a range of nations including *Apache*, *Yaqui*, *Papago*, *Navajo*, and *Tarahumara*

from the border regions, as well as dozens of Native tribes throughout *México*" (Moraga, 2003, p. 268; emphasis mine).

More recently, Gonzales (2012) has used the term "de-Indigenized" to explain a disordering that comes from people ''being disallowed to connect to what helped their ancestors make sense of their place in the world, their specific spiritual teachings that help them know themselves'' (p. 222). Gonzales (2012) also described how this disallowance relates to historical trauma that results in Post-Indian Stress Disorder (PISD), which occurs when Indigenous peoples are ''disconnected from, or with limited access to, their ancestral cosmo-logic'' (2012, p. 222; see also Rodríguez, 2012, np). Gonzales (2012) added further insight to understandings of Post-Indian Stress Disorder (PISD) when she stated ''it is *what is not known*, the *loss* of their ancestral and communal names, the *dislodgement* of ancestral memories from their embodied experience that form part of their historical trauma'' (2012, p. 222, emphasis mine). Indeed, political, social, historical, and cultural processes result in dis-allowances, dis-connections, and dis-lodgings that are dehumanizing. Most recently, the 2016 U. S. presidential elections have proven to be a poignant reminder of this reality. More often than not, these lead to complex forms of intergenerational historical trauma—typically accompanying the social realities of racism, economic injustice, and gender inequity—among others.

Chicana and Chicano

Upon analyzing the responses from the six educators in this study, I observed, that when woven together, their collective responses offered a collaborative storying of a beautiful and complex people whose Original languages (prior to both Spanish and English)

affirm them as sacred because they represent a center—an *ombligo* or *xictli* (in *Nahuatl*). Chapter 4 will provide this collaborative definition from the educators who embrace their Mexican and Guatemalan ancestries, respectively. The collaborative definitions are an affirmation of Indigenous origins—though articulated in diverse ways. Fluidity is a theme in the responses that is necessitated of a consciousness that must respond, constantly, to oppressive conditions—though not be so overwhelmed by them so as to forego creative capacities that are life affirming and giving. The various definitions provided, when woven together, provide a holistic understanding of identity that is fully human, recognizing the interrelatedness of spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical aspects that are shaped by history, politics, society, and culture.

Re-Indigenization

Many efforts have been made by Indigenous people and their descendants—even those who are mixed-bloods—to remedy de-Indigenization with re-Indigenization, which I describe as a process of actively (re)learning how to speak, listen, act, and live in a good way—in balance with all of life—seen and unseen. An entire chapter is devoted to this concept in *Original Instructions: Indigenous Teachings for a Sustainable Future* (Nelson, 2008). Voices of Indigenous activists, organizers, community members, and Elders who have chosen to speak at the Bioneers Conference over the years are combined to provide the varying points of view surrounding this important concept[7]. John Mohawk (2008) explained

[7] Founded in 1990 in Santa Fe, New Mexico by social entrepreneurs Kenny Ausubel and Nina Simons, Bioneers advances the great transformation underway in human civilization by serving as a seed head for game-changing social and scientific vision, knowledge and practices that honor the genius of nature and human ingenuity. The organizers do so through their annual National Bioneers Conference, award-winning media, local conferences and community resilience networks, and

that re-Indigenization arises from the urgency to rebuild that which was there before the exploitation, conquest, and extinction brought on by colonization (p. 254). For Mohawk, the rebuilding is connected to human cultures and in the form of bringing back the biodiversity that existed prior to colonization. It involves a new consciousness that helps all people to rethink terms like modernism and progress and to honestly reexamine where things are going. It involves the re-biodiversity, re-cultural diversity, rethinking of the Earth as a living being.

Melissa K. Nelson (2008) further expanded on this by describing how Native groups are renewing so-called extinct languages, recovering ancestral lands, and are actively maintaining and revitalizing traditional knowledge systems and cultural practices (p. 289). Nelson (2008) simply yet profoundly illustrated that with "every native word we learn, every wooden drum we build, every new song we create, every heirloom corn we grow, we are reconnecting to our cultural heritage and our native imagination" and "this is re-[I]ndigenization" (p. 293) Gregory Cajete (2008), on the other hand, offered a broader and multi-leveled perspective—though he did speak from his perspective as an integral member in the Pueblo community in New Mexico. He articulated that situations are needed that bring us back to re-emphasize the important things that we know are part of culture and our communities. Cajete (2008) called upon an inclusive approach when he stated that it is not exclusively about the Indigenous Peoples of a specific place; it's about re-Indigenizing the people of the planet to the planet (p. 295).

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leadership training programs focused on youth, women and Indigenous peoples http://www.bioneers.org.

Cajete (2008) urgently insisted that the ordinary, everyday people of the world have to understand that they are called upon to care about what happens to the peoples and living things of this world too. That is a huge job, but that is also the spiritual call of the re-Indigenization of the world. These multiple versions of defining re-Indigenization were useful to this study because one of my main research questions specifically focused on asking: To what extent are de-Indigenization and re-Indigenization treated as key themes within the curricular choices made by the educators highlighted in the study? The study revealed that even though re-Indigenization is treated as a key theme among all the educators, the context and depth in which it is presented in the classroom, depends on the factors impacting the human development, identity formation, and self-actualization for each educator—as related to their own exposure and commitment to engaging in a ceremonial discourse, which will be further elaborated on later in this section.

Original Instructions

As has been shown, the concept of re-Indigenizing becomes synonymous with rebuilding, rethinking, reexamining, recovering, renewing, remembering, and revitalizing. These actions are not possible without origins and without access to Origin Stories that contain Original Instructions. It is extremely important to keep present that Original Instructions are place-specific blueprints that describe how to live sustainably within our home ecosystems (Nelson, 2008). Not only do they guide us on how to interact with the environment, such as with wind, water, land fire, plants, animals, trees, clouds, rains, soils, stars, and other life-forms—but they also describe how to interact with "all our relations"—

people within clans, villages, tribes, nations, and other peoples of the world.[8] The concept is not only inclusive of human relations such as neighboring tribes or island peoples but also of nonhuman ones, such insect nations or those beings that are unseen (Nelson, 2008). According to Nelson, Original Instructions, which have been passed down generation after generation through oral histories give us ethics and protocols for how to honor and respect this gift of life in its many manifestations.

Many of the Original Instructions contain the sacred protocols for how to conduct rituals and ceremonies meant to ensure the continuity of a peoples. Some of these Original Instructions are also communicated in sacred ways through visions and dreams. It is very important that we recognize these special teachings within our own traditional knowledge system and respect the diversity of instructions given to other cultures (Nelson, 2008, p. 290). Vital to this study are the Original Instructions that accompany each of the Indigenous ceremonial traditions practiced by the educators in this study. These include: *Danza Azteca*

[8] One of the very beloved grandmothers from the International Council of Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers, Unci Rita Long Visitor Holy Dance, who has now passed into the spirit world, helped explain the meaning of *Mitakuye Oyasin* or "All My Relations." She expressed that *Mitakuye* means "My relatives" and Oyasin means "All of you." She told of a teaching she received from a medicine man who explained that *Mitakuye Oyasin* is an entire prayer in itself when said with all of one's might, praying for all beings—thinking of all the Earth, the whole world, including birds, bugs, everything http://www.grandmotherscouncil.org/

Ceremonies,[9] Sun Dance Ceremonies,[10] Sweat Lodge Ceremonies (*Temazkal* and/or *Inipi*)[11], Spiritual/Ceremonial Running,[12] Talking/Healing Circles,[13] Consuming and/or Preparing

[9] Specifically with regard to *la Danza Azteca* (also recognized as *Azteka*/*Aztekatl*) it is important to include voices that are representative of the experience and scholarship from *México*—the geographical location of the origins of this tradition. I would have liked to have included many more sources from *México* but this is where I hope my future path will guide me. To set this intention, not only for myself bur for future Chicana and Chicano scholars, I include the following reference. Everardo Lara González (2009) in *Paso, camino y danzo con la cuenta de armonia: Teoría matemática del origen del Universo y el orden de la cuenta del maíz, en la danza del Anáhuac,* defined that "*la danza* is the essence of movement of our Universe, the energy that awakes, energy in movement; the manifestation of the pure energy in the refuge of our essence" (p. 15). Additionally, Andrés Segura and Florencio Yescas are *Mexicanos* attributed with introducing *Danza Azteca* to Chicanos and Chicanas in the Southwest over several decades since the late 1960s. For a detailed study of *Danza Azteca* history in Mexico and its impact on Chicano and Chicana identity, please see Mario Aguilar's (2009) doctoral dissertation, *The rituals of kindness: The influence of the Danza Azteca tradition of central Mexico on Chicano-Mexcoehuani identity and sacred space*. Other recent scholarship also gives serious attention to the contributions of both Andrés Segura and Florencio Yescas to Chicano and Chicana (Xicana and Xicana) history, culture, identity, and spirituality. These studies include: Raquel Hernandez Guerrero's (2010) thesis, *Dancing in the street: Danza Azteca as cultural revitalization and spiritual liberation for Chicanos*, Veronica Valadez' (2012) thesis, *Dancing Amoxtli: Danza Azteca and Indigenous body art as forms of resistance*, and Jennie Luna's (2012) doctoral dissertation, *Danza Mexica: Indigenous identity, spirituality, activism, and performance*.

[10] I do not claim to hold any level of expertise on this seventh sacred ceremony brought to the *Lakota* people by White Buffalo Calf Woman—bringing to the *Lakota* nation—their Original Instructions, teaching them about the seven sacred ceremonies: 1. The Sweat Lodge, or the purification ceremony 2. The Naming Ceremony, child naming 3. The Healing Ceremony 4. The making of relatives or the Adoption Ceremony 5. The Marriage Ceremony 6. The Vision Quest 7. The Sun Dance Ceremony, the people's ceremony for all of the nation. I only know that what I witnessed at the only Sun Dance I attended (in 2014) was profound and transformational—just being a supporter of the prayers that were being offered by the Sun Dancers themselves. Other Chicanas share their experiences about attending and participating in the *Lakota* Sun Dance in Elisa Facio's and Irene Lara's (2014) edited book, *Fleshing the spirit: Spirituality and activism in Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous women's lives*.

[11] Kenneth Cohen (2003) provided details on the Sweat Lodge, also recognized as the Purification Lodge or Stone People Lodge. The Sweat Lodge is the name of both the ceremony and the man-made structure in which it takes place (p. 254-255). Cohen described that in the Sweat Lodge "people sweat away their illness, unhappiness, and negativity and invite helping spirits with prayer and song" (p. 255). According to Cohen, in the *Lakota* language, the Sweat Lodge is called "*Initipi* or (*Inipi*), which are" beautiful words that mean 'tipi or lodge of the life-breath' or *Oinikagapi* 'place where they renew life'" (p. 255). Cohen also described the *Nahua*/Aztec Bathhouse or *Temazkal*. He stated that when the Spaniards invaded Mexico in 1519, most Native homes had, nearby them, bee-hive-like lodges made of mud or stone. The bathhouses were also common in Guatemala and Belize; they are still used today. Cohen mentioned that the *Nahua*/Aztecs believed, and continue to believe, that to

Sacred/Ceremonial Foods, Receiving Origin Stories, Meditating at Sacred Sites, and Honoring Dreaming as Sacred Sight/Site. It could be considered a violation of Indigenous protocol—and is far beyond the scope of this project—to offer the specific details surrounding the Original Instructions of these ceremonies—especially since they have come in distinct and unique ways to each of the educators included in the study. What I would like to emphasize, however, is that participating in these living Indigenous knowledge systems (Gonzales, 2012) has shaped the Indigenous epistemologies of the educators who inherited the de-Indigenization that their ancestors experienced. In profoundly transformative ways, these ceremonies have also aided in deleting the colonized neural networks (Yellowbird, 2012; Newcomb, 2008) of the educators and subsequently their families, communities, and students.

enter a *Temazkal* is to return to the warmth, humidity, and darkness of the mother's womb. It is used to "treat many conditions, including skin conditions, arthritis, pain, congestion, infertility, cysts, gout, and menstrual problems, such as PMS and irregularity" (Cohen, 2003, p. 259).

[12] According to Rodríguez (2012c) in "Corriendo educando or teaching/learning while running," published in the *International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies*, Indigenous ceremonial running is traced back many hundreds of years and generally forms part of larger ceremonial ways. Today, running functions as part of athletic events, although running can also function as a means to commemorate a past event (memory) and as a means to transmit ancestral or traditional knowledge. Rodríguez' article examines running as a means of learning and acquiring knowledge and as a method of teaching and raising consciousness. It also considers how ceremonial running has transformed the Tucson community in Arizona, which has been involved in intense human rights struggles, particularly in the struggle to teach Ethnic Studies and examines the *testimonios* of the runners.

[13] Shawn Wilson (2008) in *Research is Ceremony* described a Talking Circle as a space where group members sit in a circle that represents the holism of Mother Earth and the equality of all members. According to Wilson, what is most important is that members feel ownership of the rules.

Ceremony

For those who may not have any knowledge or lived experience of a ceremony, Kenneth Cohen's (2006) work is useful. Cohen (2006) defined that a ceremony is a prescribed sequence of actions that enables one to experience and communicate with a spiritual realm or to influence events. Ceremonies may be personal, inspired by visions and dreams, or they may be tribal traditions, passed down from generation to generation. They may be performed individually or by the tribe or community. Ceremonies are conducted by a ceremonial leader, a medicine man or woman trained in the protocol. To attend a ceremony is to participate in it, even if you are not assigned a role. Speaking about sacred subjects invokes the attention and presence of spirits, requiring the speaker to perform ceremonial actions that demonstrate respect (Cohen, 2006, p. 31).

Tela Star Hawk Lake (1988) further elaborated that ceremony is what gives us empowerment. Without empowerment we are helpless and at the mercy of other people, powers, and predicaments beyond our control. Every new sickness or problem requires another ceremony to help make a transition; otherwise, we become trapped (Star Hawk Lake, 1988, p. 67). Ceremonies function in increments and levels; they are a spiritual form of protection. They can be used to help a person deal with fear, anxiety, pain, and the unknown. Star Hawk Lake added that ceremonies can be used as a spiritual means to help a person make a transition from the known to the unknown and back to the known again and that they are an important form of knowledge that provide a psychological, physical, mental, and spiritual support system both in the past and in the present. And as life changes, we are forced to change with it, so sometimes we have to improvise or make up a new ceremony to deal with life crisis and change (Star Hawk Lake, 1988, p. 158). For de-Indigenized peoples,

such as the Chicana and Chicano educators in this study, this statement by Star Hawk Lake is especially relevant. Due to the distance (in years and geographical location) all of the educators have experienced a loss of access to the ancestral languages, Origin Stories, rituals and ceremonies of their ancestors. However, as a result of the resilient Indigenous expressions of spirituality of groups, such as the *Quiché*, *Lakot*a, and *Mexica*, for instance, the educators have gained access to the ceremonial discourse surrounding those respective traditions. This, in turn, has facilitated the process in which the educators have deepened their commitments to recover their own Indigenous histories, languages, Origin Stories, and ceremonies. These details will be furthered expressed in Chapter 4.

Ceremonial Discourse

Ceremonial discourse is one of memory that is not only cognizant of the historical past but also affirmative of the living capacity of the past in the present, thusly invoking a living relationship with the past. According to Rodríguez, "for de-Indigenized and de-ceremonialized, often dehumanized peoples, this ceremonial discourse represents more than a reconnection to story and place, it represents a reconnection to humanity itself" (2014, p. 10). Rodríguez was referencing "the seven-thousand year ceremonial discourse of *maiz* as a story of the continent that continues to be conveyed through oral and written narratives and often through song, prayer, ceremony, and dance" (p. 159). As will be shown, in this study, ceremonial discourse is an important concept that proved to be foundational to my analysis of the findings, which will be further discussed in Chapter 4.

Medicine

In the context of traditional culture and within a ceremonial discourse, medicine means the presence and power embodied in or demonstrated by a person, place, an event, or object, or a natural phenomenon (Cohen, 2006, p. 27). The Elders teach that some medicine is inborn. The Great Spirit gives each person a medicine, a unique spiritual gift or talent; it takes time to explore and confidence to express (Cohen, 2006, p. 28). Recognition of this medicine is coming into critical consciousness about one's sacred power. This study traces the ways in which the Chicana and Chicano educators have struggled to recognize their own medicine—to accept it—and to put into good use for the benefit of not only themselves but also their families, communities, and students.

Sacred Power[14]

Mark St. Pierre and Tilda Long Soldier (1995) examined power in the context of the sacred and connected it to faith in a spiritual reality beyond the physical world. They described sacred power as the ability to get things done in the spirit world, such as having the power to sense danger, call spirits into a ceremony, or doctor a patient. The medicine person must accurately predict the future and tell the patient what is needed in order to achieve this cure to avoid future problems. This can become risky because it places the healer in potential spiritual danger; it may diminish his or her own spiritual powers through a lifetime of use and dissipation. (St. Pierre and Long Soldier, 1995, p. 20).

[14] Though in a slightly different context, Winona LaDuke (2005) discussed the definition of sacred in *Recovering the sacred: The power of naming and claiming*.

From my own experience, reflection, understanding, and growth as a two-legged being walking on this Earth at this time, sacred power is related to discernment. It is guided by intuition. It is connected to the sacred sites of the body, such as the liver, heart, and top of the head (Sesma, 2015; Esperansa, 2016). It is a self-trust—the result of self-love. It is confidence in guiding voices one is instructed to listen to. It is being able to walk alone and yet walk in tune alongside others without feeling threatened or diminished in any way. Some examples are praying, learning, healing, teaching, loving, birthing, and being in ceremony—which, in reality, these all include. For me, sacred power is fearless honesty, especially with oneself. It is strength of will. Sacred power is the authentic resilience it takes to be the person you have the potential to be. Ray Dupris, asserted that it is not enough to copy the songs and ceremonies of another holy person; this means nothing. He stated in an honest way that, "If you truly have the calling, the spirits will teach you your ceremony, then you will have power—the kind of power that is so strong you could cure anything, even deadly disease, just by being there, praying for that person" (St. Pierre and Long Soldier, 1995, p. 147). What evolves is a way of conducting ceremonies that is unique to the person/healer—uniquely suited to the person and what they are learning. These pieces of ritual practice come and must be affirmed by multiple dreams—it is a slow, lifetime process.

Philosophy of the Seven Generations

Several of the educators in the study discussed the Philosophy of the Seven Generations as integral to their Indigenous epistemology. It is a form of critical consciousness that prioritizes sustainability of ancestral and cultural existence across generations, inclusive of the past, present, and future. Further definitions and clarifications of this philosophy will be revealed in the educator narratives, primarily in Chapter 4.

Teaching as a Healing Craft

It follows that when Chicana and Chicano educators center the importance of Indigenous ancestral wisdom traditions in their classrooms, they are, arguably, enabling their students to heal from various forms of intergenerational historical trauma in order that they may continue to learn. This project asserts that for these Chicana and Chicano educators teaching is a healing craft in its own right. I am interested in examining how the pedagogical decisions of the Chicana and Chicano educators can be traced to their own participation in and intense study of Indigenous ancestral wisdom traditions, such as ceremonial dancing, running, and participating in sweat lodge ceremonies. Commitment to engaging in and preserving these lifeways relates to Gonzales' (2012) emphasis on living Indigenous knowledge that involves a ''ceremonial platform of sacred relationships with the elements of life" which are not experienced through "limited explorations solely of the human mind" amidst textual, narrative, or symbolic analysis (p. 236). By re- centering these living Indigenous knowledges, the urban educators transition into a role of community leadership as cultural practitioners. As cultural practitioners, they maintain a purposeful engagement in the processes of decolonization, which, in turn, allows them to re-Indigenize.

Prophecy of the Eagle and the Condor[15]

In 1990, over 200 representatives of Indigenous nations from throughout the western hemisphere met for the first time in Quito, Ecuador. There they witnessed the unfolding of the Eagle and the Condor. The Encounter of the Condor of Urin and the Eagle of Hanan. This prophecy was related during the first *Encuentro* of Indigenous Peoples in Quito, Ecuador in 1990. In the unfolding of the life of the Indian Nations, every five centuries produces transformations of both foundations and forms. With these changes, life does not lose its essence. It becomes covered with new skin. The old is rejuvenated. It is nourished with pure energy. This energy is transmitted by the great spirits of Allpa Mama and Pacha Mama, that is of nature and of the Universe in general. The prophecies teach Nations to maintain themselves solid, united, and above all to search for the most appropriate paths for their liberation. The beginning of the liberation of the Native People would be symbolized by different prophecies, one of which is the union of the tears of the Condor of Urin and the Eagle of Hanan. The union of these tears would cauterize our wounds and fortify our spirit, body, and thought. The Great Spirit would open furrows and in each furrow would water its

[15] Information for this section was provided in the Raza Studies Now! materials packet distributed at their Second Conference held at Santa Monica College, 2014. Raza Studies Now (RSN) is an organization of educational activists who organized the Raza Studies Now! Conference during the summer of 2012 to build on a vision of self-determination first established in 1969 with *El Plan de Santa Bárbara* for Chicana and Chicano Higher Education. In addition, an insightful definition of *Raza* is provided by Raza Studies Now!: "Ancestral knowledge is the memory of past and current experiences that have shaped our household, community, schooling, and education. It is the culture, history, narrative, and relationship with the land and the universe that all people and groups enjoy. The science of how things work in harmony, such as song, music, dance, math, symbols, and language. Through ancestral knowledge, the student, the parent, the novice, and the institution commit their efforts to further acquiring, uncovering, and advancing ancestral knowledge for the purposes of advancing ancestral knowledge for the purposes of developing innovative and sustainable ways of living in the arenas of family, community, health, and education. Ultimately, we want our children to be critical thinkers and intellectuals, so that they may make conscious decisions with pride and dignity. THAT'S RAZA!" Excerpted from, From Raza Studies Now! *El Plan de Los Angeles: Toward a Path to Implement Raza and Ethnic Studies in K-14 Learning Environments* (2013).

seed an in each step would spring battalion of men who would bare their chests to fend off the daggers of the enemy. They would reach out with their hands to erase oppression, exploitation and injustice and they would write on the huge page of the sky the sacred word liberty. The union of the Condor and Eagle according to the prophecy should occur in this time. The ensuing period will be born with a new spirit. This new spirt will unite once again the red nations of the North, Central, and South parts of the hemisphere. It should also be noted that I learned about the Prophecy of the Eagle and the Condor during the 2012 Peace and Dignity Journeys run when it passed through Los Angeles, CA. More of my own journey and how this prophecy has had a personal impact on me will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Decolonization

When understood collectively, the previous twelve terms provide an in-depth understanding of the complexity that is involved in the decolonizing process. For the purposes of this study, they make-up the thirteenth term, decolonization. Because it was anticipated that some readers may not be familiar with the concept of decolonization and much less the lived practice of it (especially within the field of Education), I wanted to ensure the best possible scenario in order to provide sufficient context for terms that will continue to persist and be further developed throughout the dissertation.[16] This

[16] I also want to acknowledge the work of scholars who DO focus on the intersection between education and decolonization, particularly Dolores Calderón, Carlos Tejeda, and Manuel Espinoza. Tejeda and Espinoza (2003) proposed the concept of a decolonizing pedagogy to address the issue of social justice from and within the educational arena. They argued that an anti-capitalist decolonizing pedagogical praxis is a concrete way to struggle for a social justice that serves the interests of working-class Indigenous and non-white peoples in the internal neocolonial contexts of the contemporary United States. Calderon (2014 focused on making settler colonialism explicit in education. She argued that the United States, and the evolution of its schooling system in particular, are drenched in settler colonial identities. Thus, to begin to decolonize we must first learn to account for settler colonialism. To do so necessitates that we grapple with the dialectic of Indigenous presence and absence that is central to settler colonialism in the United States and its social studies curriculum.

comprehensive examination of this one concept better prepares readers to explore, for themselves, the relevance of Poka Laenui's (2006) five stages of decolonization: Recovery/rediscovery, Mourning, Dreaming, Commitment, and Action. When this trajectory becomes part of one's inner process of reflection, one may be better equipped to embrace Waziyatawin and Michael Yellow Bird's (2012) presentation of decolonization as the "meaningful and active resistance to the forces of colonialism that perpetuate the subjugation and/or exploitation of our minds, bodies, and lands" (p. 31). The current political climate in the United States, considering the struggle at the Standing Rock Reservation in North Dakota as well as the emergence of overt (rather than covert) racism and American exceptionalism at the onslaught of the Trump presidency, warrants renewed urgency for close examination of these concepts for individuals, families, communities and, of course, educators (and students) within institutions that have been the source of cultural annihilation for centuries. Later in this study, another in-depth view of decolonization is offered as it relates to decolonizing Indigenous pedagogies, specifically. The literature reveals that there is a dual emphasis in this type of pedagogical practice, one that focuses on critical analysis and another that prioritizes creativity for transformation and liberation.

Contextualizing Colonial Histories Relevant to the Study

The early forces of European colonialism (primarily Spanish and Portuguese) directly impacted the originating ancestral relations and geographical locations (in what are now referred to as *México* and *Guatemala*) of the educators included in this study. These early forces subjugated and exploited not only the minds, bodies, and lands but also the spirits of Indigenous people. Emphasizing this fact is a vital step in order to show not only how the forces of colonialism continue to be perpetuated, but also, and more importantly, the ways in

which these forces are being meaningfully and actively *resisted* by the educators highlighted in this study. As this project will also point out, the Indigenous-identified Chicana and Chicano educators presented here are a representative sample of a continuously growing movement (one that has consistently been present in the Southwest since at least the height of the Chicano Movement—if not before) toward self-determination through education in Southern California.

The Doctrine of Discovery, the Spanish Inquisition, and the Resulting Spiritual Conversion/Conquest

Steven Newcomb's (2008) work is widely recognized for the manner in which he decoded, made explicit, and provided new understanding to what has been hidden in the doctrine(s) of discovery for centuries. He described that the 1494 Treaty of Tordesilla, approved by Pope Alexander VI, granted that "any Christian king, prince, or nation could 'discover' and assume dominion over lands previously known to non-Christians but unknown to Christians"—with the intent to "protect the land rights of any Christian monarch, such as the Portuguese king, but not the land rights of non-Christian indigenous nations" (p. 125). According to Newcomb (2008), the document emphasized "that non-Christians be 'subjugated' for 'the propagation of the Christian empire'" (p. 125). Newcomb (2008) also made explicit that the murderous and subjugating actions of Cristoforo Colombo/Cristóbal Colón/Christopher Columbus are very much a part of the legacy of Christendom and of Christian evangelization during the Age of Discovery (p. 65).

Colombo/Colón/Columbus, according to Newcomb (2008), is a prototype of the Conqueror Cognitive Model and of "those horrific and destructive forces of colonization that desired and worked hard to strip [I]ndigenous people of their free and independent existence"

(p. 65). Newcomb (2008) detailed that Colombo/Colón/Columbus' symbol of "justice" were the three hundred gallows he had erected on many different Indigenous islands in order to hang Indigenous people at the "bar of justice," thirteen at a time, the number corresponding to Jesus and the twelve Apostles (p. 65). Characteristic of this early colonial reality is the barbarity—and the religious foundations that justified it. It is necessary to highlight these details because they directly informed the ways in which colonialism continued to spread amongst the regions of ancestral origins related to the educators of this study.

Gonzales (2013) also elaborated on the Spanish colonization of what is now known as present-day *Guatemala* and *México*. She described, in detail, how the Spanish Inquisition and colonial authorities utilized public displays of power to repress Indigenous worldviews while replacing the grand pre-Columbian public ceremonies (Gonzales, 2013, p. 77). The repression of Indigenous worldviews began in 1600 when the *Nahua* writing systems ceased to officially exist as the sacred calendar systems were destroyed and the keepers and makers of the books faced prosecution and execution (Gonzales, 2013, p. 73). Following the book burnings, Spanish priests assumed some of the Indigenous traditions to serve the purpose of conversion. This resulted in recreating some pertinent knowledge on traditions but interjecting colonizing Spanish frameworks regarding Native practices (p. 74).[17] Furthermore, one facet of Indigenous epistemology of the time recognized natural forces by personifying them. The Spanish believed that these ideological constructions were informed by the ideology of the devil (Gonzales, 2013, p. 76). Spaniards introduced European concepts

[17] The ceremonial calendars, the sacred sites, the attendant ceremonies are all forms of sharing knowledge and lifeways that are part of Red Medicine. The codices and colonial documents are valuable as both sites of historical trauma and sources of Original Instructions (Gonzales, 2013, p. 79).

of witches, devils, and "wild women" as they interrogated Native peoples in search of these very frames (Gonzales, 2013, p. 76). This practice of conditioning people's mental networks and sensitivity toward this cognitive construct continues—as Newcomb (2008) has also pointed out. Some Native leaders argue that such conditioning occurs via sermons and faith activities, eventually leading to the de-Indianization of Mexicans (Gonzales, 2013, p. 78).

Thus the de-Indianization of Mexicans (and people descended from *CentroAmérica*) can be directly traced to the Catholic Church and its vital role in espousing the colonial project of the time. Gonzales (2013) referenced López Austin who provided details about colonial domination that noted how certain Native teachings were accommodated, while other, more powerful contestations to Catholicism were demonized and exorcised from Native cultures. Day keepers and keepers of medicinal and ritual or sacred knowledge were reported to the Holy Office, and their Native technology was used against them (Gonzales, 2013, p. 73). Florescano, as also cited by Gonzales, captures how colonization and imposed conversion fragmented the Indigenous people's lifeways by separating them from their ritual calendars and "means of knowing" that imbued the daily life cycle with sacredness, grounding, and meaning. Native time and order in all its dimensions became disarticulated and dismembered (Gonzales, 2013, p. 77-78).

Priests and colonizers used existing social networks to exact social control and surveillance. The Inquisition used repression of entire families and communities, torture, death, indentured servitude, and even prison in perpetuity for repeat offenders (Gonzales, 2013, p. 77). These severe injustices that prioritized physical submission and simultaneous oppression of Indigenous bodies were justified by early colonizers and Catholic priests who believed that Indigenous people did not have souls. Gonzales (2013) asserted that one of the

several aims of the Holy Inquisition was to censor the spoken words that invoked prayers and incantations in traditional healing (p. 73).

Within a discourse of Chicana and Chicano Studies, that aligns itself with both Decolonizing and Indigenous Studies, it may be time for a reconceptualization of colonialism—one that not only calls out but also calls into question the role that religion (Catholic and Protestant to begin with) has played in facilitating an intuitive incapacitation to achieving one's full human potential—a potential that works in alignment with cosmological natural law. Although this may, at first, seem like a drastic conclusion to draw, it is based on the reality that the fear-based methodologies of these religious (and once colonizing) orders deactivate, disable, and disempower intuitive guidance that is grounding and guiding. When people are coerced to make decisions based on fear-based intimidation, they are being led astray from acknowledging their true feelings and needs.[18] The outcomes can result in inauthentic choices that lead people further and further away from their intuitive capacities and can deny them access to their intuitive intelligence—which is, in essence, their sacred power.[19] Sacred power is what places people in direct communication with the Creator that lives within (or reflects back to) them; however, as the research will further reveal, Indigenous ceremonial practices, such as those enacted by the Chicana and Chicano educators in this study, activate this sacred communication. Continued ceremonial practice

[18] Materials provided by Edmundo Norte (2016) at the Nonviolent Leadership for Social Justice Retreat offer insight from a scholar-activist-organizer-educator who blends a Human Development focus with *Raza* epistemological frameworks.

[19] It should be noted that intuition here is linked to sacred power—it is internal; it is deep; it comes from deep within at the level of spirit—not the "intuition" that is biased, tainted by social forces and norms—where the hierarchies are already in place, and that result in a systematic-led intuition that is fragmented and based on Euro-western-based epistemologies and cognitive models—see Newcomb (2008).

provides guidance, training, experience, and most importantly exposure to understanding the language of intuition that comes from within oneself.[20]

Coloniality of Power and Spiritual Violence

Furthermore, creative and natural forces, appearing in the form of spirit allies, may also arrive in either waking, dreaming, waking-dreaming, and/or ceremonial time. Quijano's (2000) coloniality of power perspective is useful here to contextualize why it is, that today, countless people of Mexican and Central American descent have been and continue to be de-ceremonialized for, ''we still live in a colonial world'' where ''metropolitan spaces are already polluted ''by a colonial history, a colonial imaginary, colonial knowledges, [and] a racial/ethnic hierarchy linked to a history of empire'' (Grosfoguel et al. 2005, p. 6, 8). Furthermore, a ''constant feature of coloniality is that white European/Euro-American groups are always at the top of the racial/ethnic hierarchy despite the changes over time of racist discourses, racial dynamics and the groups that share the bottom of the hierarchy'' (Grosfoguel et al. 2005, p. 12). Previously, in 2013, I wrote about how this racial hierarchy is further exhibited in school curricula that situates white European/Euro-American/Westernized authors consistently at the top where they are given primacy over other works by people of color and/or First Nations People, especially those who question and resist via their thematic content and methodological innovations. Here, I expand upon this work to further explore how the mechanism that fuels a racial hierarchy also operates at the level of spiritual practice—questioning the extent to which spirits have been and continue

[20] This is an area to be further developed in future research as there seem to be significant implications at the level of identity development when the field of Human Development is informed by a Chicana and Chicano/*Raza* Studies perspective.

to be colonized as well as the ways in which the Euro-westernized canon of thought, characteristic of standardized school curricula, facilitate this form of spiritual violence.

One way to re-conceptualize colonialism so that people understand its force, magnitude, and continued impact is to emphasize that it became manifest in religion (which also influenced dogmatic practices in other social institutions besides churches, such as schools, courts, hospitals, and even the home) so insidiously that it has functioned to the extent that the descendants of Indigenous people, today, have voluntarily distanced themselves from their Indigeneity—from accessing their Indigenous ancestry and traditions as well as their own personal sacred power as intended by their Original Instructions. To clarify, this is not to suggest that sacred power is not present in religious practices, such as Catholicism and Protestantism (amongst numerous others) as followers of these specific orders may definitively be inclined to describe the guidance provided by the Holy Spirit, for example. The point I am insisting upon here is that such explanations and manifestations of sacred power are undoubtedly de-Indigenized and almost entirely devoid of Indigenous epistemologies, linguistics, symbolisms, or aesthetics. This, in turn, has deep implications when considering racial/ethnic/cultural identity development, especially over a lifetime (Pizarro, 2001).

Research Questions

For this study, I was interested in documenting and analyzing the praxes of Indigenous-identified Chicana and Chicano educators who reclaim the classroom as a decolonizing space. Decolonization, in this context, allows for re-Indigenization, which I define as a process of actively learning how to speak, listen, act, and live in a good way—in

balance with all of life—seen and unseen. The study focused on unearthing the insights that the urban educators have gained from ceremonial practice, and it also explored evidence of how these insights have shaped their teaching methods and practice. Three main questions guided this study:

1. What factors have influenced Chicana and Chicano educators to assert Indigenous-centered identities?
2. How do Indigenous-identified Chicana and Chicano educators assert decolonizing practices within academic institutions?
3. To what extent are de-Indigenization and re-Indigenization treated as key themes within the curricular choices made by these educators?

To address these questions, I began this study by conducting a series of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with six Chicana and Chicano educators. These interviews were followed by participant-observation of the educators' classrooms and a gathering of the educators at a local southern California community college, in the San Gabriel Valley, where they shared about their high-impact practices in working specifically within the Chicana and Chicano Educational Pipeline, including high school and various higher education institutions, such as community colleges, state colleges, and private universities (Yosso, 2005).

Foundational Theoretical/Conceptual Frameworks

Humanizing Pedagogy

Humanization, within the context of education, was thoroughly explored by Paulo Freire (1970) in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Although Freire was not writing within the

specific framework of the educational system in the United States, his treatise continues to hold relevance for educators across the globe, especially those who recognize the transformative and liberatory power of educational spaces. In contrasting the two methodologies within education, banking versus problem-posing, Freire clarified that authentic liberation—the process of humanization—is not another deposit to be made, so that those ‘‘truly committed to the cause of liberation can accept neither the mechanistic concept of consciousness as an empty vessel to be filled, nor the use of banking method of domination (propaganda, slogans—deposits) in the name of liberation’’ (p. 79).[21] Self-awareness and its connection to self-actualization are thus integral to humanization. This study posits that when pedagogical practice facilitates this process, it can also be seen as a form of healing with empowering implications for both individuals and communities.

Critical Race Theory in Education

I have drawn upon literature in Critical Race Theory (CRT) in Education, Ethnic Identity development among Chicanas and Chicanos, and Decolonizing Indigenous Pedagogies, which allow for analyses of transformative interventions that originate with the lived experiences of those who have endured the violent legacies of racialized colonial processes. Collectively, the literature examines how the construction and dissemination of what counts as valid knowledge make school sites complicit within an oppressive, systematic regime of inequality. Thus, the theoretical frameworks I utilized, met at the point where racism and colonialism intersect as well as where self- determination is sought in order to

[21] For a useful problematization of Freire’s work from a working-class Chicana perspective, see Edén Torres’ (2003) chapter, “Weakness and wisdom: Freire and education in her book, *Chicana without apology*.

move toward transformative and liberatory educational praxis. I note that I drew especially from literature written by educators-scholars-activists who have prioritized interventions pertaining to students along the Chicana and Chicano Educational Pipeline (Yosso, 2005).

Specifically, I build upon Yosso's (2005) in-depth consideration of the Chicana and Chicano Educational Pipeline. Her framework expanded upon Critical Race Theory in Education and sought to shift the research lens away from models of deficit-thinking (Valencia, 1997) by introducing the concept of community cultural wealth. Community cultural wealth has been defined as ''an array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and utilized by communities of color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression'' (Yosso, 2005, p. 77). Community cultural wealth stands as an alternative—a direct intervention—working to counter hegemonic privileging of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977). It legitimizes various resources Chicanas and Chicanos (as well as other minoritized students) bring with them to schools from their home and community environments. These include capital that is also aspirational, familial, social, navigational, resistant, and linguistic (Yosso 2005, p. 78).

Curanderismo—Indigenous Ancestral Wisdom Traditions Guiding Pedagogical Praxis

A vital intersection exists between Yosso's (2005) work on community cultural wealth and Avila's (2000) work on *curanderismo*. Although this work does not focus exclusively on *curanderismo,* it does address the Indigenous epistemologies that are foundational to it. When Chicana and Chicano urban educators integrate Indigenous ancestral wisdom traditions into their pedagogical practice, they affirm an overlooked and often suppressed form of community cultural wealth. This study seeks to further explore how

key aspects of Avila's practice of *curanderismo* relate, specifically, to the Indigenous-identified Chicana and Chicano educators that will be involved in this project.

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review
~Sacred Bridges~
A Discussion of Scholars con *Palabra*:
In Honor of the Prophecy of the
Eagle and the Condor[22]

Transformative Pedagogies

What follows is a synopsis of literature written by both Chicana and Chicano as well as Indigenous educators.[23] A significant intersection exists between both bodies of literature since they advocate for transformative pedagogies that serve Chicanas and Chicanos that may also identify as Indigenous as well as those that may exclusively identify with their Indigenous and/or respective nations.

Chicanas and Chicanos along the Educational Pipeline and CRT in Education

Critical Race Theory (CRT) in Education serves a pragmatic role in allowing educators of color to act in creative ways to counter racially hostile educational environments that their students face. Yosso (2005), in highlighting the Five Tenets of CRT, as applied to the field of Education, described the first tenet as the inter-centricity of race and racism (p. 7). CRT in Education centralizes race and racism while also focusing on racism's intersections with other forms of subordination gender, class, sexuality, language, culture,

[22] This dissertation project has sought to bridge the discourses of indigeneity and education between Indigenous-identified Chicanas and Chicanos and other Indigenous Peoples in the spirit of the Prophecy of the Eagle and the Condor. It is my hope that this work will honor the Eagle and Condor Prophecy by facilitating a space where words become bridges—in this way—there is a spiritual running of ideological exchanges—a movement and flow of ideas that connect peoples across space and time.

[23] It should be noted that Jack D. Forbes, who played a pivotal role in developing Native American Studies at UC, Davis as well as in opening the first Tribal College in California (D-Q University), is noted as the first American Indian scholar to recognize Chicanos as Native peoples in his 1973 book *Aztecas del norte* (Gonzales, p. 239).

immigrant status, phenotype, accent, surname (Yosso, 2005, p. 7). The other tenets include: the challenge to dominant ideologies proliferating falsities about objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity; the commitment to social justice; the centrality of experiential knowledge; and the importance of an interdisciplinary perspective (Yosso, 2005, p. 7). The Five Tenets of CRT have served as one framework guiding the analysis of the findings of this dissertation project, particularly with regard to the six educators' own pedagogical practice. This is further explored in Chapters 4 and 5.

The body of work represented by Marcos Pizarro (2005), Dolores Delgado Bernal et al. (2006), Jeffrey Duncan-Andrade (2008) as well as Augustine Romero, Sean Arce, and Julio Cammarota (2009) provides access to scholarship that centers on the personal experiences of primarily Chicana and Chicano educators who are embattled to fight for educational justice for their (primarily Chicana and Chicano) students. These works have served as exemplary models for me as they have contributed to my knowledge of how Critical Pedagogy and CRT in Education can be utilized by Chicana and Chicano educators specifically. Furthermore, these authors offer concrete examples of educational praxis—as defined by Freire (1970) as they move from personal reflection to action in the service of liberatory transformation—not only for themselves but for their students and their respective communities. Furthermore, the discourse represented by this body of work aligns with Laura Réndon's (2009) *sentipensante* (sensing/thinking) pedagogy, which is defined as "consonance between inner work, focusing on emotional and spiritual nurturance, and outer work, involving service and action in the world" (p. 137).These works ground the vision of this project and enable me to seek a more thorough understanding of the motivating factors that have ignited this process for the educators themselves.

Collectively, these four works also show that efforts have been made since publications by Angela Valenzuela (1999) and Harriet Romo (1999) were published. These works were vital to the discourse surrounding the experiences of Mexican American/Chicano/a school youth specifically. Romo (1999) articulated that there was a lack of qualified teachers with little to no experience with diverse populations. Also, Valenzuela (1999) posited that subtractive schooling (schooling that subtracts cultural resources from students) divests youth of important social and cultural resources, leaving them progressively vulnerable to academic failure (p. 3). She stated that schools are organized formally and informally in ways that fracture students' cultural and ethnic identities, creating social, linguistic, and cultural divisions amongst the students and between the students and staff. She also expressed that teachers mostly fail to forge meaningful connections with their students and that feelings that no one cares are pervasive. This disconnect between students, staff, and educators, according to Romo (1999) is the equivalent to cultural genocide as students are eventually socialized away from their communities and families of origin—resulting in marginalization. Ultimately, for Valenzuela, the interest of the community is best served by those who possess an unwavering respect for the cultural integrity of a people and their history[24].

The collective works by Pizarro (2005), Delgado Bernal et al. (2006), Duncan-Andrade (2008) as well as n Romero, Arce, and Cammarota (2009) exemplified more recent efforts by educators to incorporate, within their pedagogical practice, an unwavering respect

[24] For an update on Valenzuela's more recent work, please see the review by Richard P. Durán (2014) of *Generating Transworld Pedagogies: Reimagining La Clase Mágica.* Edited by Belinda Bustos Flores, Olga A. Vásquez, and Ellen Riojas Clark (2014). Please visit, www.budrich-journals.de/index.php/IJREE/article/download/19552/17049.

for the cultural integrity and history of Chicanas and Chicanos. With regard to this dissertation project, these four works further compelled me to inquire about the challenges that present-day Chicana and Chicano educators face in their working environments (where racism and colonialism intersect) as well as how they might resist them. The research sought to examine the ways in which Indigenous epistemologies guided the various forms of resistance enacted by each of the educators. In order to understand the process of how the educators were guided to practice Indigenous ceremonial traditions, it was helpful to closely examine the literature on ethnic identity development among Chicanas and Chicanos.

Ethnic Identity Development among Chicanas and Chicanos

Pizarro[25] suggested two main areas of focus in which Chicana and Chicano identity have been best explored: social psychology and post-colonial social theory. These have made fundamental contributions to understanding Chicana and Chicano experiences and identity formations. However, Pizarro also pointed to the specific limitations of these works. He described that while they have made "powerful progressions in our understanding of the Chicana/o experience, the core of this discourse exists on a theoretical plane which is inapplicable to our understanding of the daily manifestations of these social creations" (np). Fittingly, complex models explaining Chicana and Chicano identity have "pushed researchers to try to understand how ethnic identity is created and connected to individuals' daily lives and behaviors" (np). For Pizarro, these efforts suggested the possibility of conducting research on Chicana and Chicano identity that "can be more fully understood with regard to its influences, formative processes, and multiple manifestations" (np).

[25] Unpublished manuscript by Marcos Pizarro, "Power, borders, and identity: Understanding the world of Chicana/o students."

In order to analyze the influences, formative processes, and multiple manifestations responsible for impacting ethnic identity development among the Chicana and Chicano educators who participated in this research project, I referenced Tajfel's explanations of social realms as a starting point. He specified that the intersecting realms, in which one interacts, are responsible for affecting identity development. According to Tajfel, these factors include: cultural, familial, occupational, peer, and community contexts (Pizarro and Vera, 2001). Because formal educational institutions have been primary sources of oppression for Chicanas and Chicanos (and their antecedents), I build upon the work of Chicana and Chicano scholar-activists, such as those previously mentioned, to expand the scope of Tajfel's definition of social realms to also include educational contexts. Within formalized school settings, Chicanas and Chicanos—who like many other ethnic minorities —as well as some members of immigrant groups—have lived "in a cultural universe [that is] embedded within, but [is] substantively different from that of mainstream American culture" (Ainslie as cited in Peña, 2003, p. 315). This cultural universe—existing within and outside of formalized educational institutions—is characterized by the incessant conditions of oppression that maintain the structural and systematic mistreatment of targeted groups in the United States (Roybal Rose as adapted by Norte, 2015). As a result, a Cycle of Oppression is recognizable that

1. Is structural, systematic mistreatment of a targeted group.
2. Leads to negative assumptions, attitudes, and beliefs about the targeted group through misinformation supported and perpetuated by the mainstream media.
3. Justifies the enactment of oppressive laws, policies, and practices aimed at the target group.

In turn, maintaining one's existence within this Cycle of Oppression leads to patterns of coping behavior in response to it. The coping behavior is related to intergenerational historical trauma, and internalized oppression as well as subsequent unresolved grieving and shame-based behavior.

Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart (2000) defined historical trauma (HT) as a cumulative, collective wounding across generations "emanating from massive group trauma." Duran (2006) described that internalized oppression is when we take on the attributes [e.g. psychological, spiritual] of the perpetrator and use these energies against our families, communities, ourselves. Additionally, the oppression can be internalized in the form of self-hatred, or we may believe our power comes from oppressing or hurting others. Internalized oppression affects domestic violence in that the self-hatred is projected onto someone who looks the most like us, (i.e. family members). Gonzales (2005) explained that people identified as mestizo, Hispanic, or Latino suffer from a particular kind of historical trauma because they are told that they are both the oppressed and the oppressor. Gonzales (2005) also asserted that many Mexicans are largely Indian by heritage and do not descend from Spanish colonialists, and when they do, it may be through rape or forced marriage, such as with one of her *Kickapoo* grandmothers. For Gonzales (2005), it is "hard to determine who is the 'we/they,' who of the relatives were/are the mestizos who benefited from controlling 'the Indian.' She emphasized that the "Mexican (read Bolivian, Ecuadorian etc.) community has been in a constant process of de-Indianization and each family has its own particular relationship to that process" (p.1).[26]

[26] For a thorough discussion of de-Indianization, please reference Bonfil Batalla's (1996) work *México profundo: Reclaiming a civilization*.

Minoritized subjects, individuals from within targeted groups as those previously described, may experience a sense of loss and cultural mourning in the face of negotiating divergent cultural spheres (Ainslie as cited in Peña, 2003, p. 315). Ezequiel Peña revealed that "complex transcultural traumas lingering in the Chicano/a imagination" are oftentimes "re-agitated in the face of contemporary disavowals of Chicanos/as by American imperialist ideologies" (Peña, 2003, p. 315). The current political climate (with Donald Trump as the new representative of the racist-colonialist vision of the United States—which has ALWAYS been in place) with its anti-immigrant, specifically anti-Mexican discourse is one example of a re-agitation that has triggered transcultural traumas of alienation and the cultural mourning that accompanies the visibility of cultural genocide in the making.

Undoubtedly, collective identity politics are impacted as Brown (2003) has suggested: "Even as it is being articulated, circulated, and lately institutionalized in a host of legal, political, and cultural practices, identity is unraveling—metaphysically, culturally, geopolitically, and historically—as rapidly as it is being produced" (Brown as cited in Peña, p. 316). When observed carefully and thoroughly, the unraveling of identity allows for the visibility of the intersecting factors that shape it, including those at the institutional, interpersonal, and internal levels. Exterior factors existing at the institutional and interpersonal levels simultaneously impact the interiority of individuals. In other words, the systematic forces that have been influenced and supported by centuries of racist-colonialist practices continue to have an impact on the minds, bodies, emotions, and spirits of the targeted groups most marginalized oppressed by them.

With regard to Chicana and Chicano ethnic identity development, in particular, Pizarro's (2001) work has contributed to the discourse on exterior forces, such as those that

originate in educational institutions that have employed racist-colonialist practices against brown *Raza* youth.[27] Yet, Pizarro and Vera (2001) have emphasized that there "have been no analyses of Chicana/o ethnic identity development in adulthood" (p. 91) and that such studies would be useful because they could—by way of longitudinal analyses—reveal that shifts in identity formations, do, indeed, occur over time due to varying forces related to historical, political, social, and cultural factors—among others.

Decolonizing Indigenous Pedagogies

Whereas CRT in Education promotes the centricity of race, practitioners of Decolonizing Indigenous Pedagogies call for an analysis of the inequities that arise from legacies of colonial education that have been based on ontological and epistemological violence in school systems. Sandy Grande (2004) introduced the term, red pedagogy, as an emancipatory teaching method that asserts the importance of Indigenous populations not only taking a critical stance but also partaking in survivance (Vizenor, 2008), which, similar to re-Indigenization, includes the active recovery, re-imagination and reinvestment in Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and living. In this way, red pedagogy becomes a key component to resist against Euro-American assimilationist practices.

The relevance of a red pedagogy can be understood by way of analyzing the role educational institutions play in defining what counts as valid knowledge. Inés Talamantez (2006) expressed that the world of academia continues to exert control over the very

[27] See also, Pizarro (2005), *Chicanas and Chicanos in school: Racial profiling, identity battles, and empowerment*. UT Press.

substance of Native American research and publication, given its power to determine what counts as academic scholarship. For Talamantez (2006), the deeper and more crucial issue involves the control over what counts as knowledge, which is a critical question when exploring Native American (and I would include Indigenous epistemologies (p. 114).[28] She described that one of the greatest tensions has involved the imposition of different constructs of authentic knowledge through unfamiliar forms and understandings of power. In many Native American traditions, power cannot be understood apart from sacred realities or from specific notions of balance.

Talamantez (2006) also clarified that in today's context, Chicana and Indigenous women, who are in dialogue with women Elders, are finding a place for themselves as they redefine the history of their religious and healing experiences. She explained that Native American women's and Chicanas' works are grounded in systems of relatedness, obligation, and respect that also includes chants, songs, and sacred narratives (Talamantez, 2006, p. 117). These modalities provide an Indigenous framework, which remain the most significant ways of accessing the divine and sacred powers for healing, harmony, and spiritual teachings. Talamantez' work, in this regard, has been necessary for this dissertation project because it has engendered a discourse surrounding ontology, epistemology, and Indigenous pedagogy as it relates to both Native American women and Chicanas respectively. I have drawn upon Talamantez' work to further explore the factors that have influenced the educators' intense study of Indigenous ceremonial knowledge and teachings. Furthermore, in this study, I have examined how the educators' active roles as cultural practitioners of these traditions have

[28] It is beyond the scope of this project, at this time, to engage in the lengthy discourse surrounding the various labels, such as Native American, American Indian, and Indigenous. Please see footnote 1.

facilitated their consistent interrogation of the function of schools as well as educator-student-community relations.

Intersecting Indigenous Pedagogies from the Southern and Northern Traditions of the Hemisphere

Chicana and Chicano Decolonizing Indigenous Pedagogy, as defined in this study, intersects with the priorities set by advocates and practitioners of Indigenous Education insofar that both have been and continue to be challenged by the fact that "no contemporary theory of Indian education exists that can guide the implementation or direction of curriculum development unless it has the underlying aim of cultural assimilation" (Cajete, 2012, p. 155). Stating the problem in this way—with an emphasis on the need for a contemporary *theory* of Indian education—does not seek to diminish the tremendous pragmatic efforts made by those involved in designing, implementing, and defending K-12 schools and programs rooted in Indigenous Mexican principles and practices, such as Semillas del Pueblo (El Sereno, CA), MAS-Tucson (Tucson, AZ), and Academia Cuauhtli (Austin, TX) among the many others that have and continue to remain in active existence and resistance.[29] Rather this project is an effort to move in alignment with those transformative *esfuerzos*. It is a way to demonstrate and communicate my deep reflections about the significance of these efforts and to contribute to the cyclical rotation—commonly referred to

[29] Tribal colleges are an important area that should be acknowledged and that require further comparative research as well, particularly with regard to issues of sovereignty, autonomy, and self-determination. Please see Cheryl Crazy Bull's (2014) "American Indian College Fund's Cheryl Crazy Bull: Why tribal colleges matter" www.nativenewsonline.net.

as praxis—that is theory +reflection + action ~ working in the service of social transformation (Freire, 1970).

Cajete's concern about the problematic connection between curricula that promotes cultural assimilation is one that coincides with the content expressed in *El Plan de Santa Bárbara* (1969), a higher education plan, specifically, which called for a "strategic use of education" by placing value on the needs of the community (La Causa, p. 9). *El Plan* (1969) recognized and promoted that self-determination could be achieved through education. Essentially, *El Plan* (1969) recognized the transformative potential of the learning process.

The Dual Emphasis of Decolonizing Indigenous Pedagogies:

Critical Analysis and Creativity for Transformation and Liberation

In this section of the literature review, the authors individually and collectively call attention to the fact that Decolonizing Indigenous Pedagogies have a dual emphasis.

1.) They foster critical analysis of the inequities that arise from legacies of colonial education
2.) They seek to engage in creative attempts to reintroduce and revitalize Indigenous knowledge systems and their ensuing practices in order to decolonize.

Critical analysis is necessary for developing the skills to discern the ongoing presence of colonialist practices in school settings while creativity is essential for undoing the remnants of those colonialist practices and in taking the necessary action steps to replace them. Essentially, the decolonial process is a creative one that focuses on reintroducing and revitalizing Indigenous knowledge ways that are transformative and enduring alternatives. Grande's (2004) seminal work on red pedagogy contextualized decolonization within an educational framework as she calls upon Indigenous scholars to construct their own theoretical systems relevant to their current struggles and conditions In order to do so, Grande (2004) reaffirmed the dual capacities that are foundational to Decolonizing

Indigenous Pedagogies. Grande (2004) asserted that "we [as educators] must *engage the best of our creative and critical capacities* to discern the path of social justice and then follow it" (p. 175, emphasis mine).

Identification of four major themes that can be grouped into two larger categories, in this portion of the literature review, can guide the implementation of curricula that prioritizes the Original Instructions inherent in Indigenous knowledge systems. The themes reveal themselves in the following way:

Critical Analysis

- Employing Critical Analysis of Educational Experiences Based in Colonialist Practices
- Recognizing the Impact of Colonialist Educational Practices on Spiritual Identity Formations

Creative Process

- Decolonizing Neural Networks: Regenerating Indigenous Epistemologies by Re-rooting Indigenous Metaphors
- Engaging in a Relational Teaching-Healing Learning Experience

Critical Analysis

Employing Critical Analysis of Educational Experiences Based in Colonialist Practices

Grande (2004), wrote that it was imperative that Indigenous educators utilize critical analysis to thoroughly examine "the causes and effects of all wars, conflicts, and inter/intrapersonal encounters" (p. 175). She asserted the importance of recognizing that the root cause is colonization. Cajete (2012) identified the long-term effects of colonization on Indigenous Peoples as including the loss of traditional homelands, personal and communal self-sufficiency, and traditional sustaining practices. Cajete (2012) also clarified that the colonization process is responsible for the disintegration of traditional communities, economies, and languages; a significant reduction in Indigenous populations; and a consistent

disruption of personal freedom and family life—including a loss of economic independence, personal self-respect, honor, and identity (p. 148). The two authors also acknowledged the ways in which colonialist practices have been and continue to be inherently implicated within educational institutions and settings. Hence, Cajete (2012) provided the reminder that "as we examine the purpose of modern education, Indigenous People must analyze the effects it has had on our collective cultural, psychological, and ecological viabilities" (p. 146).

This is why, according to Grande (2004), a red pedagogy is necessary because it compels students [and the educators they are entrusted to] to question *how* whitestream knowledge is related to the processes of colonization[30] (p. 56, emphasis mine). The violence of whitestream history and the consequential re-victimization it has on students is akin to colonization itself as well as the genocides and cultural annihilations that have followed it. In essence, education systems in the United States (and abroad) have stripped Indigenous People away from their origins by imposing hierarchical knowledge systems onto them (Battiste, np. *Grandfather, how do I learn?*). These unfamiliar knowledge systems were intended for Indigenous People to live in a different kind of way. Gonzales (2012) provided one specific example relevant to those with origins in what is now called *México*. She explained how colonization neutralized the understanding and practice of time keeping—of understanding, measuring, and being in relationship with time itself. Colonization separated Indigenous People from their connection with time through the cosmos. They were thus

[30] Luis Urrieta Jr. (2010) in *Working from within: Chicana and chicano activist educators in whitestream schools* references Sandy Grande's (2004) use of the term whitestream in *Red pedagogy: Native American social and political thought*. Urrieta pointed out that whitestream schools, in his book, refer to all schools from kindergarten through graduate school and to the official and unofficial texts used in US schools that are founded on the practices, principles, morals, and values of white supremacy and that highlight the history of white Anglo-American culture (p. 181). He also noted that any person, including people of color, actively promoting or upholding white models as the goal or standard is also involved in whitestreaming (p.181).

thrown into space without support (Florescanso as cited in Gonzales, 2012, p. 103). To learn the deeply rooted implications (that continue to be relevant today) of even this one example requires lengthy study that extends far beyond the scope of this project.

Thusly, as Grande (2004) illustrated, the lesson here is most definitely pedagogical, and it is applicable to all fields of study, including mental health. Duran (2006) problematized the mental health profession by also explaining that it has been instrumental in fostering the colonial ideation of Native Peoples all over the world (p. 163). What follows then, in order to begin the process of coming back to our power and of using education as a tool to do so, Indigenous educators must especially understand the ways in which colonialism continues to function in hidden forms in education, institutional, economic, and political structures, and in the psychology of BOTH Indigenous and Non-Indigenous People alike. Cajete (2012) confirmed that the nature of prejudice and discrimination as well as the inherent dehumanization of colonialism must be understood in historic and present contexts. He also challenged the modern denial of colonialism with its accompanying blame-the-victim-for-their-own-victimization mentality. Quite relevant to this dissertation focus is Cajete's effort to insist on critical analysis of internalized colonization, which is manifested as hopelessness, powerlessness, self-abuse, shame, and negative self-image.[31] Practitioners of Decolonizing Indigenous Pedagogies do, in fact, play a vital role in not only understanding but in remedying these outcomes and their various manifestations among Indigenous People.

Recognizing the Impact of Colonialist Educational Practices on Spiritual Identity Formations

[31] Within the context of Chicanos and Chicanas, please see Charles Ornelas, Carlos Muñoz, and Mario Barrera (1972), "The barrio as an internal colony." *People and politics in urban society*. Edited by Harlan Hanh. Beverly Hills: CA, Sage Publications.

The literature revealed the significance of Indigenous educators actively developing (for both themselves and their students) the critical capacity and consciousness to investigate the ways in which colonialist educational practices function, in detrimental ways, against the well-being of Indigenous People. The key danger of a culturally assimilationist curriculum design is that it shapes ontology and epistemology as well as cognitive patterns, which ultimately drive behavior—including patterns that do not prioritize self-care. Cajete (2012) provided helpful insights in understanding this as he explained that American education continues to emphasize "objective" content and experience that is detached from real life and community. For Cajete (2012), this "conditioning for being a marginal participant and perpetual observer involved with only objective content is the basis of the crisis of American education and the alienation of modern man from his own being in the natural world" (p. 151). In this passage, Cajete (2012) holds the American education system completely responsible for fragmenting beings that are designed to be integrative and complete. Duran (2006), whose work focuses on mental health, added to a deeper understanding of the ways in which Euro-Western canons of thought (which are undoubtedly promoted in educational institutions) directly justify fragmentation of the Self: "Through the process of the so-called enlightenment and the Cartesian splitting of the world, we literally have done just that [...] we have been split-off from our world-soul" (p. 19). Duran (2006) further problematized the Cartesian split by addressing that the question of identity is one that relates to who people are as spiritual beings (p. 43).

To be indoctrinated into an epistemological framework that attempts to split beings who are intended to be integral is a form of violence. It is unaligned with non-Western epistemologies that understand the body is never separate from the spirit or mind, for all

curative recommendations must consider the ailing person as a whole (Castillo as cited in Torres, 2003, p. 18). Edén Torres (2003) offers a visual representation of how the Self is affected by trauma by suggesting that readers imagine the four primary aspects of a person, which surround the vulnerable, as well as the secure, ego: the mental, the spiritual, the emotional, and the physical (p. 18). According to Torres (2003), these "form a circle around the core of a person and become the first line of defense in the ego's struggle to maintain its health, so in a sense, "they compose the facade or face with which we operate in the world; therefore, a "disturbance to, or an assault on any of the four parts of a person will push the center of the core Self off balance" (p. 18).

An unfortunate yet undeniable colonial reality is that school settings, as a result of their assimilationist agendas, have failed to engage the spirit as an essential component for self-definition as well as identity formation. Engaging the spirit in a way that affirms Indigenous epistemologies and knowledges requires "an interior examination of one's relationship with fear, trust, insight, and confidence" (Gonzales, 2012, p. 162). This is one way of recognizing how the interiority of a person may be severely affected by the systematic Cycle of Oppression.

Moreover, for Eduardo Duran (2006), who works in clinical settings that focus on improving mental health for Indigenous People, the importance of spiritual identity starts to become clear as those whom he serves begin to understand that a relationship with spiritual entities is part of the work that is done in the clinical world (p. 43). It follows that a liberation discourse (which is applicable in all settings—clinical as well as educational and beyond) involves taking a critical eye to the processes of colonization that have had a deep impact on the spiritual identities of Original Peoples. Such an intense interior examination that

confronts the origins of spiritual doubt can lead to what Cajete (2012) named "In-powerment"—the process of coming back to our power (p. 147). In-powerment is a type of empowerment that begins with an inward transformation that emphasizes the internal work that each of us must do to come back to our power (Cajete, 2012, p. 147). This type of empowerment leads to greater personal, interpersonal, communal, and political power and enables Indigenous peoples and communities to transform oppressive situations into actions of healing and revitalization (Cajete, 2012, p. 147). The literature revealed that critical analysis is necessary to ascertain the colonial factors that have de-ceremonialized Indigenous identities. Such a critical analysis, that can be facilitated through an Decolonizing Indigenous Pedagogy, will engage people in the complex process of moving toward sovereignty, which Grande (2004) identified as a profoundly spiritual project involving questions about who we are as a people; an inward and outward looking process—a process of re-enchantment, of ensoulment, that is both deeply spiritual and sincerely mindful (p.57).

At this juncture, it is helpful to ascertain that there are specific concepts that can aid in fostering a critical consciousness about colonialism and its devastating impact on the spiritual identities of Indigenous People. It is difficult, as Duran (2006) suggests, to attain social justice if one is not aware of being oppressed (p. 9). Duran's work is most useful here as he introduces the importance of the following three key concepts: Intergenerational Historical Trauma, Internalized Oppression, and Soul Wounding. According to Duran (2006), these are critical concepts that must be understood in order to begin a shift in the mind of both healer and patient. The shift involves understanding the historical context in the presentation of the life problem, which the clinical setting is meant to address (Duran, 2006,

p. 7). I extend Duran's point as being applicable to the teacher-student relationship within educational settings.

Intergenerational historical trauma, internalized oppression, and the concept of the soul wound "all present the idea that when trauma is not dealt with in previous generations, it has to be dealt with in subsequent generations; it is cumulative and becomes more severe each time it is passed on to a subsequent generation" (Duran, 2006 p, 16). Healers/teachers must always hold in mind the presence of historical trauma as they navigate the world of sadness and/or fear the patient/student brings with her or him into her place of ceremony or office/classroom. For Duran (2006), family history is of great importance because once it has been ascertained, it will facilitate the gathering of data to place the patient in the context of her tribal history. As these pieces of the puzzle fall into place, the healer can start guiding the patient into the world of the soul wound and begin healing it. This is a challenging process, however, that requires a sincere commitment from both healers/teachers and patients/students. The difficulty is due to external societal barriers that originated with colonialist projects which remain entrenched. Samuelin MarTinez (2013) names a primary source—Corporate America. MarTinez (2013) pointed out that Corporate America's unconditional profit is preserved by dislocating people from historical truths in order to believe historical lies about their demise. He also asserts that America's intention has always been to remove US from our natural-traditional relations; so it is common to become disoriented when dislocated and then feel dismissed.

MarTinez' (2013) attention to this colonial-racist process of dislocating people is important to note, especially since he offers the term, *dislocado*. He defined *dislocado* as pertaining to the experience of being uprooted—as in disconnected from ancestral roots—

and relocated (p. 7). Placed within the context of the previous terms, which require an extensive examination of colonial history that is both general and familial, the concept facilitates critical analysis of how colonialist practices have and continue to negatively impact the spiritual identities of Indigenous Peoples. The following list extensively explains how:

- **Dislocado** is prolonged PTSD, characterized by constantly induced states of fight or flight.
- **Dislocado** is like depressive episodes one after the other.
- **Dislocado** is like anxiety—like your very presence is outlawed; therefore, you are in search of a safe-place.
- **Dislocado** is like being homesick and reaching out to anything that reminds you of home.
- **Dislocado** is not only like being uprooted but being surrounded by legislated congressional hate that disdains you over and over—trying to kill the Indian.
- **Dislocado** is like repeated institutionalized traumatic exploitations all day long where America is not family-friendly.
- **Dislocado** is like your daily reaction to institutionalized trauma—exposed to a culture of hate.
- **Dislocado** is like being personally exploited forty hours per week on the ancient lands of your origin.
- **Dislocado** is like every fiber of your being telling you this is unfair and a very bad deal.
- **Dislocad**o is like raising your children in an unfriendly community.
- **Dislocado** is like trusting and believing what you were told all your life about an Uncle Sam and finding out he is a sociopath mass murderer that went global.
- **Dislocado** is like looking at a mirror, map, or history book and not seeing a reflection of yourself, so your mirror neurons are in panic and also America calls you His-panic
- **Dislocado** is like sitting in a classroom six hours per day being taught and tested in a language you do not understand about everything except who you really are and how you came to be stuck in that classroom where everyone is indoctrinated to envy the class that is oppressing your mother and father (MarTinez, 2013, p. 68)

This last point provides a poignant reminder: It is important to enact pedagogies that prioritize the development of skills to discern the ongoing presence of colonialist-racist-

imperialist-capitalist-sexist practices in school settings (Barba). The literature also suggests that spiritual identity formations require critical analysis of the ways in which oppressive systems are in and of themselves sick. Because of that innate sickness, these oppressive systems feed off of the sickness of others and thusly favor a perpetual state of dis-ease where self-neglect is normalized (MarTinez, 2013, p. 23). Oppression thrives in the superimposed conditions of self-neglect, which makes people more exploitable (MarTinez, 2013, p. 2).

Therefore, to take on the project of self-love that requires self-care leads to protest as well as radical and creative expressions of autonomy that centers on healing oneself. MarTinez (2013) speaks to the ways in which these radical acts of self-love enable people to not only heal themselves but in the process gain independence from Corporate America's intent to make a killing off of the oppressed in the name of economic progress. It is imperative, then, to consider a pedagogy of the oppressed and engage the oppressed in a healing process, which may become liberating if inspired by self-care; which is healing from a basic tenet of oppression and self-neglect (MarTinez, 2013). The actual methods involved in the healing process described here, however, requires a rootedness in Indigenous epistemologies, lifeways, and practices.

For instance, Duran (2006) described that traditional healing in most Original cultures is based on the belief that "illness itself has a consciousness that relates to the psyche and/or body of the individual" (p. 32). This belief that illness is conscious leads to the idea that "all illness has a distinct purpose that eventually will teach and bring wholeness to the individual" (Duran, 2006, p. 32). For this reason, from Duran's perspective, traditional healing requires naming a sickness. The purpose is to restore a relationship with the energy of the sickness (Duran, 2006, p. 32). Restoration of a relationship with the energy of a sickness requires a

trusting relationship between the patient and the healer: "Once the patient and healer discover the identity of the illness, the illness can be asked about its purpose and about what it is trying to teach the patient and the healer" (Duran, 2006, p. 32). The relationship with the illness affects the psyche of the healer and thus the healer also must have a relationship with the illness.[32] Otherwise, the healer may contract the illness in the same way a therapist contracts burnout (Duran, 2006, p. 32). As can be surmised, the life project of healing is one that involves interrelatedness—not just between the patient and the illness as well as the patient and the healer but also between both patient and healer and their own healing relations—who await acknowledgement in order to be able to assist with the healing process (Duran, 2006, p. 130).

The discourse of honoring spiritual identity as well as the Indigenous technologies needed to do so rely on decolonizing methodologies and practices. Within learning spaces, specifically, it is useful to ask in what ways, decolonizing pedagogies are grounded, as Cajete (2012) suggests, in efforts to re-envision and re-establish the "ecology of Indigenous education?" Ecology becomes a metaphor for Indigenous education because it involves a "web of reciprocal relationships, understandings, and responsibilities that guided and sustained our tribal societies" (Cajete, 2012). The ecology metaphor creates an image of a tool that Creator provides through nature (e.g. a web, a tree)—reinforcing the interconnectedness of all living things—of all creation; and that teachers surround us—we are immersed in learning environments at all times. Five hundred-plus years of colonialist-racist institutional practices may have hindered the ability to use metaphoric thinking among

[32] Estela Roman (2012) also makes this point in her discussion of *los trece aires*/ the thirteen winds in *Nuestra Medicina: de los remedios para el aire y los remedios para el alma.*

Indigenous people. To re-vitalize metaphoric thinking may require an epistemological paradigm shift that is decolonial.[33]

Creativity for Transformation and Liberation

Decolonizing Neural Networks: Regenerating Indigenous Epistemologies by Re-rooting Ancient Metaphors

Once the ongoing neurodecolonization process has started, the epistemological framework has the potential to return back to its Origins. What then becomes possible is an additional set of cognitive abilities accompanied by intensified analytical tools. In order to decolonize neural networks, one must come to the understanding that colonization conditioned (and continues to invade) Indigenous people's mental networks, resulting in a form of psychological colonization (Gonzales, 2012; Duran, 2006, p. xiii). MarTinez (2013) identified this psychological colonization as Neuron Association Conditioning (p. 71). This type of conditioning facilitates a process of learned helplessness and hopelessness (MarTinez, 2013, np). It is an indoctrination that is very profitable to Corporate America and is reinforced psychologically, politically, and economically. Cajete (2012) implicated both Corporate America and the educational system that serves it when he stated, "American prosperity must come to terms with the conditioning inherent in its educational system that contributes to the loss of a shared integrative metaphor of Life" (p. 150). For this study, it is imperative to draw attention to Cajete's point on the loss of a shared integrative metaphor of life, which is one of interrelatedness and interconnectedness. Some ways to envision it can be as the Tree of Life, the Web of Life, the Hoop of Life. This metaphoric understanding of

[33] The topic of neurodecolonization is vitally important and requires further research, especially as it related to Chicanas and Chicanos. However, works by Eduardo Duran (2006), Michael Yellow Bird (2012) and Steven Newcomb (2008) are extremely useful starting points.

life—where Nature provides models and guiding principles—is embedded with Indigenous principles of relationship, respect, reciprocity. To lose (or have stolen/denied) the integrative metaphor of life and the principles that accompany it is a form of epistemic violence[34] that has occurred and continues to occur to present-day Indigenous and de-Indigenized people. School systems and their cultural assimilationist practices continue to induce this type of violence to subsequent generations.

Creativity, and the intuitive aesthetics that an Indigenous epistemology nurtures, is essential for undoing the remnants of those colonialist practices and in taking the necessary action steps to replace them. Essentially, the decolonial process is a creative one that focuses on reintroducing and revitalizing Indigenous knowledge ways that are transformative and enduring alternatives. The project of decolonization demands students acquire not only the knowledge of the oppressor but also the creative skills to dismantle and negotiate the implications of such knowledge. Thus far, the literature described that one crucial entry point into the decolonial imaginary is through the mind (Pérez, 1999; Waziyatawin and Yellow Bird, 2012). Nevertheless, at this juncture the literature will be shown to move from critical inquiry that is mostly based in analyses that situate history within the current contexts (of persistent colonial legacies) to creative regeneration of Indigenous epistemologies. Decolonizing Indigenous Pedagogies are vital to this process as Cajete (2012 revealed:

> It is time for Indigenous people to define our education in our own voice and in our own terms.[35] It is time for Indigenous people to allow ourselves to

[34] Ramón Grosfoguel defines epistemic racism, sexism, and violence in "Decolonizing the University," a video recording at Humboldt University, 2nd Decolonial Days, Berlin 2011.

[35] UC Riverside Professor Juan Felipe Herrera, the California Poet Laureate, has also spoken about Chicano and Chicana identity and the importance of having self-determination and autonomy in naming a reality "in our own terms." Please view, *A natural history of Chicano literature: Juan Felipe Herrera*. University of California Television, 2008. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g7ZLhIjURFw.

> explore and express the richness of our collective history in education. Among Indigenous people, education has always included a visionary expression of life. Education for Indigenous people is a grand story, a search for meaning, and essential food for the soul (p. 155).

Essentially, Cajete (2012) described key pedagogical characteristics that foster a decolonizing creative process. In his description, this process fosters authentic exploration of meaning and expression—one that moves to an empowered system, which allows for a reclaiming and thus a revaluing of those things that are *still* existing in our communities. Recognizing and then valuing the fact that ancestral cultural teachings continue to exist is a key aspect of Decolonizing Indigenous Pedagogies. Practitioners of these teaching methods must contend with the fact many colonized and de-Indigenized people have experienced and express a continued mourning[36] surrounding the loss of culture (Duran, 2006, p. 101). However, Duran (2006) guides those he works with to realize "that the essence of the cultural ways are still here on the very Earth that gave them birth in the first place" (Duran, 2006, p. 101). Duran also facilitates the process of gaining insight about how "the ways are not static but are fluid and alive" and "need to be fresh and new if they are to be viable in our present-day life world" (Duran, 2006, p. 101). Duran's statement offers one way to regenerate Indigenous epistemologies, which is to consider the fluidity of ancestral wisdom traditions and implement creative strategies to bring them into a contemporary context alongside Western knowledge systems. This can lead to an awakening to how knowledge is gained and sustained and can begin the process of not only deconstructing, but, more importantly, of

[36] For a description of the various phases of decolonization, please see Poka Laenui (2006), "Processes of Decolonization." He lists these processes as: Recovery/Re-discovery, Mourning, Dreaming, Commitment, and Action http://www.sjsu.edu/people/marcos.pizarro/maestros/Laenui.pdf.

reconstructing and thinking through linear and causal systems in order to be rigorous about modalities that endure (from *Grandfather, how do I learn?*).

Engaging in a Relational Teaching-Healing Learning Experience

The literature on Decolonizing Indigenous Pedagogies has consistently emphasized the importance of engaging in a rigorous form of critical analysis that examines educational experiences based in colonialist practices. It has also extended this critical capacity to recognize the detrimental impact of colonialist educational practices on spiritual identity formations. In order to begin the process of undoing this colonial and racist trauma, the literature has also pointed to the importance of embracing the creativity and the intuitive aesthetics of an Indigenous epistemological worldview. Doing so assists in decolonizing neural networks by regenerating Indigenous epistemologies and re-rooting Indigenous metaphors. As the literature also suggests, all of this happens while engaging in a relational teaching-healing-learning experience. Cajete (2012) acknowledged that education is at its very essence learning about life through participation and relationship to community including not only people but plants, animals, and the whole of nature.

Cajete (2012) also affirmed that Indigenous Education liberates both the learner and educator to participate in a creative and transforming dialogue inherently based on equality and reciprocity. It is a way of learning, communicating, and developing relationships that mirror those ways found in nature that de-stigmatizes the Indigenous learner as being "disadvantaged." This allows for both learner and educator to co-create a learning experience and together undertake a pilgrimage to a new level of self-knowledge whereby the educator enters the cultural universe of the learner and no longer remains an outside authority. By co-creating a learning experience, everyone involved generates a kind of critical consciousness

and enters into a process of empowering one another. I have previously written about the process that Cajete (2012) described within the specific context of the Mexican American Studies (MAS) program that was established within the Tucson Unified School District in 1997 and was dismantled in 2012.

In that work, I carefully examined the MAS-Tucson educators' pedagogical praxis of introducing Chicano-Indigenous based concepts for self-direction and community-healing. I also emphasized that the use of such culturally intuitive yet methodologically innovative technologies exemplified a significant shift—one marking an intersection between teaching-healing that honored a hemispheric understanding of Indigenous epistemology. I identified the MAS educators efforts as a way to recognize that teaching is a healing craft when it prioritizes the totality of personhood in a holistic manner and it is not only cognizant of the Cycle of Oppression as well as the effects of intergenerational historical trauma but it works in co-creation to disrupt, heal, and transform it. MarTinez (2013) advocated that "this respect for people who are being oppressed allows one to not be defined by oppression, therefore not allowing one's perception of the oppressed to be defined by the oppression either. This level of respect allows one to engage in a teaching-healing experience that is not in itself oppressive but liberating (MarTinez, 2013, p. 2).

Maria Figueroa (2014) positioned Elenes' and Rendon's work as central to reminding us that traditional models of teaching all too often emphasize logical thought guided by the ever-present knowledge of the educator and discourage emotional or personally driven questions from coming to fruition as a subject matter. As a result, according to Figueroa (2014), mainstream versions of pedagogical practice" omit the spiritual entity (a connection of mind, body, and spirit) of the individual and collective by ignoring the emotional

connection inherent in the subject matter" (p. 37). This fragments the parts of the whole in order to seek objectivity and reason, thereby invalidating any kinesthetic or emotively driven reactions to learning. For Figueroa (2014) recognizing teachinglearning as a spiritual entity calls for acknowledging that teachinglearning is sacred as well (p. 37). Figueroa's envisioning for a pedagogical practice that honors spirituality aligns Cajete's (2012) emphasis on creating a new circle of Indigenous education that is founded on the roots of tribal education and that reflects the needs, values, and sociopolitical issues as Indigenous people themselves perceive them. Cajete (2012) has suggested that the new circle must encompass a continuance of ancestral traditions as well as an emphasis on respect for individual uniqueness in expressing spirituality. It must also develop a strong sense of place and service to community and forge a commitment to educational and social transformation that recognizes and further empowers the inherent strength of Indigenous Peoples and their respective cultures (Cajete, 2012, p. 154-55).

CHAPTER 3: Methodology, Research Design, and Data Collection: ~Sacred Intentions and Connections~

I was drawn to do this study—to move forward and backward with it in a way that would honor the work of not only those in the academy but also those far outside and beyond it—all of those who have come before me having given their time, energy, efforts, and even sometimes their lives so that a young brown girl could grow up in a working-class *Mexicano* and Chicana household, make a multitude of mistakes during her adolescence and young adulthood, and still find her way back home as a grown *mujer*—being lost for some time, but never quite losing herself—never being completely disconnected from her ancestral roots—but rather always in search of them, longing to be re-connected to them in meaningful ways. To honor that lifetime process, in this project, has meant being careful, mindful, and thorough of not only the work of scholars, researchers, educators, and intellectuals that have guided me but also of those who have guided *those* scholars, researchers, educators, and intellectuals. I also seek to honor those who have left their imprints in our memories or in our dreams about memories or in our memories about dreams. I offer my gratitude in a way that, hopefully, traverses cultures and dimensions.

Decolonizing Methodologies

Primarily influenced by the framework of decolonizing methodologies, I incorporated Indigenous research methods that are guided by responsibility, respect, reciprocity, and relationality (Weber-Pillwax, 2003, as cited in Wilson, 2008, p. 58). I took part in what Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) has named "researching back"—a process that involves a knowing-ness of the colonizer and a recovery of ourselves, as well as an analysis of

colonialism, and a struggle for self-determination (p. 8). Researching back involves following an Indigenous paradigm that adheres to a methodology that includes producing scholarship that serves Native communities; following Indigenous communities' protocols when conducting research; rigorously interrogating existing scholarship and calling out the "anti-Indigenous concepts and language" embedded in existing literature; incorporating Indigenous languages, such as place-names, names of people, and pronouns; and finally, privileging Indigenous sources and perspectives over non-Indigenous ones (Lonetree, 2012, p. 8).

Methodologies of the Spirit

Methodological frameworks from a decolonizing Indigenous Chicana and Chicano epistemological standpoint were also acknowledged, referenced, honored, and put into practice.[37] Sendejo (2014) has made a beautiful *ofrenda*[38] to researchers such as myself in her discussion of Methodologies of the Spirit, which include those experiences that occur over the course of conducting research and that contribute to the researcher's knowledge about spirituality, the production of spiritual epistemologies, and the uses of spiritual practices. The course in which I have conducted this research spans five years from 2011-2016. However,

[37] Dr. Roberto "Cintli" Rodríguez (2014) has provided seven Protocols for *Maiz* Research that this project has sought to follow: 1.) Reasons for research 2). Receiving knowledge 3.) Full disclosure, being transparent about the researcher's relationship to topic and from what community do I come from? 4.) Nature of the research 5.) Dissemination of the research 6.) Compensation and acknowledgements 7.) Respectful relationships with Elders and other storytellers and knowledge keepers.

[38] Offering

prior to applying to the M.A. /Ph.D. program at UC, Santa Bárbara, I had already started on a very intentional spiritual journey.[39]

My Spiritual Journey: Learning to Heal—Healing to Learn

One pivotal moment occurred when I met with *Maestra* Griselda (Grace) Alvarez Sesma in 2009-2010. I had already attended at least one workshop with her surrounding the history, protocol, and basic teachings of *curanderismo (*http://www.curanderismo.org/.) At that time, I felt that I needed more than just a workshop, so I asked for a private session with *Maestra* Grace in Alpine, CA. She advised me to be clear about the intentions I was setting prior to our *plática,*[40] and she explained to me the various ways I was to ask for permission and guidance from the medicines I was gathering for the *limpia*[41] she would help facilitate on my person.

The *plática* revealed to us that I was really in search of honoring for my spirit, which asked for the space to participate in ceremonial dancing by way of *Danza Azteca*. *Maestra* Grace encouraged me to honor my spirit in this way and to also seek guidance on my own in working through major patterns of co-dependence, which (upon painful reflection) I realized I had inherited generationally from my maternal relations. What followed after that transformational moment in my personal story led to the continued production of spiritual epistemologies and practices in all aspects of my life. My spirit was purified, and I soon

[39] My teachings, as received from *Maestra* Griselda "Grace" Alvarez Sesma, have instructed me that only certain information should be revealed and other portions left unmentioned in honor of the sacred beings and their teachings.

[40] A heart-to-heart talk

[41] spiritual cleansing or purification

entered onto the path of a red road *soldadera*[42]—fighting for the integrity of my spirit, which I had denied for so long before that (including a deeply held desire to dance). *Danza Azteca* allowed me access to ancient ways of embodied learning where my feet were praying, my breath was speaking, my heart was listening, and my spirit was healing. In seeking more *conocimiento*,[43] I attended gatherings around momentous cosmological events, such as the transit of Venus on June 6, 2012. I also visited sacred sites and received healings from the Indigenous relatives (mostly *Tongva*, *Acjachemen*, and *Chumash*) who hold the Origin Stories related to the places near to where I live and work in Southern California.

The more steady, concentrated, and committed I became to following the path I was on, the more connections I made with others who were also following a similar path. I participated in Sweat Lodge ceremonies, such as *Inipi* or *Temazkal* and Spirit Runs—most significantly the Peace and Dignity Journey of 2012.[44] Being present during a Sun Dance

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[42] Soldier

[43] knowledge and understanding

[44] Peace and Dignity Journeys are spiritual runs that embody the prophecy of the Eagle and Condor, previously referenced and described. Through the Journeys, participant runners and supporters work to accomplish this goal by helping each other reconnect to their respective spiritual practices and traditions; by helping each other relearn our role in the world as Indigenous Peoples; and by reminding each other of our responsibilities to Mother Earth, Father Sky, our communities, and ourselves. Peace and Dignity Journeys occur every four years and start with Indigenous runners on opposite ends of the continents (*Chickaloon*, Alaska and *Tierra del Fuego*, Argentina). They run for six months through hundreds of Indigenous communities where they participate in their respective spiritual practices and traditions; spark dialogue on the issue of peace and dignity for Indigenous Peoples; model their responsibility to Mother Earth, Father Sky, communities, and themselves; and receive the community's prayers. These prayers and conversations are then carried to proceeding communities until the runners reach the center of the hemisphere. When the runners meet at the Kuna Nation in Panama City, Panama, it will symbolize all Indigenous Peoples joining together in a spiritual way to manifest the prophecy of the Eagle and Condor https://peaceanddignityjourneys.wordpress.com/about/. Please also visit https://tonatierra.wordpress.com/eagle-and-condor/.

ceremony in 2014 was also transformational for me on multiple scales and levels that have yet to be fully actualized and understood. My spirt allies traversed dream and waking time, gifting me with guidance and protection, teaching me about reciprocity, relationship, and respect. These experiences led me to seek guidance from Elders whom I could trust myself to trust. I have been humbled on so many occasions—making mistakes, learning about my own medicine and gifts, confronting fears and doubts, being patient, crying, waiting, starting over. These are some of the details that have made up my ceremonial discourse (Rodríguez, 2014) which ultimately prepared me to seek knowledge production around the spiritual (Sendejo, 2014) which this research project represents.

Going through this journey of honoring my spirit has allowed me to recognize others who have not only been called—but who have also *listened and acted in ways*—to do the same. My own spiritual development, experience, and trajectory has helped inform the research being conducted and has also enabled meaningful intersections to occur with the other educators who chose to participate in this study (Sendejo, 2014, p. 85-85). In essence, we have all been learning to heal and healing to learn. Methodologies of the Spirit, according to Sendejo (2014) offer a model for doing ethnography inspired by Indigenous scholars who acknowledge that the spiritual practices and worldviews of research participants are foundational aspects of everyday life; they acknowledge the corporeal and spiritual experiences as key sites of knowledge production.

I entered into this research project well aware—through my own lived experiences—that each educator had a ceremonial discourse that had shaped them and their pedagogical practices both in and outside of classroom spaces. Their participation in ceremony provided them with an embodied method of learning that impacted them and their ancestors

holistically—mindbodyspiritemotion.[45] Methodologically, these unifying ceremonial experiences, that shape daily interaction and accountability, resulted in a holistic and historically informed approach that counted for moments of connection and understanding between me, the researcher, and those with whom I worked as vital sites of knowing (Sendejo, 2014, p. 85). The knowingness has confirmed that we have each been called to do the work we do for a much larger purpose than just ourselves or our families. And that we need to not only know of each other but to also know of our gifts, our medicine, and our sacred power in order to effectively combine them for the co-creation of meaningful transformational change that will be manifested seven generations from now.

Qualitative Interview Methods[46]

I followed the characteristics that make qualitative research a "natural" approach that: (a) Includes context as an essential component (b) Addresses the researcher's processes of self- awareness and self-reflection (c) Captures the meanings participants give to their experiences (d) Allows for voices that were previously silenced to be heard by way of honoring paradigms that use stories, folk wisdom, and the common sense of ordinary people (e) Addresses questions that cannot be answered using traditional methods (f) Provides an opportunity to explore previously unexplored or undefined constructs (Morrow, Raksha, and Castañeda, 2001, p. 582-583).

[45] I choose to merge all of these aspects of self together to emphasize their interconnectedness.

[46] Qualitative research, for me, included transparency and authenticity with the six educators in the study throughout the entire dissertation process. After individual and some collective discussions, we all agreed that it was important to provide readers with an honest understanding of who the educators are despite (or perhaps because of) the unconventionality of it. Therefore, names have not been altered or changed.

Context

For this project, I sought to provide a thorough context of the historical and geographical origins of the educators. I also sought to contextualize the factors shaping their identity formations, educational histories, ceremonial discourses, Indigenous (and subsequently spiritual) epistemologies, their *conducta*[47] as scholars-educators-activists-cultural practitioners as well as their pedagogical practice.

Self-awareness and Reflection of Researcher

I entered into the project well aware of my own ceremonial discourse as well as how it has impacted my pedagogical practice. I was aware of my own prioritization of protocol in asking for permission in a respectful way by bringing offerings and blessings to each educator upon our first interview encounters. The most profound and impacting reflections came from when I was reviewing the transcripts during the summer of 2016.[48] The words of the educators, particularly in relation to their experiences with ceremony and the profound life-changing experiences they had and continue to honor at the rise of each new sun, called me back to my own ceremonial practice, which I had stepped away from for some time (and which I am still in the process of returning). I reflected so much on their words and teachings and gained a new vitality for the importance of not only ceremony in our lives but in the documentation of how interwoven it is for the past, present, and future of Indigenous-identified Chicanas and Chicanos.

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[47] Conduct

[48] I am grateful beyond words can express to the two people who assisted me in transcribing over twenty hours of interview material. They did it with respect, care, and love for the project (and me). I reciprocate respect, care, and love to them with these words.

Meanings Participants Give

I entered into this project seeking to co-create this dissertation with six other educators, honoring the meanings they were attributing to their own Origin stories, geographies, and identities. Throughout the process they have engaged with me, encouraged me, questioned me, gifted me, and nurtured me with kindness, generosity, authenticity, and sincerity.

Allowing for Previously Silenced Voices to be Heard

Though many manuscripts have been produced that explore the experiences of Chicana and Chicano *students* along the educational pipeline, not many have thoroughly explored that of the Chicana and Chicano *educators*—especially with regard to their identity formations and spiritual development through Indigenous epistemological frameworks.[49]

Designing Questions that cannot be Answered or Asked using Traditional Methods

My lived experiences as a *Mexicana*/Chicana educator-scholar-activist-cultural practitioner, who prioritizes (though in limited and limiting ways) her Indigenous roots from *Tepehuanes del Sur*, *Durango* (maternal grandmother), *Chihuahua*, *Chihuahua* (maternal grandfather), *Coalcóman*, *Michoácan* (paternal grandmother), and *El Grullo*, *Jalisco* (paternal grandfather) has allowed me to accumulate non-conformist epistemological frameworks over my lifetime. This situated standpoint enabled me to pose the questions that I did. With consideration to these vital aspects of my identity, I have utilized a transdisciplinary approach that seeks to work in alignment with the Prophecy of the Eagle and the Condor.

[49] One recent example is the book *Fleshing the spirit: Spirituality and activism in Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous women's lives* edited by Elisa Facio and Irene Lara (2014).

Providing an Opportunity to Explore Previously Unexplored or Undefined Constructs

The unexplored constructs that I sought to develop expanded upon my previous queries in understanding teaching as a healing craft (2013)—one that prioritizes a human development approach, personal activism, and self-actualization through the acknowledgement and documentation of and active engagement in working through and ending the cycle of intergenerational historical trauma (Brave Heart, 2000; Gonzales, 2012; Torres; 2003), soul wounding (Duran, 2006), and the unending sadness/*tiricia* that may result (Cruz, 2012). Such a construct has tremendous implications for classrooms as potential sites of healing.

Purposeful Sampling

As previously mentioned, my own participation in Indigenous ceremonial traditions over the past several years has included participating in and/or attending *Danza Azteca* Ceremonies, Sun Dance, Sweat Lodge (*Temazkal* and/or *Inipi*), Spiritual/Ceremonial Running, Talking/Healing Circles, Consuming and/or Preparing Sacred/Ceremonial Foods, Receiving Origin Stories, Meditating at Sacred Sites, and Honoring Dreaming as Sacred Sight/Site. In many ways, the prayers that brought me to be within these ceremonial spaces also granted me access to the six educators who came to participate in this study and who also represent a qualitative, purposeful selected sample. Access to these educators was also made possible through community organizing and/or participation at conferences focused on Chicana and Chicano Studies, Indigenous identities, decolonizing pedagogical practices, and the intersections between teaching and healing. The participants (ranging in age from mid-twenties to early forties) made it possible to conduct an inter-segmental analysis because of their diverse representation of the

Chicana and Chicano Educational Pipeline (Yosso, 2005) representing an innovative, secondary public charter school, two community colleges, two state universities, and a private university.

Research Design: The Four Phases

Phase I—Initial In-depth Semi-Structured Individual Interviews

These initial interviews were scheduled to last between 2-3 hours and focused on (a) Gathering definitions from the educators on Chicana and Chicano, Indigenous, Indigenous ceremonial traditions, and pedagogical praxis (b) Asking about identity formation and the role Indigenous ceremony has played in it (c) Inquiring about the process in which the educators came to practice and see the validity of traditional Indigenous ceremonies within their own personal lives (d) Identifying key factors and processes that may have brought the educators closer to Indigenous ceremonial practice, such as historical moments in time or influences by certain people, places/spaces (e) Determining whether the educators faced any challenges related to maintaining control over their curriculum within the constraints of their institutions and, if so, how they have coped with them (f) Allowing the educators to reflect and share about how their participation in Indigenous ceremonies has impacted their pedagogical practice and curriculum (e.g. content, topics, assignments, etc.).

Interview Prompts/Questions for Phase I & II

Phase I: Initial in-depth semi-structured individual interviews.

1. *What factors make-up your identity and how do you verbally express that identity to others?*

2. *Can you provide a definition of the following terms?* Chicana and Chicano; Indigenous; Indigenous ceremonial traditions and practices; Pedagogical praxis
3. *Can you describe your identity formation and the role Indigenous ceremony has played in it?*
4. *Can you discuss the process in which you came to practice and see the validity of traditional Indigenous ceremonies within your own personal life?*
5. *Can you identify any key factors and processes that may have brought you closer to Indigenous ceremonial practice, such as historical moments in time or influences by certain people, places/spaces?*
6. *Have you faced any challenges related to maintaining control over your curriculum within the constraints of the institution where you teach and, if so, how do you cope with them?*
7. *Please reflect and share about how your participation in Indigenous ceremonies impacts your pedagogical practice and curriculum (e.g. content, topics, assignments, etc.).*

Phase II: Follow-up to the initial in-depth semi-structured individual interviews.

1. *How would you describe your educational history?*
2. *How would you describe your professional history--as an educator?*
3. *Throughout your teaching career, what specific observations or patterns have you recognized about the student population you work with?*
4. *How have your observations and/or recognition of patterns with the students affected your interaction with them inside and/or outside of class/school?*

5. *Is there a particular assignment or teaching unit you would like to share/discuss?*

6. *Are there any classroom or teaching materials, from your own archives, that you would like to share and/or discuss?*

Phase II—Follow-Up to the Initial In-depth Semi-Structured Individual Interviews

In this phase, the interview questions I designed asked about the ways in which colonial domination has continued to manifest along the Chicana and Chicano Educational Pipeline for the educators—based on their own experiences. I was also interested in how they negotiated their own experiences within the context of their roles as educators. I sought to gain insights about the observations they have made about their own students and how this affects their interactions with them—both within and outside of school sites. Prior to this second phase of the interview process, I asked the educators to select an assignment, a teaching unit, or a student writing sample or project to discuss. These were discussed within the context of their connection to the traditional Indigenous ceremonial practice of the educators. I was also interested in examining the educators' own archives, including classroom and teaching materials. A content analysis of these materials was used to identify keywords and/or content and make comparisons to that of the other educators.

Phase III—Participant Observation of Learning Spaces

In addition, I conducted participant observations within the individual classrooms of the educators to acquire recordings, when possible, as well as ethnographic field notes on their pedagogical practice, curriculum content, and interactions with students. Occasions did arise where the educators made public appearances for community related events and/or panel presentations, conferences, or speaking engagements. Participant observations were also made during these events. Furthermore, there were other

opportunities where the educators were either teaching or present at a teaching but within a context that exists outside of the classroom space, such as at a ceremonial gathering. Participant observations were also implemented in these instances without the use of any recordings due to Indigenous protocols of respect for the ceremonies.

Avila's (2000) work on *curanderismo* offered useful and timely insights that can have significant implications at the level of pedagogical practice, for it provides a model of how to promote a sense of personal activism whereby documentation of historical trauma is a project. Once I gathered the data from my participant observations of the Chicana and Chicano educators' pedagogical practice, curriculum content, and interactions with students, I sought to draw upon Avila's insights to help facilitate my data analysis. Building upon Avila's work on *curanderismo* by applying it to the specific teaching methodologies of the six educators, I examined the extent to which the following practices were enacted by the teaching units shared with me by the educators involved in this study:

- Listening, with respect, to the cultural perspectives, values, and beliefs of students
- Advocating for totality of personhood—necessarily inclusive of emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual aspects
- Collaborating with students, their families, respective communities, and ancestors
- Cultivating a critical consciousness as well as critical thinking, which requires accountability to self and others

The specific findings of these analyses will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Phase IV—Talking Circles

After the initial and follow-up interviews, I wanted to organize a space to facilitate a Talking Circle where the educators could come together to discuss and analyze their

experiences collectively. Shawn Wilson (2008) described a Talking Circle as a space where group members sit in a circle that represents the holism of Mother Earth and the equality of all members. According to Wilson, what is most important is that members feel ownership of the rules (Wilson and Wilson, 2000, as cited in Wilson, 2008). This points to a significant difference between a Talking Circle and a Focus Group. In a Focus Group, the moderator is seen as the authority whose main objective is to maintain control. However, I wanted to de-center myself during this phase of the research process. The use of the Talking Circle is a purposeful method that was envisioned to be used in order to nurture collective decision-making amongst the participants. The ideal goal was to shift to a point where the participants and I could become co-creators of this aspect of the process. However, the Talking Circle did not occur due to challenges with scheduling and availability of space. Alternately, what occurred was in response to the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office emphasis on Student Equity.

Alternative to the Talking Circle—*Innovative Collaborations*

Interactive Presentations and Dialogue

According to the Chancellor's Office, Student Equity Planning is administered through the Student Success and Support (SSSP) unit at the Chancellor's Office. SSSP staff are responsible for the implementation of the Board of Governor's Student Equity Policy and related regulations, including assessing district plans and reporting recommendations to the Board of Governors, providing districts with technical assistance in the development and improvement of plans, and assessing district progress towards the implementation of their plans over time. Individual college student equity plans focus on increasing access, course completion, ESL and basic skills completion, degrees, certificates

and transfer for all students as measured by success indicators linked to the CCC Student Success Scorecard, and other measures developed in consultation with local colleges. "Success indicators" are used to identify and measure areas for which "disadvantaged populations" may be impacted by issues of equal opportunity. Title 5 regulations specify that colleges must review and address the following populations when looking at disproportionate impact: American Indians or Alaskan natives, Asians or Pacific Islanders, Blacks, Hispanics, Whites, men, women, and persons with disabilities (§54220(d)). The State Budget trailer bill, SB 860 (2014) added requirements to address foster youth, veterans and low income students. Each college develops specific goals/outcomes and actions to address disparities that are discovered, disaggregating data for indicators by student demographics, preferably in program review. College plans must describe the implementation of each indicator, as well as policies, activities and procedures as they relate to improving equity and success at the college.

I responded to my own college campus' efforts to satisfy the requests for prioritizing student equity in order to align with the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office. At the time I submitted the proposal (spring 2015), over 47% of the student population was labeled as "Hispanic"—it is now (in 2016) over 50%. The original proposal described a professional speaker series that would focus on bringing to campus Chicana and Chicano educators-scholars-activists to provide guidance, mentoring, reflecting, and strategies for implementing pedagogical techniques that would help to alleviate the disparities in access, success, and retention for *Raza* students (primarily of Mexican and Central American ethnic identifications) at my campus. The hope was that faculty members, staff, and administrators would be inspired by scholar-activist-educators

who promote equity in their classrooms and beyond in creative, engaging, and provocative ways. Ideally, faculty would have been equipped with tools to enhance their course curriculum, syllabi, and classroom and community practice. By the end of each workshop, each faculty member would have had a chance to inquire, discuss, reflect, and design interventions that could be applied immediately for more equitable outcomes with their students. With continued mentorship (*i.e.* access to the presenters), the educators would gain enough experiential knowledge in the classroom to be able to share with others and thus work toward a more sustainable plan for future training and teacher preparation. Needless to say, my proposal was not fully funded, and I received only a fraction of the amount I requested.

The outcome, however, was that a space was organized where all six participants involved in this study were brought together on September 11, 2015 in an event entitled, *Innovative Collaborations Closing the Achievement Gap through Culturally Competent Pedagogies & High-Impact Practices along the Chicana & Chicano Educational Pipeline*. Campus and community members were invited to participate in this engaging gathering where the six educators offered individual presentations that emphasized the use of High-Impact Practices (HIPs) (American Association of Colleges and Universities Organization) and how their work has closed achievement gaps for Chicana/o students. The educators were carefully selected because of their lifelong experience, inspiring creativity, cultural competence, and authentic caring as educators-scholars-activists. The gathering was organized in a collaborative way by encouraging the educators to share what they each envisioned the space would be like as well as what it would promote. A spirit of collaboration was nurtured amongst all the educators who communicated frequently

through email in preparation for the gathering. The result was a spiritual aesthetic that made its way onto the flyers,[50] a local vegan-meal that was inspired by ingredients to honor the ancestors,[51] and the co-creation of a beautiful altar—which would allow all present to focus and set intentions as the day progressed.

Collectively, the educators shared how they are closing achievement gaps and how they are doing so by building bridges that connect communities in authentic and meaningful ways. Those in attendance benefitted from the practical strategies on the following High-Impact Practices: Diversity/Global Learning, Service-Learning/Community-based Learning, and Collaborative Assignments. Below is the information that was provided by the educators to be included in the final program for the gathering.

Educator Descriptions of Presentations for [52]

***Innovative Collaborations: Closing the Achievement Gap through Culturally Competent Pedagogies & High-Impact Practices along the Chicana & Chicano Educational Pipeline,* September 11, 2015, Pasadena, CA**

[50] The artwork was created by Danielle Aguilar. Her captivating piece, "The Gathering" is a depiction of the multi-dimensional space of dreamtime, where past, present, and future are one. It is a shared space of prayer where all entities gather to remember and thrive (Aguilar, 2015).

[51] coraloveone catered a local vegan lunch that was set with the intentions to honor the ancestors with original foods, such as *chia*, *cacao*, *quinoa*, *aguacate*/avocado, *nopales*/cactus, and so much LOVE!

[52] Permission from each educator was granted to include pictures, names, and descriptions of presentations.

Heidi Coronado

The Power of Story: Healing, Resiliency and Community Transformation

This session will explore the Resiliency Circles Framework (Coronado, 2014). This social justice oriented model honors indigenous epistemologies and pedagogies, which focus on mindfulness practices and students' cultural wealth. The presentation will also discuss other strategies and on how utilizing this model has been successful with high school, college and graduate students. Including first generation, LGBTQ, AB540 and other underserved populations

Andres Mendoza

Self-Navigation

My presentation will be about the importance and practicality of knowing where you are physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Also, it will include the importance of getting out of your immediate situation—environment--in order to grow and understand yourself better.

Claudia Serrato

Building Bridges: Palabra on Nepantlera Pedagogy and Mentorship, Community Relationships, and Indigeneity

In this *plática*, Claudia will share a couple of teaching toolsets she applied in her course, 'Decolonizing the Diet…,' towards cultivating a classroom final project under the guidance of Indigenous principles of respect, responsibility, relationship, and reciprocity; benefiting local, national, and global community members in and outside of the institution. As a *nepantlera movida,* this personal narrative transitions by addressing how responsible class projects, through the decolonial act of community-bridge making, conscious participation, and relationship building, takes the facilitator of knowledge (professor/educator) out of the

academy and into grassroots community spaces where nourishing mentorship relationships get fed.

Miguel Zavala

Reclaiming Cultural Identities via Decolonizing Pedagogies: Making Identity Central to Community-Based and Service Learning

This presentation centers on the transformative potential in developing community-based and service learning education at the high school and higher education levels. Via concrete examples, the focus is on curricular and pedagogical approaches that make cultural identities, their development and reclaiming, central to learning.

Maria Figueroa

"Mi granito de arena" - #teachinglearningwritingEnglishwhilebrown

Meaningful connections are often made when composition students are encouraged to write from a place of knowing while prioritizing and validating their lived experiences as a path to developing a more authentic, purposeful, and spiritual relationship with writing. Many of my strategies, rooted in the spirit of collaboration, community, and a collective experience seek to heal the wounds often imposed upon students of color but more specifically Chicano/a Latina/o students. This healing work challenges rigid academic structures which deduce students' stories hence their lives as unimportant and therefore unworthy of documentation.

Santiago Andres Garcia

Materializing and Excavating Indigeneity through Clay-work and Narrative Inquiry at Rio Hondo College

This thirty-minute visual presentation will highlight one of my current teaching models working with a population of students that is 70% majority Indigenous youth of Mesoamerica. During the summers of 2014 and 2015, I asked students in my *Humanities 125: Introduction to Mexican Culture* class to materialize and excavate the human body through hand-bone morphology use, the sculpting of *barro* (clay), and narrative inquiry. Drawing from a series of Mesoamerican Indigenous epistemologies, particularly Gloria E. Anzaldúa's (1987) *Coatlicue* State, students gave birth to their own Indigeneity, and in the process cultivated agency and empowerment.

Collection of Data

At the end of all four phases, I had at least four points of contact or interactions with the participants. This data collection took approximately one academic year to complete (2014-2015). My goal in emphasizing this qualitative analysis was to look for themes, patterns, and commonalities among the various interactions and subsequent data collected. Coding was used to categorize and record data using common language. It was necessary to engage participants for open-ended responses, reflections, additional clarification, or for other explanations for their behaviors, feelings, and choices. It was helpful for me to engage in direct communication, so as to get as much feedback and clarification as possible on the given questions. The collection and coding of data unraveled as fluid, flexible, and transformative—not only for the participants but also for myself. Initially three patterns emerged that proved to be the most significant factors influencing the identity development among the six educators: family, education, and ceremonial discourse.

However, upon further examination, it proved difficult to isolate these three categories as they each had their own overlapping layers and complexities. For example, family was influential in exposing most of the educators—during their childhood—to Indigenous cultural traditions, especially having to do with healing and agricultural technologies as well as ceremonial dances. However, these experiences became distant memories that faded somewhat for those educators who were exposed to the assimilationist practices of attending schools in Southern California during their childhood and early adolescence. Family, then, took on a different significance as the educators grew into early adulthood, especially as they gained critical consciousness about the importance of *Raza* and community—and even more so for those who participated in Indigenous ceremonial traditions, which they became exposed to not so much by "blood" relations but rather by their peers. Family also took on new dimensions as the educators entered their professions and refined their craft in their respective classroom spaces. Education, as a category, also became difficult to confine only to that which occurred in institutional places, for important lessons and teachings came from the *educacíon* received at home as well as the multiple protocols involved in participating in ceremony—mostly related to responsibility, respect, reciprocity, and relationality. Ultimately, ceremonial spaces also proved to be familial spaces of deep learning. Given the overlapping nature of the categories that the data collection and coding processes revealed, I have chosen to honor each educator's personal story and how it has contributed to the development of a pedagogical practice that honors the sacred Indigenous teachings most relevant to them.

Educator Biographies and Our Crossing Paths

Heidi Coronado

Heidi Coronado is an Assistant Professor of Counselor Education at California Lutheran University, Thousand Oaks, CA. Her work in education began as a bilingual elementary school teacher and counselor in both K-12 and at the college level. She has also directed programs for first generation students in both K-12 and higher education. Her activist and scholarly work focuses on Indigenous based pedagogies, mindfulness, critical pedagogy, resiliency, and social justice. Her goal is to prepare culturally proficient activist educators who are mindful, compassionate and critical.

I first met Heidi at UC, Santa Bárbara for the 2012 MALCS Conference *"Todos Somos Arizona": Confronting the Attacks on Difference*, where our connection began as a scholarly one. I was the moderator for the panel she presented on, titled "Many Paths to Health & Healing: Caregiving, Community, and Educational Empowerment." I distinctly remember being intrigued when she mentioned that her work on counseling undocumented Latino/Chicano immigrant high school students had been inspired by a dream and then an actual visit she made to New Mexico at one of the gatherings with the International Council of Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers. I was also touched by how Heidi's two twin boys and other members of her family were present. They all came to greet and hug her at the end of her presentation. I recall that I had initiated a conversation with Heidi a few days after her panel presentation in order to further discuss this aspect of her presentation. At that point, it was no longer only a scholarly interest that guided that connection but also a personal one. This is so because I had done earlier work with *Maestra* Grace Alvarez Sesma. As I described earlier, I had made a decision to work with *Maestra* Grace on matters connected to

my own healing. During one of *Maestra* Grace's *pláticas*, she had mentioned the role of dreams and the International Council of Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers in her own life and practice. The connection I felt with both Grace and Heidi was undeniable, unexplainable, and unshakable.

It had been over one year since I had met Heidi at the 2012 MALCS Conference at UC, Santa Bárbara. Somehow our email communications had been interrupted. However, as I began to prepare my course materials during the summer of 2013, I remembered Heidi and was drawn to getting in touch with her again as I prepared for my fall class in Mexican and Chicano/a Literature. Although I had taught the course four times before, I was very clearly guided to shift the focus, so after much reflection, I decided on the subtitle of—"Healers, Teachers, & Knowledge Keepers of Indigenous Healing Traditions." I emailed Heidi with a brief description of my intentions for the class, and she graciously responded. Shortly after that communication, we met for lunch, exchanged syllabi, and penciled in a time on our calendars for her to come visit my class. Since that time, we have remained *colegas*[53] and have engaged in numerous collaborations and support for one another's growth and health.

Miguel Zavala

Miguel Zavala is an Associate Professor at the College of Educational Studies—Chapman University, Orange, CA. He is also part of the California Chapter of NAME (National Association for Multicultural Education). Miguel describes himself as a Chicano who has been actively organizing in teacher and community grassroots spaces. His research

[53] Colleagues

and pedagogical praxis centers on decolonizing and Indigenous Xican@ epistemologies as they relate to pedagogy and action-research.

While teaching a summer course in advanced critical thinking and composition at Pasadena City College during 2014, I was focused on gathering relevant examples, for my students, of both quantitative and qualitative research as well as those using a mixed-method approach. While searching online, I came across Miguel's article, "What do We Mean by Decolonizing Research Strategies? Lessons from Decolonizing, Indigenous Research Projects in New Zealand and Latin America," which was published in the journal, *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* in 2013.

I was impressed and inspired by Miguel's comparative analysis of the Māori whanau in New Zealand and the *comunidades de base*[54] in *México*, *Nicaragua*, and *Colombia*. According to Zavala (2013), these parallel organic structures provide models to reflect upon the praxis of decolonization, for "the structures are not mediated by the colonial-capitalist State, meaning that these organizations emerge in civil society and are directed by the community itself, sometimes directly opposed to the State" (p. 62). Close examination and discussion of these models are useful for Indigenous and *Raza* scholars, especially when considering Zavala's call to action for them "to become students of the formation of grassroots organizations that are generating alternative, collective education and research projects" (Zavala, 2013, p. 68).

He also directly stated that in becoming both participants and students of grassroots research collectives, Indigenous and *Raza* scholars "enter spaces of struggle and solidarity in the deepest sense possible, generating historically new accounts and practices that can

[54] base communities

respond locally to colonialism, thus generating spaces of recovery and healing that become the fertile soil for seeds of inquiry and research that are inherently political, ethical, and accountable to the communities that make research possible" (Zavala, 2013, p. 68). Appreciating this perspective and its connection to Participatory Action-Research (PAR), I enthusiastically assigned Miguel's article as a supplemental text for my students to read and discuss.

A few months later in early March 2014, I found myself browsing through the program for the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education (AAHHE), 9th Annual National Conference. I noticed that Miguel would be presenting on a panel that focused on "Countering the Deficit Paradigm: An Asset-Based Application to Effectively Mentoring Latino/a Students." The program description clarified that dominant explanations for student access and success are rooted in familial and cultural deficit ideology. The session deconstructed this ideology and presented an alternative framework for student mentorship programs that is culturally inclusive and asset based in its approach to working with students from historically underrepresented populations. Participants interested in challenging deficit notions and learning more about culturally inclusive mentorship programs and training were encouraged to attend.

I chose to attend the panel and introduced myself to Miguel, explaining that I had read his recently published article and shared it with my students. I soon found out about Miguel's role in the Association of Raza Educators (A.R.E.) (which I had been following for some time) and other commitments he had made to grassroots efforts and organizing. At the time, Miguel was an Associate Professor of Secondary Education at California State University, Fullerton. We soon arranged for him to visit my classes and have been supportive

colleagues ever since. I greatly admire Miguel's dedication to autonomous grassroots spaces, especially his more recent work that focuses on parents and families, which is clearly guided by his own experiences of being a father of two children

Maria Figueroa

Maria Figueroa is a full-time faculty member at MiraCosta College—Oceanside, CA where she has shared that she "ventures into the realm of English Composition (including being a co-leader of the Puente program), Literature, and Humanities instruction while fueling the soul through *Danza Azteca*, teatro, writing and performing poetry and running along the *Kumeyaay* coast of *San Diego Kosoy*" (Figueroa, 2015). Maria has also shared that she is originally from the city most marginalized by the Orange Curtain and that her roots run three generations deep in Santa Ana, California where, as she has described, the rooster's crow awaken working class dreams. Maria is also a mother to her precious masterpieces, *Cuauhtemoc* and *Esperanza Tonantzin*.

Similar to Miguel, I first encountered Maria, in print, when I was teaching a course, in this case, Mexican and Chicano/a Literature also at Pasadena City College during the fall 2014 semester. As a class, we read her chapter, "Toward a Spiritual Pedagogy along the Borderlands" in the book, *Fleshing the Spirit: Spirituality and Activism in Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous Women's Lives* published in 2014. The chapter really spoke to me, and I connected with it on a variety of levels, including being a community-college English professor who drew upon her exposure to ceremonial resources—as Maria has defined them, including *Danza* (in Maria's case, *Danza Conchera*). One major difference, however, was that Maria had about 15 more years of experience being in ceremonial spaces and relying on her ceremonial resources—as she called those spaces that have provided her undivided

sources for balance, healing, grounding, strength, and love. I was surprised, amazed, and flattered when I noticed that Maria, in her chapter, had referenced my work "Teaching as a Healing Craft: Decolonizing the Classroom and Creating Spaces of Hopeful Resistance through Chicano-Indigenous Pedagogical Praxis" (2013). I quickly located her contact information to say hello, introduce myself, and to offer her a sincere *GRACIAS*! Upon our first conversations, we realized we had further connections to make, including her own *aprendizaje con*[55] Maestra Grace and her commitment to praying with her feet—not only as a *danzante* but also as a Peace and Dignity Journeys runner and supporter. Due to the distance in location, I do not interact with Maria as much as I would like but the spiritual connection is there, and I can only hope it will continue to flourish.

Andres Mendoza

Andres Mendoza is a Curriculum co-developer of *Matlachtli Iuan Yei Xinachtli* (13 Seeds) and was (at the time I interviewed him) a Community Educator at Youth Build Charter School of California, El Monte, CA. Some details that he shares about himself are that his parents are from *Zacatecas* and Mexico City, and his grandparents are from *Zacatecas* and *Michoacán*. He is a simple man basing his decisions on what will happen to our seventh generation and those in between.

My first memory of Andres is when I arrived "late" to the morning opening prayer and blessing for Peace and Dignity Journeys 2012 as the runners were leaving the East L.A. Civic Center moving toward, *Puvungna*, an ancient burial site of the *Tongv*a, which was

[55] Learning, apprenticeship with

added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1974.[56] When I arrived to the East L.A. Civic Center, everyone had already circled up. I was feeling a little nervous about the possibility of being disruptive or seeming disrespectful, as I entered the very large circle, late. However, once my presence became known to Andres, he quickly smiled, took two steps to the left, and made room for me in the circle. I felt very at ease and welcomed and quickly focused my attention on the Elders that were being introduced. After that day, I would run into Andres every so often at *Danza* ceremonies and sometimes when I visited the grassroots library and cultural learning center that he offered to the community out of his home in Azusa, CA.

I had not seen Andres for a couple years when I ran into him at a park in January 2015—as we were both heading to a demonstration of solidarity and resistance at the Worley Parsons Engineering Consultants office in Arcadia, CA. Worley Parsons was a contracting company who had been hired by Transcanada for the Keystone XL Pipeline Project. The Keystone XL Pipeline was planned to run from Canada, through Montana, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma and all the way to the Gulf Coast of Texas. In South Dakota, leaders of the Rosebud Reservation had publicly spoken out against the proposed pipeline. The coalition that organized the protest effort included Native and non-Native organizations, including the Harmony Keepers, American Indian Movement (AIM) Orange County, AIM Southern California, Indigenous D.R.U.M., ChICCCAA (Chicano Indigenous

[56] Controversy arose in 1992 and 1993, when efforts to develop the grounds into a strip mall and community garden. The plan was strongly opposed by the *Tongva*, who subsequently founded the "*Puvungna Sacred Site Struggle of 1993-1995*." Please visit http://www.cityprojectca.org/blog/archives/6638.

Community for Culturally Conscious Advocacy & Action), Idle No More Los Angeles, and the Sierra Club (*Native News Online.Net*). Andres' sincerity, authenticity, and kind-heartedness stands out to me. He makes Indigenous teachings and life lessons applicable and relevant to those who he communicates with.

Claudia Serrato

Claudia Serrato is a doctoral candidate in the program of Sociocultural Anthropology at the University of Washington. Her dissertation research focuses on ancestral food memory and re-memory transmission through Indigenous cooking, taste, and eating from the modern Indigenous kitchenspace. Claudia holds two Master's degrees (Anthropology and Chicana/o Studies) and a Bachelor's degree in Gender, Ethnic and Multicultural Studies. Outside of the institution, she is a community-based/plant-based chef, a womb ecologist, a mother of two, and a social justice activist.

Claudia, I met, while I was a graduate student at California State University, Los Angeles in 2010 and enrolled in Dr. Valerie Talavera-Bustillos' course on the Chicana and Chicano Educational Pipeline (Yosso, 2015). The professor invited Claudia to come speak to our cohort about her application process to pursue a PhD. Claudia was extremely positive and very organized. She graciously shared her portfolio with those of us in the cohort and encouraged us to get in touch with her if we wanted to obtain a copy of any of her materials. Her portfolio contained teaching materials as well as her applications, personal statements, and academic papers for admission into doctoral programs. Claudia de-mystified the process of applying to a doctoral program for me, and she was a major catalyst in me applying the following year. I soon became familiar with her and Chris Rodríguez' blog, *Decolonial Food*

for Thought: A Local Response to the Globalization of Foods, Taste, & Dis-ease Decolonizing our Diets; Re-Indigenzing our Foodways. I invited Claudia to come speak to my Freshman Composition class at Pasadena City College, which was part of a Chicana/o Studies based cohort. She presented her research and community-based decolonizing work surrounding Indigenous foodways, and the students were engaged, provoked, and eager to learn more. Claudia is a phenomenal scholar, rigorous educator, a loving and energetic mother of two that has much to contribute to Indigenous Studies in creative and innovative ways.

Santiago Andres Garcia

Santiago Andres Garcia is an adjunct Professor of Physical Anthropology and Humanities at Rio Hondo Community College, in Whittier, California. At times, he also serves as a colleague at Pasadena City College (my home campus) where he is often invited to teach courses in Anthropology. He is the recipient of the 2015 American Studies Association, Gloria E. Anzaldúa Award for Independent Scholars, Contingent or Community College Faculty. Through our various conversations, I have come to know that Santiago was born and raised in the San Gabriel Valley, is a devoted father to his daughter Julia, as well as a caretaker of the *Tongva* land he lives on.

Santiago introduced himself to me in August 2014 when I co-presented on a panel at the 3rd Annual Raza Studies Now![57] Conference held at the Pico Youth Center in Santa

[57] Raza Studies Now (RSN) is an organization of educational activists who organized the Raza Studies Now Conference during the summer of 2012 to build on a vision of self-determination first established in 1969 with *El Plan de Santa Bárbara* for Chican@ Higher Education (Raza Studies Now, *El Plan de Los Angeles: Toward a Path to Implement Raza and Ethnic Studies in K-14 Learning Environments*, July 2013).

Monica, CA. The panelists were asked to focus on the future of Chicana and Chicano Studies—from their perspectives of being educators from local high-schools and community-colleges. While there, I presented from an unpublished manuscript that I had co-authored, earlier that year, with Heidi Coronado on "Restoring Our Sacred Balance: Honoring *Indigena* Modalities of Wholeness in Urban Classrooms." After the panel presentation was over, I met Santiago and other members of RSN (Raza Studies Now). They mentioned that they had read my piece, which focused on teaching as a healing craft (2013). At the end of the article, I included a section on hopeful visions for the future. One of the efforts I specifically mentioned in the article, that Santiago brought up, had to do with "engaging in a respectful way with local peoples dedicated to preserving the original lifeways of what we now refer to as the San Gabriel Valley in Southern California to teach youth through traditional modes of storytelling and about the importance of protecting sacred sites, especially those in close proximity" (2013, p. 38). Santiago mentioned that he had appreciated that point as he, too, was an educator from the San Gabriel Valley. We stayed connected, and Santiago eventually visited a PUC (Partnerships to Uplift Communities) high-school course I taught on Contemporary Mexican Literature at the Community Charter Early High School Campus in Lakeview Terrace, CA. We collaborated on the Mesoamerican Clay Figurine Project (Garcia, in press; please visit http://mesofigurineproject.org) where I covered the writing portion and Santiago facilitated the clay-work. I recall the empowering and healing impact that working with the hands had on the students who were having a difficult time navigating the multiple levels of their adolescence that term. Santiago is an exceptional educator and scholar who uses his creativity in the classroom to offer spaces of hopeful resistance to his students and colleagues.

CHAPTER 4: Discussion and

Analysis of Findings:

~Sacred Stories~

Chicana and Chicano Educator Narratives—Ethnic and Spiritual Identity Development while Awakening to the Sacred Power Within

"What is important for us is that the old ways are correct and if we do not follow them we will be lost and without a guide. We must remember that the heart of our religions is alive and that each person has the ability to awaken and walk in a sacred manner. The manner with which we walk through life is each person's most important responsibility and we should remember this at every new sunrise."

-Thomas Yellow Tail, Crow Holy Man, 1903-1993
Walking in the Sacred Manner: Healers, Dreamers, and Pipe Carriers—Medicine Women of the Plains Indians, (St. Pierre and Long Soldier, 1995).

Learning as We Live

Learning opportunities surround us at all times. Our families teach us. Schools teach us. Life teaches us. Life itself is our greatest teacher. Each experience has the potential to be a future memory that will shape our identities and our behaviors. Categorizing is difficult when all creation in the world is interrelated. The educators in this study, who, in some ways, are mirror reflections of myself, have been shaped by their earliest experiences and exposures. In essence, they have been called to a ceremonial discourse since before they were ever born. They have walked back in time synchronizing their steps with the sound of the ancient drums that keeps them alive and flourishing today.

Prefatory Foundations: Spiritual Gifts and their Sacred Power

According to Cohen (2006), the Elders teach that some medicine is inborn. Indigenous epistemologies confirm that medicine is correlated to the presence and power embodied in or demonstrated by a person, place, an event, object, or natural phenomenon (Cohen, 2006, p. 27). Indigenous teachings also instruct that the Great Spirit gives each

person a medicine, a unique spiritual gift or talent that takes time to develop and explore as well as confidence to express. Because the Chicana and Chicano educators in this study walk in the sacred power of their own medicine, they have been able to acknowledge their unique gifts to help reshape identities and empower those they are entrusted to work with, including their students, families, and communities. The gifts have had a unique method of arriving to each educator, and they have manifested or begun to flourish according to that method. In essence, the gifts have brought the educators closer to recognizing, naming, and putting their sacred power into pedagogical practice. Restrictions related to time and space in this project as well as matters of protocol and respect allow me to only briefly mention these details later in this chapter.

According to Ray Dupris, "it is not enough to copy the songs and ceremonies of another holy man; this means nothing. If you truly have the calling, the spirits will teach you your ceremony, then you will have power—the kind of power that is so strong you could cure anything, even deadly disease, just by being there, praying for that person. This is the kind of power these people had" (St. Pierre and Long Soldier, 1995, p. 146). This passage helps explain that what evolves is a way of conducting ceremonies that is unique to the person—uniquely suited to the person and what they are learning. As the pieces of ritual practice become evident, they must be affirmed by multiple dreams. It is a slow, lifetime process.

Working in alignment with the powers of creation have always been a way of life among Indigenous peoples. When sacred power is activated and sustained, it can be understood as connected to faith in a spiritual reality beyond the physical world. It requires the ability to get things done in the spirit world, such as the power to sense danger, call spirits

into a ceremony, and/or doctor a patient. The medicine person must accurately predict the future and tell the patient what is needed in order to achieve this cure to avoid future problems. This can be risky because it places the healer in potential spiritual danger, which may diminish his or her own spiritual powers through a lifetime of use and dissipation. Furthermore, the reputation of the healer rests on accuracy. Positive results also reassure the faithful and remind them of the mysterious and tremendous powers of creation (St. Pierre and Long Soldier, 1995, p. 20).

Colonial Disempowerment of the Spirit

However, as was described in Chapter 1, these were the knowledge systems that were demonized and outlawed as a result of European colonization and missionization, which, ultimately, de-Indigenized modes and methods of learning. The doctrines of discovery justified these practices by labeling Indigenous peoples and their knowledge systems as heathen and pagan. Such oppressive conditions also endured a few centuries later in the United States when Congress enacted laws to deal with the so-called "Indian problem," such as the Dawes Act of 1887 and the Indian Reorganization Act in 1934. The new laws were used to take away the people's rights, more tribal land, and natural resources. Because of these laws, the ancient holy places and doctor training sites were removed from tribal territory and given to the U.S. Forest Service and Department of Interior or ended up in the ownership of timber companies, etc. (Star Hawk Lake, 1996). Relevant to this project is the fact that these forces of assimilation created a serious imbalance in the Native community and tribal system. It caused severe mental and physical illnesses that were new to the ancestors living in those times. And these changes presented new challenges for the few remaining Indian doctors. Star Hawk Lake (1988) insightfully concluded that it takes time to

study and understand a new illness, injury, or social problem. It takes a special kind of training and knowledge to come up with new approaches to healing and to handle new cases.

Doctoring Colonial Injuries—The Need for a New Medicine

For the tribal peoples (as well as those who have been de-tribalized), this balancing between two worlds can be very precarious, both spiritually and physically. What many of today's medicine men and women do most is help people who have experienced intergenerational historical trauma (Brave Heart, 2000), soul wounding (Duran, 2006), and subsequent factors, such as, unresolved grieving (Gonzales, 2006), and shame-based behavior (Torres, 2003). They offer their unique spiritual gifts and medicine to those who are "injured" by living as a colonized tribal people. In effect, they doctor depression, lack of positive identity, suicidal behavior, drug abuse, alcoholism, family crises, spouse abuse, and stress-related illnesses that are effects of colonization (St. Pierre and Long Soldier, 1995, p. 34). This dissertation project offers that the six Chicana and Chicano educators also contribute to the doctoring of colonial injuries (including de-Indigenizaton) in their students as well as to their families and communities. In many ways, caring and critically conscious educators are some of the "first responders" to these deep injuries that have been pervasive for generations, especially among those with origins from what we now call *México* and *Centroamérica* (Garcia, personal communication, 2015).

Indigenous Ceremonial Discourse as Community Cultural Wealth

Important to note, then, is that this study examined not only how the educators developed their ethnic identities but also how those ethnic identity formations provided access to the community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) inherent in Indigenous spirituality.

While gathering data on the factors (e.g. family, community, and education) shaping ethnic identity development among the Chicana and Chicano educators, I also found other influences related to a ceremonial discourse (Rodríguez, 2014) that helped to promote their spiritual identity development. The project examined how the educators' participation in a ceremonial discourse helped them acquire sacred information about their unique gifts and how they could best put them into practice, making the best possible contributions in their respective spheres of influence, primarily as educators.

For Heidi, her ceremonial discourse is grounded in honoring dreams as sacred sight/site. As sights, her dreams provided her instructions from specific Elders, medicine, and ceremonies that she could later identify and/or visit as actual sites. Santiago's ceremonial discourse is characterized by storytelling and receiving Origin Stories as well as oral histories in the form of familial narratives. Santiago's narrative also expressed the impact that journeying with the sacred *hongitos*/mushrooms had on his spiritual identity development and on deepening his Indigenous epistemological foundations. Maria's ceremonial discourse invokes the Fire of Life and the importance of fire keepers, who hold the responsibility of keeping ancestral flames alive. Andres' ceremonial discourse honors the tradition of speaking and praying with the feet through ceremonial/spirit running. Claudia's ceremonial discourse is very similar to Maria's because they both gained exposure to Indigenous teachings outside of the family in their late adolescence and into their early adulthood. For this study, I emphasize the role that the Sweat Lodge ceremony has played in shaping Claudia's Indigenous epistemology. Miguel's ceremonial discourse included his exposure to *Danza Azteca* while visiting *Zacatecas* and *Guanajuato,* in *México,* as a child. Those experiences cultivated an Indigenous epistemology based on the living ancestral knowledge embodied

and enacted by both Miguel's mother and *tía*—in their (and his) homeland. This experience had a profound impact that has followed him into adulthood. As can be observed, the ceremonial discourse for each educator is unique and is related, in many respects, to each person's sacred power. Below, I have provided brief descriptions of each of the major contributing factors concerning both ethnic and spiritual identity development among the six Chicana and Chicano educators. These factors had a significant impact on preparing the educators to embrace a ceremonial discourse.

Brief Overview of the Key Factors Influencing Ethnic and Spiritual Development

Family and Community

The patterns of the responses, gathered from the educators, suggested that family was a complex factor that also included community and culture. The majority of participants specifically used the word family/*familia* in their responses. Family was not necessarily mentioned first but it was mentioned, at some point, in the responses and was a consistent factor for the majority of participants. According to Pizarro and Vera (2001) "higher levels of ethnic identity were associated with more cooperative tendencies among the children in their learning environments: the participants were more committed to group advancement than they were to individual advancement" (p. 98-99). Such was the case for the participants in this study as they extended the notion of family to also include what they understood as their community; therefore, community was identified as an important factor or characteristic of identity. In addition, several of the educators acknowledged a spiritual aspect of their identities, which was directly linked to their spiritual connection not only with their ceremonial communities but also to more expansive and sacred forces of nature and

existence, which emphasizes a more holistic and expansive understanding of community that is rooted in Indigenous epistemologies.

Education

Pizarro's (2001; 2005) research made important connections between identities and the success and failure of Chicana/o students that can be confirmed in this study, especially to support the preliminary analyses "that there are critical connections between academic success among Chicanas/os and the influences of parents on developing strong, educationally grounded racial identities" (np). Pizarro's research also confirmed that for "the majority of Chicana/o students, the fact that they are made well aware of their lack of power becomes critical to their understanding of their place in the world. This is the means by which they can define their own identities" (Pizarro, np). For many of the participants, experiencing a lack of power, proved to be true—for some starting as early as kindergarten— and for others it continued to manifest well into their graduate programs as well as in their current positons as faculty members at institutions of higher education.

Although Education is listed as a singular (and generalized) factor, it most definitely extends into both the categories of Family and Ceremonial Discourse in very specific and dynamic ways. There is a distinction to be made between the learning that is promoted within a formalized educational system functioning to perpetuate the Cycle of Oppression and the *educación* received from family members in intimate settings[58] as well the apprenticeship

[58] Dolores Delgado Bernal (2001) in her piece, "Learning and living pedagogies of the home: The mestiza consciousness of Chicana students" draws on Gloria Anzaldúa's (1987) work to define the concept of a mestiza consciousness as the way a student balances, negotiates, and draws from her biculturalism, bilingualism, commitment to communities, and spiritualities in relationship to her education. Using this concept, Delgado Bernal offers a unique way to understand and analyze Chicana's educational experiences. Her analysis of life history and focus-group interviews indicates that the communication, practices, and learning that occur in the home and community, pedagogies of

that occurs while being present in ceremonial spaces. For the purposes of this study, each learning situation has been distinct for the participants and the findings also reveal this. When thinking about the impact Education has on ethnic identity development for Chicanas and Chicanos, it requires redefining—allowing space for it to be acknowledged, as a part, but also outside of formalized school settings.

Ceremonial Discourse

A major finding in this study was that ceremonial discourse was and continues to be the most significant factor that has influenced not only the spiritual identity development of all six educators but also their pedagogical praxis, which is guided by decolonizing Indigenous epistemologies. It is a discourse of memory that is not only cognizant of the historical past but also affirmative of the living capacity of the past in the present, thusly invoking a living relationship with the past. According to Rodríguez, "for de-Indigenized and de-ceremonialized, often dehumanized peoples, this ceremonial discourse represents more than a reconnection to story and place, it represents a reconnection to humanity itself" (2014, p. 10). Rodríguez was referencing "the seven-thousand year ceremonial discourse of *maiz* as a story of the continent that continues to be conveyed through oral and written narratives and often through song, prayer, ceremony, and dance" (p. 159).

Collectively, the educators, in this study, revealed that they had participated and/or continue to participate in the following Indigenous ceremonies: *Danza Azteca* Ceremonies, Sun Dance Ceremonies, Sweat Lodge Ceremonies (*Temazka*l and/or *Inipi*), Spiritual/Ceremonial Running, Talking/Healing Circles, Consuming and/or Preparing

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the home, often serve as a cultural knowledge base that helps students survive and succeed within an educational system that often excludes and silences them.

Sacred/Ceremonial Foods, Receiving Origin Stories, Meditating at Sacred Sites, Honoring Dreams as Sacred Sights/Sites. The responses from all six educators reveal that participating in these ceremonies has shaped identity in two distinct but interrelated ways:

1.) Connection to self

2.) Connection to community

The educators expressed that connection to self is really a (re)connection to spirit, which is, in essence, an acknowledgment of a spiritual identity. The outcome is a process that unfolds in a sequence where a connection to self IS connection to community, resulting in a knowingness that affirms, "When my spirit is clear, I can see you."

Ethnic Identifications and Autonomous Naming

A significant amount of time was dedicated in the interview process for gathering information from the participants that would allow for a thorough understanding of their own ethnic identifications as well as other concepts related to their identity formations—as developed over their lifetimes. The insights provided are invaluable and help to lay a foundation for the remainder of the study—ensuring understanding of *who* the participants are and most importantly the factors that shape their *Indigena*-centered ontologies and epistemologies.

Chicana and Chicano

Collectively, the definitions of Chicana and Chicano, provided by the educators, offer a narrative—a collaborative storying of a beautiful and complex people whose Original languages (prior to both English and Spanish) affirm them as sacred because they represent a center—an *ombligo*, as Andres Mendoza (2015) commented, that "connect the Earth and the Sky." An observable trend in the responses affirm that Chicanas and Chicanos are a

"mestizaje culture" that is "undeniably tied to Indigenous communities and traditions" (Coronado, 2015). These terms capture a way of being that "involves a certain consciousness, a historical and political awareness of where we come from" (Figueroa, 2015). For this reason, Chicana and Chicano are fluid terms that recognize and represent the fluidity of a people who continue to exist, persist, and resist across borders that are both seen and unseen: "Chicana and Chicano, it's indigeneity, it's modernization within this western context, it's urban" (Serrato, 2015). Although some respondents positioned Chicano as a "political identity" that was formed by a political moment, "a radicalization and moment for our *Raza* in the 60s and 70s" (Figueroa, 2015) others admitted that it "meant something very different in the 70s than it does now" (Serrato, 2015).

Claudia (2015) provided a metaphoric description of the development of the term in the following way: "I want to say that this word began as a seed, a *semilla, Xinachtli*—you plant it; it becomes a seed, you plant it, there's roots, water them, they grow—take on different shapes and ways of expressing themselves. Build relation with this seed and in building that relationship, it's reciprocal. Speak to each other; it is strength, community, relationship, constant, ecological, forever evolving, no beginning and no end—a planetary experience that can be ruptured." For Chicanas, in particular, this rupturing involves recognizing many additional layers to deal with; "these include family dynamics, the hierarchies, the sexism, the heterosexism," as stated by Maria Figueroa (2015).

Additionally, Claudia clarified that "some of us still use the Ch for Chicana and [some] prefer to use it with an X, the X represents a crossroads, symbolic of *Ollin*—

movement, and it, too, is a symbol of resistance, and it is also like a stamp of indigeneity.[59] It's a lay term for *Nepantlera/Nepantlero*, a border crosser within a spiritual realm, an emotional realm—[with the ability to undergo a] multi-dimensional way of traveling." Together, these definitions provide a holistic understanding of identity that is fully human, recognizing the interrelatedness of spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical aspects that are shaped by history, politics, society, and culture. Being integrated and whole while also recognizing the causes of fragmentation is part of the Chicana/Xicana and Chicano/Xicano experience. Creativity is also needed to maneuver through the simultaneity of the past that exists within the present *for* the future. Chicanas/Xicanas and Chicanos/Xicanos, are those "with a *consciencia* about themselves about their place in the world about their place in society, and a conscience that they know enough to acknowledge and to have a civil responsibility" (Zavala, 2015). When they are "willing to go that extra mile […] fighting oppressive forces to help their *familia* and their [*Raza*] community, those are people who deserve to call themselves Chicanas and Chicanos" (Garcia, 2015).

Indigenous and Indigenous Ceremonial Traditions and Practices

For all six educators there was an overall trend in defining Indigenous as being closely related to acknowledging, respecting, taking care of, and going back to the land. Claudia Serrato (2015) offered the important insight, however, that the land is not necessarily immovable—remaining in one location over generations. Rather, land, specifically through food as an example, is fluid, mobile, constantly moving—as well—because food is absorbed

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[59]  Ollin, Plate 10 of the *Codex Borbonicus*

through the body—and as the body moves as a result of being nourished by food—so does the land.[60] In this way, as well, Indigenous ceremonial traditions and practices have also been fluid. Four out of the six educators described that Indigenous ceremonial traditions and practices served the purpose of connecting to spirit, to self, and to others in community. They provided examples of their own participation in Sweat Lodge Ceremonies, such as the *Inipi* or *Temazkal*, Sun Dance Ceremonies, *Danza Azteca* Ceremonies as well as Talking/Healing Circles where the presence of Elders and a sacred fire were present. Emphasis was placed on how these ceremonial traditions and practices serve the purpose of "emptying you out" in order to facilitate a connection to spirit.[61] Miguel and Santiago, described the importance of community and connection to spirit but within a different and more insular context of family values with examples of family gatherings, rituals of work, and activities that involved movement of the body, such as running and cycling/*ciclismo*, for example (Zavala, 2015; Garcia, 2015).

[60] Dr. Roberto "Cintli" Rodríguez (2014) traced the movement of *maiz* in *Our sacred maíz is our mother: Indigeneity and belonging in the Americas*. He argues that, given the restrictive immigration policies and popular resentment toward migrants, a continued connection to *maíz* culture challenges the social exclusion and discrimination that frames migrants as outsiders and gives them a sense of belonging not encapsulated in the idea of citizenship. The "hidden transcripts" of corn in everyday culture—art, song, stories, dance, and *maíz*-based foods like tortillas have nurtured, even across centuries of colonialism, the living *maíz* culture of ancient knowledge.

[61] Maestra Elena Avila (1999) in *Woman who glows in the dark: A curanderara reveals traditional Aztec secrets* explained that the spirit is basically "the envelope that protects the soul from harm" and that if "the spirit is relatively healthy, the soul will be too" (p. 179). She further commented that a "strong spirit buffers negative outside influences much as the skin of a fruit protects the fruit from decay and certain insects" (p. 173).

Verbalizations of Ethnic Identity among the Participants

Each of the educators used multiple ways to verbally express their identities to others. One major reason given for the multiplicity in verbal expressions of identity was that, indeed, their identities had been shifting over time. Three out of the six participants specifically mentioned that they would have identified very differently ten years ago. Miguel explained that the signifiers[62] had changed, precisely, because he had changed due to his own pedagogical, spiritual, and organizational (i.e. working as an organizer) journeys (Zavala, 2015). The educators recognized the varying expressions they had used in the past because those were still a part of their identity development over their lifetimes. In the past, they were simply in a different place in their lives and therefore used different verbal expressions of those identities. However, they also revealed that multiple expressions of identity were *currently* necessary because their identities were, in fact, at the intersections of the signifiers. The lists below attempt capture the variety of verbalizations used by the participants:

Female/They participants.[63]

[62] Although not a focal point in this study, I would like to recognize the ways in which I came to a better understanding of signs and signifiers in my coursework at UCSB with Chela Sandoval. In her book, *Methodology of the oppressed,* Sandoval (2000) relied on "Barthes's early work on semiotics, and on his emancipatory method for challenging dominant ideology, what he calls "mythology," as guides to the methodology of the oppressed" (p. 81). She also recognized and reclaimed "Barthes's early contributions to de-colonial praxis, while also studying the ways his early 'science' of semiotics depends on, articulates, and strays from the collective principles and procedures of this very methodology" (p. 81).

[63] I would like to acknowledge that at the onset of the research process, I was very intentional about having a balanced group of educators, with equal parts male and female. However, upon further engagement with the educators, particularly Santiago Andres Garcia, as well as with other encounters I have had with transgender populations, I realize that I have a lot to learn about how to make all people feel comfortable with their chosen identifications. To acknowledge my effort to continue learning, I have included They in addition to female and male categorizations. I would like to clarify, however, that my intent to have equal parts male and female participants is due to my own Indigenous epistemology that promotes the importance of balancing the energies and that the invocation of *Ometeotl* is an acknowledgement of the duality of all existence and the daily challenge for people to do their best to achieve balance.

- Chicana
- *Mexicana*
- Mexican American
- Chicana Indigenous
- Chicana *Indigena*
- Xicana
- *Indigena*
- Mesoamerican

Male/They participants.

- Chicano
- Chicano/*Mexicano*
- Xicano
- Indigenous
- Brown Body

The educators expressed having an awareness that their identities were still continuing to shift, which required an ongoing commitment to a lifelong learning process. An additional determining factor in the type of verbal expression selected by the participants had to do with the various social spaces they were navigating through. Some of the social spaces mentioned, included: ceremonial circles and/or communities, work, which for most, was limited to the educational institutions in which they were employed, included faculty meetings as well as classroom interactions, and the spaces of social media.

It is helpful to note here that, according to Pizarro and Vera (2001), virtually "all studies of Chicano identity have been too exclusively focused on the ethnic aspects, without adequately examining an individual's private definition and categorization of his or her total social identity" (p. 2). Pizarro and Vera (2001) clarified that if such a distinction were adopted, "it would be possible to assess the importance of ethnic identity in the broader framework of a multidimensional social identity [because] for Chicano[a]s, ethnic identity is

not simple or unidimensional [but rather] it potentially operates on multiple levels (on a private to public continuum), each of which has several components that may be ethnic in general character" (Pizarro and Vera; 2001, p. 2). García's (1982) work was also crucial because it defined the difficulties involved in understanding Chicana/o ethnic identity and it considered a number of different ways of thinking about identity that called for multidimensional analysis of Chicana/o ethnic identity (García as cited in Pizarro and Vera; 2001, p. 96). Phinney later acknowledged (1996), that ethnic identity can be best understood in terms of dimensions along which individuals and samples vary, rather than as categories into which individuals can be classified (Phinney as cited in Pizarro and Vera, 2001, p. 101).

To illustrate, two of the educators chose to expand upon the parameters set by the question, which asked how they verbally express their identities to others. They both communicated that expression of identity could also occur through the body in other ways. For example, the mouth and tongue are not limited to only vocalized expressions made by a speaker. For Claudia, whose work focuses on decolonizing the diet through practice of Indigenous veganism, the act of cooking could also be a reciprocal mode of communication and expression—one where the recipient is also engaged in the process of tasting and receiving what the cook or chef has to offer or express. She stated that, "I feel like verbal doesn't always have to be something you hear. Verbal could be something you taste, [and] verbal to me, I guess a synonym to that is communication, is how do I express my communication […] it varies [with] the event, the space, the place, right?" (Serrato, 2015). Santiago, on the other hand, who mentioned having difficulty with public speaking, shared that he could verbally express himself and his identity through his physical body and presence, especially by making sure that his tattoos were visible, particularly at the

educational institutions where he teaches. He declared, "I love to keep my sleeves up. In meetings I keep them, I show them, and I show them to students, my Dean, colleagues, so they're definitely a part of my identity. Body language is a part of who I am. When I'm not expressing myself verbally, I'm expressing myself through my body, and I think a lot of that has to do with difficulties. I get really nervous. I have a difficult time speaking in public" (Garcia, 2015).

Pedagogical Praxis

Five out the six educators provided definitions for this concept. The majority of the responses specifically mentioned that pedagogical praxis was connected to methods of teaching. These methods are what characterize the craft of teaching; they include the multiple ways and artistic forms of not only teaching but also of structuring various learning spaces both within and outside of classrooms. Two out of the five responses emphasized that pedagogical praxis involved constant "transformation of self and society" and was informed by a "philosophy of social justice." Two of the educators—who provided lengthier responses—with more specific examples about their own praxes—introduced Indigenous epistemologies as informing the structure of what they do. For instance, Claudia identified that it was useful for her to shut out the Western voice in her mind in order to "allow the Indigenous voice to be present and come out" (Serrato, 2015) This required an awareness of her own multiple subjectivities and facilitated a need for her to rely on her skills at enacting a sacred performative activity—depending on whether she was teaching in a classroom, community space, or in the home. In addition, Maria, who specifically discussed her own Indigenous pedagogical perspective, also described that her pedagogy was rooted in her background as a social justice-based and grassroots theatre practitioner. She described how

her classrooms were organically centered and structured around community, healing, gathering the students and allowing them to share space as a *familia*—honoring the sacredness of the circle as a tool to democratize and cultivate transparency within the learning space (Figueroa, 2015).

The insights provided by the educators remind me of the lifetime it has taken them to acquire the knowledge and wisdom they embody in their daily lives and that follow them into the classroom spaces that they occupy. I realize that many people, including ancestors and Elders have helped to nurture, cultivate, inspire, support, guide, and heal the educators highlighted in this study.

Sacred Stories that Heal: The Chicana and Chicano Educator Narratives

In order to honor the overlapping realms of influence for each educator, I have chosen to focus on each of the educator narratives individually as I realized that the stories they have shared with me are more valuable than the categories I could ever assign to them. Rather than organize the remainder of the chapter by dividing it into separate categories, I would much rather allow for the stories to speak for themselves. Therefore, I provide a brief description of each educator—focusing on HOW their ethnic and spiritual identities have changed/shifted/aligned. The same format is used to organize the educator narratives to allow for coherence amongst each story. The format is divided into four categories that are posed as questions, which are described below:

Who am I?

Includes factors, characteristics, moments and experiences that have contributed to the identity development of the educators.

How did I come to be who I am?

Identifies key moments in the life cycle of the educators (childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, and adulthood) that were pivotal in shaping both ethnic and spiritual development. Includes excerpts, in italics, directly taken from the oral narratives of each of the educators that capture highlights of defining moments in their identity development.

What is my ceremonial discourse?

Names and describes the specific Indigenous ceremonial practice that was emphasized the most in the interview process as well as the key experiences that provided them the exposure to it. The ceremonial discourse provides insights into the guiding principles that shape a Chicana and Chicano Indigenous Decolonizing Pedagogical Praxis.

How do I pass on what I know?

Describes how ceremonial discourse intersects with pedagogical practice for each educator. Explains how the educators foster specific learning methods and techniques unique to their own ceremonial practices and Indigenous epistemologies. Illustrates the healing potential of the course content and assignments for each educator.

Heidi Coronado

*[My spirit] it's what keeps me connected to the, to the rest; it's like a…*como te digo?[64]*Like a …like an* ombligo."[65]

Who am I?

When asked to describe the factors that make up her identity, Heidi expressed, "connections to my culture, roots, being Mestiza, part Mayan, being an immigrant [from *Guatemala*], and a woman" (Coronado, 2015). She felt that all of those were what fostered her sense of resilience in response to how people see her. Heidi also stated, "I'm a mom and I think [it] is definitely a very important part of my identity and even though I've always been very mindful of how I treat others…my purpose in the world is or what I want for other generations now being a mom is even stronger" (Coronado, 2015). Heidi also clarified that "being a teacher is definitely part of my identity, a very important part. Where would I be if I

[64] how do I tell you?

[65] center; bellybutton

wouldn't be teaching? And I don't mean only in the classroom but passing on knowledge or sharing knowledge with others" (Coronado, 2015)? Lastly, Heidi acknowledged that another important part "is my spirit and I haven't recognized it before. It took me a while to reconnect to that but I feel that now because of how I've grown and I am very conscious that I need to make sure to take care of because it's what keeps me connected" (Coronado, 2015).

How did I come to be who I am?

Heidi's narrative revealed that she lived in *Guatemala* for the first fifteen years of her life. Her developmental years of childhood and adolescence were shaped by the cultural (including religious and linguistic), historical, social, political, ideological, and economic conditions of her surroundings. She attended Catholic school as a child, and she questioned the gender and class inequities she observed around her; however, she was often silenced, ignored, and castigated for asking about and problematizing patterns of conduct that seemed unjust to her, including gendered repression against girls and women. Heidi's narrative revealed several key moments that shaped both her ethnic and spiritual development.

Experiencing gender inequality. *"One of the main things I could tell you was when I was younger about being a girl, being the different one, not fitting in. So being a girl because as a girl when I was growing up, I wasn't allowed to do a lot of stuff and one of the things that I remember the most was…so I've always had this connection with nature. It's there, just something. So in* Guatemala*, that's where I grew up fifteen years of my life, there's volcanoes and to me they're just this amazing thing and when I was young I had cousins who were younger than I was and then I had cousins my age, and I think one that was older, so they wouldn't allow me to go camp, to go hiking and camping on the volcanoes because I was the girl. So all of them, even my younger cousins they would, my uncle would take them hiking and they would camp on the craters or if it was not active, they would do cool stuff. But I wasn't allowed because I was a girl. I wasn't allowed to express my voice and a big part was because I was a girl and women had to shut up and just obey. I mean that was the message"* (Coronado, 2015).

Living in war and poverty. *"In* Guatemala *we were really poor. My family was coming apart. It was really difficult for us because of the war in* Guatemala *My dad lost his job; my mom too. They couldn't pay for school anymore cuz in* Guatemala *there are public schools*

but you don't really learn. It's like you go there and there is one teacher for five or seven grades. You do nothing. And also not in public school because of the war, a lot of army or guerilleros[66] *[were] coming even for girls but mostly boys, so I went to a private school.* La monja[67] *Juana since fourth grade had pulled me out of class and [was] saying if you're dad doesn't pay you are not going to get your grades. I wouldn't tell my dad because I knew he couldn't pay"* (Coronado, 2015).

Being undocumented and afraid. *"I was an immigrant. I was undocumented; just coming to a new country [United States] was difficult. My parents made eight-thousand dollars per year; it was a family of four. We came to live in the Pico-Union area, in Koreatown. We lived in an alley, and it smelled really bad, but we didn't complain or anything. We had one of those singles just a kitchen and a big room. I used to do my homework in the bathroom, I remember the tiles on the floor, and we would call it my* oficina[68] *I studied hard because I did want to attend the university"* (Coronado, 2015).

"In my undergrad it was the whole thing about being Chicana or not being Chicana or being Latina. Learning about the decolonization process for people of color in the U.S. So I think that was my awareness stage. That's when I did a lot, I got involved in the National Conference for Community and justice NCCJ; they used to do a human relations retreat. I found an outreach department because at that time there was no AB540; it was just so difficult. I didn't know if I was going to get kicked out of school or my parents were going to get deported. There was [Proposition] 187 going on and all these immigration things. But I remember taking a class on the Chicano Child, and it helped me change my focus to cultural psychology where I could design my own coursework. In that class and in some other Chicana/o Studies classes, I wasn't accepted because I am not Mexican and it was hard for me because I identified with the struggle even though I was from Guatemala*. But my professor said you could actually be Chicana or Chicano and not be Mexican but Chicana just means the struggle and the activism and the social justice for the communities, for the communities of color, and I thought, ok so then I am a Chicana"* (Coronado, 2015).

Reconnecting to Indigenous identity through dreams and women elders. *"When I started my PhD is when I connected to my Indigenous identity. I had my citizenship then so I was able to go back [to* Guatemala*] and interview my family about who we were. But even before that, I started getting these dreams and signals from the universe like here it is or you have to look for this or you have to move this way. A course was being offered on Indigenous Women and Spiritualty; it was not part of my program, but I ended up sitting in on class and then ended up being the translator for the* México *trip and meeting all these* curanderas*. I met Estela Roman[69] and stayed with her and I met other women there. On one of the trips we*

[66] guerillas

[67] nun

[68] office

[69] Estela Roman is a traditional healer from Cuernavaca, Mexico. She is recognized in her community as a teacher, a healer, social worker, and a lawyer. She is also the author of *Nuestra Medicina: de Los*

went to a cerro[70] *close to Cuernavaca. And then we had to walk it, but I didn't know we had to offer. You know like the offerings. She brought* maíz *and she taught us. This teaching had a big impact on me about reciprocity; we take from the Earth. It was like I was coming back, like I could hear my* abuelita[71] *or somebody had said that to me before. I was listening again with purpose. We went up to the* cerro; *it's very spiritual. When we came back, we met with women who were leaders; they were doing a lot of activism with the Mayans that were coming from* Guatemala *to* Chiapas*. It was amazing to me. I had never met people like that. I felt a connection to my heart, but at the same time I was confused, scared both like in shock. I felt a calling but it was a big calling, too much responsibility. I went away from it but things kept coming back.* Flor de Mayo[72] *came to me [in a dream] you know, so that was the big one. So that again, the last, spirit of identity development. I guess the spiritual. And then you know everything that has happened since then like meeting them [13 Indigenous Grandmothers] and then and then always going back to…to…hold on"* (Coronado, 2015).

What is my Ceremonial Discourse? Honoring Dreams as Sacred Sight/Site

For Heidi, her ceremonial discourse is grounded in honoring dreams as sacred sight/site. As sights, her dreams have provided her instructions from specific Elders, medicine, and ceremonies that she could later actually identify and/or visit. As sacred sites,

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Remedios para el aire y los remedios para el alma (2012) Since the age of nineteen she has participated in the formation of women's groups that promote and encourage basic health/self-care utilizing traditional methods of healing. I, too, have had the privilege to learn from *La Maestra* while she visited Los Angeles at here & now in El Sereno, CA and poured water in a Sweat Lodge ceremony in San Fernando—where she gave the *mujeres* a version of a *Temazkal* (without the adobe structure). I learned the very important role that our sacred allies, *las plantitas*/ the plants play in Mexican Traditional Medicine (MTM) (Gonzales, 2012).

[70] Mountain

[71] Grandmother

[72] Flor de Mayo is one of thirteen grandmothers that make up The International Council of 13 Indigenous Grandmothers, which is an international alliance of Indigenous female elders that focuses on issues such as the environment, internationalism, and human rights. The group met for the first time in October 2004 at the Dalai Lama's Menla Retreat Center on Panther Mountain in Phoenicia, New York, during which time they declared themselves a council http://grandmotherscouncil.org. Flordemayo is a Curandera Espiritu, or a healer of divine spirit. As a seer, she has the ability to see other realms of color, light, and sound. In addition, has the ability to see the effects of existing imbalances on the physical, emotional and spiritual realms within a person's energy system. She was born in highlands of Central America, specifically Nicaragua and was the youngest of 15 children. She was born under the sign for the seed, in Mayan https://followthegoldenpath.org.

her dreams have been places that her spirit has actually traveled to in order to grant her access to better understanding her spiritual gifts, where she could receive instructions on how best to access actual sites in nature during her waking time. Visiting these sites and conducting herself in a way that follows principles of respect, responsibility, relationship, and reciprocity enables her to stay connected to her spirit and to gain confidence in how to use her spiritual gifts, especially in the classroom. Important to emphasize, within an Indigenous epistemological framework, is the uniqueness of each person's spiritual gifts and medicine as well as the ways in which the natural elements of life (and all of the energies—seen and unseen—that are associated with them) function in a cohesive and interrelated manner of communication and exchange.[73]

She explained that she has made it a consistent pattern of behavior to write down her dreams. She stated that, "To me, they're very important, and I think that's why when I started reconnecting with the Indigenous part of me or my spirit, my Indigenous ancestors, my spirit was the strongest. It was like the strongest message" (Coronado, 2015). Heidi also humbly shared that "I feel that there are a lot of things that I doubt about myself, about my gifts and

[73] It falls beyond the scope of this project to go into detail about the use of sacred counts (i.e. ancient ways of keeping and recording time) in determining the potentialities for each person based on key details about place, date, and time of birth. My understanding, based on my own personal experience from teachings by Maestro Cuco Esperansa, is that the ancient relatives worked in alignment with the cosmic energies in order to better understand themselves, their potentialities, as well as areas to focus on for improvement. I am aware that my understanding is very limited and may not coincide with the various interpretations that exist amongst community intellectuals who are often self-taught and/or have received instructions based on oral traditions passed on by Elders from various regions of the world. Despite these controversies, I think it is important to acknowledge, that, to date, we have access to these counts and Indigenous epistemologies because ancestors carved them into sacred stones. It our responsibility to continue learning in ways that are respectful. In retrospect, I would have liked to have included an interview question on the use of the *Nahua* day counts, *Tonalpohualli* (260 day count) and *Xiuhpohualli* (365 day count), or the *Maya Tzolk'in* (260 day count). I do have an awareness and surface-level understanding of some of the educators' identities that is rooted in the count of days.

about how I am supposed to share them. Like I still don't know. But I know my spirit is very important" (Coronado, 2015). These doubts connect back to her childhood when she would share prophetic dreams with the adults in her life, but they went unacknowledged or ignored. These details demonstrate the results of de-Indigenization that Gonzales (2013) discussed in detail. It was not until much later in Heidi's life that she gained access to the Elders that could help her and instruct her on how to access her own inner guidance and teachers that were available to her during her dream time.

How do I pass on what I know?

As Heidi has learned to trust her intuitive intelligence, her ceremonial discourse of honoring her dreams has manifested in her capacity to emphasize the importance of interconnectedness in her pedagogical practice. Heidi cultivates spaces of dialogue, trust, and community in her classes as well as in the spaces she enters outside of the classroom, such as conferences, workshops, and now life-coaching interactions. Heidi promotes listening with respect and honors the circle as a sacred tool for fostering interconnectedness. Heidi has shared with me specific dreams that have to come to her, which described to her how to conduct a lesson or create a healing space for students or how to elaborate on a specific concept. This gift has also extended into her children's classrooms as well as spaces she has cultivated for other mothers to practice mindfulness and receive inner guidance. Heidi shared that being connected to her spirit keeps her connected "to the, to the rest; it's like a…*como te digo*? Like a …like an *ombligo*. You know? Like the umbilical cord that connects us all, is that spirit and that's to me that's…a spirit connection to self. Which, which is, I wish I could draw it for you right now because I'm looking at the picture and how it all connects us. Like we each have our own spirit but yea we are all interconnected."

Figure 1: Indigenous Pedagogical Tools
by Heidi Coronado (included with permission)
(From PowerPoint presentation as example of her pedagogy)

Santiago Andres Garcia

"I was like yeah, you know what, I'm Tlaloc *in disguise."*

Who am I?

Throughout the interview process, Santiago provided several details to describe his identity. He began by stating, "My name is Santiago. I'm really proud of my name, Santiago" (Garcia, 2015). He told the story of when he was in kindergarten, his teacher had some difficulty pronouncing and thus accepting his name, so Santiago's mother told her to just call him Andy, which was the Anglicized version of Andres, Santiago's middle name. Santiago shared that from kindergarten to high school he was known by Andy. He states, that "My sister called me Andy, my parents called me Andy, everyone called me Andy, my best friends knew me by Andy" (Garcia, 2015). And that it wasn't "until the end of high school when I started filling out applications that my counselors were like, 'no you gotta put you're real name' and so I started putting Santiago Andres and that brought me lot of success" (Garcia, 2015).

Santiago's name became a part of what he defined as his "true identity and everywhere I go my name is Santiago Andres, [and] I let them know Santiago is in your presence (Garcia, 2015). Another characteristic of identity, for Santiago, has been his masculinity, where he seeks to be recognized as a level-headed, strong leader type, *hombre*, who likes to ensure that he is using the privilege of his physical body to making sure everyone's feeling safe (Garcia, 2015). In addition, Santiago emphasized his identity as a "Chicano/*Mexicano* who has been through a lot, is educated, comes from family" (Garcia, 2015). He wants to provide the message that it is ok to be Chicano; it's ok to be *Mexicano*, that it's ok to have that identity. He also described that his identity is also reflected "in my

ink, you know, I think my tattoos are a part of my identity that I like to show off to people" when they "ask me about my ink, about my tattoos and [I] tell them, you know they're about my Mexican culture, I'm a Chicano and I always like to share that with them" (Garcia, 2015).

How did I come to be who I am?

Santiago's oral history revealed that his developmental years of childhood and adolescence were primarily shaped by his family and neighborhood as well as memories that were made while visiting his pueblo in *Ixtlahuacan de los Membrillos, Jalisco, México*. He grew up in a Mexican household, with a very large extended family (with both of his parents coming from families with ten siblings). Santiago's narrative revealed several key moments that shaped both his ethnic and spiritual development. Some of these included the ritual aspects of work within his household, the importance of planting as part of his identity development as a Mexican boy, Chicano adolescent, and Indigenous hombre.

Working as ritual. *"Work for my* familia[74] *was a ritual because we were always working. My dad was always working, being in construction, I helped him ever since I was a little boy, five years old. I'd go work with my dad,* andamos por toda la[75] *valley working odd jobs helping people with plumbing, remodeling kitchens, concrete. Work was* ceremonia *for us. My mom and dad worked, I worked, my sisters worked; when we weren't doing school work, we were out in the yard cleaning,* limpiando los baños, la cocina;[76] *looking at it now as an adult that was ceremony for us; that was out ritual"* (Garcia, 2015).

Planting as ceremony. *"Planting, I also consider that to be* ceremonia*, and that's something that was introduced to me on and off throughout my childhood and adolescence from nine to thirteen years old. We would take frequent trips to our pueblo in México. There were a lot of farmers, people were farming, an agricultural town,* Ixtalahuacán de los Membrillos*, and*

[74] Family

[75] We went all over the

[76] Cleaning the bathrooms, kitchen

when people weren't farming, they were getting drunk and that's my pueblo, es un pueblo alegre,[77] Ixtalhuacán de los Membrillos. *I remember that having a big impact in my life going up to* las sierras *and watching the farmers farm and seeing and just seeing it and tripping out; that's how they were making a living; that was their subsistence practice. At that time, it seemed awkward [but] as an adult and remembering thinking about it, it wasn't. And then later, when I was like 14, 15 my* nino,[78] *Cecilio who was a Vietnam Veteran, he introduced planting to us at the household level here in Walnut, CA. We would grow* calabazas,[79] *we would grow corn,* cebollas,[80] *carrots, and it was fun. I remember it was fun because then it was something for us to do during the spring and summer. It brought my family together. My dad never did it with us because he was always busy working But my* tío,[81] *my* nino *be brought that to the households"* (Garcia, 2015).

Running with the neighborhood. *"During my adolescence, from about the ages of ten to fifteen, I was a bad boy, a gangster. I ran with the neighborhood. That really developed my identity; my neighborhood helped make me who I am, made me who I am today and that was ritual to me, that was ritual and ceremonial cuz you know there was a strict protocol, street lingo, way to act, dress, expected to be out at certain times of the week, expected to be out certain hours, to react, to be aggressive, have a certain type of behavior—that's ritual. When I got out into the neighborhood, shaking everyone's hand, being welcomed into the neighborhood, was part of my identity back then. It stuck with me to this very day. You did a lot of stupid things. We tattooed things I regret now. When I was a young* chavalo,[82] *it was like ok so you tattoo your neighborhood on you; then later when I was more educated, ok well now you tattoo your ancestors on you. The ritual and method were still the same, but the material and content were different. This was definitely part of my identity formation. I was taught not to be scared. There's a reason why you get jumped in so that out can take a beating you can take a pounding, and if you get caught slipping, you get jumped, you can take it. Then you come back and you go back and you ride. I think that's something I bring to the academy and institution because I don't like getting punked. I don't like my colleagues getting punked; that's something that developed in me early, you know being a part of the neighborhood"* (Garcia, 2015).

Writing to mi Primo Coco brought me closer to my Indigenous ceremonial practice. *"My primo Coco, you know I've, been writing to him, my cousin since I was 13, you know; he's been locked up for most of his adult life…and he brought me closer to my Indigenous ceremonial practice. He's the one who introduced me to the ancestral ways and in his letters*

[77] It's a cheerful town

[78] Godfather

[79] squash

[80] onions

[81] uncle

[82] kid/adolescent

he would write to me about how in Ixtlahuacán de los Membrillos*, the town where we're from, the primary* Santo *is* Santo Santiago*. I was named after* San Santiago*, my dad,* Santiago*, is named after* el Santo, Santiago*, Saint James, but Coco used to tell me that when the* españoles[83] *arrived in* Ixtlahuacán de los Membrillos*, the primary deity was* Tlaloc*, he was the main deity, and what they did was that they destroyed all of* Tlaloc's *effigies, and they replaced it with Saint James, they replaced* Tlaloc's *effigies with* Santo Santiago*[…]so that's why I'm cool with being* Santiago *because I'm* Tlaloc *in disguise. For me, it's the same,* Tlaloc, Santiago*, they're the same"* (Garcia, 2015).

"Coco's an anarchist and that's the reason he was in prison in the first place because he disliked authority and every opportunity he got, he would put a smash down on the juras.[84] *He never had any violent encounters with other neighborhoods, but he was in there for crimes against authorities. When he felt the safety was being threatened by* juras*, he would put a smash on them and that why he's in there and that's why he probably will never get out because he was always beating up cops and guards, assaulting them because he feared them. He did what he had to do to protect himself. I remember when I was like ten, eleven, twelve years old, I loved him. I loved Coco. He was an* anarquista,[85] *he was a punk; he was a punker before he was from EP. He had spikes, his vest, sleeves were cut off and his chains and boots and then he had a big ol* anarquista *tattoo. I'll always remember at my abuelita's house cuz he was raised by my* abuelita*. I'd look at his* anarquista *symbol. I was always looking at his tattoo and those memories always really stayed with me, and then when he got locked up, I was like thirteen. I was really sad. He would always tell me about the importance of not forgetting who you are and where you come from, you know being* Mexicano*. I have those letters, all those letters. He would tell me stories of our* pueblo*, to be proud of our* pueblo*. He would write me letters about the conquest and how the rituals and our ceremonies were negated and destroyed, and about colonization and the* indio*, how it was colonized and it was given other ways, these other teachings not native to his or her home"* (Garcia, 2015).

What is my Ceremonial Discourse? Preparing and Consumption of Sacred Foods/Medicine—Journeying with the Sacred *Hongitos*

Santiago's ceremonial discourse is characterized by rituals with *familia*, such as work, gatherings, food, and music as well as with storytelling and receiving Origin Stories as well as oral histories in the form of familial narratives. Outside of the family sphere, Santiago

[83] Spaniards

[84] Cops/police

[85] anarchist

has participated in visiting sacred sites as well as participating in Sweat Lodge ceremonies, such as the *Lakota Inipi*. However, in this section, I think it is vital to include and emphasize a portion of Santiago's narrative where he expressed, in detail, the impact that journeying with the sacred *hongitos*/mushrooms had on his spiritual identity development and on deepening his Indigenous epistemological foundations. Santiago shared that ingesting the sacred mushrooms reaffirmed him in a really honest and sincere and earthly way. He explained that he loved the fact that the affirmation was coming from him and his heart. He felt like the earth was telling him, "Santiago everything that you are doing, you're on the right track, keep doing it and you're going to be safe" (Garcia, 2015). He illustrated that: "It was really affirming knowing that I was gonna be safe and secure teaching what I am teaching, writing about what aim writing, practicing what I'm practicing which is planting and growing, that's where the medicine really helped me" (Garcia, 2015).

Santiago reflected and mentioned that he thought the mushrooms did bring him closer to an Indigenous awareness: "it brought me closer to that which has been kept away as Indigenous people [because] my parents never told me they did anything, you know ingest, take, you know mushrooms [, and] I didn't learn it in school" (Garcia, 2015). Santiago described growing up "in an era of DARE, stay away from drugs; in the neighborhood, you know, we were smoking weed and there were other illicit drugs around but nothing like *medicina* like mushrooms" (Garcia, 2015). He explained how that teaching didn't come until much later in his life when another Indigenous person, Xochitl, who was also an intellectual introduced it to him. Santiago spoke about how his journey was a very deep emotional experience, a very personal experience. He explained that his "brain was communicating with the ancestral memory that is just locked in there, all of the parties that were involved in

my naming in communication with—I think that's what happens when you are under the influence, when you're under the power of this medicine, all of the players in your life that were part of your *vida*[86] that were part of your making and your development are communicating with one another and you're seeing that you're experiencing it, visualizing it" (Garcia, 2015). Santiago summarized the importance of his ceremonial discourse as connected to the sacred journeying that he took with the mushrooms: "Our journey is an Indigenous feeling that has been negated to us because of colonization. It has been wiped out; we've been told it's bad, illicit that's not allowed in our families, households, and schools, so definitely that's something that changed my mind, that changed my whole perspective on the world, definitely that, the *medicin*a" (Garcia, 2015).

How do I pass on what I know?

Santiago's ethnic identity development and the exposure he had as a child and adolescent to his place of origin in *Ixtlahuacán de los Membrillos* was pivotal. This exposure to an agricultural form of subsistence, that was ancestral, rooted Santiago to a place of origin and provided him with access to an understanding about what those origins meant—being connected to the land, in a way that was reciprocal and joyful/*alegre*. The memories that were created in *México* stayed with Santiago and provided him with a type of resilience that proved to be formidable upon further reflection of other factors influencing Santiago's identity development (e.g. working-class background; gang affiliation). Santiago's formative years as a child and adolescent facilitated an embodied learning process, inclusive of his parents' work ethic, his *nino* Cecilio's planting technologies, his neighborhood's

[86] life

prioritization of being able to physically hold it down, and his primo Coco's personified resistance that was much more than a punk aesthetic but was backed up by the commitment to take action against oppressive authoritative forces in his community—through physical force (Garcia, 2015).

These factors help explain why Santiago fosters experiential, engaged, and hands-on learning methods for his students that are also grounded in what he describes as Mesoamerican concepts. Embodiment really guides Santiago's pedagogical practice. His own physical presence is an exemplification of the embodiment of self-awareness. As an educator, Santiago plants seeds of knowing, of self-awareness in his students and does so by also inviting the elements of life—Earth, Fire, Water, Wind—into learning spaces through the use of clay work, specifically. He provides a type of inventive-aesthetic sustenance that is necessary to feed the spirit by nurturing creativity. Embodied knowing is promoted by acknowledging the body as a site of knowing and expression that continues to have agency despite its presence in the Cycle of Oppression that surrounds it. A more detailed analysis of Santiago's pedagogy will be provided in the following chapter.

Maria Figueroa

"It's like a fifteen-year career so far. I think I am a seasoned professional. I'm a seasoned Maestra[87] *of literature and of the word, of the palabra. But it's taken me this long to feel comfortable in my own* Maestra *skin."*

Who am I?

Maria provided a very concise description of the factors that shape her identity, which include her family, gender, gender identification, history, and her formal education that she acquired (Figueroa, 2015). Maria offered the important clarification, however, that "the

[87] Teacher/Educator/One with accumulated knowledge to share

family *educación* is different than the education, you know, the way we understand formal education and other social networks or social circles community, culture, everything, I mean all of that, politics, history, all those intersections" (Figueroa, 2015).

How did I come to be who I am?

Similar to both Heidi and Santiago, Maria's story affirmed the role that family plays, during childhood, in shaping gender and ethnic identity. Another intersection with Heidi and Santiago was related to the importance of connecting to the ancestral homeland (in Maria's case, *México*) by way of receiving stories from family members or interacting with sacred geography and/or recognizing the importance of working in relationship with the land for subsistence. Such experiences shaped memories that, later in life, became markers of remembrance that facilitated the process of re-Indigenization for these educators. Maria's narrative also provided new insights on the role that a culturally relevant school curriculum—at the undergraduate level—could have on both ethnic and spiritual identity development. Maria expressed that her identity formation has ebbed and flowed and evolved.

She shared that, "Currently, I'm very comfortable identifying as an Indigenous woman, *punto*. And then if I want to be more specific, I can say as a Chicana Indigenous woman. And if that means more explanation, then I'll say it, I'll share that, but I don't know that I was as comfortable saying that even five or six years ago" (Figueroa, 2015). The result of this confidence of expression in asserting an Indigenous identity, explained Maria, has come from "maturity and just more experience but being involved in Indigenous *ceremonias* like *Danza,* Sweat, and Sun Dance for many years, since I was 18-19, that's over 20 years combined in totality" (Figueroa, 2015). Maria went on to state that she by no means is an

expert "cuz I don't think we ever want to say that but walking what's called the Red Road or this path you get to learn a lot, you learn a lot, you see a lot, sometimes you step away from it for a little while, to kind of evaluate and reassess and then it just calls you back and you go back […] and that's the ebb and flow, and that's what I think informs the identity" (Figueroa, 2015). Key factors shaping Maria's identity included observing her *tío* dancing *Matachin*[88] in *Juarez, Chihuahua, México* when she was a child, enrolling in Chicano Theatre courses as an undergraduate student and being exposed to Indigenous epistemologies and pedagogies in the process, and dancing ceremonially for over twenty years.

Seeing Matachines as a kid. *"I came into* Danza *[around 1994-1995] first because I had seen* Matachines *as a kid. My mom is from* Juarez *and her family comes from* Jalisco*, like my mom's bloodline comes from* Jalisco *and my grandparents are* Huichol*. My maternal grandfather remember[ed], before he died, he told me that he remembered his grandparents speaking '*un dialecto, dice que hablaban un dialecto*'*[89] *and so I immediately was like '*tienen que ser*'*[90] *because they are from the* Sierras de Jalisco*, so that's the people and then my grandmother she has other stories not as vivid as my grandfather's but our family, my mom and father met in* Juarez *and that's where my mom was born and so I remember going back as a kid to* Juarez *visiting my grandma and seeing* Matachines *there. A* tío *of mine danced* Matachin*, but I had never seen* Danza Azteca*, like the* Mexica *or* Conchero*,* Chichimeca[91] *style until I got to college"* (Figueroa, 2015).

Birthing cultural knowledge while in college. *"Coming to college was a really transformative moment in, I would say, birthing—that was the moment when I realized there was more to who I was, you know, I mean I knew that I was a* Mexicana*,* de papas inmigrantes,[92] *from a working class community of* Santa Ana*, but I knew that there was more.*

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[88] *Matachin* is a centuries-old ritual dance/drama. For further discussion, see Norma Cantú (2009) "The semiotics of land and place: Matachines dancing in Laredo, Texas in the book, *Dancing across Borders: Danzas y Bailes Mexicanos*, edited by by Olga Najera-Ramirez, Norma E. Cantu, and Brenda M. Romero

[89] A dialect, he said that they spoke a dialect

[90] They have to be

[91] *Mexica*, *Conchero*, *Chichimeca* are different styles of *Danza Azteca* with varying ideologies. For a thorough discussion, with detailed historical information, please see Mario Aguilar's (2009) doctoral dissertation, *The rituals of kindness: The influence of the Danza Azteca tradition of central Mexico on Chicano-Mexcoehuani identity and sacred space*.

[92] Immigrants

And in college there are many revelations especially when you become politicized, at least I did. I became very politicized, more culturally informed, you know, cuz my parents didn't necessarily have access to that cultural knowledge, so then I remember seeing Danza*, I was just blown away and like many people are, I really felt called to it. One of my good mentors, Patrick Velasquez from UCSD told me, 'I drummed with the group you saw, why don't you come learn' and so that's how I was introduced to* Danza*.*

Once I saw Danza*, once I started learning more about my history and traditions I wanted to share more with my family, my parents, my siblings, so that was really the key when I started my undergraduate career and continued and the influences and the people. I think I have a lot of really strong teachers in my life whether they consider themselves teachers or not. My mentor forever in my life will be my Chicano Theatre teacher and that's Jorge Huerta, Dr. Jorge Huerta. And he introduced me to the concept of* In Lak' ech.[93] *I was blown away. I was just fascinated by* In Lak' ech*, that you could manifest an Indigenous philosophy through art, like in* teatro*, in the praxis of it, and so I really went full throttle with that. I asked, how do you do that? I want to learn more about that, so through the arts I learned how to connect with my Indigenous identity. And that was pivotal and has always been pivotal because I continue to write and do some performance and it's always informed by* ceremonia*. It's always informed by an Indigenous world view,* Indigena *world view and what I want to share with the community and with my students very much comes from that place, you know, too"* (Figueroa, 2015).

Developing ceremonial resources. *"Felipe and Yolanda were my first teachers. I started off and then I just practiced with them a couple of times. I formally gave my palabra to another group and so Marilu Valencia with* Mixcoatl *was my* Maestra *for many years so I [had] been to ceremony you know* velaciones *and different* danza fiestas, danzadas*. And then I started Sun Dancing probably I would say in 1998 when I came back from grad school in 1998 or 1999. It was an even year number because the Sun Dance came to the Red Stone Sun Dance, which came from the* Yaqui Pascua *pipe. It was being taken care of by, they call him* Indio*, and he's over in Pascua, which is Tucson area, so he's* Yaqui *and they brought that pipe, though, to Manzanita, which is right here in* Kumey[94] *land, and I did the first four years there so I danced the last two years of the four years there and then I continued over. It went over to* Casa Blanca *which is in Arizona like an hour north of Phoenix and danced there for about four years. I did four years. Then I got pregnant"* (Figueroa, 2015).

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[93] For a detailed explanation of connections among the Mayan concept of *In Lak'ech* (which translates loosely into, You are my other self), Maya scholar Domingo Martinez Paredez, Luis Valdez, and University of Texas professor Dr. Arnoldo Vento, please see Dr. Roberto"'Cintli" Rodríguez' (2012b) article ''Tucson's maiz-based curriculum: MAS-TUSD profundo.''

[94] The *Kumeyaay* (or *Diegueño* as they were later called by the Spanish), are the Indigenous people of present-day Southern California (San Diego and western Imperial Counties) and Northern Baja California.

What is my Ceremonial Discourse? The Fire of Life

Maria's ceremonial discourse invokes the Fire of Life. Because Maria has made an extensive commitment to living her life in a way that prioritizes ceremony, she has come to understand the integral part that fire keepers hold in them. From my understanding, fire keepers are those that keep the ancestral flame alive, that maintain intergenerational connections with those who held fires in the past—first fires, originating fires (Sesma, 2014). Without the sacred fire, there cannot be any ceremony. Fire keepers carry the responsibility of ensuring that prayers are carried and that medicine can be carried to those that need it (e.g. sacred medicines—copal, sage, sweet grass, cedar). Maria shared that she speaks "from an experiential perspective" and what, to her has been her "orientation in ceremony and that comes from being involved with *Temazkal*, the Sweat Lodge, in *Danza Azteca*, in Sun Dance, and in other *circulos*/circles of healing, other ceremonial circles, like Talking Circles where Elders are involved, where there's a fire being lit and being essential to the beginning of all of those ceremonies. The Fire of Life" (Figueroa, 2015).

Maria's ceremonial discourse has provided her with exposure and access to Indigenous epistemologies that have enabled her to know how to decolonize by not only bringing in the alternate voice but also "the voice that's going to be more critical too of what has been of what has always been and why" (Figueroa, 2015). The numerous ceremonial resources that Maria has also make her feel that she is "in a good place when it comes to being comfortable with what I teach, when I teach it, why and not really needing to explain much" (Figueroa, 2015). Maria revealed that this confidence is also "indicative of a very slight paradigm shift, slowly, *poquitito*, it's just a little bit, it's like molasses, it's like the *copal* seeping, little drops, *apenas*, it's not *chorros*, it's like little drops…"(Figueroa, 2015). It is significant to note

Maria's comparison of her paradigm shift to the very slow burning of *copal*, and the way it seeps—in little drops.

From my own experience, I understand that *copal* resin is offered to the fire in order to purify, cleanse, and transform a space into one that is sacred. This is especially true in ceremonial and healing traditions from *México*, such as *Danza Azteca* and *curanderismo*. The metaphor that Maria evokes, as she describes her identity development, is one that acknowledges the importance of the medicine itself (*copal*) and the sacred fire that transforms it into smoke. Maria's ceremonial discourse has activated her Indigenous epistemology insofar that this type of imagery is even possible to envision. The *copal*[95] seeping, *poquitito,*[96] *apenas*,[97] in little drops, not in *chorros*[98] is indicative of the slow, transformational neurodecolonization process Maria has had to undergo throughout her adulthood. It has been facilitated and continuous through her ceremonial practice. It is essentially Maria's use of her ceremonial resources—where sacred fires have been present—that have enabled her to purify and decolonize her mindbodyspirityemotions. This ceremonial discourse, coupled with the many other factors from her childhood and adolescence, that are described below, help explain why Maria cultivates a decolonizing pedagogical praxis in the classroom while also utilizing and promoting Indigenous aesthetic sensibilities that honor experiential knowledge.

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[95] *Copal* is the resin/sap or sometimes referred to as the "blood" offering of certain trees that is given to the sacred fire during ceremonies, healings, and/or teachings; copal purifies the space and sends prayers with its smoke.

[96] just a little bit

[97] just barely

[98] dripping in large amounts

How do I pass on what I know?

Maria identified as a *Mexicana* from the working class due to the familial experiences that shaped her, such as having immigrant parents who worked hard to provide for their family in *Santa Ana*, CA. She was also provided the opportunity to visit family in *Juarez, Chihuahua, México* where she gained exposure to cultural traditions, such as the *Matachines* that her uncle participated in. She also had access to the stories and memories of her grandparents, with origins from the *Sierras de Jalisco* before the migrations and de-Indigenization that intensified with each subsequent generation—the further they were removed from their ancestral homeland(s). However, Maria's ethnic and spiritual development were both highly influenced by re-Indigenizing influences that surrounded her on campus and in her Chicano Studies classes. Her experiences as a young adult in her undergraduate program at UC, San Diego provided foundational concepts, such as *In Lak 'ech* as well as opportunities to gain familiarity with living Indigenous knowledges she was exposed to with the various *Danza Azteca* circles from the area. These specific experiences helped to shape and deepen an Indigenous epistemology within Maria that would eventually provide the foundations to a ceremonial discourse that would guide her life's journey.

Maria described that the way she structures her writing classes is informed by the idea of community, of healing—that identity of being Indigenous and Indigenous ceremony-based and ceremonially-focused because "when we are in the classroom, it is a *ceremonia*" (Figueroa, 2015). Maria may not tell them it's *ceremonia*, but the "fact that we are all gathered together, the fact that they are students and let's say that one day I have them sit in a *circulo*, and we're just talking about one simple concept, and whatever comes out of that, I think it's going to trigger; it's almost modeled after the way we would have a Talking Circle"

(Figueroa, 2015). Maria does not necessarily name it that, call it that, or tell the students that, but that's what it is. She explained that it happens very organically and is not planned because "it's what I know, and it's what I practice outside of my classroom environment, outside of my professional environment, and so it seeps in" (Figueroa, 2015).

She illustrated how she assigns groups but instead of calling them groups or pods, she calls them *familias* and that stems from her training in Puente,[99] which she sees as a healing model that teaches students the value of their words, of their voice. Maria also explained how the Puente model is oftentimes healing for the instructors as well because the majority "of us are Chicana and Chicano, Latinos, first generation, so we get to talk about our own internalizations of like we're not worthy enough to be English teachers, we're always questioned, we're always suspect, so it's always like translating or transposing the Puente model of *familia* into the classroom even when my students are not Puente students, so it's in there, it creeps in when it's needed and, to me, that's kind of the Indigenous pedagogical praxis" (Figueroa, 2015).

An Indigenous epistemology grounded in over twenty combined years of ceremonial discourse is what guides Maria's pedagogical practice. Maria understands the ebbs and flows of life and its cycles. She recognizes that some semesters she will have more energy and capacity to (re)Indigenize the curriculum. An example of this is the *Antepasados* Descriptive Unit she has assigned to her composition students in the level before freshman composition. For this assignment, students make *nichos/cajitas* (box altars) to honor their *antepasado/as* (ancestors) while simultaneously satisfying an English composition assignment focused on descriptive writing that captures the significant characteristics of their loved one. Maria

[99] http://www.miracosta.edu/studentservices/puente/index.html.

understands that this assignment has a healing potential because it allows students to reflect on their loved one and to engage in an aesthetic creation in honor of them. Writing the descriptive paper requires internal work that can later be expressed in the creation of the *nicho/cajita*. This becomes a prayerful exercise to students who may not have a guided opportunity to critically reflect on their loved one, their impact, or their passing. According to Maria, this is "like doing twenty-four *limpias* in one hour and that is not possible every single day or every semester" (Figueroa, 2015). Chapter 5 will provide further details of this teaching unit.

Andres Mendoza

"There's a certain point where you just empty everything you got and now you're just in spirit and when you're just in spirit then you find out more about yourself than any book can tell you."

Who am I?

In describing his identity, Andres focused on three major aspects: originating from stardust, embodying a Chicano identity—that is rooted in Nahua epistemologies of centering and interconnecting, and acknowledging the importance of spirit. He stated that his identity "is being stardust, being off a star first and then converted into whatever we converted into before we become human beings" (Mendoza, 2015). The fact that Andres links his origins back to stardust is important to note because as he stated, "our calendar, our count [260 day *Tonalpohualli*] is always connected to the stars" (Mendoza, 2015). But also there is the "connection as a Chicano, you filter all the way down until today [, and] I'm mixed blood like a lot of people are" (Mendoza, 2015). Andres shared that, from his understanding, there were at least two ways of defining Chicano. He explained that "for one, Chi means red, Cano means sacred so when you say Chi-cano it means the sacred people and another way it is

explained to me is Chi is a *ombligo*; it's the umbilical cord and Chicano comes from *Chitlacatl* and *Tlacatl* in *Nahuatl* is person and so Chicano means the people from the *ombligo* or the people who connect the Earth and the Sky" (Mendoza, 2015). For Andres, these definitions confirm that his identity is that of a person connecting everything, being connected. Andres went further in confirming that his identity is intertwined with Indigenous ceremony:

> My people have practiced these ways for a long, long time and some of us forgot it you know for different reasons, you know, especially colonization. Then after the effects of colonization, which is migration and then the migration goes into wanting to become one in the melting pot that America provides saying forget where you come from. This is what you are now. (Mendoza, 2015)

This portion of Andres' narrative demonstrates that for Indigenous-identified Chicanas and Chicanos, ethnic identity merges with spiritual identity—one informs the other, and there is no separation. This synthesis, of course, is one that has been demonized by colonizing, missionizing, and assimilating-schooling practices that have been in place for centuries—as evidenced by the dismantling of MAS-Tucson and the continued battles to promote Ethnic Studies in other parts of the nation, including California. Andres' voice also contributes to the understanding that spiritual resistance is key for sustaining authentic identity that is guided from within oneself rather than outside oppressive, social forces. Of great significance to Andres is that his identity is his connection to spirit: "My connection to spirit is my ceremony and that is lifelong, to be able to maintain that cuz it's not something you do and then that's it, it's done; it's a constant moment to moment connection that we're able to achieve if we choose, so my identity is intertwined with my connection to my spirit" (Mendoza, 2015).

How did I come to be who I am?

As with the other educators, family continued to be a significant factor in Andres' oral history. Andres mentioned one primary influence in the nurturing of his Indigenous epistemology, which was his cousin, Sara. It was of great importance to Andres that Sara exemplified a strong *mujer*, in his family, one that he could trust. Because of his trust in her, he was led to ceremony, which transformed his life and has provided him with tools for self-navigation that he is now able to share with others, especially youth.

Trusting in familia. *"Back in 2010 I was really materialistic, vastly materialistic. I wanted a Maserati, I had my mansion laid out. I wanna have this. I'm a have that. I'm a have my own drive in, you know what I mean? But at the same time, I really wanted to learn about my culture, so I was living in a space where my cousin Sara was living at for a minute with her family, and I would talk to her about stuff and I would ask her a lot of questions and so at that time, she was like, 'oh you know what? Why don't you come to a ceremony with me'? You know. I was like alright. Didn't ask a question, didn't say anything, you know what I mean? [That trust] a lot of time it is because it's* familia*, you know, we grew up around each other, and she's a bit older than me, and she would show my sister and myself some things. And there was a time when my dad told her, "Hey, I don't want you telling her any of this." And my dad's her uncle. He told her one time, 'I want my kids to have a childhood, not to be political. I want my kids to have a childhood.' Right, but things just happen and you're pulled to whatever you're pulled for whatever reason and I trusted my cousin because I know the type of woman she is and the type of strength she carries. She is a mother. She's a community organizer first and foremost, right. She does her own workshops of* Xinachtli[100] *for the empowerment of women, so she does workshops here and there and right now she's going into the whole mother aspect, you know but she is multi-faceted just like everybody*" (Mendoza, 2015).

Learning from ceremony. *Sara, she smells out the BS right, so I knew I could trust her, and so I think that was the biggest one for me. [I was like] I am asking you for some things and you said you're inviting me out to the place, so I trust you, right, which is a big thing, right. I trust you, and so my first ceremony was a Sun Dance. It kinda smacked me around and it kinda shoved me down to the Earth and it said, 'Remember what you're doing, remember what you're supposed to do.' And that's my connection with ceremony"* (Mendoza, 2015).

"Ceremony allows me to be placed in different situations with different people and learn about yourself more, right and that's what it helps you with. If you're in a Sweat and it's

[100] Seed

really hot, why are you focusing about the heat? What is it about the heat that's making you do this? Is it something in your life that's making you feel the heat? Right now, how come you're thrown off? Where else in your life are you thrown off by something small? And when you wanna maintain your focus? And when you wanna maintain your prayer?" (Mendoza,2015).

These brief sections of Andres' narrative provide profound statements that begin to illustrate how ceremony itself is a teacher, a facilitator of learning about oneself and gaining deep insights about one's purpose and accountability to self, family, community, the world, the cosmos, the Creator. The teachings that arise require critical reflection and thinking, a careful examination about one's life in order to help cultivate a critical consciousness about one's purpose. This learning is not at all textual but is internal and actual and can influence choices and discussions that will have intergenerational repercussions. What is so empowering about Andres' discussion of ceremony is that it encourages self-navigation, and it provides tools for self-evaluation, with regard to thought processes, verbal responses, as well as behaviors. Andres' narrative also emphasizes the importance that just one person (such as his cousin) can make by leading through example.

What is my Ceremonial Discourse? Spiritual/Ceremonial Running

Andres' ceremonial discourse honors the tradition of speaking and praying with our feet through ceremonial/spirit running. Spiritual/ceremonial running has existed for centuries.[101] The start of this ceremonial discourse, for Andres, began when he attended his first Sun Dance back in 2012. He explained that in

[101] For a more detailed discussion of ceremonial running, see Rodríguez, (2012c) "Corriendo educando or teaching/learning while running" in *International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies* and Elias Serna (2011), "Strange rumblings in Arizona: A battle to defend theK-12Raza Studies Department at Tucson Unified School District from racist republicans" retrieved from http://bsnorrell.blogspot.com/2012/01/ elias-serna-strange-rumblings-battle.html.

> 2012 when I was keeping the house, I went to Sun Dance where I met one of my *tías* there. I never knew her before, right; however, she asked to run for Peace and Dignity, right and she goes, she asked me, 'Oh what are you doing after Sun Dance? Do you go to school?' I go, 'no.' 'Do you work?' I go, 'no.' She goes, 'You wanna run for two weeks?' I go 'no,' right. But one thing led to another and she only had two runners for the state of Nevada, and I go, 'Well do you need help?' She goes, 'Yea, I need help.'

Andres felt compelled by his own sense of responsibility that "as a man if you're able to, if you're able to help, then there's no reason not to" (Mendoza, 2015). Since he didn't have a job or other major responsibilities, he was able to commit to run for the state of Nevada approximately ten days after the Sun Dance ceremony. This example demonstrates the serpentine, circular unraveling of an Indigenous epistemology, where, in this case, one ceremony led to another, the spiral of learning continuing. As a result, mindfulness deepens and likewise introspection and connection to spirit also deepens. When more is understood, more is revealed. It is a reciprocal, respectful, relational process, and as it accumulates so does the responsibility to share the teachings that come from it.

For Andres, it is important to center that he is a Chicano but that defining comes from a *Nahuatl* language/epistemology, which, as previously indicated, centralizes a centered connection. This is highlighted in the following portion of Andres' narrative: "It was three of us to run the state of Nevada right so that ceremony you have to pull out more than what you have physically there's a certain point where you just empty everything you got and now you're just in spirit and when you're just in spirit then you find out more about yourself than any book can tell you" (Mendoza, 2015). Andres' narrative, surrounding his ceremonial discourse, illustrates how his participation in ceremony has moved him closer to recognizing his spirit, which then guides his praxis as he walks in the world. This is the root-core-center of his self-navigation. And it is a willing process. Andres seeks to incorporate that into the

curriculum by having students build up to it—and where the thirteenth seed, is a Sweat Lodge ceremony. Because Andres' ceremonial discourse prepares him to recognize his authentic identity, he wants to provide opportunities for youth to do the same, so that he contributes to a world where we are walking in our true skin, as we become reflections and manifestations of our true selves with clarity and purpose and not with confusion, hiding, and masking. Moreover, Andres' pedagogical practice honors life experience. It promotes a human development approach to identity formation and expression. This is consistent with Indigenous views about education and learning, to help a person be who they truly are.[102] Andres summarizes this as follows:

> I like books. I like reading. I enjoy that; however, they don't necessarily add up as much as life experience does when you put yourself out there when you travel when you go and meet new people when you're humble enough to go and however you want this. However, you want this ran, however you need help just let me know and I'll help, you know, when you, that, you open up your life and your heart your mind, you're more available.

How do I pass on what I know?

Andres' experiences, in ceremony, have helped purify him so that he can be guided by his own spirit in the path that is correct for him. Ceremony reminds him what is important and what he needs to convey. Similar to Heidi, Andres is guided by an intuitive sense of trust that allows him (the educator) to allow the students to lead themselves to their own

[102] The centering of an Indigenous epistemology and a daily commitment to re-Indigenize lifeways has equipped/prepared the educators to promote the Ten Essential Characteristics of Indigenous Education as defined by Cajete (2012) who describes the transformative nature of Indigenous learning. There are significant overlaps between Cajete's (2012) description of the characteristics of Indigenous Education and Avila's (1999) work on *curanderismo,* such as the focus on respect, relationship, and responsibility. Positioning Avila's work alongside Cajete's is useful at the level of pedagogical practice, for it provides an Indigenous model of how to promote a sense of personal activism whereby documentation of historical trauma is personal project.

understanding. Andres cultivates the space in the classroom for this to happen. He shared that,

> Sometimes I just get out of the way, so that which I learn in ceremony, that which just comes to me in ceremony, I just present it, you know. I allow it to come forth from the youngsters because I don't even like to talk that much. I would rather have them go off their own understanding of why water is important, you know. We have a intellectual understanding. You know where we think about stuff and we know about stuff from our history books, our science books, or what have you but really a practical foundation of what these four elements [wind, water, land, fire] mean to us (Mendoza, 2015).

Andres also passes on what he knows by promoting the importance of developing an identity that is authentic where youth are empowered with methods and tools for self-navigation that allow them to make their own decisions, period. That's all. For Andres, it matters to him deeply that youth can make their own decisions but "also keep an eye on the future as far as not necessarily living in the future but [reflecting about] what does their decisions do that directly affects the future" (Mendoza, 2015). In this context, Andres revisited the teachings that occur in ceremonial circles and he referenced the philosophy of the seven generations. Andres described that "when they talk about seven generations, they talk about a grandfather, a father, a son, and grandchild that being one generation, right, so we're talking about seven of those right, so my hope, my grand hope is that they live for the seven generations that their decisions are made for the seven generations, but in reality I would be happy with their decisions being made by themselves and no outside influence" (Mendoza, 2015).

Claudia Serrato

"Ultimately, you know, pedagogical practice is how one goes about in engaging and transmitting knowledge and creating a space and moments of how to practice or make use of this new knowledge, how to implement it, theoretically and methodologically, within the various spaces that I find myself in which is academia and in the community and in the home, so it has a lot to do with palabra, with performance, right, performativity, you know, like a sacred performativity."

Who am I?

The first things that came to mind for Claudia when asked about the factors that make-up her identity were food, music, family, and community. She made sure to clarify that verbal expression of that identity had different characteristics, which were not always exclusively received by being heard. Claudia expressed that for a good ten years, she has been engaging and communicating who she is and making a very strong presence with her cooking and the oral tradition. She also explained that how she embraces, embodies, and practices her indigeneity also goes into classroom spaces because she teaches very closely along Indigenous decolonization and Indigenous food ways. She stated that, "I bring all that into the space and all of this equates to how I identify which is a decolonial, Indigenous, feminist" (Serrato, 2015). Claudia clarified that she doesn't even necessarily have to identify as a Chicana because it is just obvious in the communities that she surrounds herself with:

> I go into these different reservations and different spaces with other chefs, so I've learned what it means to be a Xicana with an X but I've also learned that in some spaces it's just blurred and it doesn't matter. It actually becomes like a way to separate Indigenous unity or solidarity and so in these spaces it never comes up. It's either you are *Indigena* or Mesoamerican and that's just what it is and so I am learning, as I'm learning this I'm also learning the importance of really allowing food to speak to me more within this modern Mesoamerican context.

How did I come to be who I am?

Claudia's narrative supports the finding that family has a very large impact on ethnic identity formation, in her case—as a Mexican. Claudia learned about traditional Mexican medicine through her interactions with and observations of her grandmothers. Foundations for an Indigenous epistemology were established in the ways in which her grandmothers provided healing to their communities in their own respective ways as *parteras*[103] and *curanderas*. These knowledge systems were inaccessible once Claudia entered Catholic school. There, she experienced the strategies used for assimilation and cultural annihilation. This sense of being *dislocada* (MarTinez, 2013) continued until Claudia entered her adolescence. In high school, Claudia connected with peers who questioned the status quo and resisted the majoritarian stories of what or how one was "supposed" to be. Ultimately, Claudia's ethnic identity development intersected with her spiritual development as she entered into a ceremonial discourse.

Learning medicina from the abuelas. *My identity formation begins as a little girl. I was born and raised here in East Los and I always knew I was brown. I always knew I was Mexican, but I was blessed enough to know my great-grandmother and my grandmother from my dad's side and there was just something always so unique about them. My great-grandmother she was a* partera*, so she just had these ways of being that I knew were non-western. I just thought they were Mexican. I never associated it with indigeneity or being Indigenous because those just weren't terms that were being used for me or with me. Then my grandma Carmen, I remember being around her. She lived out in the* bosque[104] *and in the playa and you know she used to hunt rattlesnakes and she had a collection of rattlesnake tails. I remember watching movies and making connections like this had to do with* brujeria[105] *or* curanderismo *or like there was some medicine to this and you know those were the things that kind of lingered with me.*

[103] Healers with the gift of birthing/assisting with bringing life into the world

[104] Forest

[105] witchcraft

Assimilating into Catholic schools and wanting to be white. *I eventually began to assimilate after kindergarten because I was no longer in bilingual school. I went to Catholic school. They were all white, Irish, orthodox nuns, so it was very intense. I started to lose my accent. I still have it a little bit. In that process, I began to see whiteness as something to desire, as something I want to be and like*.

Drumming back to self-love. *Going into my teens, I began to be a little more prideful of who I was as a Mexican because I was very shameful of even the word Mexican because it was associated with being a beaner or something like that, like it was a bad thing. That happened around my late teens. A lot of my friends were into Reggae, Bob Marley. A few of us had dreadlocks, but there was a few friends of ours who would bring in Eagle feathers and we would have drum circles and we would sit around the fire and being around fire like there was something that just felt good about it. Maybe it was because, at that time, my dad would take me camping a lot, so I grew up around nature a lot. Like I went shooting and did, you know, all these things, and we always had campfires and so that was like a childhood memory of mine. We [my high school friends] all had our* djembes *and we were drumming and you know we had our friend, sure enough his nickname is* Indio*, we were like, 'Oh, what's up* Indio*' and he's like 'Ah little sister, lemme bless you.' I remember I was going on a journey.*

What is my ceremonial discourse? Sweat Lodge Ceremonies-*(Inipi/Temazkal)*

Claudia's ceremonial discourse is very similar to Maria's because they both gained exposure to Indigenous teachings outside of the family in their late adolescence and into their early adulthood. They each have over twenty years of being called into ceremony (e.g. *Danza Azteca*, Sweat Lodge (*Inipi/Temazkal*), Sun Dance, Healing Circles). Claudia, in a similar way to Andres also expressed that "my epistemological standpoint is my practice and so I bring it and yeah it's definitely very influenced on how I go about teaching and the pedagogical practice and you know the curriculum and in active listening and all of that came from Sweat" (Serrato, 2015). Claudia illustrated the preparation that occurs within the Sweat Lodge ceremony: "You have to learn how to actively listen and being uncomfortable and sitting on the floor and being in a space that maybe you don't wanna be in, you know, cuz it's so hot, but you have to be there. You can't leave; you can't just run away" (Serrato, 2015). Claudia's narrative provides rigorous, thick descriptions about her ceremonial discourse that

accentuate her spiritual identity development—ultimately helping to demonstrate her role as a cultural practitioner and future Elder within her community. Her ceremonial discourse followed a trajectory that began in her adolescence when the medicine of the Eagle feather presented itself to her: "I remember *Indio* blessed me with his Eagle feather and you know he was singing and chanting and drumming and I remember I felt something happen to my body, and I was like, 'dude this is legit right here' and he was just like 'wait a minute you know your dad is from here and he was like wait a minute you're *Purépecha*[106] and what!? What is *Purépecha*? Hey you know?'" (Serrato, 2015). The medicine of the Eagle feather—along with *Indio's* prayers and blessings—began a re-Indigenization of Claudia's identity as a Mexicana with *Indigena* ancestral roots from *Michoácan*.

This re-Indigenization process continued in the use of everyday language and just being around medicine as Claudia began to go sage picking slowly began to attract people and people began to be attracted to her within these circles and these spaces. Then her *comadre* found this *Danza Azteca* group and started going. Claudia would go watch her friend and again gained more exposure to the drums, the *copal*, the sage. Claudia explained that they became friends with *Tía Xochimilco* in San Pedro during their twenties. It proved to be a transformational time for her during her young adulthood:

> We began attending Sweat there and that immediately as soon as I attended Sweat, it just became very clear and so after that moment I began to really embrace my indigeneity. I began to talk to my dad more about who he is and you know his family was in Mexico and what did that mean.

Within these community circles, Claudia also encountered *mujeres* who had traveled to *Chiapas* and were bringing the teachings back. She was playing with a wombyn's group,

[106] Indigenous peoples of *Michoácan, México*

Cihuatonalli who used percussions. She recounted that they were in their early twenties playing around the same time as *In Lak Ech*[107] and attending different activities all over L.A., Hollenbeck, Boyle Heights, and Griffith Park. Going into these space where there were other Xicano Indigenous folks already present reinforced coming into an Indigenous formation for Claudia where a lot of it was expressed mainly through art and music.

Claudia, in a similar way to both Heidi and Andres, summoned the *ombligo* as a metaphor to explain that art and music were at the center of her ethnic and spiritual development as an urban *Xicana Indigena*:

> Art and music was the driving force, what would be called the *ombligo*, right? In a *Temazkal,* we have the *ombligo*, the pit, so it was art and music was the *ombligo* within this you know cosmological *Inipi*, right? That was the *ombligo* and you know that opened me up.

Claudia's identity formation followed her as a student navigating spaces of higher education as well. She eventually began to bring her Indigenous epistemology into the classroom by offering the drum, *cancion*,[108] spoken word, *palabra*. Then people began to see her as a carrier of *palabra* (or word that requires acknowledgement) because she carried a feather.

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[107] In Lak Ech is a performance poetry and song collective of Xicana multi-media artists, writers, students, and organizers united to tell Her-story through poetry. They were birthed on International Women's Day in 1997. In Lak Ech utilizes words to briing awareness and empowerment to issues of women, family, humanity, and Mother Earth. In Lak Ech is the seed that inspired creative women's circles, such as *Mujeres de Maiz,* collectives with a significant presence in East L.A. through art shows, performances, and organizing efforts https://www.facebook.com/inlakechla/about/. *Mujeres de Maiz* will celebrate their twenty year anniversary in the spring of 2017. A 20 year retrospective exhibition at *La Plaza de Cultura y Artes* in Los Angeles will honor and historicize the legacy and holistic art, activism and spirit of the group that has transformed women's creativity and empowerment in East Los Angeles and beyond. Viewers will experience the different facets of *Mujeres de Maiz* which are rooted in ancestral knowledge that connect the mind, body and spirit. https://www.facebook.com/inlakechla/about/.

[108] song

The medicine of the feather allowed Claudia to gain confidence in her capacity to share what she knew with her peers and community as she would bring sage into the classrooms, organize pilgrimages to the UFW sites of resistance, and take the drums out there and sing to them (César Chávez, Dolores Huerta), sing the songs she would sing with *Cihuatonalli*. According to Claudia, it "was beautiful, beautiful, beautiful and then the community began to reaffirm the identity I was formulating" (Serrato, 2015). She went on to state that her identity "was appreciated, validated, you know, like oh wait, I am this person, this is who Claudia is, you know, Claudia is not just this confused youth, you know, merging going from, you know, *chola* to punk to reggae, you know what I mean, like that was just the journey, that was part of the journey that allowed but ultimately all of that was still art and music, art and music have always been the *ombligo* even within these different genres because it was still about resistance" (Serrato, 2015).

Claudia acknowledged the critical consciousness she had as an adolescent when she recalled that she was part of youth groups and was against police brutality and how she always knew something was wrong. She expressed that, "I always knew that these ideas and western ways of being there as something that just didn't feel right" (Serrato, 2015). Her resistance centered on decolonizing as she continued to embrace her ceremonial discourse. As she eventually stayed committed with Sweat, her *tía* granted her water pourer status.[109]

[109] From my own participation in Sweat Lodge ceremonies, I have come to understand that the water-pourer holds a very important role because s/he is responsible for the well-being and safety of those in the lodge as s/he literally pours the water and therefore sets the intensity for the ceremony that, on most occasions, is rigorous. Despite the intensity of the ceremony, the water pourer also provides comfort and reassurance to those in the lodge. I have not received permission to describe, in full detail, what the responsibilities entail or what, exactly, must be demonstrated to receive the status of water-pourer, but from my own observations, they are significant and require extended focus, prayer, and commitment.

Claudia's respect for protocol within Indigenous ceremonial contexts furthered her responsibility as she commented that, "I'm not a Sun Dancer, but I do hold Sun Dance *palabra* at the Xicano Sun Dance [*La Rumurosa*[110] Ceremony] where I help run the kitchen" (Serrato, 215).

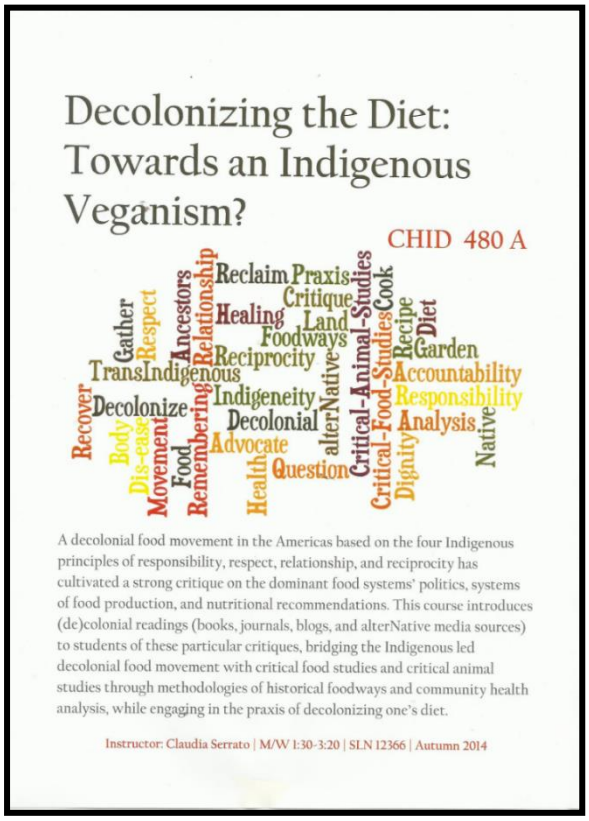

Figure 4.2. Decolonizing the Diet promotional flyer for Claudia Serrato's Comparative History of Ideas 480 class (included with permission)

How do I pass on what I know?

Claudia has developed a highly specialized area of expertise in the topics of Indigenous veganism and womb ecology from an urban Xicana *Indigena* perspective. She designs curriculum based on ancestral Mother foods, recreating and re-envisioning Indigenous traditions. This study confirms that an Indigenous epistemology, such as Claudia's, which has developed over two decades most definitely has influenced her pedagogical praxis. She was requested to teach a course in her area of specialization at the University of Washington. She designed the course,

[110] Sacred mountain range located in *Tecate, Baja California, México*

Comparative History of Ideas 480 entitled, "Decolonizing the Diet: Towards an Indigenous Veganism."

The course description addressed that there is a "decolonial food movement in the Americas based on the four Indigenous principles of responsibility, respect, relationship, and reciprocity" that "has cultivated a strong critique on the dominant food systems' politics, systems of food production, and nutritional recommendations" (Serrato). Her course introduced (de)colonial readings (including books, journals, blogs, and alterNative media sources) to students bridging the Indigenous-led decolonial food movement with critical food studies and critical animal studies through methodologies of historical foodways and community health analysis, while engaging in the praxis of decolonizing one's diet. Her student learning goals were focused on "nourishing and cultivating new recipes towards decolonization" (Serrato, excerpted from course syllabus). They included:

- Employ a decolonial framework centered on Indigenous food epistemologies
- Develop fundamental reading, interview, and research methods of questioning and challenging assumptions underlying dominant food and health discourse
- Identify and explain the intricate relationships that exist between food, health and (de)colonization
- Engage with various culinary art traditions through sensory ways of knowing and practice

Furthermore, Claudia's course syllabus also provided background on her teaching philosophy, which centers "ways of learning under three full moons." She articulated that she is an educator "committed to community growth, social change, justice, and healing, informed by revolutionary models of education and pedagogy" (Serrato). She also sought to provide students an opportunity to "engage with her leadership style of co-intentional teaching which embodies traditional ecological knowledges and principles of co-existence

and accountability, creating a safer, transformative, and engaging space to learn" (Serrato). Claudia seeks to nurture an alterNative learning experience where learning outcomes can be directly applied to the diverse worlds students live in. Claudia was very intentional about offering a pedagogical practice that moved in cosmological alignment with three full moons over ten weeks, where students would read about, dialogue, journal, debate, question, respond, peer-review, write, create, collaborate, cook, and work towards building a healthy future by embracing both a different way of learning and a different way of teaching each other through active learning designed to provide hands on approaches on Decolonizing the Diet: Towards an Indigenous Veganism (Serrato).

In addition, Claudia uses social media to establish a consistent and accessible presence online. She is a co-author of the blog *Decolonial Food for Thought: A Local Response to the Globalization of Foods, Taste, & Dis-ease—Decolonizing our Diets; Reindigenizing our Foodways* as well as the author of the Tumbler site, *alterNative Anthropology*. Ultimately, Claudia's ceremonial discourse has infused her multi-faceted pedagogical practice, which she has described as being inclusive of engaging and transmitting new knowledge. Her pedagogies create spaces and moments of how to practice or make use of this new knowledge and of how to implement it theoretically and methodologically within the various spaces where she finds herself, which is in academia, in the community, and in the home. She is guided by her Indigenous epistemologies in ways that are confident and intuitive. Claudia asserted that it has "a lot to do with *palabra*, with performance, right, performativity, you know, like, sacred performativity and also

impromptu, you know, there's times that you need to just figure it out at the moment and in *confianza*."[111]

Miguel Zavala

"I remember one time we saw a Danza*. They were opening ceremony, right where we were. It was a* Salon Acapulco *in South Central, and it was like a second story place, and it looked real dank in the bottom; it's a sweat shop, but the* Danza *came in and they just, the beauty that they brought to the space, and I remember when we all started participating , moving to different locations right and it's like […]there's an energy about who I am that gravitates me towards that, and I remember having this connection […] I could connect to this real unmediated connection to everybody that was there but in a weird way I think what I was feeling was a connection with myself, of who I am, as a human being."*

Who am I?

Similar to the five other educators highlighted in this study, Miguel revealed that his *familia* was the responsible factor in shaping his identity: "What forms my identity is my *familia*" (Zavala, 2015). Miguel also addressed the ways in which memory can contribute to the development of an identity within a familial context—or not. Miguel described that there is a spatial and historical dimension to understanding the complexity of family, especially with regard to the inaccessibility of memories or a type of forced forgetting and erasure set in motion by colonialist and missionizing systems of power:

> a particular way of seeing our history is through memories that pass and it's real unfortunate cuz I think I've mentioned this, if you hear me speak, that memory doesn't go very far, at least, the memory that in my family we're trying to excavate. I just recently had a conversation with my dad ***¿****De dónde venimos****?***[112] And my dad, it was real interesting, he said, "Well *pues por parte*"[113] cuz his mom died when he was twelve; I had no relationship to her. I see a lot of that in our families, like people leaving and there isn't a passing on

[111] Trust

[112] Where do we come from?

[113] Well, in part

> of where we come from; and the memories, however fractured, those are part of who I see myself as (Zavala, 2015).

In addition to these familial losses, Miguel also described that, "I had a connection with my *tío* Max from *Zacatecas* but most of the family they've either died, they've migrated to the U.S., violent things have happened to them, and my wife and I have talked about that, too, and her family, just violence, deaths *como cae una energia que te absorbe*[114] in a bad way and it's like naming that, outing that in its place has been healing. Miguel's narrative captured the intergenerational historical trauma that has been passed down after centuries of genocide (including cultural) as well as forced assimilation, the result being inaccessibility to origins. This storying provides useful insights in relation to the Chicana and Chicano educators and the ways in which the Cycle of Oppression has manifested in their families. This helps to demonstrate why it may be useful to examine identity formations over a lifetime within the contexts of the following concepts: intergenerational historical trauma (Brave Heart, 2000), internalized oppression (Duran, 2006; Gonzales, 2006), unresolved grieving (Duran, 2006; Gonzales, 2006), and shame-based behavior (Torres, 2003)

The educators acknowledge the complexity of their identities and understand, firsthand, the power of the personal narrative that excavates not only the stories, but perhaps more importantly, the *continuity* that exists among them. Each of the educators have developed a very deep sense of commitment to their communities and each are actively involved in grassroots organizing. Miguel offered that "there are moments I've seen that in the praxis of organizing, this communal sort of way of being is very spiritual, and I sometimes don't have the language for that except that it's felt on a level that I can't even

[114] Like an energy descends that absorbs you.

begin to articulate" (Zavala, 2015). Ultimately, that is how Miguel sees his identity—"connected to others" (Zavala, 2015). How he verbally expresses that has shifted over time as he recalled that: "I think more recently I've come to claim and be confident in my sense of self of saying, "I am Indigenous, I'm Xicano, but I'm also Indigenous and I'm at the intersection of these places and I think maybe had we been here ten years ago, it would have been a very different register, but a different place I was in as well" (Zavala, 2015).

How did I come to be who I am?

An insightful aspect of Miguel's narrative is when he shared that "the question of identity […] I see it that there's a spatial and historical dimension to that of my very being here that it's a moment in passing." For Miguel, the spatial dimension of his identity development was connected to family visits to *México* that were made during his childhood to both *San Francisco del Rincon, Guanajuato* and *Jalpa, Zacatecas*. Miguel remembered his mother participating in *Danza Azteca* in *Jalpa, Zacatecas*, which was said to be "right in *el sur, topando*[115] *con Jalisco*, that area. *San Francisco Rincon* is right next too; it's a little bit close to *Morel*ia. They call it *Rincon* because it's in this space; it's in *Guanajuato* but it's right next to *Jalisco*; it's right next to *Michoácan*—we were very fortunate to return and our parents would do industrial work, but we would take off in a little VW bus and *vamonos*."[116] Miguel also explained that the memories of this time and in the geographical space with his family are significant because both his *tía* and his mother were practicing *Danza Azteca*.

[115] crossing over

[116] Let's go!

Living memories. *"I bring back my* tía *and my mom because my* tía *she's in* Danza *and my mom when we went back the two years to* Zacatecas*—that's what she did and those memories come; they're so much alive. It's the memories of my* tía *and my mom being in* Danza *you know, I think back again I was 10, 11, a young kid* y estas como no sabes mucho[117] *the way you've been educated to kind of go through schooling,* no sabes mucho*, but there was always something inspiring about watching my mom and tía.* A mi tía le gustaba tomar y luego pues pisteaba un poco y empezaba a hablar y nos regañaba.[118] *I remember now, those memories are coming back. She would get mad and tell us, 'You're Indigenous,* somos de aqui,[119] *but in our whole family I don't think her other siblings saw themselves that way. That's who she was. To this day she still does* Danza*. As far as I know, it's been decades. She started at the age of 17 and she's about 69 or so now; it's been a long time. I always want to [stay in] touch with my* familia*. When we go to* México *I would love to have a* platica[120] *with my* tía*. Let's talk. Talk to me. It would be the best living lesson on what these Indigenous ceremonies mean in a very concrete way. I do need to follow up with them and be taught and be open with them and have those important* platicas *about you know why? What does this mean to you? Why is it important? And why did you practice it? But I also want to know why did you sever that? There's a lot that could have been developed and I feel* como un poco,[121] *not resentment but like how come that wasn't handed? How come that wasn't diffused? Why?*

Racialized indigeneity. *My* tía *still does it [*Danza*] and has been doing it for decades; it was part of being you know, growing in* San Francisco Rincon *where you had this fusion of Catholicism with Indigenous practices and so it was very normal and it wasn't seen as something other. My* tía, Mariola*, is my dad's sister, and I'm going to be very real about how race operates too. My mom, is* como dicen prieta y mi tía es mas prieta.[122] My tía is morena morena [very dark-skinned]. *You know like for me it's very beautiful, but I'm trying to think how in our families based on their racialization maybe people's ways of trying to cope/deal/navigate—whatever the terms are—with the way in which we're marked; for some people, like my* tía *I have a sense it's like a recovery going back into that [Indigenous ceremonial dancing manifested in* Danza Azteca*].*

Reappearing Danza pedagogies. *[Much later in my life when I began to organize with the Association of Raza Educators, A.R.E.], I remember one of the* Danzas *we had. We invited an Elder, and he gave a 45 minute lesson and he said I want to do this because we get invited to dance* pero *[but] we need to explain. He was talking about the children, the noise* verdad *[right]? And it struck with me that story because I wish there could be more like that, but he*

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[117] Your like, you don't know much

[118] My aunt she liked to drink, well when she would drink a little, she would begin to talk and scold us.

[119] We are from here.

[120] A heart-to-heart talk

[121] I feel like a little

[122] She is like dark-skinned and my aunt is even more dark-skinned.

explained it and it's los niños *[*the children*] you know the sound of the children and we embrace children, you know. They make noise* es parte de su ser[123] *at that stage. We don't want to create this "*quedate callado*"*[124] *and just follow orders. He was talking about the role that children play in the community, and it's just these moments when I hear these things and they stay with me literally because I repeat them in my mind. I may be driving, and I remember you know there's an Elder who said this, and I may look at my daughter and I need to check myself.*

Bodily movement through space and time. *But I also see running as a sort of spiritual ceremonial practice because I don't run but what my dad what he introduced to us was* ciclismo *and we've been doing cycling; we had a club in East L.A. It was* Club Ciclistas Aztecas*, and it was the only* Club Ciclistas Aztecas *registered. And it was real interesting because we had a fusion of people from* Guatemala *but most were from* México*. That club was kind of like a social space for youth to come together. There wasn't a deliberate attempt to define why we even named it* Aztecas*. What was that indigeneity? What was that relationship? But I feel through* ciclismo*, through movement, through bodily movement in space and time because that is what it became for me and my dad says this too, a long meditation. It's a long meditation where you go ride up in the mountains, and I'm talking 80-100 miles—we were gravitating toward a different tradition of* ciclismo in México *(not capitalistic, not circuits). So I remember Eric, we were in high school and he was from* El Salvador *and we would just ride, ride, ride; we would train long distance. A hundred miles we would do in a day. Rest 30 miles. That was like Monday, and we had a whole routine, 500 miles a week. Going to the mountains, the experience there, something that drew me to that movement of the body in time and space.*

What is my Ceremonial Discourse? Danza Azteca Pedagogies

Miguel's connection to his ceremonial discourse, and his description of it, differed from the other five educators insofar that Indigenous ceremony did not play a *direct* role for him as an active participant in the same capacity as the other educators. However, he explained that,

> right now, I think that the energies of what I've experienced as somebody not directly but who's been a part of these, I think that there are some energies I gravitate towards, and they happen most of these through the organizing like in *A.R.E.* [because]in these spaces we always have *Danza* opening our events and they bless, it's ceremony that blesses those *eventos* and we acknowledge who we are, we acknowledge our ancestors and Mother Earth and those experiences that I 've been a

[123] That is part of their being/their existence

[124] stay quiet

> part of but not directly they have been shaping who I am and there's an energy that I can't describe.

Miguel's ceremonial discourse included his exposure to *Danza Azteca* while visiting *Zacatecas* and *Guanajuato*, in *México*, as a child. Those experiences cultivated an Indigenous epistemology based on the living ancestral knowledge embodied and enacted by both Miguel's mother and *tía*—in their (and his) homeland. This experience had a profound impact on him that has followed him into adulthood. A key moment in the narrative occurred when Miguel described how transformative his experience was as a participant in a *Danza* ceremony—not as a *danzante* but as a community member present to support and receive the blessings and medicine that the sacred space offered:

> I remember one time we saw a *Danza*. They were opening ceremony, right where we were. It was a *Salon Acapulco* in South Central, and it was like a second story place, and it looked real dank in the bottom; it's a sweat shop, but the *Danza* came in and they just, the beauty that they brought to the space, and I remember when we all started participating, moving to different locations right and it's like […] there's an energy about who I am that gravitates me towards that, and I remember having this connection […] I could connect to this real unmediated connection to everybody that was there, but in a weird way, I think what I was feeling was a connection with myself, of who I am, as a human being.

At the time of the interview, Miguel expressed that he would love to, at some point, do what his *tía* and my mom have done and commit to *Danza*. He commented that it's a point, it's a juncture right now, that he is in conversation with his wife about. They agreed that they need to be a part of these things and understand them, be taught, and be open to understanding what this means.

How do I pass on what I know?

As a teacher educator, Miguel has had to face the epistemic racism, sexism, and violence (Grosfoguel, 2011) that exists in teacher preparation programs throughout the state of California. He understands that teacher education programs do not encourage students to interrogate epistemologies, especially when they have to work through the bureaucracy of the California Commission of Credentialing as well as with the standardized curriculum enacted throughout the state, at this moment, Common Core. Miguel expressed disillusionment because teacher educators and teachers themselves, in many ways, become instruments of this oppressive system. He stated, "I include myself as much as I fight it because over time you are forced to do these things and you're enacting them and you're being complicit" (Zavala, 2015). He expressed the toll this takes on faculty of color similar to him because "we want to validate ourselves [and] we need like a support group because we are not just *cuerpos que* have these brains" (Zavala, 2015). Miguel continued to share the inquiries that have stirred within him as he has navigated the toxicity of the Education field: "But where is our history? And our place? And the spiritual is *nunca*, it's *nunca*—you never talk about it" (Zavala, 2015). However, Miguel did articulate his own way of maneuvering through the system. He stated,

> I must say in the teaching, I do strategically do that. I talk to my students about where is the role of our identity. I have this whole thing about cultural identities what do those mean? And gendered? Identities being dynamic, fluid multiple. I'll bring in a certain register in the way I teach about love, talking about our spiritual aspects of our beings. I'm at a point where I can stand very solid in my intonation; we need to recreate spaces of love. I talk about my reality and I always find there is an openness from students; it doesn't matter where they come from; they all have a history.

Miguel also cautioned that when educators do this type of work—bring these perspectives into the classroom—they have to be careful about NOT re-inscribing the logics of Eurocentrism to the point where they begin hating back. Miguel called for *un respeto profundo*[125] where to model that burden is on us, to embody a kind of way of being, *conducta*.[126] Miguel insisted that "if I'm going to talk about the spiritual and love, then I need to be that, become that and be very self-critical, too" (Zavala, 2015). He shared that throughout his pedagogical practice

> I keep it real, and they gravitate towards that. They're real hungry for spiritual connection to even discuss aspects of who we are as spiritual beings. And what does that mean? What is the connection of love toward self and other and family and extensions of that in communities?

The findings of this portion of the study confirm that there is a direct connection between Miguel's teaching methodology and the Indigenous epistemology he acquired through his exposure to the ceremonial discourse inherent in *Danza Azteca* spaces of learning and healing throughout both his childhood and adulthood. To exemplify, I will discuss a presentation Miguel made at a university campus. This presentation shows how Miguel prioritizes identity formations within his own curricular design so that students are given the opportunity to analyze their connections to place, family, and community within the context of critical social analysis. He encourages critical inquiry and analysis as well as fosters the need for creative self-reflection that has the potential to be healing as it is also teaching. The first presentation, I will discuss is one he made at the CA-NAME conference in 2014 at CSU, Fullerton. Miguel was part of panel discussion that explored *The Battle for Transformative*

[125] A very deep respect

[126] conduct

Pedagogies: Decolonial Perspectives on the Embattled State of California's Higher Education. Specifically, Miguel presented on *Decolonizing Teacher Education within the Cal State System: Where is there Space for Healing in Teacher Education?*

Miguel began the presentation by suggesting that teacher education students be posed with orienting questions, such as for undergraduates, in what ways have diverse students been subjected to schooling? For graduate students, he offered the following questions: What are key actors and interests impacting curriculum development? What discursive and political struggles shape curriculum and teaching? For Miguel, decolonizing begins with the assumption that colonialism and imperialism are central to oppression. Miguel mentioned that a decolonial framework is different than those that are critical, feminist, anti-racist, and/or humanist. He asserted that centering one's own positionality as an educator is necessary, so that for himself, he names his Chicano standpoint. In addition, Miguel defined that a decolonial pedagogy is an embodied process that is felt and lived intimately that materializes as a broader strategy for community self-determination. He then summarized that when students are encouraged to voice and then name their colonized lives, healing becomes possible. He shared that in his own pedagogical praxis, as a teacher educator, he has facilitated dialogue, naming, counterstorytelling, and healing. Miguel's concluding thoughts summarized that

> 1.) The struggle for community within classroom spaces is a primary strategy for prioritizing healing as a learning outcome.
>
> 2.) That educators must reposition themselves as academics by becoming community organizers in order to actively gain understanding from the communities they are responsible to serve.

Summary of Contributions on Identity Development among Chicana and Chicano Educators

Collectively, these narratives contribute to research with Chicana and Chicano adults who are also educators and responds to the call for "a much more thorough and complex understanding of the forces involved in Chicana/o ethnic identity development and its changes over time" (Pizarro and Vera; p. 91). Analysis of the findings of the various phases of this study confirm that "Ethnic identity [must be understood as] part of a more complex construct referred to as social identity," which traverses all social realms heretofore identified (Pizarro and Vera, pg. 91). Whereas Pizarro's contributions analyzed educational institutions as exterior and systematic agents (often negatively) impacting ethnic identity development among Chicana and Chicano youth, this particular study examined the interior and mostly spiritual forces guiding Chicana and Chicano educators to maintain their resilience and autonomy despite their own (as well as their students') positioning within such oppressive conditions. In this way, the research contributes a new layer of understanding to the discourse community concerning itself with ethnic identity development for Chicana and Chicano adults, especially those who uphold Indigenous ontologies, epistemologies, and ways of being in the world.[127] For this study, in particular, examining the social identity for Chicanas and Chicanos has also included a ceremonial discourse, which is based on memory that not

[127] This study seeks to emphasize that the Indigenous ceremonial traditions have been foundational in sustaining resiliency among the educators; to me, they have demonstrated a Non-violent Communication (NVC) trait of prioritizing self-empathy, which addresses getting their feelings and needs met in a way that is mindful of others. NVC is very problematic for numerous reasons; however, Edmundo Norte has made significant contributions to teaching it from a *Raza* perspective, which has been quite helpful for me. Edmundo Norte is division dean and instructor of Intercultural/International Studies at De Anza College in Cupertino, CA. Norte's discussion of self-empathy is exemplary for lessons on self-care, which are necessary for decolonization and transformation as MarTinez (2013) discusses in detail.

only recognizes the historical past but also affirms the living capacity of the past in the present; a ceremonial discourse essentially invokes a current and living relationship with ancestral connections.

Hence, this project focused on unearthing the insights that Indigenous-identified Chicana and Chicano urban educators have gained from participating in a ceremonial discourse. Broadly, the research revealed that the social realms (cultural, familial, occupational, peer, community, *and* educational) overlap in several ways and in so doing, bring out the multiply rich dimensions and details that have influenced the identity developments of the educators.

Collective Findings Gathered from the Sacred Stories of the Educators

My collective findings revealed there were three major influences of ethnic identity development among the six Chicana and Chicano educators: Family, Education, and Ceremonial Discourse. For most of the participants their families were instrumental in shaping their cultural identities. Cultural contexts overlapped with familial ones because the participants had family (e.g. parents, *abuelas*, *abuelos*, *tíos*, *tías*, *primos*, *primas*, *hijo/as*)[128] with geographical connections in both *México* and *Guatemala* respectively. *Convivencia* occurred in the form of familial gatherings, learning by doing and observing kinship networks (including family). They also gained exposure to planting, food preparation, healing practices, food, music, and work ethic/values. All of this contributed to epistemologies rooted in the traditions from their countries of ancestral origin.[129] In addition

[128] grandmothers, grandfathers, uncles, aunts, cousins, sons and daughters

[129] "Rodriguez and Gurin (1990) suggested that unique social contexts in Mexico and the United States lead *Mexicana/os* to have more class-oriented identities and Chicana/os to have more political-

to geographical connections, participants expressed rooted cultural connections to both *México* and *Guatemala* respectively. The participants expressed that these rooted cultural connections and instructions that they received from their families, as children or even into young adulthood, facilitated their later-in-life acknowledgement of Indigenous and ancestral cosmovisions, which allowed for centering and prioritization (during adulthood) of cultural practices, such as ceremonial dancing and running as well as healing and purification rituals. It is also important to note that familial connections fostered a communal respect for others and this seems to have shaped the fact that the educators also expanded a familial context to their respective communities, which also included their students.

The social realm of their occupation as educators was also shown to overlap with their familial contexts as oftentimes many students have come to be recognized as part the educators' extended family. The responses of the educators expressed that their peers, in many ways, are also other educators such as themselves or community activists, organizers, intellectuals, and artists, which contribute to a larger spiritual connection to *Raza, jente*—and moreso when involving *ceremonia*. Nevertheless, it was their early familial contexts–in most cases—that anchored and provided a foundation from which to return to later in life, even if it was only for a short period of time and/or with a very small or confined group of people—sometimes even one person. These early familial exposures created experiences that would

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oriented identities. This leads to different group contacts, such as more intergroup interaction for Chicana/os) (as cited in Pizarro and Vera, 2001, p. 97).

"Hurtado et al (1994; 1993) found that Chicana/os have more complex identities as a function of more complex experiences and interactions in the United States and that the most important identities to individuals (which are Ethnic identities) are those that are the most devalued by society" (as cited in Pizarro and Vera, 2001, p. 97).

later become memories that would help orient the participants toward embracing an decolonizing Indigenous epistemology and ceremonial discourse. To my knowledge, these details are absent from literature that focuses on ethnic identity development among Chicanas and Chicanos.[130] Furthermore, the community contexts, for the participants, were also proven to extend outside of their neighborhoods as well as places of work and activism into ceremonial spaces of purification, prayer, and healing.

Infused within the six educator responses was a collective invocation of the sentiments found in *El Plan de Santa Barbára* (1969). The historical document helped to explain that culturally, the word Chicano, "in the past [was] a pejorative and class-bound adjective, [but it became] the root idea of a new cultural identity for our people," which "revealed a growing solidarity and the development of a common social praxis" (1969). *El Plan de Santa Barbára* (1969) continued to elaborate that the wide- spread use of the term Chicano, at the time, signaled a rebirth of pride and confidence. Nevertheless, the responses of the educators, which emphasized a true love for community aligned with what *El Plan de Santa Barbára* (1969) defined as an ancient truth embodied within the concept of Chicanismo: man [or woman] is never closer to his [or her] true self as when he [she] is close to his [her] community. So that even though the participants were describing the factors that made up their own identities, they could not do so without also including their families, and by extension, their respective communities.

[130] Two exceptions are Rose Borunda's and Melissa Moreno's (2014) *Speaking from the heart: Herstories of Chicana, Latina, and Amerindian women* and Elisa Facio's and Irene Lara's (2014) *Fleshing the spirit: Spirituality and activism in Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous women's lives*.

Yarbro Bejarno points out that in the context of oppression, to focus on the self is not a selfish act, for "the Chicana writer finds that the self she seeks to define and love is not merely an individual self but a collective one," and "individual subjectivity [emerges] through the articulation of collective experience and identity" (Noriega and Belcher, p. viii). Miguel illustrated this in the following statement: "My relational history [with reference to blood relatives or relations] is tied to the work I do and the people that I see I serve, my *familias* but also the broader *Raza* coming in. It's why I see myself invested in community organizing and in grassroots organizations. I cannot not see myself only as individual disconnected from *comunidades*. I really feel and a lot of this comes through the organizing work" (Zavala, 2015). It should be noted that for at least three of the educators, community was connected to *cultura*/culture. Cultural identification was named as Chicano/*Mexicano,* Mestiza and part Mayan, and Chicano/mixed-blood.

Schools as Sites of Systemic Oppression—Curriculum Control

Despite the tremendous display of resiliency and critical consciousness of the educators to assert decolonizing practices within their respective academic institutions, they have not been exempt from maintaining control over their curriculum. For half of the participants, this proved to be true, which, ultimately, has strengthened and deepened their participation in Indigenous ceremonial traditions and lifeways—as a means of cultural and spiritual survival—key aspects of their identifications. Three of the educators, Maria, Miguel, and Heidi, who are full-time faculty members at institutions of higher learning,—both public and private–expressed that they definitely faced challenges in maintaining control over their curriculum. They are sole representatives of Chicana and Chicano identifications within their

respective departments of Counseling, Teacher Education, and English. When asked if they did face challenges, the immediate responses were: “Yes!” “Absolutely!” “Everyday!”

The three educators each described facing intense challenges in maintaining control over their curriculum, specifically book selections. Book selections and other course content were selected by the educators based on their pedagogical practices that prioritize the identities, subject positions, experiential knowledges, and collective histories—across generations—of those students whose epistemological ancestry has been historically marginalized, criminalized, silenced, and/ or ignored as a result of the racist-colonialist foundations of education in the United States. The educators each, painfully, recalled having restrictions placed on them. Based on the experiences they shared, the following list was compiled of these restrictions:

- having to follow “norms” and expectations established decades before their arrival to their respective campuses
- having no say in designing course content, course design, or book selections
- being limited in curricular choices
- being questioned by administrators and colleagues when trying to advocate for minoritized voices to be included in curriculum
- being suspect about professionalism and commitment to respective fields of study
- being alienated, isolated, and targeted
- feeling drained and depleted of energy because of having to deal with added stress from colleagues, administrators, and even students regarding pedagogies
- working through the internal struggles of self-doubt
- experiencing serious health issues requiring medical attention and/or leaves of absence

The strategies used to cope with these pressures, included:

- being strategic and thinking critically of the many factors and their implications before deciding on a move to advocate, support, represent, contest
- exercising creativity to gather alternative resources that support their curricular choices (e.g. using community networks to come visit their campuses)
- Invoking ancestors and originating cultural connections (i.e. Indigenous roots) to remind about resiliency, inner strength, and perseverance

- Seeking Indigenous ceremonial resources to remain grounded, centered, and focused on life's purpose and calling as well as (e.g. *Danza*, Sweat Lodge, Sun Dance, Talking/Healing Circles, Meditation)
- Finding alter-Native communities (including family) and grassroots spaces to enhance support system and networks
- Organizing and participating in events, conferences, workshops, retreats, meetings outside of respective fields of study where their perspectives and contributions are appreciated and validated as necessary
- Exerting agency by showing up, standing up, clarifying, explicating, and vocalizing…sometimes

Conscious Educational Spaces are Possible

The other three educators in the study, Andres, Claudia, and Santiago, admitted that they had not faced any challenges in maintaining control of their curriculum. In fact, they each mentioned the opposite; that they had affirming experiences at the various institutions where they were hired to teach. These three educators work either as adjunct faculty or on a part-time basis at a high school charter school, a community college, and a state university. It should be noted that these educators were specifically recruited and hired for their areas of expertise in *Mexica* Curriculum Design, Indigenous and Decolonial Foodways, and Mesoamerican Studies. The findings suggest that there are critically conscious educational spaces (even in the public sector of higher education) and it depends heavily on the administrators, the student population, and the institution's commitment to the population—it makes a significant difference when administrators demonstrate a background and familiarity with either Ethnic, but more specifically, Chicana and Chicano Studies as a rigorous field worthy of attention and support. In this way educators, such as those highlighted in this study, are encouraged to acknowledge and engage their sacred power for the benefit of their students and the larger campus community.

CHAPTER 5: Continued Findings and Discussion of Chicana and Chicano Decolonizing Indigenous Teaching Units: ~Sacred Pedagogies~

"My learning goal was for them to instill some type of good hope, good faith, good energy, I don't know what you call that... the will, a will, my SLO [Student Learning Outcome] was to instill in them a will, a Huitzilopochtli*, a will to exercise an agency, that's what I was instilling in them, and whatever it is that they went out to learn about because of that will that I helped instilled in them, then I would have met the SLO but I don't know that because perhaps some of these students I will never get to see again. But my main purpose there was to instill in them a will, so that they can go out there and perhaps learn something or get through life. Sometimes we just need to get through life, not so much pass the class, so..."*

-Santiago Andres Garcia, personal interview, 2015

The Influence of Chicana and Chicano Indigenous Identity on Pedagogical Practice and Teaching as a Healing Craft

The Chicana and Chicano educators represented in this study embody Indigenous identities, ontologies, epistemologies, and technologies. They have memories and experiences that connect them to ancestral wisdom that is Original to their respective homelands. Honoring and participating in Indigenous ceremonies has allowed the educators to realize their full humanity. Because of this, they also see the full humanity of their students and bring them opportunities to recognize their capacity to heal themselves.

Cajete (2012) asserted that it is necessary to exploit all avenues of communication open to us in order to establish a dialogue about a contemporary theory for a decolonizing Indigenous education that evolves from us and our collective experience. I offer this dissertation project as one avenue of communication. The dialogues that began with the six educators in this study—and the narratives that have emerged as a result—provide valuable insights to help guide the foundations of a contemporary theory (to be put into practice) for a Chicana and Chicano Decolonizing Indigenous Pedagogical Framework. The small sample size allowed for an extensive in-depth exploration of the most significant factors that have

shaped Chicana and Chicano Indigenous identity formations. Documenting the collective experiences of the six participants revealed that it was necessary to contextualize the spatial and historical dimensions surrounding their family influences (Zavala, 2015).

Doing so has demanded recognition of the colonial realities responsible for distancing not only large numbers of *Mexicanos* and *Mexicanas* (as well as their relations from *CentroAmerica*) but subsequently Chicanas and Chicanos from their Indigenous origins and life practices (Batalla, 1996; Menchaca, 1993). Despite the continued and enduring efforts of colonialists (in all their disguises) to ensure this cultural genocide, the collective narratives also affirm the resilience of Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies. These represent the first seeds of identity which are buried deep within the mind-hearts, bodies, and spirits of the people. As the findings from this study demonstrate, familial teachings expose children to the first aspects of their cultural foundations. Familial learning, in this regard, provides its own education that shapes epistemological origins that are deeply rooted. As the narratives detail, these origins accompany, and in most cases, ground children who later become students entering formalized institutions of learning—schools.

In the cases exemplified by this study, the children-students, were essentially guided by Indigenous epistemologies to pursue studies (both inside and outside of classroom spaces) that reconnected them to themselves, their Original and first identities. For this reason, one can recognize why Chicana and Chicano Studies and the social movements (including Zapatismo)[131] that made them possible and enduring have been and continue to be invaluable. Because the narratives confirm that a ceremonial discourse (Rodríguez, 2014) has

[131] For historical archives on *the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional*, please visit http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/.

been the most influential factor shaping *both* the identity development *and* pedagogical praxis of the educators, it is necessary to highlight the forces that have led them to it:

1.) Cultural learning within the family—even if only by way of brief exposure[132]

2.) Access to culturally relevant educational opportunities in formalized learning environments

Tracking the depth and complexity of Chicana and Chicano Indigenous identity development has revealed the complex factors and rigorous efforts that have to occur in order for these potentialities to emerge.

The Role of Chicana and Chicano Indigenous Epistemologies in Cultivating Decolonizing Learning Spaces

My own positionality as a community college educator allows me to be sensitive to the fact that there is something to be noted about the *potential* that classroom spaces hold to provide a trusting environment that creates consistency in communication and dialogue among teachers and students as well as intimacy and safety. Such examples are noteworthy of attention because they provide alternatives to the history of violence and brutality that has shaped schooling in the United States for centuries (Valencia, 1997). The colonialist-elitist-

[132] Gonzales (2012) in *Red medicine: Traditional Indigenous rites of birthing and healing* included qualitative research accompanied by sacred Elder knowledge about the intentionality behind parenting because pregnancy and birthing are seen as sacred ceremonies. My point in bringing it up at this point in time is because most of the educators in this study were influenced by only a few people when they were older children, adolescents, or even adults. Gonzales' work is valuable because it demonstrates to readers what is possible when we are intentional about decolonizing parenthood. One can only envision the possibilities that could arise when whole communities value the arrival of the children who will be born into them and who consciously cermonialize their arrival as well as their milestones throughout childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. It should be noted as well that five out of the six educators, at the time of the study, were already parents. Findings revealed that they were instilling in their children a ceremonial discourse. I felt compelled to add these findings but could not fully develop them within the time frame. I anticipate that I will be able to expand upon these findings in the future and that others will be called to do the same.

racist-sexist-homophobic (Barba) origins of the educational system in this country have been confronted and overturned by educators such as those focused on in this study. My contribution to the fields of Education, Chicana and Chicano Studies, and Indigenous Studies have begun with the following inquiries: What is it about the epistemological viewpoints of these educators that significantly sets them apart from their colleagues? What forces have shaped them to be adamant about social justice—from the very beginning of their careers?[133] What can those vested in the field of Education—at all levels—learn from these educators? Where can the dialogue for transformative and meaningful change for schools, serving *Raza* students, begin? Is it possible for educational institutions, specifically public schools, to bridge, more intentionally, with grassroots spaces of learning?

Building upon my previous work that situated teaching as a healing craft (2013), it follows that when the six educators highlighted in this study center the importance of Indigenous ancestral wisdom traditions in their classrooms, they are, arguably, enabling their students to begin a process of healing from various forms of intergenerational historical trauma and the perpetual Cycle of Oppression. Because of their achieved clarity of purpose made possible by their own ceremonial discourse, the educators are equipped to guide students to confront their own familial and personal connections to intergenerational historical trauma (Brave Heart, 2000; Clearing Sky cited in Torres, 2003), internalized

[133] The level of critical consciousness that these educators bring into their classrooms and educational institutions is outstanding and commendable. For institutions that are truly interested in advocating and implementing effective changes that speak to current issues, such as sustaining equity for underrepresented student populations, these educators prove to be exemplary. I contrast this with comments I have heard from other educators I work with, who are not grounded in Indigenous epistemologies. For many of those colleagues, it has taken them well over five, if not ten, years to realize that they have been abiding by deficit-thinking models that place students "at-risk" or "unmotivated" and "lazy." Campuses are more recently placing a lot more pressure on faculty to implement equitable practices in their classes. It is unclear as to how authentic these efforts actually are.

oppression (Duran, 2006; Gonzales, 2006; 2012), shame-based behavior (Torres, 2003), unresolved grieving (Duran, 2006; Gonzales, 2006), and feelings of dislocation (MarTinez, 2003).[134] At the time of the interviews, the educators ranged in age from 25-42, and they each had endured or were enduring significant challenges related to health, work, and/or family issues. Although family has been pivotal in shaping ethnic identity and laying the foundation for a ceremonial discourse, it must also be said that colonial residues are still very present and all the educators have had to confront the effects of intergenerational historical trauma and the Cycle of Oppression accompanied by coping behaviors that may be destructive; this is where their deeper commitments to self-navigation and healing come from. At this juncture, recognizing the ways in which identity has developed over a lifetime is pivotal because as the educators have faced more challenges, their commitments to ceremonial practice have also increased.

Each educator is well on their way to receive deep healing. This is the life stage where wisdom is gained and as a result a high level of spiritual understanding is also achieved. This understanding acts as a bridge to finding one's own Center and the transformation to being a complete person in that place that Indigenous people talk about—

[134] This continues to be an ongoing process for the educators themselves. They have not been exempt in any way from being impacted by issues of domestic violence, sexual abuse, alcoholism, drug addiction, co-dependency, suicide, depression, incarceration, and major health challenges to name a few.

with deep understanding (Cajete, 2012, p. 151-152).[135] All participants are hopeful about this stage. They are seeking and definitely on the path. This is why, as cultural practitioners, they are important to recognize in their communities. They are more than classroom educators; they are also community leaders. Because of their hardships walking through life, they have identified ceremonial resources in their communities, in their cultures, in their ancestral teachings. Their ability to recognize the community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) that surrounds them is part of the decolonial lens, which not all educators or Chicanos and Chicanas possess; they make up part of a unique population of educators with something additional to offer their families, communities, students, and peers.

This transformative process requires intense commitment to deep introspection and constant self-reflection. The extra time required to honor the aesthetics of crafting Indigenous-based teaching modalities results in unblocking energetic stagnations that have attached themselves to students. This is most definitely healing but is made possible because the educators view their students holistically—considering their minds, bodies, emotions, and spirits. They also provide learning spaces that are set with intentions of mindfulness, thoughtfulness, kindness and that make room for a consistent pattern of repetition, understanding, and care.

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[135] Black Elk believed that the center of the universe was everywhere and that all people are at the center, with some actually realizing that they are at the center. He understood cosmology in a transcendental versus historical manner (Neihardt, 1932, *Black Elk speaks: Being the life story of a holy man of the Oglala Sioux*, p. 46).Black Elk's teaching explains how any healer from any tradition can heal if the individual is centered. Centering is the process whereby the Healer is in constant awareness of his own soul's healing process; there is only one center. This center can be attained by anyone who allows for his awareness to become aware of itself in the seventh sacred direction. In this manner, the Healer can assist the patient in finding her own center in the universe. This is the task of the healer (Neihardt, 1932, p. 46).

Again, one major goal of this research project is to emphasize that these subtle yet essential details of cultivating a decolonizing learning space are made possible as a result of Indigenous epistemologies that have been nurtured over decades for the Chicana and Chicano educators. At this point, it is also important to re-emphasize the works of Elena Avila (1999) and Tara J. Yosso (2005) and the major contributions that *combining* their works can offer to a Chicana and Chicano Decolonizing Indigenous Pedagogical Framework. Yosso (2005) provided an in-depth consideration of the Chicana and Chicano Educational Pipeline. Her framework expanded upon Critical Race Theory (CRT) in Education and sought to shift the research lens away from models of deficit-thinking (Valencia, 1997) by introducing the concept of community cultural wealth. Community cultural wealth has been defined as ‘‘an array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and utilized by communities of color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression’’ (Yosso, 2005, p. 77). Community cultural wealth stands as an alternative—a direct intervention—working to counter hegemonic privileging of cultural capital. It legitimizes various resources Chicanas and Chicanos (as well as other minoritized students) bring with them to schools from their home and community environments. These include capital that is also aspirational, familial, social, navigational, resistant, and linguistic (Yosso 2005, p. 78).

I argue that there is a vital intersection to be observed between Yosso's (2005) work on community cultural wealth and Avila's (2000) work on *curanderismo*. Avila's (2000) work on *curanderismo* offers insights that can have tremendous implications at the level of pedagogical practice, for it provides a model of how to promote a sense of personal activism whereby documentation of historical trauma is a project. As the research in this study reveals (and will be further elaborated upon in this chapter), when Chicana and Chicano urban

educators[136] access their ceremonial resources and integrate Indigenous ancestral wisdom traditions (and their accompanying epistemologies) into their pedagogical practice, they affirm an overlooked and often suppressed form of community cultural wealth.

Chicana and Chicano Decolonizing Indigenous Pedagogies: Teaching Units Overview

As the overview of the teaching units illustrated below will demonstrate, the curricular choices made by the educators include critical readings, exposure to various types of supplemental content, scaffolding, relatability/relevance to lived experiences, and application of concepts. It is quite obvious that the teaching units start with textual and content-based analysis but eventually move to inquiries about self and community; the teachings have a simultaneous outward and inward personal focus. Each entry includes a brief description of the teaching unit, the Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs), and a detailed discussion of where Avila's (1999) characteristics of healing technologies occur within the pedagogical choices enacted by the selected educators, contributing to my discussion of teaching as a healing craft practices (2013). I draw upon Avila's (1999) work on *curanderismo* by applying it to specific teaching units of the educators involved in this project, examining the extent to which the following practices are enacted:

- listening, with respect, to the cultural perspectives, values, and beliefs of students
- advocating for totality of personhood—necessarily inclusive of emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual aspects
- collaborating with students, their families, respective communities, and ancestors
- cultivating a critical consciousness as well as critical thinking, which requires accountability to self and others

Due to time and space constraints, I highlight only one teaching unit for four of the educators involved in this study. It should be noted that these teaching units were self-selected and

[136] The six participants in this study are urban educators within institutions; however urban education also manifests in other forms, especially within grassroots roots sites of resistance.

provided to me by the educators as part of their own archives, and they were not teaching them when I visited their classrooms.

***The Schooling Biographies Project: Re/Writing Our Lives through Counter-storytelling* by Miguel Zavala**

Brief Description of Teaching Unit

The Schooling Biographies Project, outlined in this section, is composed of a series of pedagogical, curricular, and experiential mediations that were designed by Miguel and his collaborations with other instructors and teaching assistants, who undertook the idea of developing student-led research. The project grew from Miguel's experience teaching in alternative pedagogical spaces, the UCLA Migrant Student Leadership Institute (MSLI) and the TELACU Education Summer Program, both residential programs for high school migrant and urban youth. Specifically, the *Schooling Biographies Project: Re/Writing Our Lives through Counter-Storytelling* is a cross-curricular approach that brings together concepts, readings, and skills developed in the Writing and California History courses. Over the course of five weeks, students work towards the production of a written auto/biography, which assignment is introduced during the fourth week.

The Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

- Investigate personal schooling experiences by way of demographic statistics as they pertain to local high schools
- Identify (collectively, in groups) social problems affecting local communities and the role that education plays in relation to these problems
- Read critically, against the cultural grain of texts, unpacking master-narrative practices, and teaching about the history of media and historical texts
- Summarize, in a critical way, a statistic or set of statistics as related to local public high schools
- Create analytic summaries that involve interpretation and analysis beyond mere re-telling

- Interview at least three other peers (audio-taping or extensive note-taking is required)

Discussion of Teaching as Healing Practices

From the SLOs, it is evident that this project prioritizes Avila's work on *curanderismo*. For example, the principle of listening with respect to cultural perspectives, values, and beliefs is prioritized by assigning students to investigate their own personal schooling experiences. Collaboration is fostered by encouraging students to work collectively to not only gather narratives (interviews) but also to work together to identify social problems impacting their local high schools and communities. Cultivation of critical consciousness is nurtured when students receive guidance on how to read critically—against the cultural grain of texts—while also unpacking master narratives. It is also facilitated when students are asked to critically assess and summarize quantitative statistical data pertinent to their local communities.

The Schooling Biographies Project: Re/Writing Our Lives through Counter-storytelling also promotes Avila's focus on balanced healing, which includes advocating for totality of personhood—necessarily inclusive of emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual aspects. This is apparent when Miguel, in describing the project, explained that the development of political clarity among urban *Raza* youth requires that critical educators work toward the constitution of healing spaces. For Miguel, healing is the social space interwoven throughout the experience of coming to name one's pain. Wrought by the violence of colonialism, decolonizing pedagogies (of which Miguel's curriculum is an example) seek to generate spaces of healing and community, where students can come together in spaces that are seldom experienced in public schools. Miguel shared that, in the project, students collectively perform their auto/biographies as

counter/narratives. As such, students not only strive to think critically about colonialism and how it is experienced personally in relation to schooling, but they also speak against this violence and oppression. This speaking against or *naming* generates spaces of self-worth, cultural validation, and a vision of community that involves a love for their peers, families, and broader community. The development of a political and social consciousness emerges out of this sense of community. Precisely because of colonialism, *Raza* students experience personal violence, marginalization, and dehumanization everyday and everywhere. Thus, it is essential that teaching is recognized for its healing potential.

Figure 5.1. Artwork *con la tierra que trabajamos*. UCLA Migrant Student Leadership Institute (MSLI) and the TELACU Education Summer Program. Photo provided by and included with permission of Miguel Zavala.

The Mesoamerican Clay Figurine Project of Rio Hondo College

by Santiago Andres Garcia

Brief Description of Teaching Unit

The Mesoamerican Clay Figurine Project of Rio Hondo College serves as the primary classroom assignment for Humanities 125: Intro to Mexican Culture. It is a requirement to pass the class. The project explores the crossroads of urban and decolonial pedagogy, the humanities, and anthropology's four fields: cultural, physical, archaeological, and linguistic, inclusive of Indigenous education sovereignty. More specifically, as Santiago has thoroughly researched, it accentuates how curricular content developed from the material culture of Mesoamerica may serve as a culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012; McCarty and Lee, 2014, as cited in Garcia, syllabus, 2015) for students of all backgrounds, at the community college. The project represents a culturally relevant teaching model that acknowledges the growing Mesoamerican ancestry of Rio Hondo's student population, which according to the 'Report to the Community 2012, *A Community Legacy*' 74% of the campus population at Rio Hondo is labeled as "Hispanic." This statistic grows every year. After a series of self-reflective writing exercises and one final student-figurine narrative inquiry, students materialize their own views, values, and narratives concerning race, ethnicity, status, and identity through clay-work (Sholtz and Gavron, 2006 as cited in Garcia, syllabus, 2015).

The Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

- Interpret the daily life activities of contemporary Mesoamerican peoples through Mesoamerican figurine analysis
- Synthesize the history and culture of Mesoamerica, from Olmec to Aztec, through Mesoamerican figurine analysis
- Analyze their own views of race, ethnicity, status, and identity, in their own context, and in a borderlands environment through clay-work

- Reconstruct their own ideas of the body and self, while bringing their stories and local histories to the center of learning through clay-work

Discussion of Teaching as Healing Practices

Avila's healing practices are also reflected in Santiago's SLOs. Given the demographic make-up of Santiago's campus at Rio Hondo College—which is made up of over seventy percent descendants of Mesoamerican or Indigenous peoples, primarily from *México* and *CentroAmérica*, the first learning outcome does not seem to be a random occurrence. This is so because it recognizes the students as contemporary Mesoamerican peoples. This promotes a critical consciousness that allows students the space to collaborate with their ancestors—as is also developed further in the second SLO. These outcomes are evidence of a pedagogical praxis that is, at once, healing and decolonizing. It is healing because it intervenes in the intergenerational historical trauma of de-Indigenization that has impacted *Raza* populations for centuries. It is also decolonizing because it makes permissible the re-Indigenization of Hispanic, Latina/o/x, and Chicana/o/x identities.[137] Critical consciousness is further cultivated in the third outcome that requires students to analyze their own views of race, ethnicity, status, and identity. It demands thinking critically in a way that requires accountability to self and others since the examples and definitions must arise from personal experiences and narratives.

The last two SLOs also require further discussion as they intersect with Avila's advocacy for the totality of personhood—inclusive of the emotional, physical, mental, spiritual. Santiago assigns the "*Coatlicue* Worksheet," which is focused on identity. He has

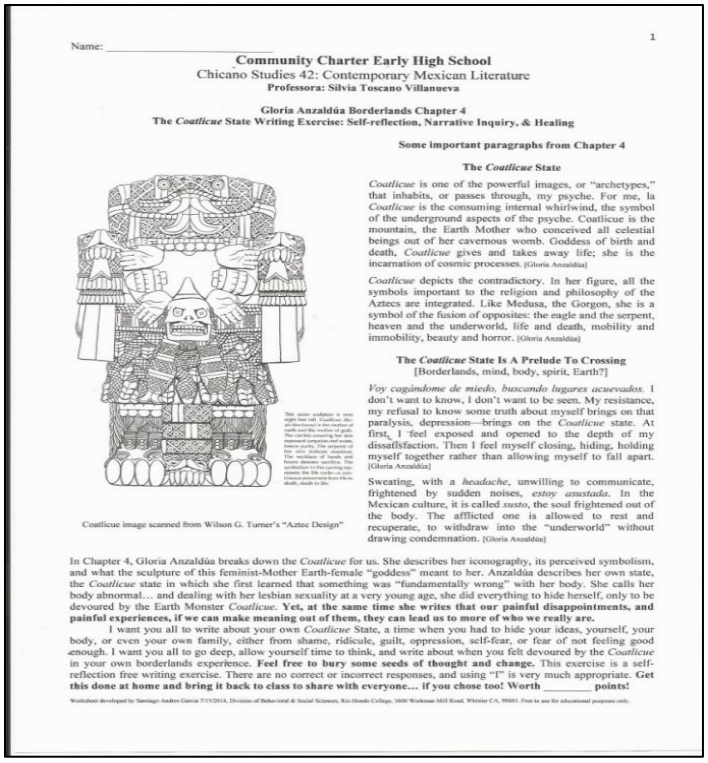
[137] My basic understanding is that, in Spanish and English, the term Chicana and Chicano are gender specific to male and female, respectively. Chicanx is inclusive to female, male, and gender neutral, respectively.

the students identify the iconography of the *Coatlicue*, identifying her "ugliness and her body parts" and then he has the students read the chapter by Anzaldúa, on the *Coatlicue* state. One part of the assignment consists of looking at the *Coatlicue*; the other part is reading Anzaldúa's viewpoint on what it means to be in transition. The third part incorporates clay-work as another form of expression that centers Indigenous epistemologies of learning by doing and creating—centering the use of the hands.[138] Santiago discussed that he wants his students to inquire about: "What it means to [be] figuring out your identity [and] what it means to you yourself to be ugly; what it means to live in the crossroads" (Garcia, 2015). Santiago scanned that particular chapter from the Anzaldúa book and he inserted it into the word document, so the students look at the *Coatlicue* and then they get Anzaldúa's take on her. Then he has them write about their own iconography (Garcia, 2015). Eventually, in Santiago's Humanities class, he has his students writing about their own bodies, their own *Coatlicue* status, and in that worksheet he tells them that they themselves, have to make sense and come to terms with their own ugliness and to put themselves into their own context, accept it, make due of it. He encourages his students to start forming their own identities around their true phenotypes, around who they really are and accept that.

[138] For a more thorough discussion of the importance of hands to decolonizing work, especially from within the home, please see Garcia (2014) "Modeling household building sustainability (HBS) with wood, stone and paint: Achieving spatial wellness in a West Walnut household of the San Gabriel Valley, USA" in the *International Journal of Development and Sustainability*. Volume 3. Number 4. pp.865-894. The article explores the building of *spatial wellness* through *household building sustainability* (HBS) and the growing of one's own food. HBS is explained as the negotiation and modification of recycled building materials so to manipulate living space as householders best see it fit for cultivating health and wealth in the home (one's spatial wellness). In addition, Garcia lays out the components of the *household clinic* as: (1) the kitchen, (2) the garden, (3) the altar, and (4) the workshop; tenants operating to aid the cultivation of spatial wellness http://whereareyouquetzalcóatl.com.

Because these explorations require intense introspection and authentic reflection, the clay-work allows for the simultaneous expression of an integrated self that is aware of the interconnection among mindbodyspiritemotion. In this way students can, perhaps—if relevant to them, acknowledge the borderland identities that they embody. The clay-work allows them to reconstruct their own ideas of the body and self, as indicated in SLO four. As he has students read about Anzaldúa's life and her experiences, Santiago creates an opportunity for them to place their own lives, bodies, and contexts in the crossroads "cuz we're all borderlands people; we live in the crossroads" (Garcia, 2015). Santiago provided an insight that is absolutely relevant today, given the results of the recent 2016 presidential election. As of this writing, students are coming to school with increased levels of fear, anxiety, anger, frustration, and outrage. Educators, staff, and administrators are left with the dilemma of reassuring these students and providing adequate services to accommodate their needs. Santiago's words are fitting:

> We're, this is Mexico, but, from a political standpoint, Mexico's over there, and from a historical-social-political standpoint, why people have always made us feel inferior, even though we reside on the other side of the fence we still have been made to, we've still been made out [as] inferior people. Ugly people. *Narcos*. *Feos*. Trouble-makers. *Cholos, Cholas*. You know and what not, so it's a worksheet on coming to terms with your identity.



Name: _____ 1

Community Charter Early High School
Chicano Studies 42: Contemporary Mexican Literature
Professora: Silvia Toscano Villanueva

Gloria Anzaldúa Borderlands Chapter 4
The *Coatlicue* State Writing Exercise: Self-reflection, Narrative Inquiry, & Healing

Some important paragraphs from Chapter 4

The *Coatlicue* State

Coatlicue is one of the powerful images, or "archetypes," that inhabits, or passes through, my psyche. For me, la *Coatlicue* is the consuming internal whirlwind, the symbol of the underground aspects of the psyche. Coatlicue is the mountain, the Earth Mother who conceived all celestial beings out of her cavernous womb. Goddess of birth and death, *Coatlicue* gives and takes away life; she is the incarnation of cosmic processes. [Gloria Anzaldúa]

Coatlicue depicts the contradictory. In her figure, all the symbols important to the religion and philosophy of the Aztecs are integrated. Like Medusa, the Gorgon, she is a symbol of the fusion of opposites: the eagle and the serpent, heaven and the underworld, life and death, mobility and immobility, beauty and horror. [Gloria Anzaldúa]

The *Coatlicue* State Is A Prelude To Crossing
[Borderlands, mind, body, spirit, Earth?]

Voy cagándome de miedo, buscando lugares acuevados. I don't want to know, I don't want to be seen. My resistance, my refusal to know some truth about myself brings on that paralysis, depression—brings on the *Coatlicue* state. At first, I feel exposed and opened to the depth of my dissatisfaction. Then I feel myself closing, hiding, holding myself together rather than allowing myself to fall apart. [Gloria Anzaldúa]

Sweating, with a *headache*, unwilling to communicate, frightened by sudden noises, *estoy asustada*. In the Mexican culture, it is called *susto*, the soul frightened out of the body. The afflicted one is allowed to rest and recuperate, to withdraw into the "underworld" without drawing condemnation. [Gloria Anzaldúa]

Coatlicue image scanned from Wilson G. Turner's "Aztec Design"

In Chapter 4, Gloria Anzaldúa breaks down the *Coatlicue* for us. She describes her iconography, its perceived symbolism, and what the sculpture of this feminist-Mother Earth-female "goddess" meant to her. Anzaldúa describes her own state, the *Coatlicue* state in which she first learned that something was "fundamentally wrong" with her body. She calls her body abnormal… and dealing with her lesbian sexuality at a very young age, she did everything to hide herself, only to be devoured by the Earth Monster *Coatlicue*. **Yet, at the same time she writes that our painful disappointments, and painful experiences, if we can make meaning out of them, they can lead us to more of who we really are.**

I want you all to write about your own *Coatlicue* State, a time when you had to hide your ideas, yourself, your body, or even your own family, either from shame, ridicule, guilt, oppression, self-fear, or fear of not feeling good enough. I want you all to go deep, allow yourself time to think, and write about when you felt devoured by the *Coatlicue* in your own borderlands experience. **Feel free to bury some seeds of thought and change.** This exercise is a self-reflection free writing exercise. There are no correct or incorrect responses, and using "I" is very much appropriate. **Get this done at home and bring it back to class to share with everyone… if you chose too! Worth _____ points!**

Worksheet developed by Santiago Andres Garcia 7/15/2014, Division of Behavioral & Social Sciences, Rio Hondo College, 3600 Workman Mill Road, Whittier CA, 90601. Free to use for educational purposes only.

Figure 5.2. *Coatlicue* Writing Prompt used in Santiago Andres Garcia's Humanities 125 class and modified (with permission) by author for use in PUC high school classroom.

Santiago further elaborated on student feedback that he had received after his students completed the project. He stated that his students (even those students who do not identify as *Raza*) shared with him that is was "really touching" to be in the classroom and to be able to talk about where they come from and those accompanying experiences. Santiago shared that there was no learning goal there other than

to instill some type of good hope, good faith, good energy, I don't know what you call that... the will, a will, my SLO was to instill in them a will, a Huitzilopochtli[139], a will to exercise an agency, that's what I was instilling in them, and whatever it is that they went out to learn about because of that will that I helped instilled in them, then I would have met the SLO but I don't know that because perhaps some of these students I will never get to see again. But my main purpose there was to instill in them a will, so that they can go out there and perhaps learn something or get through life. Sometimes we just need to get through life, not so much pass the class, so...

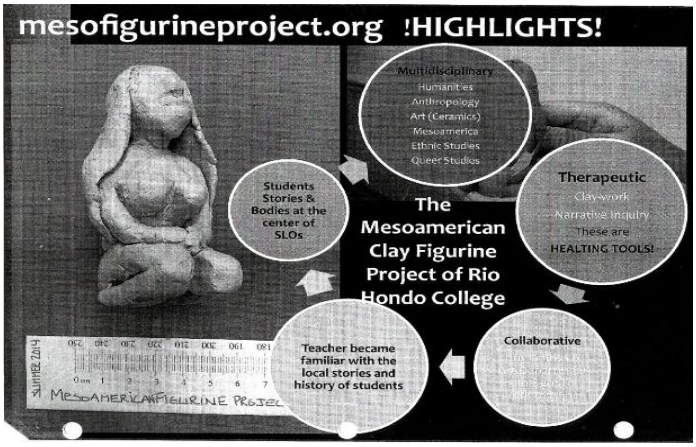


Figure 5.3. Mesoamerican Figurine Project—Pedagogical Model. Provided with permission by Santiago Andres Garcia.

139  *Huitzilopochtli*—the will to act. As we grow in consciousness, we must be willing to act with a revolutionary spirit that is positive, progressive, and creative. He represents the element of Fire. From MAS-Tucson's *The Four Manifestations of Tezcatlipoca* (Images from *The Codex Borgia*) (Díaz et al. 1993) based on MAS Encuentros Tucson Freedom Summer—July 8, 2012 (MAS Encuentros 2012).

***Matlachtli Iuan Yei Xinachtli* (13 Seeds)**

by Andres Mendoza

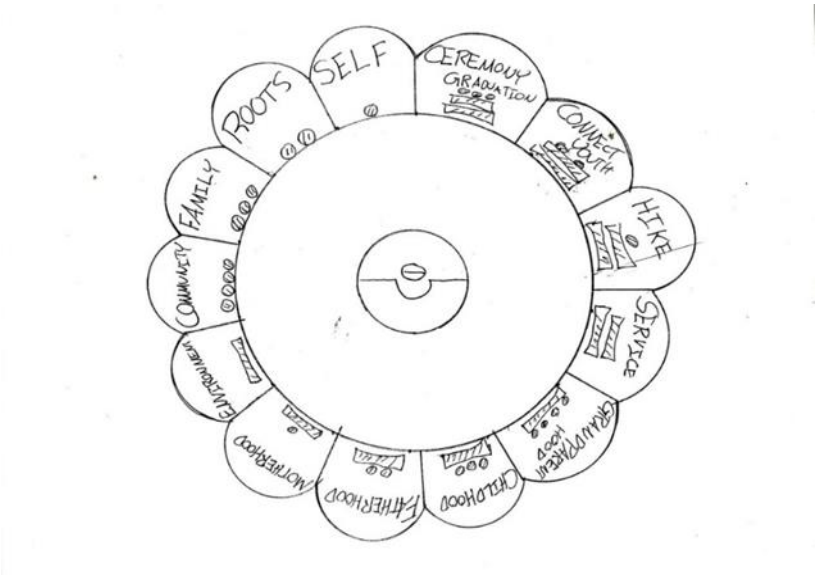


Figure 5.4. Illustration of the 13 Seeds Curriculum by Martin Gallegos. Provided with permission by Andres Mendoza.

Brief Description of Teaching Unit

Matlachtli Iuan Yei Xinachtli is a curriculum rooted deeply in cultural awareness and the advancement of new connections. The title literally means 13 seeds. It represents the 13 steps to this program, the first nine of which take place in the classroom and the last four being optional.

1. CE,	Self
2. OME,	Roots
3. YEI ,	Family
4. NAUI,	Community
5. MAKUILLI,	Environment
6. CHICO CE,	Motherhood
7. CHICO ME,	Fatherhood
8. CHICO YEI,	Childhood
9. CHICO NAHUI,	Grandparenthood
10. MATLACHTL,	Service
11. MATLACHTLI IUAN CE,	Hike
12. MATLACHTLI IUAN OME,	Connect
13. MATLACHTLI IUAN YEI,	Ceremony

The purpose of *Matlachtli Iuan Yei Xinachtli* (13 Seeds) is to provide a basis, a foundation that will help young people or anyone navigate their life in a purposeful way. The goal with this curriculum is to promote self-directed leadership and a sense of understanding on how to maintain a full and healthy life. Andres expressed that the navigation curriculum materialized in 2013 when he had a community center at his house, in Azusa, CA. It came about when he was mostly in conversation, with the co-creator of the curriculum, Martin Gallegos. Andres mentioned that it was a directive conversation "so me and the brother sat down, and I [was] like, look I wanna get this together and he was a really good artist and so I go, well, what is this? And what is that? And so we start asking each other questions and we start trying to clarify what these qualities will help us out with. What is it? What happens?" (Mendoza, 2015). He also stated that they had established and affirmed for themselves that the four directions could be used as foundational base for the first teaching unit. Andres commented that, "[me and Martin] we chopped it up; we were talking about it like, well, what could we give these youngsters to help them understand what that feeling of attraction is and how to convert it and how to use it and not how to abuse it? Cuz once you start abusing that attraction then you start abusing that which you are attracted to" (Mendoza, 2015).

The Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for the first seed, CE

- Facilitate dialogue for a new perspective and a new understanding in regards to personal responsibility, accountability, and self-navigation
- To evaluate four basic values: acknowledgement, trust, language, and gratitude
- To be in dialogue about the decision-making process and how it can have negative and positive effects on their/our lives
- To reflect on past decisions and situations allowing participants to recognize the same signs in their future decisions and situations.

Discussion of Teaching as Healing Practices

The prominence of advocating for totality of personhood (Avila, 1999) is distinct in the curriculum for *Matlachtli Iuan Yei Xinachtli* (13 Seeds) because the first seed (CE) is dedicated to the Self. Two of the learning outcomes, the first and third, ascribed to this seed, focus on dialogue about the decision-making process. This promotes collaboration with and among students who also have to reflect on patterns of behavior that can be attributed to making certain life decisions. Dialogue also suggests that the curriculum promotes listening, with respect, to the cultural beliefs, practices, and values of the students and their respective families and communities (Avila, 1999). The second SLO asks that students evaluate four basic values. Of significance, is that these four basic values are also organized to match with the energies connected to the four sacred directions/regions, which are listed in English and *Nahuatl* below:

Acknowledge-North-*Mictlanpa*

Trust-West-*Cihuatlampa*

Language-South-*Huitzlampa*

Gratitude-East-*Tlahuitzlampa*

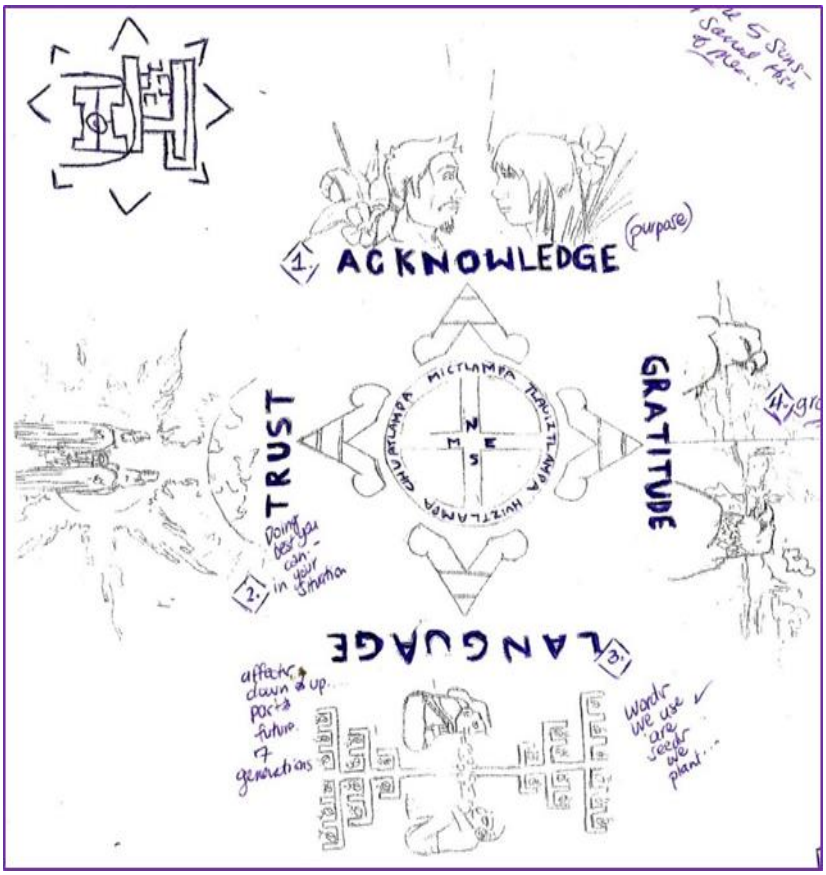


Figure 5.5. Indigenous Method of Knowing. Four Basic Values. Provided with permission by Andres Mendoza. Illustration by Martin Gallegos.

This framework, similar to Santiago's pedagogy, centers an Indigenous epistemology. This method of knowing guides as it centers because the Self is oriented in the middle of the four sacred regions—centered and guided by those energies. Self-navigation is prioritized as essential to the planting of the first seed in this human development approach to learning. Andres explains the rationale behind this Indigenous decolonizing pedagogy:

> Ok, first you see somebody, so you're acknowledging them, right. Your acknowledging somebody's there, right. And the four directions that we teach, the four values is acknowledgement, trust, language, and gratitude, and we're not saying this is the end all, be all. We're just saying, look youngsters, this will help you out, navigate your life. It will just give you a little extra something that will help you make your decisions and be comfortable and be grounded with yourself.

In this praxis, reflections on decisions and situations as well as on generating new perspectives, understandings, and behaviors contribute to the cultivation of critical consciousness as well as critical thinking, which requires accountability to self and others (Avila, 1999).

***Antepasados* Descriptive Unit**

by Maria Figueroa

Brief Description of Teaching Unit

The Antepasados Descriptive Unit was assigned in an English composition community college classroom—one level before freshman composition. Maria explained that the steps involved in the writing process included gathering several photos of an *antepasado/a* (deceased ancestor). Maria encouraged her students to select photos of their deceased loved ones in various settings or of moments captured which represent them, their personality, their interests etc. Then students were to engage in composing an essay 4-5 pages in length that was focused on writing a descriptive portrait (similar to Villaseñor in *Burro Genius: A Memoir*) where they would pay homage to one of their *antepasados* who helped shape their personhood. Maria advised that the person should preferably be someone who was part of the student's family lineage (e.g. a grandparent) but it could also be an iconic figure (e.g. César Chávez, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Dr. Martin Luther King). After completing the essay, students were then required to construct a 3-D *cajita/nicho* (box altar) that visually depicted the importance and prominence of this person. Students were encouraged to creatively construct and decorate their *cajitas* by including symbolic objects representative of this *antepasad/a.* Students were asked to consider the following questions: Ask yourself how this *antepasado/a* would want to be remembered? What did they enjoy eating, or doing? How can you best and most symbolically capture their essence, their persona?

The Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

- Demonstrate an understanding of the use of description as a rhetorical strategy
- Compare the assigned reading with personal experience/ familial history in order to generate ideas for a college-level composition, focused on description as a rhetorical strategy
- Apply the knowledge gained about description as a rhetorical strategy in a creative way that also incorporates the use of aesthetics to honor a loved one who has passed through the medium of a *cajita*
- Analyze the use of relevant symbols to include to represent the *antepasada/o* for the *cajita* project
- Synthesize knowledge gained throughout all aspects of the assignment by organizing a presentation of the assignment to the class

Discussion of Teaching as Healing Practices

Avila's protocol as a *curandera* working in collaboration with those who would seek her for healing work is definitely apparent in Maria's teaching unit. The second learning outcome establishes the importance of connecting personal experience and familial history with the course content. This is in alignment with listening with respect to the cultural perspectives, values, and beliefs (Avila, 1999) of the students. The third and fourth learning outcomes, that describe the requirements of the box altar, invoke collaboration with families, communities and ancestors while also promoting the use of a critical consciousness. Reflecting and deciding upon which particular symbols represent the *antepasado* requires critical thinking in a way that will honor a deceased loved one. Honoring the spirit of the *antepasado* centers an Indigenous epistemology that connects back to ancestral practices in *México* and *CentroAmérica* respectively through *Día de los Muertos* ceremonies. Furthermore, the aesthetic component of envisioning, designing, and creating the *cajita* becomes an opportunity for students to practice mindfulness that is ancestral, healing, and decolonizing. The creation itself can be seen as a form of spiritual expression. Collaboration is encouraged

by having students present their *cajitas* to their classmates, making *ofrendas* of remembrance and love to each other.

Maria shared that,

> I think in fleshing out the description and the *memoria* [memory], and the story-telling nature of who this person was and for many it was like their grandmother, their grandfather, someone was even their brother, you know, that had passed on, a relative that had passed on, they really felt this, like this person came alive for them, and this person came alive for us too, cuz I had them read, to the class, a page or a paragraph that really kind of grasped the sense, the *sentido*, the feeling the spirit of this person and so it fulfilled, so they made these *cajitas*/*nichos* and then we displayed them or exhibited them in the library.

Maria recalled one student, in particular, who gained and provided a healing space from doing this assignment. Maria explained that one could "say the student was at risk quote unquote, like her mom made her go to school because she needed her to be somewhere so that she wouldn't get in trouble" (Figueroa, 2015). She explained that the student didn't really talk to anyone and that

> she always would put her ear phones on during the break, like was disconnected *y media* ... you could tell like *media traviesa*,[140] you know, but she wrote about her brother who had died like two years before and then her whole persona made sense to me, like it made sense why she was and is who she is, you know, and she loved her brother, and she told the most beautiful story about her brother and brought in his picture and to this day I still remember her *nicho* […] it's like one of those things where you're just like *hijole*[141] that you're just like okay I need to take a breather. It's like doing twenty-four *limpias*[142] in one hour and you can't, *eso es mucho*.[143]

[140] Kind of like a brat

[141] Damn! Or Dayum!

[142] Spiritual cleansing or purification

[143] That is a lot.

Guiding from Within: Indigenous Pedagogies that Promote Personal Activism to Heal Historical Traumas

Collectively, the teaching units promote a sense of personal activism whereby documentation of historical trauma is a project for the students. The educators guide their students in exploring intersecting topics and themes, such as history, colonization, racism, and inequality—especially of both ancestral and living Indigenous peoples. The students are assisted in exploring themselves—their bodies—how continued perpetuations of systemic oppression and violence have impacted them on a personal level—inclusive of their familial dynamics. The contributions by the students appear cathartic where they participate in and are encouraged to explore their families and communities—to honor them—to beautify them—even amidst the pain and trauma that they may exist. The assignments foster inquiring, questioning, reflecting, working through, processing, and it is up to the student to decide how far and how deep they would like to go. They can confront the many manifestations of historical traumas while receiving the support, wisdom and guidance from the educators who have also done the same and continue to do so.

CHAPTER 6: Implications and Critical Reflections:

~Sacred Visions for the Future~

Acknowledging the Movement from the Inner to the Outer Realms of Living

Similar to Grande (2004) and Rendón (2009), Cajete (2012) described an important characteristic for educators to have, which is the ability to make a commitment to working from the inside out. For Cajete (2012), "empowerment begins with an INWARD transformation, an In-powerment that emphasizes the internal work that each of us must do to come back to our power" (p. 147). This inner work requires continued reflection and the willingness to be humbled by life's lessons as well as to apply them within new, and oftentimes challenging, contexts. In this way, transformation can occur and according to Cajete, this "carries the potential to lead to greater personal, interpersonal, communal, and political power and enables Indigenous peoples and communities to transform oppressive situations into actions of healing and revitalization" (p. 147).

Throughout my entire research process, I noticed this recurring theme in the literature for Chicana and Chicano Educators as well as those writing from a standpoint that seeks to center Decolonizing Indigenous Pedagogies. I also observed that this was a pattern that was obvious the more I learned about Heidi, Santiago, Maria, Andres, Claudia, and Miguel—the six educators who chose to participate in this study. Acknowledging the movement from the inner to the outer, in these contexts, allows me to describe the implications of this study by referencing three scales of applicability: the individual, interpersonal, and institutional. In this last section, I will elaborate on each, but first, I will provide further context for how I understand each of the scales.

I describe the individual level within the context of personal activism, following Avila's (1999) work as a *curandera* who emphasized that we are our own best healers. Within this context, I recognize Avila's discussion of de-tribalization among Chicanas and Chicanos (as well as those from Central and South America among others) (p. 29). She acknowledged that a collective *susto*[144] had occurred at the onslaught of European colonization as they claimed and renamed the land they called the "New World." This, of course, aligns Avila with the work of Brave Heart (2000), Torres (2003), Duran (2006), and Gonzales (2006; 2012) who discussed intergenerational historical trauma, shame-based behavior, soul-wounding, and internalized oppression as well as Post-Indian Stress Disorder. These theoretical concepts and frameworks name the damage that our ancestors endured and that many of us still carry. At the individual scale, it is important to recognize how each of these concepts applies to us and the people (students) we work with, especially if we are educators.

The interpersonal level, for me, is characterized by the human capacity to collaborate. Within institutional educational settings, this can be achieved in authentic ways if the educator has already begun (and committed) to their own personal activism. If so, this creates the setting in which the educator and the student are in the same position to learn and transform together. The concept of teaching as a healing craft that I previously wrote about (2013) is relevant in this context. Teaching as a healing craft is enacted when educators use their own intuitive capacities that are guided by Indigenous epistemologies to, essentially, craft ways to present material that is typically marginalized or ignored/erased in mainstream classroom settings. Furthermore, these educators engage critical consciousness, encourage

[144] Fright that is traumatic and continues to linger for a period of time—possible for the remainder of a lifetime if not reconciled and healed (which is why *curanderas* and *curanderos* are essential knowledge keepers and cultural practitioners that enact Indigenous epistemologies).

collaboration, and promote healing in a way that is relevant to each student. Ultimately, what this means is that gathering knowledge and wisdom is connected to empowerment of both educator and student, where they can co-partner in the learning process.

The institutional level is supposed to be responsible for ensuring that the entire population of students is served. As this study has emphasized, this has not been and is not the case today for those groups who do not conform to the standardized, normalized, dominating Euro-Western discourse and canon of thought. Educational institutions were not and are not designed for those who question, interrogate, problematize, and challenge the status quo and the normalcy of a racist-colonialist system of learning about indoctrination and cultural annihilation. Nevertheless, as this study has demonstrated, when you have educators that are critically conscious—and who have done the very difficult work of committing to the personal activism of healing colonial injuries—for themselves, families, communities, and students—transformation at interpersonal and institutional levels are possible.

Individual Scale—Personal Activism

The educators highlighted in this study have committed themselves to doing the very intense work of promoting a sense of personal activism whereby they have acknowledged the need to reflect upon and heal their own intergenerational historical traumas—essentially to interrupt the Cycle of Oppression. Doing this has allowed them to then make curricular choices in their respective spaces of learning both within and outside of educational institutions along the Chicana and Chicano Educational Pipeline. A major goal of this study was to examine how the pedagogical decisions of the Chicana and Chicano educators could

be traced to their own participation in and intense study of Indigenous ancestral wisdom traditions. While examining the curricular choices of the educators, it was useful to gain familiarity in their own de-Indigenized histories and those of their families and ancestral homelands but also to hear, firsthand, how they were making conscious choices to not only decolonize but to re-Indigenize.

The study revealed that participation in Indigenous ceremonies facilitated the process of both decolonization and re-Indigenization simultaneously. Furthermore, for each educator, participation in Indigenous ceremonies significantly impacted their pedagogical practice and curriculum design in several ways. All of the participants, throughout the interview process, expressed that they have either actively engaged, continue to engage, or have actively witnessed and supported Indigenous ceremonial practices, including *Danza Azteca* Ceremonies, Sun Dance Ceremonies, Sweat Lodge Ceremonies (*Temazka*l and/or *Inipi*), Spiritual/Ceremonial Running, Talking/Healing Circles, Consuming and/or Preparing Sacred/Ceremonial Foods, Receiving Origin Stories, Meditating at Sacred Sites, Honoring Dreams as Sacred Sights/Sites.

Prioritization of these practices (throughout various stages of their lives) has undeniably shaped epistemological standpoints, which ultimately influences pedagogical practices. For instance, participating in Sweat Lodge Ceremonies, for Claudia, is specifically attributed with the development and refinement of the skill of "active listening" as well as fostering deep levels of commitment where one cannot "just run away." This level of commitment is also described as grounding, holding the capacity to remind the participants about "what is important," as stated by Andres. A key finding of this study is that a highly sophisticated ability to intuit and discern while also trusting oneself originates in the process of connecting

to spirt, which is facilitating by engaging in Indigenous ceremonial practices. One implication of this is that the educators in this study are exemplars of what is possible. Considering these factors can impact how administrators begin to discuss who is qualified to apply for and receive equity funding that is supposed to focus on "closing the achievement gap" for underrepresented students. Likewise, human resources personnel and hiring committees can begin to think of alternative questions to ask of potential hires to allow them to demonstrate their critical capacity for engaging in multiple epistemologies and not just the ones sanctioned as valid, legitimate, objective, rational, and acceptable under a Euro-western dominant-discourse.

Interpersonal Scale—Co-creating Transformative Learning Spaces of Deep Reflection and Authentic Collaboration

The educators who have more actively and consistently engaged in Indigenous ceremonial practices—under the guidance of Elders—have developed an integrated spiritual identity that is characterized by a type of intuition that they trust, that is guided—and that is informed. A result of this deep connection to self and spirit is an intensified creative capacity to engage students in holistic and meaningful teaching strategies that prioritize integrated human beings acting in right relation with themselves and the beings (seen and unseen) around them.

The educators sustain Indigenous epistemologies that are guided by intuitive aesthetic sensibilities. They have continued to cultivate these gifts through articulations of their ceremonial discourse through their pedagogical practice. Their decolonizing efforts have been part of "an inward and outward looking process—a process of re-enchantment, of ensoulment, that is both deeply spiritual and sincerely mindful" (Grande, p.57).Their efforts

support the goal of revitalizing Indigenous Education, which is about "coming back to our power" (Cajete).

One of the most significant findings of this study was that even indirect participation—by way of engaged observation of Indigenous ceremonial practice(s)—still had a significant impact on shaping identity—as the following response offered by Miguel confirms: "those experiences that I have been a part of but not participated directly (in this case, honoring of the sacred regions/directions by *Danzantes*) they have been shaping who I am and there's an energy that I can't describe […] centered around unmediated connection to everybody that was there but in a weird way. I think what I was feeling was a connection with myself, of who I am, as a human being" (Zavala, 2015).

What I seek to emphasize in this study is that these deep connections to self, spirit, and, as an extension, community (including students) make these educators unique and worthy of attention. In a reciprocal way, the life, inspiration, and energy that the educators receive in ceremony is redistributed in moment to moment connections that are carried into their everyday interactions. Again, these details are necessary to emphasize because they illustrate the steadfast resiliency that has been built within the ancestral lineage of the educators (and which they represent) even as they have had to confront the unrelenting efforts by colonialists, imperialists, and Corporate America to deter Indigenous people away from self, from ceremony, from Elders, and from walking with authentic true purpose.

The identity formations of the educators were impacted by their lack of power within the systems that maintain the Cycle of Oppression as Pizarro (2001) has suggested. The educators acquired the analytical capacity to recognize this disempowerment because of their

lived experiences—witnessing the intersection between colonialism and racism within their own families and communities—not to mention in their lives as working professionals. They also cultivated or had cultivated in them—a cognitive capacity—characterized by creativity, which took the form of decolonization and ultimately a re-Indigenization, a re-ceremonialization in which they have sought to co-partner with their students, families, communities. "Thus, while some of the most poignant revelations within the discourse on post-colonial identity have advanced contemporary thought and understanding of the social phenomena at play in constructing 'Chicana/o' they have not suggested, in any thorough fashion, how we might dissect these forces to understand their local essence and most importantly use that understanding to assist Chicana/o communities" (Pizarro; p. 1-2; np).

Each of the educators in this study has a local essence that goes back seven generations and will go forward seven generations. They are guided daily—by principles of respect, reciprocity, and relationship as well as the Philosophy of the Seven Generations, where every day is a ceremony—an opportunity to walk in balance and in a good way with all beings both seen and unseen. They have more than academic content or pedagogical skills to share; they have wisdom about living—about living in co-creation with their ancestral, Indigenous memories to offer. They should be recognized, acknowledged, and honored by being provided with support and space to share what they have taken a lifetime to learn. Although they are not yet Elders, they are certainly on the path to being named so by their respective communities.

Because of the configuration of the social factors in which they were born and had to respond to, they have demonstrated what it is like to refine critical and cognitive capacities by centering Indigenous epistemologies and honoring the ceremonies that come with that

consciousness. This is the singular factor that has most impacted their pedagogical praxis as well, but it has also accumulated over time. The educators have lived the four themes that were highlighted in Chapter 2 that focused on Decolonizing Indigenous Pedagogies:

- Critical analysis of educational experiences based in colonialist practices
- Recognition of the impact of colonialist educational practices on spiritual identity formations
- Decolonizing neural networks by regenerating Indigenous epistemologies by re-rooting Indigenous metaphors
- Engaging in a relational teaching-healing-learning experience

This was actually the process of how their ethnic identity developed over time—manifesting what I term a Chicana and Chicano Decolonizing Indigenous Epistemology. The findings of this dissertation project directly respond to the urgency of Pizarro's (2001) request to explore identity with other Chicana/o communities considering the connections between identity formation and the overall experiences and outcomes of Chicanas/os. His work helps to set the intentions for future analyses to move towards interventions that can reshape identities and empower Chicanas/os. Pizarro (2001) insisted that it would require a continued dedication to "innovative, qualitative explorations of identity to pursue these leads and uncover findings that are not simply rich, but also laced with transformative possibilities" (p. 17). It is my hope that this study meets these expectations. Because the educators in this study walk in the sacred power of their own medicine, they have acknowledged their gifts to help reshape identities and empower those they are entrusted to work with. Individuals, families, communities, and societies can be transformed as a result.

From a Chicana and Chicano Decolonizing Indigenous Epistemology emerges a Chicana and Chicano Decolonizing Indigenous Pedagogy that is focused on addressing spiritual

identity as an integral part of a critically conscious curriculum. Some of the major guiding principles of this curriculum include:

- Understanding historical trauma is intergenerational (Brave Heart, 2000)
- Identifying intergenerational historical trauma as the cause of soul wounding (Duran, 2006)
- Recognizing that soul wounding is cumulative and worsens over time, resulting in internalized oppression (self-hatred) (Gonzales, 2006; 2012)
- Questioning how internalized oppression leads to self-neglect and a feeling of being dislocated (*dislocado*)—uprooted without a place or home (MarTinez, 2013)
- Connecting the ways in which being *dislocado* is directly related to the colonialist-racist-imperialist-capitalist-sexist factors that have resulted in de-Indigenization and de-ceremonialization of Indigenous People across countries and continents (including Chicanas and Chicanos)
- Appreciating that exposure to this curricular content requires a commitment to honoring relationships not only with the educators facilitating the learning process but also with ancestors and descendants who assist with the creativity to establish a new decolonial mindset

Although the literature I reviewed provided most of the terms listed in this pedagogical framework, the qualitative research I conducted with the six educators prove that they each enact these guiding principles in their curricular and pedagogical selections. And that this is primarily due to their Indigenous epistemologies, which have been shaped by their ceremonial discourse. This pedagogical framework is emerging in a most timely manner as it coincides with a political climate that is overtly racist in ways that are resonant of the logos that supposedly made "America Great"—land theft, genocide, slavery, servitude, brutality, injustice, and forced assimilation. Rodríguez reminds us that this is nothing new but rather has been in the making for five-hundred plus years (2011; 2016). We were already receiving a modern-day glimpse of this racist-colonialist political climate a few years back in the state of Arizona.

Institutional Scale—Ethnic Studies NOW!

On January 10, 2012 the Governing Board of the Tucson Unified School District made the decision to dismantle Mexican American Studies (MAS) in Tucson, Arizona. Soon after, the Ethnic Studies Movement emerged (or popped up) in California and has been gaining momentum ever since.[145] Major school districts across the state have passed an Ethnic Studies requirement for graduation, including El Rancho Unified, Los Angeles Unified, San Francisco Unified, Montebello Unified, Sacramento Unified, San Diego Unified, Coachella Valley Unified and Oakland Unified. At the time of this writing, new campaigns have been starting in Santa Ana Unified, Garden Grove Unified, Anaheim Unified, as well as in Santa Barbara and Ventura counties. Additionally, at the California State Legislature, an Ethnic Studies bill (AB 101) was passed in 2015 but vetoed by Governor Brown.

The veto by Governor Brown has only served as a catalyst to continue building the Ethnic Studies Movement in California.[146] The California Department of Education estimates

[145] The Xican@ Pop Up book began as a movement to support the MAS department in Arizona, to defend a highly effective and inspirational Mexican American Studies program in high schools. XPUB joined efforts in Los Angeles, statewide and nationally to demand Ethnic Studies Now. According to Serna and JohnAvalos, the first to make the prototypes of the books, "The Xican@ Pop-Up book can be made by ANYONE in solidarity with the movement. This is a movement for DE-COLONIZING ALL minds, hearts, and bodies." Please visit https://www.facebook.com/pages/Xicanao-Pop-Up-Book-Movement/565796656834843.

[146] Research on existing Ethnic Studies programs highlights positive outcomes for Students of Color, who often under-perform in school or experience low graduation rates, in terms of academic achievement and academic engagement (see Sleeter, 2011; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2014). These studies have found that Ethnic Studies programs can lead to student achievement, even among those most at-risk (Cabrera et al., 2014; Cammarota & Romero, 2009; Mathew & Smith, 1994). What scholars are finding and educators are currently promoting is how making content culturally relevant leads to increased engagement and performance (Brozo & Valerio, 1996; de los Riós, López, & Morrell, 2014; Rickford, 2001). This information and all citations was provided in an email blast sent

that there is a fifty-three (53%) percent "Hispanic" or "Latino" student population enrolled in California public K-12 schools.[147] Given this large number of students, whose origins primarily stem from what is now referred to as Mexico and Central America, this marks an unprecedented moment in Chicana and Chicano educational history. There is tremendous potential to promote Chicana and Chicano Studies curricula as an integral part of the Ethnic Studies A-G high school requirement. Important to note is that the Ethnic Studies Movement is focused on delineating fundamental tenets that are representative of the legacy, language, authenticity, and transformative potential of the field (Ethnic Studies Now).

The Ethnic Studies Now Committee on Curricular Integrity offered feedback to the Instructional Quality Commission, an advisory body for the California State Board of Education. The feedback provided key academic language and concepts in Ethnic Studies that included the following four scales:

1. Indigeneity/Roots
2. Colonization/Dehumanizaton
3. Hegemony
4. Regeneration/Transformation/Social Justice

The four scales broadly identify areas that require further clarification and elaboration according to the Ethnic Studies Now Committee on Curricular Integrity. Within these scales, the committee made recommendations that called for inclusion of "concepts, such as indigeneity, colonialism, cultural hegemony, and self-determination, as they have occurred

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out by the Ethnic Studies Now coalition in February 2016. Also, please see http://www.ethnicstudiesnow.com/research for further links to some of these and other research sources.

[147] Hispanic and Latino are problematic terms because 1.) They were invented by entities within the United States government, such as the Census Bureau, which placed the term "Hispanic" on the 1970 census; this was under the Nixon Administration. 2.) The terms perpetuate the de-Indigenization of *Raza* populations.

throughout history and today" (Ethnic Studies Now! Listserve, February, 2016). They also suggested that a "reflection of instructors and students' own personal histories should be considerate of how the concepts of indigeneity, colonialism, cultural hegemony, and community cultural wealth, relate to their own ancestral legacies as historically situated human beings"(Ethnic Studies Now! Listserve, February, 2016). Another recommendation insisted that in "studying various ethnic groups, the Indigenous peoples of any area under academic investigation and of any land where a course is taking place (e.g. Miwok in Sacramento, Chumash in Santa Barbara, Kumeyaay in San Diego), are respectfully acknowledged as the original peoples of the community" (Ethnic Studies Now! Listserve, February, 2016).

The focus of this dissertation project, which emphasizes decolonizing pedagogical practices by Chicana and Chicano Indigenous-identified educators, aligns with this current educational movement that is even more urgently needed, given the current political climate of the impending Trump presidency. A key implication of this project is that the educators highlighted in this study can be of tremendous value to the Ethnic Studies Now! movement in California, especially with regard to the four scales listed above and further described below. The educators (and those who are similar to them) are valuable resources to provide future preparation for educators throughout the nation because their pedagogical practices have been in place for decades, when all are combined. Although higher education institutions continue limiting access to underrepresented populations, they do have the responsibility to serve those who are already there. With the current push for equitable learning conditions and the funding opportunities somewhat available to ensure that significant changes are made, administrators should realize how effectively prepared

potential candidates may be to cross disciplinary boundaries in ways that are academically rigorous and educationally compassionate. The six participants traverse multiple disciplines each semester because Indigenous epistemologies begin with interconnectedness as a starting point. Holistic teaching is also transdisciplinary by default—encompassing knowledge of the mindbodyemotionspirit and all of the factors that may affect the various aspects and the entirety of a being all at once.

This study seeks to contribute to the Ethnic Studies Movement, specifically by providing clear and accessible guiding principles that will be useful to not only the documentation but also the enduring continuation of a Chicana and Chicano Decolonizing Indigenous Pedagogical Framework relevant among all academic levels, including but not limited to K-16.

Steps toward a Chicana and Chicano

Decolonizing Indigenous Pedagogical Framework

1. Indigenous epistemologies lead to development of
2. Decolonizing pedagogies that promote
3. Re-Indigenization, which helps facilitate
4. Healing whereby classroom spaces become potential sites for holistic healing praxis

Our youth and future generations deserve to be guided in ways that honor them and their ancestral origins, including their accumulated traumas. They are deserving of healing practices that will restore their wholeness and humanity—as they are—with acceptance, empathy, and love. Educational institutions do not set these intentions—only individual educators do—as this study demonstrates. What does our future look like if we continue, for another 40-50 years, to allow institutions to shape our futures? The educators highlighted in

this study hold invaluable and immeasurable resources to move to an empowered methodology that can help guide Chicanas and Chicanos, by their own reclamation, to revalue those things that are still existing in their communities (from *Grandfather, how do I learn?*) The results of this research has the potential to set the foundation for a framework that can help prepare for the ongoing injustices of the world [which call upon] educators-as students-as activists to work together in the common project of decolonization—to do so requires courage, humility, and love (Muna cited in Grande, p. 175).

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