



Association of Mexican American Educators Journal

A peer-reviewed, open access journal

Volume 20 Issue 1

2026

AMAE Special Double Issue

Muxerista Pedagogies and Praxis:

Art, Activism, and Scholarship as Resistance and Restoration

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Heridas y Sanación Colectiva: The Path of Conocimiento as a Muxerista-Jotería Framework for Queer Latinx/a/o Research in Higher Education

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<https://doi.org/10.24974/amae.20.1.533>

<http://amaejournal.utsa.edu>

ISSN: 2377-9187

Heridas y Sanación Colectiva: The Path of Conocimiento as a Muxerista-Jotería Framework for Queer Latinx/a/o Research in Higher Education

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Abstract

I assert that the path of *conocimiento* (Anzaldúa, 2002), as a Muxerista-Jotería framework, captures the pain and wounds, the messiness of non-linear development, and the possibilities of transformation for queer Latinx/a/o people (Orozco, 2025a, 2025b); and it is necessary for the future of queer Latinx/a/o research and practice in higher education. I contend with the following question: How can Anzaldúa's (2002) path of *conocimiento* guide epistemologically grounded, relational, and reflexive approaches as transformative practices in higher education research with queer Latinx/a/o people? Using the Muxerista Activist Consciousness Development Framework as an example, I name how the path of *conocimiento* informed each part of the research design process, including the initial catalyst for pursuing this line of inquiry, the methodological decisions, including identifying and selecting collaborators¹, the data collection process, the questions I developed for the pláticas with collaborators, and the ways I interpreted the data and generated the finding. I offer several reflection questions for researchers and scholars who want to engage the path of *conocimiento* in their work with queer Latinx/a/o people. Ultimately, engaging the path of *conocimiento* is about being attuned to the worldmaking capacities of queer Latinx/a/o communities within and beyond higher education.

Keywords: path of *conocimiento*, Muxerista, Jotería, research methods, higher education

¹ I use the term collaborators to disrupt the researcher–participant power relationship. Additionally, it is an acknowledgment of the labor the Muxeristas provided to the research process in the sharing of their experiences, stories, and reflections (Orozco & Williams, 2025).

Introduction

Últimamente es el escribir que me escribe / It is the writing that “writes” me. I “read” and “speak” myself into being. Writing is the site where I critique reality, identity, language and dominant culture’s representation and ideological control. –Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 3

The epigraph above is a visceral interpretation of my journey writing within Anzaldúa’s (2002) path of *conocimiento*. I remember when I first read Anzaldúa’s work during the Spring of 2014; I was sitting in my diversity, equity, and inclusion course for my masters in Higher Education at Florida State University. At the time, I was navigating my one-year anniversary of coming out to my friends and family as gay [now joto / queer], living in Tallahassee, Florida, and being one of the only gay Chicanos in this space, while trying to make meaning of my exploration, formation, and affirmation of myself in contrasting spaces of education, familia, and community.

As I sat in class and read Anzaldúa’s (1994) *Allies* chapter, I wanted to know more about her work. This is the first memory I have of reading a lesbiana Chicanas work *y queria saber mas sobre ella*. Searching for her work, I came across *Borderlands/La frontera: The new mestiza consciousness* (1987), but it was in *this bridge we call home: radical visions for transformation*, where I found Anzaldúa’s (2002) path of *conocimiento*. Flipping through the pages, highlighting, and what felt like making notes after each sentence, I felt seen, I felt written about, and more importantly, I felt that I had found “home” within the pages of that last chapter, “now let us shift...the path of *conocimiento*...inner work, public acts.”

My initial engagement with the path of *conocimiento* followed a prescriptive, linear path (Orozco & Perez-Felkner, 2018), particularly because I saw myself navigating my gay, Midwestern Chicano / Mexicano identities and positions through this framework. Reading myself through the path of *conocimiento* was intimidating because it required that I be my most vulnerable self; to uncover the parts of myself I had kept hidden for 22 years, what felt like cosplaying as an alleged straight Chicano / Mexicano growing up in Sioux City, Iowa. As Anzaldúa (2002) notes, “tu camino de *conocimiento* requires that you encounter your shadow side and confront what you’ve programmed yourself (and have been programmed by your cultures) to avoid (*desconocer*), to confront the traits and habits distorting how you see reality and inhibiting the full use of your *facultades*” (p. 540). Este proceso de estar explícitamente consciente de mi sexualidad como Chicano / Mexicano *me arrebató mi forma de ser, saber, y vivir*,

y más que nada me dio un chingo de miedo de explorar y afirmar quién era yo en este nuevo lugar de conocimiento.

To complicate my personal development, I was negotiating the tension that I was feeling with being someone who was doing “queer” research. When I entered my masters program several of my course papers centered around Latino men in higher education, but I always felt that there was something missing from my analysis and writing. Anzaldúa’s work is what catapulted me into a space of honoring my own historia, now jotería-historia. Her work led to one of my first publications, *Ni de aquí, ni de allí: Conceptualizing the self-authorship experience of gay Latino college men using conocimiento*. In this article, we (my femtor/advisor Dra. Lara Pérez-Felkner), integrated Anzaldúa’s (2002) path of conocimiento with Baxter Magolda (2008) self-authorship theory to name how gay Latino college men navigated their multiple marginalized identities in collegiate, familial, and home communities. By the time I published this article, I was unapologetic about being a joto and doing queer research in higher education, namely because of my experience entering and becoming part of the Muxerista community in Las Vegas during the revise-and-resubmit process for this article.

A decade later, the ways I understand and use the path of conocimiento have shifted to be a non-linear, reciprocal, and transformative framework (Orozco, 2025a; 2025b). I continue to maintain the path of conocimiento as a framework that captures how queer Latinx/a/o people explore, form, and assert their identity and consciousness development. Additionally, the path of conocimiento transcends my academic theoretization, and engages with the fragmentation, contradictions, and possibilities of my personal and corporeal politics. More specifically, I assert that the path of conocimiento (Anzaldúa, 2002), as a Muxerista-Jotería framework, captures the pain and wounds, the messiness of non-linear development, and the possibilities of transformation for queer Latinx/a/o people (Orozco, 2025a, 2025b); and it is necessary for the future of queer Latinx/a/o research and practice in higher education.

Therefore, I contend with the following question: How can Anzaldúa’s (2002) path of conocimiento guide epistemologically grounded, relational, and reflexive approaches as transformative practices in higher education research with queer Latinx/a/o people?

As noted earlier, the path of conocimiento is a Muxerista-Jotería framework, which I outline for the reader. I first provide an assertion of a Muxerista-Jotería onto-epistemology, and I provide an overview of Anzaldúa’s (2002) articulation of the path of conocimiento. I then offer

an example of how the path of conocimiento guided each step of my research design process from my study examining the identity and sociopolitical consciousness development of fifteen queer Latinx/a/o (Muxerista) college student activists. It is important to note that the study and data presented culminated in the Muxerista Activist Consciousness Development Framework (Orozco, 2025). This framework encompasses the cognitive (knowledge and thoughts), behavioral (engaging in actions), social-political (focus on identities and social structures of power), and corporeal (focus on the physical body) realities of queer Latinx/a/o student activists. I will highlight data from it when providing examples of the research process (i.e., epistemological, theoretical, and methodological approaches).

Onto-Epistemology and Theoretical Framing

A Muxerista-Jotería Onto-Epistemology

I begin by naming my onto-epistemology to offer us ways of knowing and being that shape the world around us (Jones et al., 2023) and the ways we interact within multiple, and often contrasting, spaces (Orozco, 2021). For me, the personal and academic is political, and I have come to unapologetically ground my work in a Muxerista-Jotería onto-epistemology, which accounts for the genealogical knowledge and theories derived from a “Chicanx/a Latinx/a queer and feminist activist approach” (Revilla et al., 2022, p. 24). As Revilla et al. (2022) notes, “a Muxerista politic is embedded in a Jotería identity/thought and vice versa; a Jotería politic is embedded in a Muxerista identity/thought (p. 24). A Jotería-Muxerista-Jotería onto-epistemology asserts that Jotería and Muxerista politics are not mutually exclusive and rely on the convergence of one another; although, it is important to note that this may not always be explicit for individuals who engage in Jotería and Muxerista politics.

Naming an explicit onto-epistemology informs “how researchers think through and within their research studies” (Orozco, 2021, p. 183). From a Jotería politic, this takes into account “the Jotería subject as an arbiter of knowledge concerning social locations and social relations that shape identity and experience” (Pérez, 2014, p. 143). Similarly, a Muxerista politic is an evolving way of being and engaging in community that builds on Revilla’s (2004) work with Raza Womyn of UCLA and Muxerista activists of Las Vegas (Orozco, 2025b; Revilla & Rangel-Medina, 2011). Revilla (2022) defines a Muxerista as “a gender-fluid and sexually expansive Chicane/Latinx identity that honors our multiple, intersecting identities and communities while uplifting our radical commitment to activism, organizing, personal and collective liberation, and

social transformation” (p. 193). As such, a Muxerista-Jotería politic is an evolving form of being and doing, individually and collectively, and one that informs the ways I conceptualize and actualize the path of *conocimiento*.

The Path of *Conocimiento*’s Seven Spaces

I conceptualize Anzaldúa’s (2002) path of *conocimiento* as a theoretical framework that illuminates a process of reflective consciousness and one that challenges “conventional knowledge’s current categories, classifications, and contents” (p. 119) for queer Latinx/a/o people, specifically understanding identity, socio-political consciousness, and activism. I operationalize consciousness as an awareness of your sense of self, relationship to others, and the social world around you (Anzaldúa, 2002; Orozco & Williams, 2025) that “transforms [your] perceptions of reality, and thus the conditions of life” (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 540). Furthermore, it is important for me to name how this framework is built on Gloria E. Anzaldúa’s realities as a Chicana lesbian growing up on the U.S.–Mexico border in Tejas, or an experience she named as *nepantla* (Anzaldúa, 1987), living in multiple and contrasting physical, corporeal, mental, and emotional liminalities. I name this as an offering and responsibility for scholars to engage Anzaldúa’s *jotería* in taking up her work; and to consider the dismemberment of her writing when her *jotería* is not at the center of how we talk about the concepts and theories she brought forth in her work. Accordingly, I provide examples later on in this paper of how this has manifested in my research process.

Anzaldúa’s (2002) path of *conocimiento* introduces a new paradigm of reflective consciousness and interrogates conventional ways of knowing, distorting a socialized reality (Anzaldúa, 2002). This way of knowing, both mental and somatic, is constructed through seven fluid, overlapping spaces, a term that I use to describe this framework; Anzaldúa uses the term *stage* in a way that denotes a fluid path of in-between spaces, bridging multiple spaces, and honoring the back-and-forth between spaces. Furthermore, the path of *conocimiento* provides an analysis that moves beyond the cognitive, behavioral, and affective dimensions of the self by centering the visceral experience of the body.

The body, as a site of historical, social, political, and affect, has always been at the center of how Chicana and Latina feminist theorize the self. Similarly, Cruz (2001) locates “the brown [queer] body as central in an ongoing practice of negotiation in which multiple often opposing ideas and ways of being are addressed, appropriated, and negotiated” (p. 657). In this sense, the

body has a way of recovering and remembering (Orozco, 2021), prompting memory and language to build community and coalition (Cruz, 2001), and theorizing self in the flesh (Moraga, 1983). Therefore, the path of conocimiento centers the body's response with and through each of the fluid spaces. In the following, I provide an overview of the path of conocimiento's seven spaces.

First, the spaces of the path of conocimiento illustrate the four directions (south, west, north, east), with the fifth and sixth spaces below and above, and the seventh space focusing on the center (Anzaldúa, 2002). *El arrebató...rupture, fragmentation...an ending, a beginning*, is what propels the process of the path of conocimiento to commence, like a process of dissonance. The second space is what Anzaldúa terms, *nepantla*, torn between ways, followed by the third space, the *Coatlicue* state...*desconocimiento* and the cost of knowing. The fourth space provides a call...*el compromiso...the crossing and conversion*. While the last spaces, fifth, sixth, and seventh spaces, focus on putting *Coyolxauhqui* together...new personal and collective "stories, leading to the blow-up...a clash of realities which shift realities... and acting out the vision or spiritual activism (Anzaldúa, 2002, 2015).

El arrebató...rupture, fragmentation...an ending, a beginning presents a space of no longer being who you used to be (Anzaldúa, 2002). This space of knowing propels you to deconstruct your previous knowledge and construct a new way of knowing. Anzaldúa (2002) vividly describes this process of putting *Coyolxauhqui* together. *Coyolxauhqui* is the moon goddess who was dismembered by her brother, *Huitzilopochtli*, the god of sun and war, when she attempted to kill her mother. She uses this graphic to evoke feelings that come with emotional psychical dismemberment, where body/mind/spirit/soul are split, and the process that follows of putting all these pieces back together in a new form (Anzaldúa, 2002, 2015).

This initial fragmentation catapults you into a space of *nepantla*. Self-identification becomes central to the process in *nepantla*. Anzaldúa's (1987) *nepantla* provides a foundational understanding of what it means to straddle in-between realities, grounded in experiences. Living in this space of *nepantla* continuously pushes individuals to negotiate the self in contrasting spaces. Living between realities results in "seeing" double, first from one perspective of one reality, then from the perspective of another (Anzaldúa, 2002). Being in the space of *nepantla* elicits a realization that this liminal space is home, especially given the continual negotiation of

the self. This continual negotiation and making meaning of your truth propels a deeper understanding of the self, relation to others, and the social world around you.

Nepantla, the space of liminality, simultaneously shifts you to enter the Coatlicue state. Coatlicue is the Aztec goddess who gave birth to the moon, stars, and Huitzilopochtli, the god of sun and war (Anzaldúa, 2002, 2015). This space forces you to confront your own desconocimiento, ignorance. The displacement in your perception and the process of knowing shift your emotional responses. Anzaldúa (2002) calls this “a paradox, stating that the knowledge that exposes your fears can also remove them” (p. 553). Following the Coatlicue state is the space where you begin to define yourself in terms of the transformation of a more authentic self. The call...el compromiso...the crossing and conversion, this is the space that is revealed by your inner voice, the one that leads you to your sense of purpose, and reveals the construction of your story of self, or what she calls, tu autohistoria (Anzaldúa, 2002).

This idea of body/mind/spirit/soul is challenged by the new personal self that you have created. This space requires acknowledging the in-depth critical self-reflection that shows up with every new experience. This space, Coyolxauhqui, represents the need to repair and heal, as well as to rewrite stories of loss and recovery in the process of self-identification and naming your reality (Anzaldúa, 2015). This new (re)construction of oneself propels you into spaces that continuously push you to have to negotiate parts of yourself, con nos/otras, with us/others, or the class of realities. The path of conocimiento leads to acting out a new vision or what Anzaldúa (2015) terms “spiritual activism,” using this path to be in touch with body/mind/spirit/soul. Spiritual activism engages the “internal work coupled with commitment to struggle for social transformation (p. 574). Spiritual activism also asks us to envision what it means to exist differently in community with one another; grounding ourselves in our truth, one that manifests through the transformation of the self (Orozco & Williams, 2025).

Lastly, I caution the reader to consider how Anzaldúa challenges a linear progression of the seven spaces of the path of conocimiento, and thus, offers them as reciprocal and fluid realities that can inform a queer Latinx/a/o meaning making process (Orozco & Williams, 2025). Consequently, the path of conocimiento serves as a political, linguistic, cultural, and social analysis that is central to how queer Latinx/a/o people make meaning of the contradictions of their liminal reality and their emerging consciousness (Anzaldúa, 2002; Orozco & Perez-Felkner, 2018).

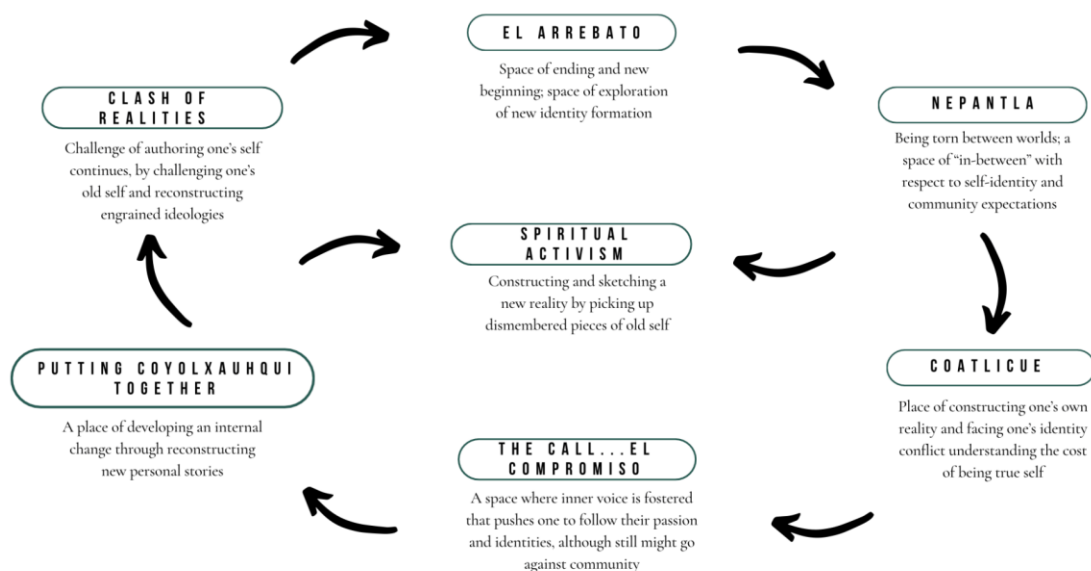
Using the Path of Conocimiento For Queer Latinx/a/o Research in Higher Education

Before I offer ways to use the path of conocimiento for queer Latinx/a/o research in higher education, it is important for me to mention that the examples I draw on are directly tied to my work on college student development and college student activism, queer recovery and worldmaking, and critical qualitative methodologies. I engage in an interdisciplinary practice of merging fields of study to more intentionally advance research on queer Latinx/a/o people in higher education. The examples I share come from the research design processes and data that informed the Muxerista Activist Consciousness Development Framework (Orozco, 2022, 2025).

I name how the path of conocimiento informed each part of the research design process, specifically, the initial catalyst for pursuing this line of inquiry, the methodological decisions, including identifying and selecting collaborators, the data collection process, the questions I developed for the pláticas with collaborators, and the ways I interpreted the data and generated the findings for the Muxerista Activist Consciousness Development Framework. I offer several reflection questions for researchers and scholars who want to engage the path of conocimiento in their work with queer Latinx/a/o people. Moreover, the path of conocimiento guided several moments of reflection in which I wrestled with tensions, contradictions, and possibilities in the research process. **Figure 1** is a visual representation of how I have come to understand the path of conocimiento as a deep reciprocal process.

Figure 1

The Path of Conocimiento (Anzaldúa, 2002; Orozco, 2025a)



Entrando al Camino de Conocimiento

The path of conocimiento is “an intensely personal, fully embodied process that gathers information from context”...and is “profoundly relational and enables those who enact it to make connections among apparently disparate events, people, experiences, and realities” (Keating, 2015, p. xxvii). This intentional and deep reflection with oneself requires an openness of vulnerability to share the *heridas* contained inside the bodymindspirit. Vallone (2014) notes, “pain gets out of a private dimension to act as a catalyst for the creation of spiritual/political communities”, and the *heridas* are a “powerful agent of transformation” (Sanchez et al., 2022). As reflected in the title of this article, *Heridas y Sanación Colectiva*, the path of conocimiento, epistemologically, theoretically, and methodologically, functions as an individual and collective form of reciprocal vulnerability, healing, and transformation in the research process. And specifically, for queer Latinx/a/o people, the path of conocimiento queers conventional ways of knowing and being in relationship to the self, to others, and the sociopolitical world around us.

When I began my doctoral studies, I knew I wanted my research to focus on queer Latinx/a/o college students because I had been serving as the Director of the Center for Social Justice at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). In this role, I had the opportunity to

work directly with queer and trans Latinx/a/o student activists, or Muxeristas. I remember witnessing how the Muxeristas engaged in their developmental processes as queer and/or trans Latinx/a/o people by questioning, forming, and naming their sense of self, while simultaneously navigating this within the confines of their activist practices and organizing efforts. In addition, the catalyst for engaging in this work was “un regreso a casa” (Gonzalez et al., 2023), where this research became about honoring “little Rober” (the name my family calls me), growing up in Iowa as a Mexicano/Chicano while suppressing my sexuality, and then coming out at the age of 22 during my last semester of my undergraduate career. As noted earlier, when I began to engage in research on gay Latino men in my masters program, I had to work through the tension of being someone who would be known as doing “queer Latinx/a/o research.” It was through my professional role at UNLV, becoming a part of the Muxerista community, and beginning my work in Jotería Studies that helped me step into this research area as an unapologetic joto.

Entrando al camino de conocimiento came with multiple *arrebatadas*, or ruptures that propelled me into a space of making sense of myself. My bodymindspirit became my way of theorizing in the flesh (Moraga, 1983), and it set the foundation for my research and scholarship. At the same time, it helped guide my decision to enter the research process. Often, I work to convey to my students that, as scholars and researchers, we have to be critical of what is driving our research inquiry. Our work has to move beyond extractive practices of knowledge and labor production to ask ourselves if we are ready and equipped to be in accompaniment (Abrego, 2024) with our collaborators. Abrego (2024) offers accompaniment as a practice of relationality that “gives access to people’s lives in ways that can evoke deep emotions from [collaborators]” (p. 39). As such, when we ask queer Latinx/a/o people to recount their stories and how they experience the world around them, we must do so with deep care for the potentiality of *heridas*, vulnerability, and healing that can emerge for them/us through this process (Gonzalez et al., 2023; Morales & Gaxiola Serrano, 2020). Also, this engagement required that I reciprocate this intimate and relational sharing as reflected in one of my research memos:

March 5, 2021: Crying and vulnerability is one of the practices that my collaborators share with me in this process of pláticas—I am someone that is learning to feel more comfortable [and sit with the discomfort] with feelings and crying and sharing those with

others. These pláticas have served as part of my healing process and as a way to continue to cultivate my relationship with others (Muxerista community).

This practice of allowing myself to be raw and vulnerable was through the collaboration with the Muxeristas, as we intentionally created and shared a space for openness in the research process. *Entrando al camino de conocimiento* calls for researchers to engage with the following:

- What rupture, tension, or lived contradiction compelled me to pursue this research, and how is it rooted in my own story?
- How is this project a response to personal and collective *heridas and arrebatadas* experienced by queer Latinx/a/o communities in higher education?
- How will I build *confianza*, reciprocity, and care with collaborators beyond extractive research relationships?

Methodological Tensions and Contradictions

I defended my dissertation proposal in spring 2020, just before the COVID-19 shutdown shifted my data collection to a virtual space. As I adapted my approach, I continued to engage intentionally in the research process. At the same time, Chicana/Latina feminists remind us to examine how socialization and training shape engagement with research through claims of neutrality and objectivity that center Westernized knowledge of being and doing (Lara, 2002; Morales & Gaxiola Serrano, 2020). We cannot untangle our *facultades* that ask us to resist objectivity and to engage the meaning of deeper realities in the stories of the historically dispossessed and marginalized (Anzaldúa, 2002; Lara, 2002). As such, using the path of *conocimiento* to guide my research design process elicited several tensions, contradictions, and negotiations in the methodological decisions I made for my dissertation research. What I share in the following reflects the reality of always being in *Nepantla*, the liminal space of leaving behind parts of knowing and doing that no longer serve you, toward the possibility of what can be.

I addressed an early methodological tension by interrogating the questions that shaped my research on queer Latinx/a/o college student activists' development of identity and sociopolitical consciousness. In response, I utilized critical grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014; Malagon et al., 2009) with Chicana/Latina Feminista (CLF) pláticas (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016) as the data collection method. When my committee members pressed me to justify that pairing, I framed grounded theory as a tool for theory building; however that framing revealed

how I negotiated legibility within academic evaluation. I aligned my methodological choice with expectations tied to publication, conference review, and faculty hiring, and that alignment exposed how I weighed disciplinary norms against feminist commitments. Although Chicana/Latina Feminist scholarship, Jotería Studies, and Muxerista frameworks shaped my research design, I felt that bringing in a methodological approach, such as grounded theory, would make my work read as more “rigorous” or be taken more “seriously.” Even after writing an entire essay on the genealogy of Chicana/Latina Feminist theory for my qualifying exam in my doctoral program, I prioritized grounded theory as a marker of rigor, reflecting how I internalized dominant standards of credibility. Moreover, I recognized that my training encouraged me to equate more with methodology and stronger scholarship, even after extensive engagement with Chicana/Latina Feminist theory during my doctoral program. At the same time, my committee—composed of Latina (e.g., Chicana, Puerto Rican, Mexican American) and Blackwomen scholars whose work engages Chicana Latina and Black Feminism—supported my ability to move through the research process with intention and care, allowing me to critically examine those tensions.

Sharing this tension, and more pointedly, the contradiction of claiming a Chicana Latina Feminist stance while negotiating how I construct research, reveals the vulnerability I confront when I name these methodological decisions within academic expectations. While the Muxerista Activists Consciousness Development Framework emerged through my work, it feels as though grounded theory has become a backdrop in how I continue to share my research. Chicana Latina Feminism anchors my work, and I engage that framework through entanglements with Jotería Studies and Muxerista frameworks, which shape how I make meaning in my research. As a result, I continue to ask myself how the path of *conocimiento* asks us to sit with, interrogate, and transform our understandings of research legitimacy and onto-epistemic commitments. Negotiating methodological tensions and contradictions requires that researchers wrestle with the following questions:

- How do my methodological decisions reflect Chicana/Latina feminist, Jotería, and Muxerista commitments to embodiment, relationality, and collective knowledge-making?
- How does the desire for academic legibility shape (or constrain) the possibilities of queer Latinx/a/o knowledge and practices?

- How am I engaging moments of *choques* (contradictions) in my methodological choices as sites of knowledge production rather than tensions or contradictions to resolve?

Relational Practices of Data Collection

Data collection becomes a relational practice by stepping into a space of Coatlicue and the call... *el compromiso*, where methodological tensions and contradictions propel me to construct my reality and align with my onto-epistemic commitments within the research process. Such relational practices highlight the ways I employed *pláticas* guided by the path of *conocimiento*. First, I used a specific criterion: potential collaborators had to identify as queer Latinx/a/o people and had to have engaged in activism and organizing efforts at UNLV and in the broader Las Vegas community from 2006 to 2016. This specificity assumed two things about potential collaborators: 1) that they had questioned, formed, and named their queer Latinx/a/o identities in some way, and 2) that they understood activism practices for themselves. I sought to learn from the Muxerista community at UNLV and Las Vegas in relation to identity and sociopolitical consciousness development, so I designed collaborator criteria that centered their lived realities. In doing so, I positioned myself in relation to collaborators as we generated knowledge through a reciprocal research process. I entered the study with prior connections to many collaborators, and I navigated distinct relationships shaped by shared classroom experiences with some and familiarity with others through archival images and videos documenting activism at UNLV and in Las Vegas. Through these layered relationships, I continue to wrestle with how I position myself in relation to research, including the following questions I pose for researchers to consider as they build relationships with collaborators:

- Who is invited into this research as a collaborator, and who might be left out?
- How am I accountable to collaborators before, during, and after the research process?

Second, I used CLF *pláticas* as my data collection method and grounded that approach in the path of *conocimiento*, which guided the design and direction of my questions with Muxerista collaborators. I conducted two *pláticas* with each collaborator, lasting 60 to 90 minutes each, to cultivate care and reciprocity within our research relationship. In shaping these conversations, I centered meaning-making around space, identity, activism, and healing, aligning with my onto-epistemic commitments. The first *plática* laid the foundation for each collaborator's meaning-making process as they reflected on their journeys toward a queer Latinx/a/o identity while engaging in activism throughout their college experiences. For

example, I asked the following questions in the first plática:

1. How did you come to identify as queer and Latinx/a/o?
 - a. Tell me about your process of identifying as queer and Latinx/a/o.
2. How do you define activism?
 - a. What is a particular event or organization or point in your life that served as a starting point for you to engage with activism?
3. Was there an experience that you had as an activist that contributed to a new way of seeing yourself?
4. How do you sustain yourself in and through your activist work?
 - a. How do you define healing?
 - b. In what ways have you engaged in healing through your activism?

These questions aligned with the path of *conocimiento*, focusing on a fluid, reciprocal, and relational framework that captures the simultaneous spaces of meaning-making for queer Latinx/a/o people.

In the second plática, I expanded on some of the initial data interpretations, such as meaning making of identities, namely, queer and Latinx/a/o realities, healing practices, insight into building queer Latinx/a/o spaces, remembering as *Muxeristas*, and world-making visions as queer Latinx/a/o people. It was important for me to ask about initial *arrebatos* of identity and activism, and also to acknowledge how that has shifted over time for individuals now in their late 20s to early 40s. Also, this inquiry was about tracing how their identity and sociopolitical consciousness development evolved and shifted over time and space. I offer three questions for researchers to consider as they think about relational practices during data collection:

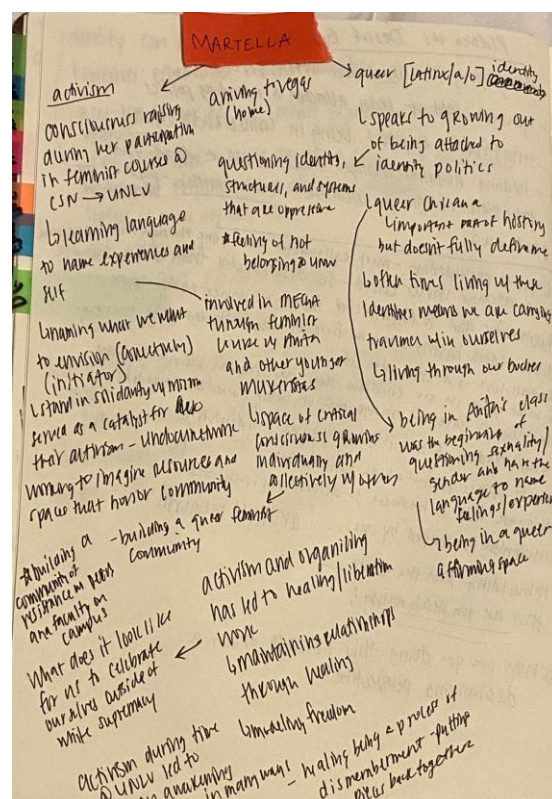
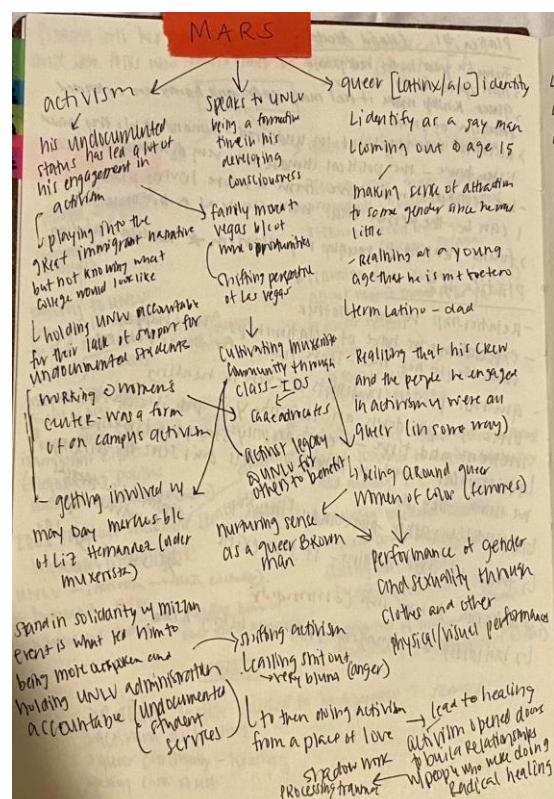
- How do my questions invite storytelling that is vulnerable, nonlinear, and rooted in lived experience rather than extraction?
- How am I attending to silence, emotion, and the body as forms of data and meaning making; and how might this be a part of the interpretive process?
- Where do contradictions emerge within or across stories, and what do these tensions reveal about queer and trans Latinx/a/o peoples experiences and knowledges?

Putting Coyolxauhqui Together...Toward Spiritual Activism: Analysis as Remembering, Embodied, and Affective Interpretation

I further demonstrate how the path of *conocimiento* informed my meaning-making of the data from the *pláticas* with collaborators and the ways I began to thematically and visually see the data informing queer Latinx/a/o student activists identity and sociopolitical consciousness in the context of activism. My analysis process was three-tiered: 1) a constant comparative method analysis which included comparing data to itself and making initial inferences of the processes, actions, or beliefs reflected in the data (Charmaz, 2014), 2) after each *plática* I conducted an initial data analysis by coding processes, actions, or beliefs highlighting collaborator's narratives and reflections, 3) and lastly, I engaged in a focused coding analysis where I began to sift through all the initial codes to make theoretical assertions of the data, while coupling my analysis with Anzaldúa's (2002) path of *conocimiento*. In addition to my analysis process, I engaged in memo writing during and after each *plática*. The analysis and the memos contributed to diagramming, see **Figure 2**, which was the practice of creating a profile for each collaborator that named how they each entered into activism and how they moved through their queer Latinx/a/o identities.

Figure 2

Diagram Examples of Collaborators Analysis



I titled this section Putting Coyolxauhqui Together...Toward Spiritual Activism because through the fragmentation of doing this research, the analytical process became what Anzaldúa (2002) notes as the space of constant transition and the act of composing a new history and self. This space also speaks to the ways that one builds collective stories; moving toward asserting a “reconstruction of how [one] views the world” (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 139) naming and ritualizing the act of an unapologetic self. Recognizing that new, more authentic ways of claiming the self and building community means leaving parts of the old self behind and that it requires engaging in more intentional forms of action with the self, in relationship with others, and with the social world around them. As such, this analytical process culminated in offering the Muxerista Activist Consciousness Development Framework (Orozco, 2022, 2025). **Figure 3** shows the earlier iterations of the Muxerista Activist Consciousness Development Framework, while **Figure 4** shows the final framework.

Figure 3

Early Iterations of the Muxerista Activist Consciousness Development

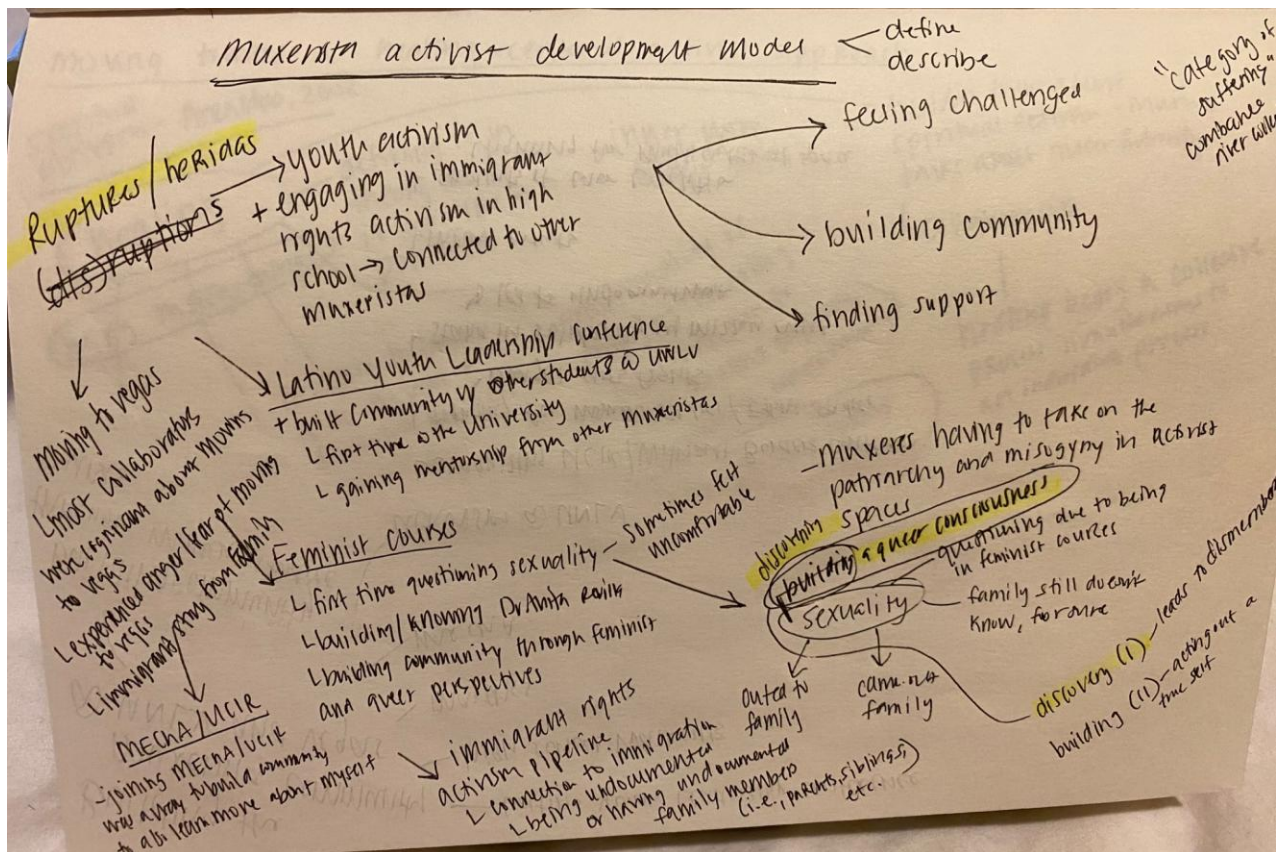
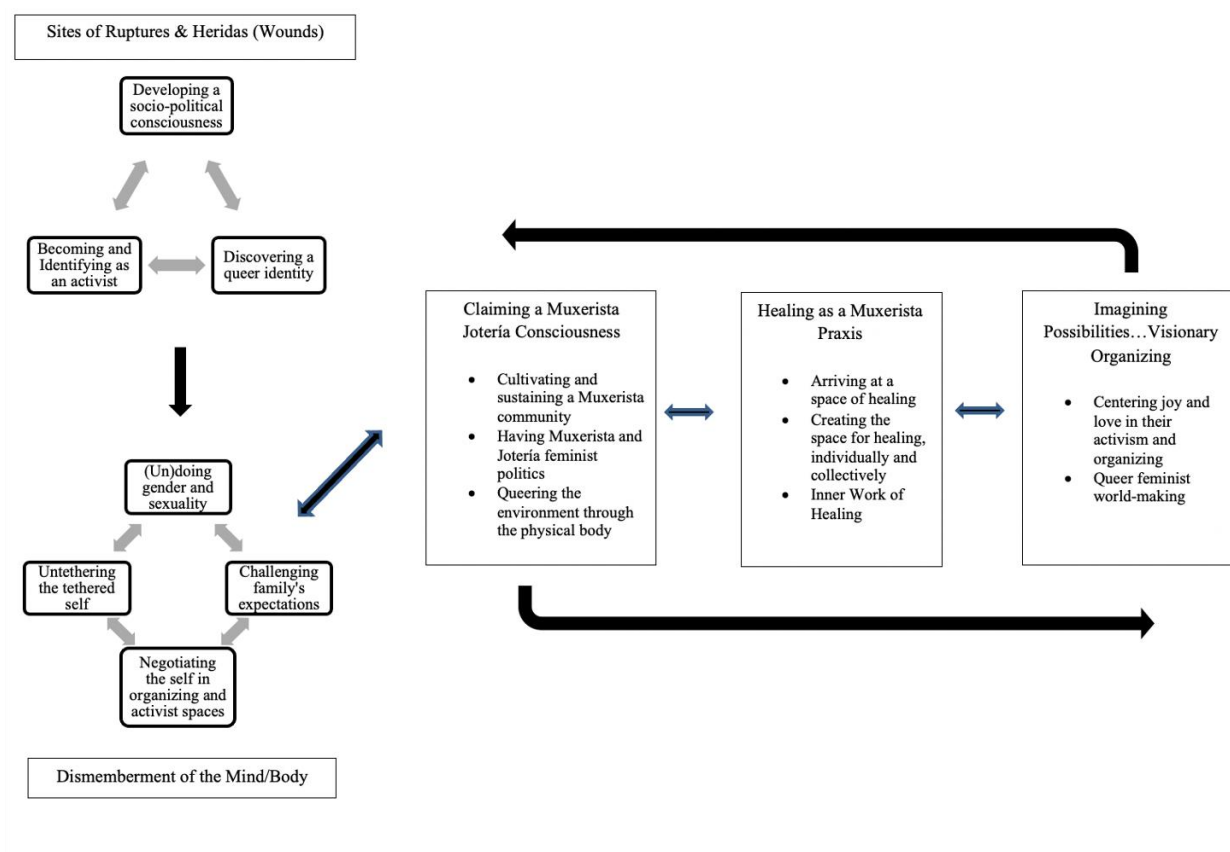


Figure 4

The Muxerista Activist Consciousness Development Framework (Orozco, 2022, 2025)



As I went through the data analysis process I had to wrestle with how collaborators talked about their identity and sociopolitical consciousness development processes. For example, how do collaborators talk about catalysts in their development?, and does everybody in this research go through an *arrebato*? Furthermore, these questions required that I think about these processes, actions, or beliefs as experiences that were part of a larger collective story for each collaborator. This was not alone, as I shared my data analysis process with my collaborators, my committee members, and my femtors / queertors, to elicit questions from them that I needed to contemplate to honor the narratives and realities shared by the collaborators in this study. I offer the following questions for researchers to consider as they enter their own analytical processes:

- How am I centering lived, embodied, and spiritual knowledge in my analytical process?

- What spaces of the path of conocimiento am I inhabiting (e.g., *arrebato*, *nepantla*, *Coyolxauhqui*, etc.) as I justify, question, or revise my analytical process and decisions?
- What would it look like to present findings as iterative, cyclical, or ongoing rather than conclusive to reflect the path of conocimiento as a continuous journey?

Ofrendas

I honor Anzaldúa's (2002) path of conocimiento by drawing on her concept of empowerment through the act of giving back or "ofrendas" in academic research. Anzaldúa (2002) states, "by redeeming your most painful experiences you transform them into something valuable, *algo para compartir* or share with others so they too may be empowered" (p. 540). I offer these ofrendas as reflection questions that provide scholars with an opportunity to explore how the path of conocimiento (2002), as a nonlinear, identity-transforming, and affective guide, can shape the research design process, including the research question development, the data collection and analysis process, and researcher reflexivity and positionality. The path of conocimiento offers a potential understanding of how queer Latinx/a/o people come into knowledge, identity, and consciousness through struggle, contradiction, and healing.

Designing a research study using the path of conocimiento for queer Latinx/a/o research in higher education calls for reflection questions that interrupt, unsettle, and invite researchers into the very tensions and contradictions that Anzaldúa (2002, 2015) names in her work.

- How might researchers navigate the space of *el arrebato* (ruptures) and *nepantla* (liminal space) as methodological entry points in the collaboration and construction of knowledge with queer Latinx/a/o people in higher education research?
- How do collaborators' narratives reflect movement through the spaces of the path of conocimiento, and what might this reveal about collective healing and resistance in higher education spaces?
- In what ways do queer Latinx/a/o collaborators enact epistemic agency through storytelling, reflection, and community building?

Researchers who use conocimiento should engage these questions as reciprocal living prompts. For example, these researchers should return to these questions throughout the entire research process, as Anzaldúa intended for the path of conocimiento to unfold: not in discrete stages, but rather in a recursive, embodied, and relational manner.

Throughout this article I have offered the ways that I have engaged the path of *conocimiento* as an intimate research process that advances a critical and relational process with queer and trans Latinx/a/o people.

Conclusion

Returning to the guiding question of this article, how Anzaldúa's (2002) path of *conocimiento* as a Muxerista-Jotería framework can inform epistemologically grounded, relational, and reflexive approaches, I have offered how the research design process itself becomes a site of struggle, contradiction, and transformation. This work illuminates the path of *conocimiento* as a call to sit with tension, to interrogate the desire for legibility, and to reimagine embodiment, relationality, and accountability in research with queer Latinx/a/o people in higher education. Across moments of entry—methodological tensions, collaborator engagement, data collection, and interpretation—this approach embraces fragmentation as a generative condition of queer Latinx/a/o life and knowledge-making. In doing so, it centers a Muxerista-Jotería epistemology as the grounding from which theory, meaning, and possibility emerge. Ultimately, engaging the path of *conocimiento* is about being attuned to the worldmaking capacities of queer Latinx/a/o communities within and beyond higher education.

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