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**Zine-ing Latinidad: Zinemaking, Latinidades, and the Muxerista-Jotería
Pedagogical Possibilities with/ in the Graduate Classroom**

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Abstract

The graduate classroom is a fraught place, often instilled with the undercurrents of colonial logics and neoliberal desires. Within this understanding, how can we make the graduate classroom a space for communally situated and collaborative educational praxis? This paper brings forth the experiences of five graduate students and one professor through a plática methodology to discuss their final projects – a zine. During Spring 2025, each graduate student took a class called Critical Latinx Educational Studies, in which the focal assignment was a semester-long zine project. Guided by the theoretical frameworks of Muxerista-Joteria pedagogies and nepantla, we argue that zine-making is a site of educational liberation, and a place where individual, communal, and reflexive commitments are realized. We highlight two key findings from our plática and analysis of our critical reflection and zines, and suggest that zine-making also serves as a form of anticolonial pedagogy and a socio-material space for epistemological curiosity. Lastly, we interweave images of our zines throughout and emplace them within broader discussions of power, knowledge, and relationality.

Keywords: zines, muxerista-jotería pedagogies, latinidad, graduate education, nepantla

Introduction

The graduate classroom is often a contentious space where students are expected to already know certain academic discourses, produce intellectually “rigorous” papers, and engage in certain Euro-Western vocabularies (hooks, 1994). Further, “academic work is not only solitary and isolating, but it is also intellectually challenging and at times systematically exclusionary, especially as it requires for many a new language to even have access to, let alone engage in, the discussion” (Bettez, p. 84, 2011). While certain curricular and pedagogical choices are aimed at growing graduate students’ thinking (i.e., seminar papers), they are not, nor should they be, the only way in which graduate students can explore their epistemological and curricular curiosities. In this paper, we, one faculty member and five doctoral students, come together in a *plática* (Fierros & Bernal, 2016) to discuss the process of making zines as a pedagogical inquiry. Guided by Muxerista-Jotería pedagogies (Revilla, 2004; Revilla et al., 2021), we propose that zine-making is a transgressive and anticolonial pedagogy rooted in the spirit and legacies of Queer and Chicana/Latinx feminist, cultural, and textual productions.

Over one semester, our graduate course titled Critical Latinx Educational Studies, curated zines where we engaged in a multiplicity of different themes and topics relating to Latinx educational studies such as LatCrit, Chicana Feminisms, Joteria, Critical Latinx Indigeneities, AfroLatinidad and AntiBlackness, Undocumented and Unaccompanied Youths’ experiences, and Hispanic Serving Institutions. Emplacing the zine as the focal point of our class and this paper, we ask: how does centering zine-making as the main graduate “assignment” speak to the possibilities of Muxerista-Jotería pedagogies rooted in collective possibility and transformational resistance?

Whereas graduate seminars often define “successful engagement with the literature” through seminar papers, formal presentations, literature reviews, and book reviews, we ask: What other ways can we engage with scholarship *and each other* that are rooted in different ways of knowing and being? What happens when we destabilize the graduate classroom and reorient how we engage with knowledge toward more arts-based, creative, and culturally rooted ways of knowing? By drawing on Muxerista-Jotería pedagogies and Nepantla theories (Anzaldúa, 1987; Keating, 2006), we argue for more expansive graduate classroom experiences that include Chicana/Latina feminist, Queer,

and anticolonial ways of knowing and being. Higher education, especially in a time of heightened anti-DEI rhetoric and legislation, continues to need the classroom as a site of radical transformation (hooks, 1994). Ultimately, we position zine-making as eliciting anticolonial pedagogies and encouraging a different type of epistemological depth that can usher in exciting opportunities to otherwise pedagogical and curricular futures.

Zine-Making in Education: Embodied, Relational, and Anticolonial Praxis

In this condensed review of zine-making, we underscore how they emerged as a feminist and anticolonial pedagogical practice rooted in resistance, creativity, and community (Licona, 2012, 2005; Creasap, 2015; Revilla, 2004). Zines are non-commercial, self-published, and multimodal texts that have historically served as vehicles for artistic expression, political resistance, cultural critique, and creative pedagogy within feminist and punk movements, particularly through the riot grrrl scene and third-wave feminism (Norell Martínez, 2018; Piepmeier, 2009; Duncombe, 1997). In particular, Chicana feminist punk movements were integral in shaping zine epistemologies, drawing from Zapatista movements, Indigenous cosmologies and spirituality, language, the body, and race to unsettle Eurowestern discourses (Norell Martínez, 2018; Uribe Kozlovsky, 2022; Lincona, 2012). As Norell Martínez (2018) further articulates, “zines are indeed a site for expressing dissent, to voice thoughts, experiences, anger, and resistance against patriarchy and homophobia, and are a popular vehicle for women, girls, queer, and transgender people to articulate their opposition to oppressive structures” (p.49). Zines thus have the potential to serve as tools for education, healing, and communal/relational building while allowing space for doubt, frustration, and pain (The Concrete Collective et al., 2024; Nijsten, 2017).

In educational contexts, zines offer an accessible, student-driven format that disrupts traditional academic hierarchies and affirms embodied, affective, and hybrid knowledge production (McCormack-Whittemore & García, 2025; Piepmeier, 2008; Creasap, 2015). For many students of color, zine-ing, or the craft and process of zine making, allowed them to narrate their stories through personal and collective testimonio as a way to counter the weight of neoliberal education that often erases, misrepresents, and absolves the richness of student voice and identity (McCormack-Whittemore & García, 2025; Concrete Collective et al., 2024). Zine’s nonlinear and tactile qualities invite

marginalized students to engage with personal storytelling and critical reflection, positioning zine-making as a space of *nepantla*, or the in-between space of cultural tension and transformation (McCormack-Whittemore & García, 2025; Lincona, 2012; Anzaldúa, 1987). What zines can offer in the classroom is an alternative to conventional academic writing by affirming identity, creativity, and lived experience through tactile, multimodal forms (Piepmeier, 2008).

Zines as epistemological and creative labor

Beyond their historical and theoretical significance, zines serve as deeply pedagogical tools in practice that draw from *conocimiento* as an anti/decolonial epistemology (Keating, 2006). In tandem with the values of Muxerista-Jotería pedagogy, praxis, dialogue, and collective liberation (Orozco, 2025), zine-making in the classroom can reorient students toward more creative labor and epistemological freedom (Rodriguez Castro et al., 2025). For example, zines not only draw on embodied epistemologies but also serve as a connective thread between the body, the visual, and the textual, further allowing the body to speak (Rodriguez Castro et al., 2025). Piepmeier (2008) notes that zines foster “bonds between the zine writers/artists, what they are drawing, and the person reading the zine” (p. 227), emphasizing a relational process of meaning-making. In educational settings, students develop connections not only with their audience but also with the subject matter and with themselves. Creasap (2015) observes that students often use zines to work through questions of identity, voice, and interpretation, bringing their lived experiences into dialogue with course content. Desyllas and Sinclair (2014) show that this creative process also supports critical reflection on social systems. In these contexts, zine-making becomes a form of epistemology, an embodied and student-authored way of knowing.

Theorizing with/in Nepantla and Muxerista-Jotería Pedagogies

We purposefully braid together Muxerista-Jotería pedagogies with *nepantla* theories. *Nepantla*, as Anzaldúa (1987) suggests, is the liminal in-betweenness that exists within two bodies of water, and the space between two worlds. Anzaldúa (1987) encourages us to think about identity in the same way, constantly changing, malleable, in flux, and always in the midst of transformation. We argue that Zine-making is itself a type

of creation born out of/from nepantla (Lincona, 2005), while Muxersita-Jotería pedagogies describe the processes of learning that make zines a site of educational transformation.

Zine-making with Muxerista-Jotería Pedagogies

Muxerista-Jotería pedagogies are epistemologies of love, hope, fun, safeness, and intimacy that foster a commitment to social justice and provide the skills to engage in multidimensional consciousness. Such pedagogies address intersectionality, hold space for diverse perspectives, and validate students' affective and emotional lives to nurture a commitment to transformative revolution (Revilla, 2010; Revilla et al., 2021). The academy claims a superior framework that is unemotional, objective, meritocratic, color-evasive, and race-neutral, yet it continues to perpetuate individual responsibility for failure and success (Annamma et al, 2017; Bradley et al., 2025). Despite evidence that emotion is essential to teaching social justice, the academy maintains commitment to empirical frameworks that “promotes entrenched racial hierarchies by demanding the use of the institutional capacities of an increasingly authoritarian state to surveil, criminalize, and crush anti-racist, reparational, and unequivocally democratic projects” (Fernandez & Hammer, 2012, p. 67). Zine-making encourages individuals to locate, articulate, navigate, and “do” emotion in ways that surpass the boundaries of verbal language into visual, auditory, narrative, and reflective expression. Zines, as an inquiry that centers affect, disrupt the epistemologies that treat knowledge as separate from experience (Bradley et al., 2025).

Muxerista-Jotería pedagogy returns to community and culture, emphasizing liberatory creativity that welcomes emotion to challenge the academy's conventions (Alarcón et al., 2014; Revilla & Santillana, 2014), while disrupting norms to reimagine education as a space that honors embodied knowledge and lived experience (Ek et al., 2010). Through zines, students engaged with the course alongside their diverse sensibilities, practices, knowledges, and forms of expression, transforming their learning into visual art, collage, music, poetry, and other multimodal forms that reflect the layered, embodied nature of their learning experience (Mendoza, 2016). By celebrating expression and practicing radical inclusion as praxis, zines enabled liberation from the hierarchies and logics of the academy (Bradley et al., 2025; Revilla, 2004).

Zines as liminal and third spaces

Zines also occupy what scholars call “third spaces,” or hybrid learning environments that merge academic inquiry with community storytelling. In her chapter *Zines in Third Space*, Licona (2012) argues that zines foster relational spaces of critique, coalition, and identity formation. These hybrid zones reflect the epistemological and political commitments of *nepantla*, embracing discomfort, contradiction, and transformation as pedagogical tools that enable students to create material spaces where theory is not only studied but lived. Zines encourage us to abandon academic normativity and embrace a dynamic process, one of alternating periods of doubt and surety, of fear and fidelity, ultimately signaling “unexpected, uncontrollable shifts, transitions, and changes” (Keating, 2006, p.9). We conceptualize the zine space of *nepantla* as one of between-ness, frustration, transformation, and growth (Prieto & Villenas, 2012; Keating, 2006; Elenes, 2006; Ika, 2002; Anzaldúa, 1997).

Feelings of *nepantla* come hand in hand with the contradictory experience of refusing to “maintain patriarchal, racist, homophobic, and imperialist structures” (Revilla, 2004) even as we must satisfy program requirements and entertain various instances of colonial mundanity and violence simply to survive. Rather than seeking to reconcile that contradiction, the very process of engagement with course materials through zine-making pushed students to look toward the emotive realities of that frustration and contradiction as a point of transformation and growth that propels shared anti-colonial goals. What transpired were the possibilities of theorizing from the margins (hooks, 2015), a space where liminality ushered in creativity, vulnerability, and intentionality in our classroom. As an educational community learning, healing, and growing within the margins, *nepantla* encourages comfort in the discomfort, understanding the reality that there will be moments of dissonance in the classroom, but living in abject fear of these moments precludes the opportunity to change and grow through them (Prieto & Villenas, 2012; hooks, 1994).

Plática Methodology

Our methodological framework is rooted in *plática* methodology (Hannegan-Martínez, 2023; Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016), which emphasizes relational and reciprocal dialogues rather than extractive research interactions. *Plática* methodology is

grounded in Chicana/Latina feminist epistemologies that value everyday knowledge-making through story, emotion, and embodied experience (Hannegan-Martínez, 2023). Through pláticas, we were able to move beyond surface-level interpretations of the zines and reflections to engage deeply with the emotional, political, and spiritual dimensions of our pedagogical labor. Muxerista-Jotería pedagogies challenge us to question dominant truths and social constructs, and pláticas provide the dialogic space where such critical reflection can unfold through intimate, reciprocal conversation (Revilla, 2010). Rooted in love, hope, and safety, pláticas serve as a lived expression of Muxerista-Jotería pedagogy, creating the conditions for critical awareness, community building, and transformative learning (Revilla, 2004). Ultimately, we reject Eurocentric imperatives that desire objectivity and instead foreground an ethic of shared vulnerability, reflection, and dialogue (Lopez & Calderón, 2023; Flores & Morales, 2021).

Our graduate seminar was rooted in the ethical commitments of plática, in which the professor invited graduate students to engage and take the lead in their own analysis of their process, thereby sharing epistemological responsibility as a collective rather than as individuals. Throughout the course, we spent considerable time dialoguing with peers, centering lived experiences, and engaging with Latinx scholarship, and had two zine-sharing circles in the semester, during which each person shared their work-in-progress and received supportive feedback. For our paper, we include the authors' completed zines, their written critical reflections, and our one-hour plática, which took place over Zoom and featured all six authors offering insights into the affective, political, and epistemological stakes of zine-making.

Zine Assignment

Each week, students were tasked with producing a two-page spread that responded to that week's content, with no constraints on form or structure. These weekly entries ultimately coalesced into full zines, organized around the individual's interests, such as Nepantla, AI, and family dialogue. As the professor, I provided multiple examples of zine work both in physical and digital formats. Although I initially wanted the zines to be physical, I felt that a *digital* zine would be more accessible and cost-effective for students, as I have an ethic in class that no students should have to purchase any class materials. Therefore, I provided an abundance of digital resources for students to use in

creating their zines, and most used Canva, while others used Google Slides. Although students requested rubrics for what makes a “good zine”, I shared with students that creating a rubric would be antithetical to a zine’s political essence. While there was a requirement to engage with the course content in some way, students had to decide on and embrace their own structure, format, and style.

Trenzas as Data Analysis

We engaged with what Puerto Rican scholar Sandra Quiñones (2016) describes as *trenzar*, or to braid, our data analysis. Since we discussed our experiences in multiple ways, including written critical reflections, the one-hour plática, and our digital zines, we argue that “weaving together” these multiple data sources speak to and align with Muxerista-Jotería pedagogies. Particularly important was also the *nudos*, or knots, in data analysis, which represent the “points of entanglement (i.e., sites of tension, struggle, and contradiction)” (Quiñones, 2016, p.349). Such tensions and sites of contradictions are generative and offer texture to the full braid as we engage in weaving together themes. Guided by *trenza analytics*, we engaged in *trenza*-based coding, which consisted of coding our written critical reflections and the one-hour plática while allowing the digital zines to be legible as an already engaged form of analysis. In other words, while our written work used *trenza*-based coding, we did not “code” our zines; instead, we gave them space to exist and be as they are.

Positionalities and Accountabilities

Positionality statements have become ubiquitous within educational research; however, their utility has been questioned, as oftentimes positionality statements are one-off confessionals (Pillow, 2003) or a running list of someone’s background and identities (Secules et al., 2021) with no interrogation of the interlocking dynamics of power and knowledge. Guided by Boveda and Annamma’s (2023) work on *positioning* in lieu of simply writing positionality statements, we collectively share the tensions, realities, and shortcomings of our paper. Researcher positioning is invested in an iterative process throughout the entirety of the project and is “an active verb where researchers reflect and address where their locations lie in relationship to interlocking systems of oppression; fields of study; and, most important, research participants over time” (Boveda and Annamma, 2023, p.307). Therefore, we collectively write our continuously shaping

research positionings and share our accountabilities to the greater work of envisioning liberatory educational praxis.

Pablo and Omar consider themselves part of the Chicanx/Latinx community, with Pablo being of Indigenous descent (Chichimeca Guamares and P'urhépecha) and Queer. Garrison, Katie, Maria, and Anna are non-Latinx white graduate students, with Garrison, Katie, and Maria also identifying as Queer. We highlight these particular backgrounds because of the question that Boveda and Annamma (2023) asked about the purpose of these statements. Doing Muxerista pedagogical work (Revilla, 2004; Revilla et al., 2021) cannot be divorced from the historical and culturally rooted legacies of Chicanx/Latinx/Muxer/Jotx scholarship. In coming together in *plática*, we also faced the tension of how to honor the work of Muxerista's and Jotería scholars when not all of us are from/of those communities. Or better yet, how can we (and *should* we even) engage in Muxerista-Jotería pedagogies in ways that are non-extractive, relational, committed to social transformation, and uplift and amplify the voices of Chicanx/Latinx communities. In engaging with these questions first, we realized that we were aligned with similar socially liberatory projects, and from this shared collective commitment to unsettling dominant epistemologies, honoring complexity, and engaging in anticolonial pedagogical practices, we enter our findings and analysis of our zine-making work.

Zines in the Classroom: Anticolonial Pedagogies and Epistemological Curiosity

Deploying the theoretical frameworks of Muxerista-Jotería pedagogies (Revilla, 2004; Revilla, 2022) and Nepantla theories (Anzaldúa, 1987; Keating, 2006), two major themes emerged. Deploying both theories encouraged us to examine the liminality (Keating, 2006) of zine-making while also engendering how zines are forms of social transformation that utilize interdisciplinary knowledge, enact a theory in the flesh (Moraga and Anzaldúa, 1984), and are committed to the transgression against structures and systems that impact Chicana/Latina/Latine communities (Revilla, 2004). The two overarching themes that emerged were a) anticolonial pedagogies and b) zine-ing epistemological curiosity. In this section, we highlight the main findings while also weaving in images of the zines to highlight the connections, tensions, and possibilities of zine-ing Latinidad.

Anticolonial Pedagogies

The first theme that emerged from the data was how creating zines enabled different ways of engaging in anticolonial pedagogies. In particular, we highlight pedagogies that are liberatory and transgressive in response to the persistence of colonial logics in academia. In the plática and reflections, there were references to different theoretical orientations such as hooks (1994), Freire (1987), and Anzaldúa (1987), and we made note of how zines can be and are an example of anticolonial pedagogy, and a reminder that everyone has a shared responsibility in their learning. Although anticolonial pedagogies are understood in a multiplicity of ways, in our findings, we understood them as purposeful acts of transgression against the epistemological and material realities at the intersection of settler colonialism and education. Regarding the freedom enmeshed in the zine assignment, Katie mentions:

Katie: The whole time we were talking, I was thinking about Teaching to Transgress, which was crazy that it was written in 1994. And bell hooks is talking about basically, exactly this, about how in the pursuit of education as liberatory practice, students are often taken off guard when they're asked to assume responsibility for their learning in a way that's like so different from what Freire calls [the] banking method and all that.

Katie notes that assuming responsibility for one's own learning is often overshadowed by the colonial mechanics of education, which prefer the regurgitation of information (i.e., the banking method) over critical discourse and liberatory thinking. Katie enacted this type of anticolonial pedagogy by imagining the zine, and therefore zine logics, as a space to create a course layout for Introductory Composition, reminiscent of a syllabus, but against syllabus normalcy. Drawing on pedagogical experiences they had with a previous professor, Dr. Carmen Kynard, Katie elucidated that creating a syllabus does not have to be formulaic and rigid but can instead take creative and anticolonial forms when drawing on the logics of zine-making. The logics were what Pablo, the professor of the course, hoped for, and as they mentioned

Pablo: When I put together the course, I really wanted to give students as much pedagogical freedom that encouraged intellectual curiosity. The zine assignment came from years of doing zine work myself, and I wanted students to also have the

opportunity to curate their artistic vision with little limitations. To me, I prioritized the challenges of the process, the felt experience, the piecing together, and the sharing of our emerging work. Although students asked me for a rubric or what constitutes a “good zine”, I encouraged them to instead ask themselves, “What feelings does the scholarship I read elicit? How do I share what I learn? Why am I choosing to piece together the content that I am drawn to”?

Furthermore, Katie highlights how collaborative classroom praxis extends beyond a single classroom experience and can be carried forward and scaffolded into continuously shifting anticolonial possibilities. As they state:

Katie: this is not necessarily a syllabus, as I went through the process it became more of a course-reader vibe because this freed me up to think beyond the limitations of the syllabus and disrupt the “apartheid of knowledge” that [Pérez] Huber (2009) describes within the academy: the separation and denigration of epistemologies which originate beyond the confines of white european knowledge systems and traditions... so to truly work to enact a commitment to social justice and anti-colonial work, I have chosen to create a course organized through the logic of a zine rather than the typical syllabus.

Shown below are two examples of zines undertaking anticolonial pedagogies, one of which is Katie’s zine/course reader, and Anna’s, who theorized with the metaphor of the kitchen table as community epistemologies. Katie’s zine (Figure 1) incorporates what they call a “zine logic” by using pictures of the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo as the backdrop of their left page spread, spelling out Borderlands down the left-hand side, and including the texts from Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands: La Frontera* (along with other works), to showcase that the material, visual, and affectual realities of *fronteriza*/borderland thinking is just as important as written text. On the other hand, depicting murals as a different type of literacy and a site of knowledge production, all of which create a different type of educational texture and pedagogy, not fully realized in a traditional academic syllabus.

Figure 1

Two-page spread of Katie's zine showcasing zine logics



Anna's zine takes a different pedagogical approach (Figure 2). Moved by the stories of her dear friends Daniela and Diego, the zine pays homage to the many discussions and *pláticas* they had over the dinner table, and how Anna learned valuable life lessons in *convivencia* with her close friends.

Figure 2

Two-page spread of Anna's zine showcasing the kitchen table



As demonstrated in this theme, anticolonial pedagogies defied colonial expectations of education. The zines provided a canvas for students to take different approaches; for example, Katie's course reader and Anna's kitchen-table analogy. While neither had a preconceived idea of what the zine would be at the start of the course, through vulnerable and liberatory learning, they both curated meaningful, attentive, and relational projects. Ultimately, as Maria explains in her critical reflection, "the zine is a relevant example of where the theory behind critical education meets what we as educators do in practice. It is not enough to read and discuss the articles and bring in an inclusive curriculum... we must radically change how we approach both the collection and demonstration of knowledge".

Epistemological Curiosity with/in Zine Formations

Our second theme elucidated the question of epistemological curiosity. Questions and comments emerged about what type of "knowledge" a Zine elicits, and students commented on how zines can incorporate a range of epistemologies (emotional, lived, embodied) that "traditional assignments" might not generally afford. Put differently, because the zine required a shift in *how* and *what* we engage through communal and personal praxis, zines transformed from an assignment into a purposeful curation of knowledge that was reflexive of the curator's intentions and curiosities.

For example, because Garrison is also a medical student, many of her zine entries tied in questions of Latinidad, medicine, and art, whereas Maria, given her professional history as a teacher and educational leader in San Antonio, dedicated the zine as a tool to amplify the voices of Latinx/Chicanx voices. Even though each zine was inherently different, the common thread or *trenza* that tied them all together was the purposeful gathering of ideas to address a specific topic, issue, or struggle. To further explore the epistemological, curious, and creative labor of zines, we further discuss two subthemes, *zine-ing Latinidad* and *zine as nepantla*, as a way to further give texture to zine epistemologies.

Zine-ing Latinidad

In zine-ing Latinidad, we note how the zine has created a digital space for critically engaging with the content and processes of Latinx/Chicanx theories and knowledges. The term Latinidad/es has taken many discursive, ideologically, semantic, and sociopolitical shifts within the U.S. context and transnationally. While a more robust discussion of Latinidad/es is out of the scope with this paper, we articulate Latinidad/es to be those shared and nuanced experiences of subordination, agency, and resistance of various groups of Latin America in the United States while also being attuned to the essentialization and violence that Latinidad/es can and do impose (Aparicio, 2017). In relation to our zine work, while we did read Latinx/Chicanx academic scholarship, the zine was also a sandbox of epistemological curiosity where the piecing together of Latinx/Chicanx literature took even deeper directions. As Garrison shares in her critical reflection, “engaging in this process reinforced that the process of knowing and creating knowledge does not always come in polished formats—more often it jumps through pages, photographs, pigment, and silence”. Omar and Maria’s zines are examples of how zine-ing Latinidad challenged their own thinking while simultaneously showcasing the multiple ways *in which theory emerged through the process*.

When we arrived at the topic of AfroLatinidad, Anti-Blackness, and mestizaje, Omar shared that he asked Canva AI (a tool in the Canva platform) to produce images of “Latino students”. While we are unable to identify the racial backgrounds of the AI-generated image of Latino students, Canva AI did produce what one could consider a homogenized image of Latino students. Reference to Blackness, we unsurprisingly found,

was absent in the AI's amalgamation of Latinidad, and thus, we discussed how AI continues to be a racial structure that produces essentialist ideas of Latinx/Chicanx identity.

Figure 3

Two-page spread of Omar's Zine on AI and Anti/Blackness



For Maria, she shares how her zine was inspired by *trenzas* (braids) and how to *trenzar* (braiding) allowed her to see the interconnectedness of culture, community, and knowledge. As she shares, “each page features a *trenza* to show that each piece is connected, even though the stories and histories shared in the articles come from different pockets of Latinidad”. In Maria’s spread, she makes a *trenza* out of muxerista pedagogies (Revilla, 2004; Revilla, 2010), Trans Jotería pedagogy (Caraves, 2020), and epistemologies of the Brown body (Cruz, 2004). She incorporates Christine Soto’s poem from Cruz (2004) in the background on the left page and emplaces the word *Muxerista* (Revilla, 2004) and a silhouette of a woman’s blooming body in the center, signaling the connection between Cruz (2004) and Revilla (2004). To complement this, *trenza* was Caraves’ (2020) powerful testimonio of his Trans Chicanx identity, which Maria shares, was moving to read as a Queer woman and shares how she was able to understand how transness, queerness, jotería, muxerista, and testimonio can/do/have always shared the same braid.

Figure 4

Two-page spread of Maria's zine on Muxerista and Trans Jotería Pedagogies



Zine-ing Latinidad demonstrates the abundance of Latinx/Chicanx theory and knowledge, and how the process of zine-making provided an avenue for deep engagement with these theories and knowledge. In the next subtheme, a specific theme emerged in many people's theoretical engagement – nepantla.

Zine as Nepantla

For many of us, a theory that we gravitated towards was that of nepantla (Anzaldúa, 1987; Keating, 2006). We found that nepantla invited us to be vulnerable, raw, and reflexive during the creation of the zines, while locating liminality as a generative site of theoretical, creative, and ontological richness. The zine, then, was not only a place to theorize the concept of nepantla through visual and artistic means, but was *itself* nepantla because of how uncertain, limitless, and liminal the process was. As Katie shares, “I was thinking a lot about Nepantla, obviously, but also like borderlands and sort of like that in betweenness, because the form of the Zine is really interesting, because it has its roots in like DIY spaces and like political movements and subculture”. Whereas Omar highlights how “Anzaldúa’s framing of the in-between space has informed how I make sense of borders, language, and belonging”. Ultimately, we share Garrison’s two-page spread and how she engaged with nepantla as theory/nepantla as process.

Figure 5

Two-Page spread of Garrison's Zine on Nepantla



Garrison shares in her critical reflection that she approached the zine as a “collage of knowledge systems, where the personal met the political, and the ethereal met the academic”. Further thinking about nepantla as theory and process, she shares:

By intentionally using a messy, unstructured layout—filled with cutouts and fragmented pieces from Latinx artists engaged in resistant discourse—I wanted the zine itself to embody the curriculum of the readings. The disjointed form was a deliberate rejection of neatness, linearity, and coherence as markers of intellectual legitimacy. Instead, the layout mirrored the themes of disruption, multiplicity, and reclamation that we explored. In refusing traditional academic structure, the zine became a decolonial object—one that held space for contradiction, complexity, and creative resistance. Theory doesn’t only live in ivory towers; it lives in the stories we tell, rituals we keep, and the communities we nurture. It lives in the zine.

Her two-page spread acknowledges, theorizes, and pushes the conversation of nepantla in medical spaces. As shared previously, Garrison is a medical student and shares how her medical training is enmeshed in white Euro-Western onto-epistemologies. She asks in her zine, “What knowledge are we missing because we insist in singular, hyper-rational view of medicine?” By incorporating theories of nepantla, visual aesthetics from Latinx/Chicanx artists, and questions of medicine, Garrison used the zine as both a

critique of Western medical systems and a space for envisioning a more ethical, relational, and liberatory system of medicinal practice. Although there were no clear answers, zine as nepantla embraced the uncertainty of our questions and directed us to think of the in-betweenness as a site of transformation and radical possibility.

Concluding Trenza: Zine-ing Possibilities in Latinx/Chicanx Education

Rooted in subculture and dedicated to subverting systems of domination such as cisheteropatriarchy, misogyny, racism, and trans/homophobia, zines offer a communal and self-reflexive educational praxis (Bradley et al., 2025; Creasap, 2015; Piepmeier, 2009; Duncombe, 1997). As demonstrated throughout our findings, zines became a self-authored and communally situated curation of epistemology, pedagogies, and theory. Muxerista pedagogies (Revilla, 2004; Revilla, 2022) and theories of nepantla (Anzaldúa, 1987; Keaton, 2006) gave shape to how the messy creation of zines were necessary steps of the process; because it is with/in the space of liminality, of uncertainty and conjuncture, where the responsibility of one's own learning flourished (hooks, 1994). Zine-making transformed from an assignment into a mode of inquiry dedicated to challenging Euro-Western onto-epistemologies by emphasizing the interdependence of knowledge, experience, and communal responsibility (Bradley et al., 2025; Lopez & Calderón, 2023; Ek et al., 2010). Theorizing with/in nepantla reminded us that our zines should not be understood as completed projects (Keating, 2006; Licona, 2012), but continuously evolving affectual, material, and epistemological sensibilities. In other words, although creating a zine was the “final assignment”, zines enact a type of ephemeral and clandestine ethic where they “instigate intimate, affectionate connections between their creators and readers, not just communities but *embodied* communities that are made possible by the materiality of the zine medium” (Piepmeier, 2008, p. 214). Thus, although the zine assignment concluded at the end of Spring 2025, its afterlife remains rooted within the larger milieu of Latinx/Chicanx theories, knowledge, and pedagogies.

Our findings also suggested how “Muxerista-Jotería pedagogies are intentionally rooted in relationships, friendships, and our humanity at the core” (Revilla et al., 2021). Guided by the professor on record, Pablo, they encouraged the classroom to think deeply with Critical Latinx educational studies, not only in acknowledging that Latinx/Chicanx communities have been susceptible to generations of violence and harm (Prieto and

Villenas, 2012; Tuck, 2009), but to view communities and their experiences as sites of strength, resilience, and cultural wealth (Revilla, 2004; Yosso, 2005). However, this was not a seamless endeavor. Contentions arose as we navigated these complex discourses, such as the anti-Blackness and anti-Indigeneity in concepts such as *mestizaje* and *Latinidad* (Sanchez, 2024; Urrieta & Calderon, 2019; Chon et al., 2021; Cioè-Peña, 2024), or the colonial impositions of gender and sexuality on Latinx/Chicanx communities (Caraves, 2020; Alvarez, 2014; Salas-Santa Cruz, 2021). While the *trenzas* of theory, knowledge, and experience also had knots (Quiñones, 2016), we found these epistemological knots fruitful in suggesting zines as a site of educational liberatory praxis (Desyllas & Sinclair, 2014; Mahon et al., 2019).

In conclusion, the zine spreads shared in the findings are but a few examples of how theory, experience, embodied knowledge, and communal praxis coalesced in visual and material ways. As Muxerista pedagogies urge (Revilla, 2004), we must also offer “a liberatory or transformative solution to racial, gender, sexuality, and class discrimination” (p.83). I, Pablo, approached my graduate courses aligned to the belief that to resist and transgress against the perpetual and structural forces that weigh on our shoulders, we must do so in a way that restores our spirits (Revilla, 2022), nourishes our creative subjectivities toward collective praxis (hooks, 1994), and is instilled with laughter, love, and the desire to envision in otherwise freer and more just world. As we tighten this last *trenza*, what is clear is the necessity of continuing to theorize from the spaces in-between, the precarious, and the always-in-transition (Anzaldúa, 2002). Our paper brings forth the communal imaginations of a class zine-ing and braiding *Latinidad*, in all its messy, complicated, and beautiful *nudos*.

Figure 6

Katie's opening zine page.



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