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Grounding Emerging Scholarship on Queer/Trans*
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Centering the “T”: Envisioning a Trans Jotería Pedagogy

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Abstract

In this piece, the author reflects on his Trans Chicanx identity and how his embodiment shapes his teaching and pedagogy. The author begins with a spoken word piece that captures his journey to his own *trans-conocimiento*. Then the author looks to the foundational work of Chicana/Latina Feminist pedagogies and transpedagogies to envision a trans jotería pedagogy that centers trans migrants—and trans women and people of color—that is grounded in disruption and vulnerability through the unsettling of borders and binaries tied to systems of power. In doing so, the author reflects on his trans jotería praxis in the classroom and through his podcast *Anzaldúing It*. The author concludes with looking to the tensions that arise when disruptions of systems of power are central to teaching and pedagogy and highlights the vulnerability necessary of both teacher and student to embark on consciousness raising and healing exchange.

Keywords: Jotería, pedagogy, trans-conocimiento

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Dear Mamá,¹

*When I was 8, as we laid in bed I said “mom, no me siento como yo.”
You laughed at me and said, “qué quieres decir con eso?”
I didn’t know then what I meant, but maybe I can better articulate now what I mean.*

*No me siento como...
No me siento como la hija que querías tener.
I’m not the daughter you expected
the one you dreamt of after bearing two sons and
taking one more shot at a girl.*

*I came
I came in the body you and dad wanted.
But that didn't keep him here.
He left when I was one,
so you did what you could to raise us three.*

*You struggled with depression and taking meds,
Because at 6 you had to be a mother to your brothers,
and at 16 you had to leave your home in Yucatan to come to LA
because of the violence you experienced from grandpa and dad.
And though you couldn’t be all there emotionally, you’ve always been my mayan queen.*

*You were always committed,
a poor migrant single mother on welfare and SSI, tell me how ya’ did it.
I finally understand for you ma’ - it ain’t easy trying to raise me.*

We were so close until I was about 11,

¹ This spoken word piece was inspired by Tupac’s song “Dear Momma.”

I found safety and comfort in you.

We shared a bed until 12 because we couldn't afford more than one bedroom.

I could never be with my brothers because I was too young a girl.

When I was old enough you tried to teach me to cook because you said "necesitas aprender para tu esposo."

I protested, because I never wanted un esposo!

*The first time my heart broke at 16, I couldn't tell you because
a woman did it to me,
so I turned to drugs to mother me.*

*I didn't know how you'd take it,
you did everything to comfort me.*

*But I learned early on that as the youngest female,
"Me veia mas bonita calladita."*

At 17, drugs gave me the courage and the voice to not give a fuck!

I told you that I was bisexual,

and you told me,

"Que hicie mal, did I not love you enough?"

You loved me in the way that you could

but not in the way that this baby queer needed you to.

All I could do is snap at you and say,

"I'm normal - I don't have a disease!"

For so long, dressed in drag,

performing femininity so that you,

my brothers, and everyone else could accept me.

The dresses, the make-up, the long hair

*going on as many diets as I could to be a size two...
My body was never mine. It was for you, for him, for them.*

*At 18, went away 'cause I couldn't stand it anymore,
so college became my only escape.*

At 19, I stopped looking to drugs and started my spiritual journey practicing and chanting Nam-myoho-rence-kyo.

It grounded me, it held me, and it embraced every part of me.

Soon after, the four of us started practicing together and through it we've been able to heal the pain.

But it doesn't stop there.

The pain is so deep!

It's taken years for it to come up to the surface.

For so long anyone who got close I would push away, because I still wasn't me.

I hated my body

I was too afraid for someone to see, to really see me

I couldn't see myself.

I got into relationships that would end

that would be filled with the emotional abuse and neglect I was used to.

I learned to push intimacy away just like you did after dad.

I always knew you were strong

but I've come to learn of how afraid you are of sharing yourself too

and I don't want that for myself.

It wasn't until I was 26 and going through yet another emotionally abusive breakup that I said, "I can't keep living this way!"

*Hurting myself
looking to others to validate me
to validate my body and love me.
Nobody can do that for me!
And I can't do that for you.*

*I met Bamby and the TransLatin@ Coalition.
Through them, I started to find myself, through my work I've started to find myself.
Through the beautiful trans and genderqueer people of color I've been surrounded by,
the universe was telling me to open my eyes
to see the mirror of myself: it gave me permission.*

*So at 27, I cut off my long hair. I never imagined I would.
It was never a thought but I knew that I needed to do it for me.
You liked it, you didn't go away.
Even as I started dressing more masculine - I still feel your love.
Even though you may not understand, you don't let me see.*

*You've seen me go through so many changes,
and you've come to understand my queerness and you even love my partner - and accept us as
we are.
My favorite times are when we come and chant and pray together.
You support my work, and even when I think you won't understand, what the hell I'm doing in a
PhD, you let me teach you about transphobia and queerphobia.*

*You tell other señoras there's nothing wrong with being a queer, because your daughter is a
Lesbiana and she's at UCLA getting her PhD.*

*But here we are again, this time I don't have the drugs to tell you,
I only have my mind, body, spirit and my prayer to guide me.
But I need to tell you again, I'm not the daughter you once thought you had.*

I'm not the lesbiana you've come to know.

The reality is I'm so confused with who I am, y lo que soy.

Last year you told me you were shopping at TJ Maxx next to a transwoman, and you asked me, “Te sientes como niño?”

Again, I snapped, because I was too scared. I didn't know. I still don't. So I said “NO!”

Ashamed.

So I shoved it back down.

But here I am - I haven't told you yet, but part of the reason I sound ronca all the time is because in December I started taking Testosterone.

So it's been over two months, and I'm re-learning how to use my voice, re-learning my power, learning to live in my body.

My doctor at UCLA asked me if I wanted to freeze my eggs,

'cause insurance can cover part of it.

I didn't know what to say.

Always thought I'd carry, but that was before - when my body was Yours – his, theirs. Taking T or having a baby?

Shit, I don't know.

But now my body is becoming mine. I'm also thinking of having top surgery. I haven't decided but I know these breasts were never mine.

They never felt like my own.

Maybe if I do decide I can still carry in my queer ass body. But who's to know.

Now at 29, I'm finding it a lot harder to become the woman you expected of me.

I'm at a crossroad, and I'm learning that to take autonomy of my body I have to cast off the expectations you had, he had, and they've had of me.

The expectations I internalized as my own.

I get to take my body back and make it my own.

I know and trust that no matter what, you and my brothers will always love me.

I love you,

Jack

I have never shared this spoken word letter with my mother or brothers. I shared this poem with close friends and many strangers at an event hosted by California Latinas for Reproductive Justice (CLRJ) called, “Healing our Hearts: A Night of Latina/x Storytelling” in early 2018. The act of writing the pain I was experiencing during my transition was healing for me. While most storytellers were cisgender, I was one of few gender queer individuals who had the mic that night. While I had been very “out” about being a lesbian for over 15 years, this night of storytelling was also one of the first times I “came out” publicly about my Trans identity. For months, I had experienced fear, paralysis, numbness, and denial at the thought of my own Trans identity. But the act of being vulnerable, through writing and performing my spoken word piece, created a bridge toward my own healing. This spoken word piece also encapsulates my path of *conocimiento* (Anzaldúa, 2002), or awakening, and the beginning of my path to greater self-actualization and acceptance. I choose to open this reflection with being vulnerable and conveying my trans narrative and *Jotería-historia*² (Tijerina Revilla & Santillana, 2014) to position myself and demonstrate that there is a direct connection between who I am as an individual, what I have been through, and how that shapes who I am as an educator and scholar. As I reflect on why I teach the way that I do as a Transgender Chicanx educator, I want to highlight how both vulnerability and disruption are key aspects of my pedagogical practice.

As I think through the role the body and embodiment play in both teaching and pedagogy, I draw on the foundational work of Chicana/Latina Feminist pedagogies and the

² Tijerina Revilla and Santillana’s (2014) *Jota-historia, Joto-historia, Jotería-historias* in the tradition of Critical Race Theory to serve as “counterstories,” which are told from the perspective of marginalized people. In sharing one’s queerstories or *Jotería-historia*, it demonstrates how an individual’s story informs their activist and academic community of queer Latina/os and Chicana/os.

growing field of Jotería pedagogy and Transpedagogies. In doing so, I also imagine a Trans Jotería pedagogy that centers vulnerability and disruption grounded in a trans of color analytic.

Defining Chicana/Latina Feminist and Jotería Pedagogies

Delgado Bernal (2020) asserts that traditional understandings of pedagogy are limited and do not account or include “embodied ways of teaching and learning, political and ideological aspects of teaching and learning, and pedagogical practices that take place in intimate, multiple, and intersecting informal spaces” (p. 161). Chicana/Latina Feminist pedagogies, or what Delgado Bernal calls “Feminista pedagogies,” have drawn heavily on the writings of Gloria Anzaldúa, Audre Lorde, Chela Sandoval, and Cherríe Moraga, among other U.S. women of color, to highlight coalitional relations and to think through the intersectional and multidimensional problems of teaching, learning, and schooling (Cruz, 2019; Delgado Bernal, 2020).

Building on Feminista pedagogies, Alvarez (2014) theorizes a Jotería pedagogy by stating that it:

looks at the role of sexuality and desire . . . sexuality is central and not additive to the study of migration, immigration, and the borderlands. Jotería pedagogy focuses on the heterogeneous lives and lived experiences of jotería but also on the erasures and omissions of queer bodies of color. Attentive to homophobia, transphobia, anti-immigrant sentiment, ableism, and other forms of institutional and discursive violence, jotería pedagogy is theory and praxis that connects the global, the local, and the individual. (pp. 217–218)

This pedagogy is both challenging and transformative, and Alvarez asserts that educators must be willing to be vulnerable and share their own story/themselves with students. In practicing this type of pedagogy, educators address intersectionality, make room for diverse ideas and perspectives, and validate the emotional lives of students. Furthermore, educators create non-hierarchical, critical spaces for both students and teachers to learn, and educators become healers and bridge builders between different worlds.

Two concepts from Chicana Feminism in particular have contributed to the development of Feminista pedagogies: Cherríe Moraga’s (2002) “theory in the flesh,” and Gloria Anzaldúa’s (2002) “*conocimiento*.” “Theory in the flesh” refers to how “the physical realities of our lives—our skin color, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longing—all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity” (Moraga, 2002, p. 21). In this way, theory in the flesh

functions as an examination of the body in pain that allows us to theorize from that pain. Cruz (2001) elaborates on racialized, gendered, and sexed embodiment in her conceptualization of the “brown body,” which she describes as “a pedagogical devise, a location of recentering and recontextualizing the self and the stories that emanate from that self” (p. 668). Thus, while Chicanas/Latinas are a heterogenous group, the body serves as a place from which knowledge is created and learning and teaching take place.

While embodiment is essential, consciousness and healing are also essential to Feminista pedagogies. Anzaldúa’s (2002) concept of *conocimiento* is also tied to theory in the flesh and knowledge production from the mind, body, spirit. In terms of *conocimiento*, Anzaldúa (2002) offers seven stages of *conocimiento* which include: (a) El Arrebato, (b) Nephantla, (c) Coatlicue State, (d) The Call, (e) Putting Coyolxauhqui Back Together, (f) The Blow Up, and (g) Spiritual Activism (Cueva, 2013). While the stages do not happen in a linear or chronological order, they are part of the process of consciousness awakening and consciousness raising. Anzaldúa teaches us that going through this process is necessary for inner transformation and is necessary to contribute to social change and collective consciousness raising. Through doing the “inner work” of healing, we engage in “public acts” which take the form of “writing, art-making, dancing, healing, teaching, meditation, and spiritual activism . . . the body, too, is a form as well as a site of creativity” (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 542). *Conocimiento* becomes a motivating force that pushes one to use newly gained knowledge to push one’s culture and communities forward to “create new paradigms, new narratives” (p. 558).

Informed by Feminista pedagogies, story-telling becomes central to my pedagogy. The spoken word poem that opened this article serves as an example of my own path through my trans-*conocimiento*. In coming to awaken to my own queer and then trans identity, the poem became a way for me to process my trauma around my racialized trans gender identity and my own internalization of cis-heteronormativity. Thus, in writing and performing the poem, it becomes a public act of sharing a new narrative of my trans Chicaxx subjectivity of dealing with familia, cultura, patriarchy, reproductive justice, and my autonomy. Sharing this in such a public way, I write and perform my body and self into existence as a body that defies many boundaries. Further, my awakening creates a ripple of awakening for those who are exposed to it.

Transpedagogies and Transformational Pedagogies³

With the growth and institutionalization of Trans Studies in higher education, the experiences of trans identities and experiences in education has been minimal (Nicolazzo, Marine, & Galarte, 2015). In 2015, *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* published a special issue titled “Trans*formational Pedagogies,” to explore and understand issues of schooling, learning, and pedagogy to address the significant gap in the field. In the introduction, Nicolazzo et al. (2015) argue that spaces of formal education foster conformity and serve to regulate students rather than radicalize them. The authors state that regulation and conformity that takes place in formal education does so through the concept of genderism. Genderism, as defined by Hill (2003), is “the notion that gender is an important basis by which to judge people and that nonbinary genders are anomalies” (p. 119). In this way, genderism, or this assumption that the gender binary of male and female is inherent, regulates the lives and experiences of trans people within educational contexts and mediates how they move through such institutional spaces (Nicolazzo et al., 2015). They add that the way in which bodies are regulated and surveilled in educational contexts varies and is subject to one’s gender, race, class, sexuality, dis/ability, religion, and that further dictates who can enter, navigate, and succeed in education. Furthermore, Grant et al. (2011) found that trans people, especially trans people of color, experience discrimination at every level in employment, housing, healthcare, and financial security and further face decreased life chances. Thus, entrance and retention in educational structures can be inaccessible altogether and once inside educational contexts can be increasingly dangerous, risky, and alienating to trans people (Nicolazzo et al., 2014; Rankin et al., 2010).

Nicolazzo et. al (2015), note that the special issue explores how education can be a “practice of freedom” (Freire, 2000; hooks, 2014) through the ways that educational processes challenge oppressive aspects of the binary gender system (Nicolazzo et al., 2015). While they do not define what a transpedagogy is outright, Galarte (2014a) has defined what a pedagogical perspective in Trans Studies should look like:

³ Transpedagogies was first termed by Muñoz and Kaeh (2008). Galarte (2014a, 2014b) makes use of the terms transpedagogies. Then on the special issue on Trans*formational Pedagogies, there is a shift to using either Transpedagogies or Transformational pedagogies.

A pedagogical perspective on transgender phenomena can also help unsettle historically and contextually specific knowledge(s) that shape understandings of normative gender. Transpedagogies should offer students the tools they need to participate in the political and economic power structures that shape the boundaries of gender categories, with the goal of changing those structures in ways that create greater freedom. In a transpedagogical approach, processes of learning become political mechanisms through which identities can be shaped and desires mobilized and through which the experience of bodily materiality and everyday life can take form and acquire meaning. (p. 146)

Additionally, Galarte (2014a) notes that transpedagogies should challenge the production of social hierarchies, identities, and ideologies across local and national boundaries. In this way, transpedagogies should critique the ways in which gender embodiment is produced as a form of cultural production and knowledge. Similar to Cruz's (2001) assertion of centering the brown body as a pedagogical source, Galarte (2014a) emphasizes that a crucial transpedagogy centers the transgender body as a site of knowledge production. Doing so "creates new opportunities for teaching and learning by working to understand how transfolk critically understand their places in the world and tactically maneuver through it (i.e., how they negotiate relations of power, privileged subordination) as well as how they actively participate in the transformation of their world(s)" (Galarte, 2014a, p. 147). He maintains that engaging in this type of transpedagogy is radical as it has the potential to critique and transform how power and authority construct and organize knowledge.

Transmasculine Teachers in the Classroom

Last, I draw on Prosser (1998) and Platero and Harsin Drager (2015) who discuss the experience of being transmasculine teachers in the classroom. In *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality*, Prosser focuses on the autobiographical accounts written by transsexual people⁴ to show that they have a different experience of embodiment than non-transsexuals. One of his arguments is that trans individuals use narrative to literally "compose" a self—through a "body narrative" Prosser says is "the story the transsexual weaves around the body in order that his body may be 'read'" (p. 101). His introduction chapter illustrates his

⁴ He uses the term transsexual to refer to transgender individuals who have gone through medical transition.

own personal narrative of his medical transition from female to male during the first month of transition while he was teaching an undergraduate class.

Prosser (1998) reflects on the confusion this caused his students and himself, especially as he did not address any part of his transition to the class:

For the entire month my poor students remarkably, collectively, assiduously, and awkwardly avoided referring to me with a pronoun or a gendered title . . . The group’s uncertainty on how to read me earned my immediate sympathy. Yet in no way did I seek to resolve its predicament. I felt unable, too caught up in my own predicament, the circumstances of teaching at this most transitional point in my transition . . . to name oneself transsexual is to own precisely to being gender displaced, to being a subject in transition, moving beyond or in between sexual difference. So, I left them uncomfortably (all of us horribly uncomfortable) leaving me to my ambivalence; and as the class progressed, this not attributing me with a gender, in my experience, became more and more glaring—a kind of deafening unspoken. In this gendered nonzone, I felt too embodied (only body) yet also disembodied: for what on earth did I embody? Not surprisingly, I was massively relieved once the course was over, and I sensed students felt similarly. (pp. 1–2)

Prosser’s choice not to disclose the physical changes that were happening were part of his own process in navigating his own transition. While Prosser was not writing his narrative to bring insight to his pedagogy, the unspoken changes caused a clear disruption in his class and left him vulnerable as a gendered other in his class. However, it seems contradictory to his argument that he would not share his body narrative with students in order for the class to “read” him as he would like to be read.

Like Prosser (1998), I also went through the initial stages of my medical and social transition to look more masculine while teaching both as a teaching assistant and as I began my tenure-track position in fall 2019. Yet, transitioning some two decades after Prosser, my teaching and how I share with students has been shaped by my training in Chicana Studies and my understanding of U.S. women of color, Feminista, and *jotería* pedagogues, who theorize from their trauma and pain. In this way, naming the parts of myself that make me vulnerable and exposing and shedding light on my transition as well as other parts of my intersectional identity creates disruptions within an academic system that is solely invested in intellectual extraction

and production. Vulnerability is essential in building rapport and trust with students in the classroom, bridging, healing, and it becomes a reciprocal process that I model for students when I share parts of my autobiography and through what I teach.

Furthermore, Platero and Harsin Drager (2015), who are both trans teachers in Spain, agree that just being trans and being a teacher/professor is not enough to engage in a transformative pedagogy. They do agree that just announcing themselves as trans can create ruptures in the room and may help with student prejudice by challenging their transphobia and stereotypes. Platero and Harsin Drager state that ultimately a transformational pedagogy that is grounded in freedom is about “disrupting notions of how the teaching–learning relationship takes place through fostering curiosity, providing students with skills for critical thought and inquiry,” and “showing the intersectional connections between ableism, sexism, classism, and other inequalities that are present in our society. It involves addressing different ways to express gender identity, as well as presenting heterogeneous representations of trans lives that are raced, classed, and embodied differently” (pp. 447–449). Building on the work of Platero and Harsin Drager, I continue the discussion of what I see as trans pedagogy grounded in a feminista and *jotería* approach.

Envisioning a Trans *Jotería* Pedagogy

Trans *jotería* pedagogy is an intersectional and coalitional approach that critically challenges the gender binary and genderism. It is grounded in an understanding that gender is a colonial construct that is defined by patriarchy and [cis] heteronormativity (Lugones, 2007, p. 186). That being said, it acknowledges that gender is a system of power that shapes one’s socialization and life chances within a white supremacist, heteropatriarchal, sexist, and transphobic society. Furthermore, it understands that gender identity, gender performance, and gender presentation are also shaped by one’s culture, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, dis/ability, nationality, and legal status among other things.

A Trans *jotería* pedagogy simultaneously centers trans women of color, trans migrants, and trans people of color’s trans embodiment, experience, existence, and resistance. Trans *jotería* pedagogy draws on trans of color feminisms, which “is a feminism that responds to the violence done to trans women of color, the historical absence of trans women in both white and women of color feminism” (cárdenas, 2016, p. 55). Trans *jotería* pedagogy is uniquely situated to disrupt a cis-heteronormative, white supremacist, patriarchal system. Drawing on

feminista pedagogies, jotería pedagogies, and transpedagogies, in order for trans jotería pedagogy to move toward liberation of those systems, disruption and vulnerability are essential to the facilitation of this pedagogy. The unsettling of borders and binaries tied to such systems of power is necessary in a trans jotería approach. That disruption begins in the class with the student–teacher relationship and the emphasis on vulnerability for the pursuit of learning as well as healing.

Trans Jotería Praxis

A few weeks after sharing the spoken word piece at CLRJ’s event that I opened this reflection with, I also shared it with students in a class I developed titled, “Queer Deviant Bodies: Migration, the Border, and Making Home.” The course took a structural approach to examine the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, and trans Chicanxs and Latinxs in the US.⁵ As part of the course, students were asked to produce a creative project to submit as their final that incorporated what we learned about LGBT/Queer Chicanx/Latinx socialization, identity formation, policing, migration, resistance, and resilience throughout the quarter, but pushed them to bring visibility or awareness to a topic of their choice. Students worked individually and in groups to identify an issue they wanted to address and created websites, Tumblr, and Instagram pages, podcast episodes, and even art that was dedicated to bringing awareness to their issue. Inspired by the assignment and the students’ interest in it, I asked if it was okay with my students to share my own creative project that was unexpectedly produced alongside them (the spoken word piece). I read through the piece struggling to hold back the tears, feeling so raw in my own emotions. I kept my eyes glued to my paper, but as I continued, I could hear students’ reactions through their “oohs” and sniffles. All quarter I was too afraid to name what I was going through, as my voice continued to drop and I felt so exposed by my changes. Yet in that unplanned moment of vulnerability, there was trust and community that was built. As they saw their teacher being vulnerable, being human, our shared stories created a new dynamic in the classroom. My ability to be vulnerable with my students led them to be empathetic: It made students feel seen in their struggle to be themselves, led them to bond with

⁵ Some of the texts we read/saw included Juana Maria Rodriguez’s *Queer Latinidad: Queer Identity Practices, Discursive Spaces*, Lionel Cantu’s *The Sexuality of Migration: Border Crossing and Mexican Immigrant Men*, Katie Acosta’s *Amigas y Amantes: Sexually Non-conforming Latinas Negotiate Family*, as well as shorter pieces or articles from Eithne Luidheid, Gloria Anzaldúa, Anthony Ocampo, Carlos Decena, among many others. Films included: *Tranvisible: The Bamby Sacedo Story*, *El Canto Del Colibrí*, and *Paris is Burning*.

me as their instructor, and broke down hierarchical structures within the classroom that can limit what students take away from the learning experience. It also showed the students that they can theorize from their own pain and lived experiences. Ultimately, students produced beautiful creative projects that not only showed their deep understanding and application of what we learned in class, but their work was grounded in their personal journey as LGBTQ Latinx individuals themselves or co-conspirators of the community. This teaching experience, which was shaped by the first months of my medical transition, showed me the importance of vulnerability in disrupting assumptions, boundaries, and binaries, not only in relation to gender but also hierarchies between teacher and students and other systems of power that function to erase the life chances of racialized gender variants.

In being vulnerable, I also emphasize the importance that students interrogate their own socialization around gender and sexuality and how they understand their own lives and what shapes how they come into the classroom. This also requires vulnerability on their end. I do this in various ways. I always begin each of my classes with an activity that requires students to reflect on their childhood and to recall any time they remember their families making comments about what they could or could not do because of their gender. I ask them to think about their siblings or cousins of the opposite gender and ask if their parents had different or similar expectations of what was allowed or what had to be learned. I also ask them to think about any commentary from their family that may have put them in a gendered box. This makes students' life experiences central in the course. Their own reflections then serve as the lens through which they see the theory. I immediately personalized the class so that they can use their own lives to learn and apply to the readings. For many of my students—a majority of whom are first-generation students of color—thinking of their gendered self is not something they had much experience with inside or outside of a class setting. I often begin with sharing a brief personal example of how my mom gendered me as a child. I share, “since I was about 12 years old my mom would tell me ‘necesitas aprender a cocinar para cuando tengas esposo’ (you need to learn how to cook for your future husband).” Then I share with students how I always hated when my mom told me this, mostly because while I didn't know it when I was younger, I didn't want a husband, but her messages conveyed two very clear things. First, that I was expected to be a woman and a good Mexican woman at that and, two, that I was heterosexual. When I am able to share from my own experience and in a sense refer back to pre-transition

when I did identify as a woman, I am able to disrupt assumptions of gender and gender roles through being vulnerable. In this way, students are able to begin their own disentanglement with their own racialized gendered identities and begin storying their gendered selves.

Concluding Reflections

Another improvement would be that she specify her readings/films we analyze implicitly just to women studies. What I mean by this is that she mixed women studies with gender/ lqbt+ sometimes. This made me feel like I was taking a lqbt+ studies class rather than Women’s 101. Although these two tend to intersect/overlap, it would be better if it was more directed to general women studies. (From a student course evaluation, Fall 2019)

In my first semester as a professor, I taught a course titled Women’s 101: Sex, Power, Politics. The course takes a body politics approach to understanding of power and discipline and how women’s bodies are shaped by hierarchies of gender. Grounded in an intersectional approach throughout the course, the reading, assignments, lectures, and activities interrogate the social construction of gender via history, medicine, and media. Throughout the semester, it was very powerful for students to go through their own path of *conocimiento* by interrogating the disciplinary racialized gendered functions they have internalized via how they accessorize, why they accessorize, and how they groom themselves.

While most of my evaluations from students were very positive and met me with their own vulnerability, disruption, and curiosity, I initially met the evaluation above with anger and frustration. There are many reasons for this, including how the student misgendered me throughout the evaluation responses after I shared my pronouns throughout the semester which at that point were “they/them” pronouns. I also had my pronouns on the syllabus, on the course website, in every email signature, and even incorporating the importance of pronouns into a lecture in class. As a trans Chicax educator, I am often the only trans person in the room. As a trans educator, moreover, I am already rupturing the assumptions of which bodies can teach women’s studies, not only in academia but also in that specific discipline. While the student was not directly speaking about my presence, their critique of making a Women’s 101 course have a trans and queer perspective underscores those assumptions of women, gender, and sexuality studies being a place where only cisgender women can be. Ultimately, they resisted the notion that gender is a social construct for all bodies. The majority of the readings

in the class were authored by cis-women, but because of the body that was standing before them each day teaching them these concepts, their intake of the material was different. Merely by having a professor who did not fit neatly into their idea of gender normativity, their idea of what a women's studies class should be was challenged. For this student, and possibly many other students who may have felt similarly, being taught by a visibly queer and Trans person was a point of tension as they learned the material. In and of itself, that tension is knowledge, information, and data for the student—as well as for me as the teacher—about how to teach these concepts in a way that leaves the students with the idea that all genders are socially constructed and all systems such as racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, and transphobia work in concert with one another to uphold each other in our society.

Furthermore, another space I am able to share my trans *jotería* pedagogy in praxis is through the use of the podcast, *Anzaldúing It*. I co-created the podcast with my friend and colleague, Angelica Becerra, and we originally started it to talk about the experiences of being queer Latinxs in graduate school as we navigated the many material and metaphysical borders of academia. While the podcast has moved to discuss all things pop culture, astrology, academia, politics, and whatever we may be navigating at the time, the podcast became a space where I brought visibility not only to my own transition but to unpacking internalized homophobia, transphobia, and sexism within myself. Since these systems function together, the classroom is a space where naturally these conversations come up, but the podcast allowed for a larger platform and reach of those who listened. The podcast was an opportunity for me to talk through every step of the process of my transition: Every episode, I was able to talk about milestones, and the podcast itself is an archive of my voice and the documentation of the audible transition of my gendered self. In the digital, you get instant feedback; I was able to get support and affirmation, people that were not necessarily expecting this conversation but that were willing to listen and were empathetic to my process. In that same vein, listeners were also learning about the process, from what it meant to take a testosterone shot, hearing the effects through the changing of my voice, talking about the growing *pelitos* on my chin, sharing about the struggles of coming out to my family, and going through top surgery together with me. Once you go listen to someone's process of pain and vulnerability, there's no way to mess up someone's pronouns or not be understanding of the effort it takes to be seen as a full person—they have been on that journey of *conocimiento* with you.

In this way, as a Trans Chicanx educator and scholar, I see my responsibility as offering students the tools to be critical of gender binaries and sexual dichotomies, as well as to be critical of the structures that shape racism, sexism, classism, ableism, and migration. My presence in the classroom, my body, my voice, and my identity, are the additional tools in my pedagogical toolbelt as I teach and learn alongside my students. As I bring my whole personhood to the classroom, my hope is that my students feel brave enough to bring their full selves to the classroom as well.

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