



Muxerista Pedagogies and Praxis :

Art. Activism. and Scholarship as Resistance and Restoration

Volume 20 Issue I, AMAE Special Double Issue

Association of Mexican American Educators Journal

A peer-reviewed, open access journal

2026



Association of Mexican American Educators Journal

A peer-reviewed, open access journal

Cover Art

Visitation, Transformation,
and Regeneration

by Zamara Cuyún, 2026

<https://www.zamaracuyun.com/>



Cover Art Used With Permission of the Artist.

Artist Statement

As a Latina artist, moving within predominantly white spaces, my art is my resistance. Inspired by my ancestral connections to the Maya homeland in highland Iximulew (Guatemala), it is a resistance against the powerful forces of colonization pervasive in Minnesota (my home of birth) and across Las Américas. It is a visual resistance that spans time and space, seeking connection with other Latinas, Indigenous women, and women of the global majority to celebrate the dignity and power of our shared life experiences and to reinforce our connections with one another in the face of ever-more-challenging circumstances. My dark-to-light painting technique points to a philosophy of darkness as potential, with the ever-present possibility of beauty emerging from the universe's darkness and of connections emerging from the darkness of memory.

For over 500 years, most accounts of Maya history and cosmology have been produced by non-Indigenous sources. Maya voices—especially female voices—are absent from these narratives. When Indigenous women—human and sacred alike—do make an appearance in Western-produced literature, their original roles within their cultures of origin are perverted. Across what is today known as “the Americas,” Indigenous women have been gazed upon and interpreted through the European colonizers’ lenses of White Supremacy, patriarchy, and Christianity.

Our goddesses and sacred grandmothers have been stolen, defiled, abused, and transformed into “devils,” “witches,” and “shit-eaters.” False interpretations have contributed to cycles of violence and historical trauma, which persist today—not only in the way that Indigenous women are perceived by outsiders, but also as justification for countless crimes against humanity across both American continents.

Brown and female, we are objectified, romanticized, hyper-sexualized, and de-humanized. We are preconditioned by the mainstream Euro-centric cultures into which we are born and raised to de-value ourselves and to be devalued by others - reduced to the “Indian Princess” or the “Ixta Fea” (ugly, dirty Indian girl). These stereotypes produce devastating consequences when we consider the alarming rates of abuse, rape, disappearance, murder, self-harm, and suicide plaguing Indigenous women and girls.

When we unite to uphold one another as Latinas/x, we become a powerful force to counter these narratives, re-imagining the mythical and re-humanizing the living. We can reclaim our sacred grandmothers, ourselves, and future generations.

It's time to reclaim our sacred grandmothers, ourselves, and our future generations. Our Grandmothers—past, present, and future—are powerful sources of love, strength, courage, and healing. Within each of us, they plant these seeds - teaching us the fundamental lessons of self-love, self-care, self-determination, and dignity. In turn, we are called to mentor—to pass these lessons on to our children and communities.

The pieces submitted to this special issue are only a small sample of the visual stories of our Indigenous grandmothers and feminist femtors/queertors that are not often told in the colonialist narratives that actively work to erase the “Indio” from their histories. They speak to the interconnections among women—past, present, and future. They honor and connect us, like umbilical cords, to our ancestral grandmothers and feminist femtors/queertors—sacred and human alike—and to one another.



Association of Mexican American Educators Journal

A peer-reviewed, open access journal

Volume 20 Issue I

2026

AMAE Special Double Issue

Muxerista Pedagogies and Praxis:

Art, Activism, and Scholarship as Resistance and Restoration

Guest Editors

Roberto C. Orozco, PhD
University of Minnesota—Twin Cities

Anita Tijerina Revilla, PhD
California State University, Los Angeles

Editors

Patricia Sánchez, PhD
The University of Texas at San Antonio

Antonio J. Camacho, PhD
AMAE, Inc.

Associate Editors

Julie L. Figueroa, PhD
Sacramento State

Lucila D. Ek, PhD
The University of Texas at San Antonio

Managing Editor

Jerry Romero Jr., PhD
The University of Texas at San Antonio



Association of Mexican American Educators Journal

A peer-reviewed, open access journal

Volume 20 Issue I

2026

AMAE Special Double Issue

Muxerista Pedagogies and Praxis: Art, Activism, and Scholarship as Resistance and Restoration

Table of Contents

Introduction, Roberto C. Orozco, PhD **pp. 1-10**

1. Heridas y Sanación Colectiva: The Path of Conocimiento as a Muxerista-Jotería Framework for Queer Latinx/a/o Research in Higher Education, by Roberto C. Orozco, PhD **pp. 11-31**

2. "It's For My Science Daughters": A Portrait of Dr. Leticia Márquez-Magaña's [Counter]Storied Legacies for Latinas and STEM, by Michael Angel Vázquez, PhD, Rama Ali Kased, PhD, Janin Guzman-Morales, PhD **pp. 32-54**

3. Acuer(pan)do la pedagogía muxerista, by Chantal Figueroa, PhD **pp. 55-70**

4. Transnacionalizando y Transfronterizando: Arte, Expresiones e Iniciativas de la Jotería desde abajo del Globo Sur en México, by Luis Oswaldo Esparza, PhD, José Ramón Ramírez, BA, Mario Marín, MA, Geovani Temich, BA **pp. 71-83**

5. Zine-ing Latinidad: Zinemaking, Latinidades, and the Muxerista- Jotería Pedagogical Possibilities with/ in the Graduate Classroom, by Pablo Montes, PhD, MA, Omar Serna, MA, Garrison Daly, MPH, Katherine Crowe, Maria O'Connor, MA, MEd, Anna Block, MLA **pp. 84-106**

6. ¡Mi Mamá Me Enseñó a Luchar!: Muxerista Mothering Pedagogy, by Joanna Nuñez, PhD **pp. 107-124**

Collection of Poetry: Literacy, Bridge a Dream, The Border to Me, by Xuanito Espinoza-Cuellar, MEd **pp. 125-128**

Book Review of The Power of Latino Leadership

Tamales and Maracas Are Not a Framework: A Muxerista Critique of The Power of Latino Leadership, by Michelle Lopez, MA, MFA, Arturo Servin, MA **pp. 129-133**

Author Biographies **pp. 134-138**



Association of Mexican American Educators Journal

A peer-reviewed, open access journal

Volume 20 Issue I

2026

AMAE Special Double Issue

Muxerista Pedagogies and Praxis:

Art, Activism, and Scholarship as Resistance and Restoration

Guest Editors

Roberto C. Orozco, PhD
University of Minnesota–Twin Cities

Anita Tijerina Revilla, PhD
California State University, Los Angeles

Editors

Patricia Sánchez, PhD
The University of Texas at San Antonio

Antonio J. Camacho, PhD
AMAE, Inc.

Associate Editors

Julie L. Figueroa, PhD
Sacramento State

Lucila D. Ek, PhD
The University of Texas at San Antonio

Managing Editor

Jerry Romero Jr., PhD
The University of Texas at San Antonio

Introduction

Roberto C. Orozco, PhD
University of Minnesota–Twin Cities

Special Double Issue Introduction Part I

Roberto C. Orozco, PhD

University of Minnesota—Twin Cities

“I am a Chicana feminist. I identify as a mujer, as a Mexicana, as an hija, or daughter, as a student, a revolucionaria, a mujerista, activista, organizadora, conscious.” —delia (Raza Womyn de UCLA member interview in 1999, Revilla, 2003, p. 288)

“I was a part of this really beautiful queer-loving [feminist] community [the Muxerista community], and that was like the most transformative experience for me of my life, not just in college, but like of my life”. — Leila (collaborator pseudonym from Orozco, 2022)

The two epigraphs that open this special issue anchor the intellectual, political, and affective commitments of Muxerista pedagogy and praxis across generations. Though spoken decades apart and within different contexts, both quotes illuminate the transformational possibilities of naming oneself, finding community, and engaging collective struggle as pathways toward consciousness, healing, and liberation. Both delia and Leila’s words underscore how Muxerista ways of being and knowing function as transformative terrains where individuals come into new understandings of themselves, their relationships, and their sociopolitical possibilities. Furthermore, the quotes foreground love, relationality, and communal care as central pedagogical elements that resonate deeply across the contributions in this special double issue. This is the first issue of the special double issue, ***Muxerista Pedagogies and Praxis: Art, Activism, and Scholarship as Resistance and Restoration (A Special Double Issue)***.

Additionally, this special double issue is a homage to the over 25 years of Muxerista activism, organizing, and social change that have evolved across academia, community, and geographies. The term Muxerista was first coined by Raza Womyn de UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles) in 2002 to define “a woman-identified Chicana/Latina who considers herself a feminist or womanist” (Revilla, 2004, p. 82, 2005b). Over the years, Dr. Anita Tijerina

Revilla has expanded on the term and embodiment of Muxerista by asserting the theoretical and pedagogical praxis rooted in theory, activism, and healing. This expansive definition is representative of her many years of community organizing alongside Las Vegas Muxerista activists (Revilla & Rangel-Medina, 2011). Dr. Anita Revilla (2022) notes that the term Muxerista “has always been organic and evolving” (p. 193). In her most recent works she defines a Muxerista as “a gender-fluid and sexually expansive Chicanx/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). She asserts that a Muxerista identity and praxis is simultaneously “a Chicana/Latina[x], a feminist, and an activist, never just one or the other” (Revilla, 2009, 2022, p. 193). As such, Muxerista identity, pedagogy, and praxis continue to evolve as a dynamic and expansive framework that nurtures critical consciousness, relationality, healing, and collective transformation across multiple sites of struggle and possibility.

Throughout the last two decades, scholars, activists, and organizers have taken up this definition to imagine and enact Muxerista pedagogy and praxis across spaces of education, community building, and sociopolitical knowledge production. For example, Morales (2016) enacts a Muxerista pedagogical practice to engage Latina/o youth in Chicana/o Studies, particularly within the site of elementary schooling. Additionally, Oliva (2017) advances her analysis of Latina mothers' leadership in their elementary school children's education using a Muxerista theoretical and research framework. Oliva and Aleman Jr. (2019) build on this by naming how a Muxerista politics of education reconceptualizes the role of Latina mothers with educational leadership, including educational policy and parent engagement. Similarly, Fernández & Paredes Scribner (2020) name how Latine parent organizing is structured and enacted through a Muxerista praxis within an urban elementary school in the Midwest. Using Muxerista story(telling), Flores (2022) reframes parent involvement by naming how Latina mothers support their high-achieving Latina daughters through the educational pipeline. The role of mothers is central to several scholars' engagement with Muxerista identity, pedagogy, and praxis, as further articulated in Nuñez's (2019) work on how mothers impart Muxerista feminist knowledge and resistance practices to their children and within the home.

Several scholars extend Revilla's (2004) Muxerista pedagogy within the higher education landscape. Revilla (2005a, 2009, 2010) has published several articles that speak to how Raza

Womyn of UCLA enacted resistance strategies and taught one another about social justice through their activism and organizing efforts on and off campus. Additionally, Alemán & Olivo (2019) highlight how Chicana editors of a college student newspaper engaged a muxerista orientation in their editorial practices to draw attention to Chicana issues on campus. Engaging in a Muxerista orientation is further reflected in Nuñez et al.'s (2021) chapter on undocumented Muxeristas, whose work and lives have shaped the very immigrant rights movement in Las Vegas through Muxerista and Jotería activism. My own work, Orozco (2022), engages the path of *conocimiento* (Anzaldúa, 2002) as an analytical tool to articulate the Muxerista Activist Consciousness Development Framework, which speaks to the identity and sociopolitical consciousness development of Las Vegas Muxeristas. This further speaks to how Muxerista activists come to know themselves within the context of their activism and how they take up Muxerista ways of being and doing in their organizing and activist efforts on and off campus (Orozco, 2025a, 2025b; Orozco & Williams, 2025). Conversely, Ek et al. (2010) diverge from the experiences of students and student activism by engaging Muxerista praxis within the lives of Chicana and Latina faculty in higher education. They highlight the importance of Muxerista mentoring for Chicana and Latina faculty in the tenure process at a Hispanic-Serving Institution. Alarcón and Bettez (2017) name their own Latina faculty experiences with Muxerista mentoring at a predominantly white university. As noted in the literature, Muxerista identity, pedagogy, and praxis have and continue to inform several areas of research inquiry within and beyond educational spaces, organizing efforts, and world-making practices.

Roberto's Muxerista Historia

As part of each special issue introduction, we, as guest editors, welcome you into our Muxerista historias. I was first introduced to the Muxerista community by Anita when I moved to Las Vegas to serve as the Director of Social Justice at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). This center was a result of the student activism on campus, including Muxeristas, that demanded the university to provide physical spaces that focused on social justice initiatives for minoritized communities. During the two years I lived in Las Vegas I had the opportunity to learn from and engage in activist work alongside Muxeristas on and off campus in Las Vegas. This community was also the one that introduced me to the Association for Jotería Arts, Activism, and Scholarship (AJAAS) when I got to go to the 2015 national conference in Phoenix, Arizona. Attending AJAAS in 2015 served as a catalyst to my Muxerista and Jotería identity and

praxis. I share more about this in the first article of this special issue, and I name how the Muxerista community was the space where I stepped unapologetically into my joto identity. This is one of the best gifts I have received from my Muxerista familia.

After leaving my role at UNLV, I went to Rutgers University–New Brunswick to begin my doctoral journey. I stayed in contact with many Muxeristas, who were my undergraduate students, at UNLV, and continued to connect during our time at the biennial AJAAS national conference. What started as my professional journey at UNLV ultimately became the center of my dissertation research, examining the identity and sociopolitical consciousness development of queer and trans Latinx/a/o college student activists in the contexts of their activism. My interest in this work came about because of my close relationships with Muxeristas and the history of queer and trans Latinx/a/o student activism at UNLV. My work alongside Muxeristas culminated with the Muxerista Activist Consciousness Development Framework (Orozco, 2025). This framework builds on Anita's early work with Raza Womyn de UCLA and the work she did alongside Muxeristas of Las Vegas. Ultimately, I see my work as a continuation of how we move forward Muxerista ways of being and doing across our communities and spaces.

I think of the Muxerista community in the metaphor of waves. I see the work Anita did alongside the Raza Womyn de UCLA as the wind and water that build the foundation for the waves to exist. In the first wave, I see Anita's work with the early UNLV and Las Vegas activists as the first wave of Muxeristas, from 2004 to 2012, that extended from the way of being in community with one another that was learned from Raza Womyn de UCLA. The Muxeristas of UNLV and Las Vegas from 2013 to 2017 are what I consider the second wave of Muxeristas, and where I entered the community. Recently, Anita Revilla, Joanna Nuñez (first wave Muxerista), Briceida Hernandez-Toledo (second wave Muxerista), and I were asked who we consider the third wave of Muxeristas to be, and our response was that the third wave of Muxeristas are the people that we are in relationship to now across spaces. Many Muxeristas continue to do work in Los Angeles and Las Vegas; for those of us not in those spaces, our Muxerista values and praxis traverse geographies and communities: to build emerging spaces of third wave Muxeristas.

Reflecting on my own Muxerista historia I am continuously brought back to the epigraphs at the beginning of this introduction. As a joto, being a Muxerista is more than an identity, it is a way of being in community with others while doing the work that matters. This

special issue is a homage to a community that taught me what it meant to claim an authentic Jotería identity. As someone who is intimately indebted to the Muxerista community, the work I have done and continue to do around queer and trans Latinx/a/o people in higher education is a moment of deep reflection of my own developmental process as someone who claimed a more unapologetic way of being when I began to be a part of this comunidad.

Special Double Issue: Part I

In this special double issue, we gather a set of deeply relational, creative, and sociopolitically grounded contributions that collectively advance Muxerista pedagogies and praxis. Across the collective manuscripts, the authors center practices of healing, community-building, and onto-epistemic disruptions that are vital frameworks for education, comunidad, and liberation. Taken together, these works insist that Muxerista pedagogies and praxis are not merely theoretical interventions, but lived, embodied, and insurgent practices that move across sites—academia, classrooms, homes, kitchens, and transnational landscapes.

As editors, we see this special double issue as both an offering and an invitation: an offering of Muxerista pedagogies as tools for survival and transformation, and an invitation for scholars, educators, activists, and organizers to continue building worlds that center relationality, spirit protection and restoration, and collective flourishing. As you enter this first part of the special double issue, we invite you to visit the second part of this special double issue.

We open up the first volume of this special double issue with *Heridas y Sanación Colectiva: The Path of Conocimiento as a Muxerista-Jotería Framework for Queer Latinx/a/o Research in Higher Education*, by guest editor Roberto C. Orozco. This opening article positions Anzaldúa's (2002) path of conocimiento as a Muxerista-Jotería framework that embraces the non-linear, liminal, and transformative processes of queer Latinx/a/o realities. By tracing how the path of conocimiento shapes every stage of the research process, from inquiry and collaborator engagement to data interpretation, the author reframes research itself as a relational, reflexive, and worldmaking practice. This intervention sets the tone for the issue by urging scholars to consider how knowledge production can honor the complexities and creative capacities of queer Latinx/a/o communities using a Muxerista-Jotería framework.

The theme of relationality and generational transformation continues in the second article by Michael Angel Vázquez, Rama Ali Kased, and Janin Guzman-Morales. This article

provides a portrait of Dr. Leticia Márquez-Magaña, whose life and work exemplify Muxerista values in STEM. Through portraiture and counterstory, “It’s For My Science Daughters”: A Portrait of Dr. Leticia Márquez-Magaña’s [Counter]Storied Legacies for Latinas and STEM” highlights how she resists the racialized and gendered constraints of academia by cultivating “science daughters” and extended networks of care. Her praxis of femtorship challenges dominant narratives of individual success and instead centers collective thriving, demonstrating how Muxerista commitments can reshape even the most exclusionary institutional spaces.

Expanding the scope of pedagogy beyond formal educational settings, the issue also includes a powerful exploration of *acuer(pan)do*—a Muxerista pedagogical practice rooted in baking *conchas*. In “*Acuer(pan)do la pedagogía muxerista*”, Chantal Figueroa foregrounds embodiment, rest, and mutual support as essential components of learning and community building. By situating mental health, dialogue, and care within the act of making bread, the author offers a radical reimagining of pedagogy as a sensory, communal, and healing practice. *Acuer(apn)do* becomes both metaphor and method: a way to *crear mundos de dignidad, sustancia, y la sabiduría colectiva*. This article is also written entirely in Spanish, and we invite readers to challenge themselves to engage with the author's linguistic offering.

Transnationally, this issue challenges the dominance of the Global North in Jotería Studies by centering voices, projects, and epistemologies from the Global South. The fourth article in this special issue is titled, “*Transnacionalizando y Transfronterizando: Arte, Expresiones e Iniciativas de la Jotería desde abajo del Globo Sur en México*” by Luis Oswaldo Esparza, José Ramón Ramírez, Mario Marín, and Geovani Temich. The authors conceptualize Muxerista–Jotería work as “*nagual*”, a shapeshifting force that traverses borders and disrupts asymmetrical power relations through narratives of art, activism, and scholarship from México. This intervention calls for a reorientation of the field toward horizontal exchanges and solidarities, emphasizing that the future of Jotería Studies depends on recognizing and engaging knowledge produced *desde abajo*.

Within the graduate classroom, another site often shaped by colonial and neoliberal logics, contributors reimagine pedagogy through zine-making as an anticolonial and liberatory practice. In “*Zine-ing Latinidad: Zinemaking, Latinidades, and the Muxerista-Jotería Pedagogical Possibilities with/ in the Graduate Classroom*”, Pablo Montes, Omar Serna, Garrison Daly, Katherine Crowe, Maria O’Connor, and Anna Block offer zine-making in the graduate

classroom through Muxerista-Jotería pedagogies. Drawing on pláticas among students and a professor, this article positions zines as socio-material spaces where knowledge, creativity, and relational accountability intersect. In this offering, the classroom becomes a site of *nepantla*, an in-between space of tension and possibility, where students collectively enact Muxerista-Jotería pedagogies and reconfigure the boundaries of academic work.

Furthermore, this issue brings us into the intimate space of the home, where Muxerista mothering emerges as a foundational pedagogical praxis in “¡Mi Mamá Me Enseñó a Luchar!: Muxerista Mothering Pedagogy” by Joanna Nuñez. Through testimonios of working-class Mexican and Chicana mothers and their *hijxs*, the author illuminates how feminist values are taught, embodied, and sustained across generations. This work underscores that the roots of Muxerista pedagogy and praxis are not confined to academic or activist spaces but are cultivated in everyday acts of care, storytelling, and survival. By naming mothering as a site of political education, the article expands our understanding of where and how transformative knowledge is produced and enacted.

Alongside the research and scholarly articles in this special issue, we are honored to include a collection of poems by Las Vegas Muxerista, Xuanito Espinoza-Cuellar, that refuse separation between theory and lived experience. In the three poems, “Literacy”, “Bridge a Dream”, and “The Border to Me”, Xuanito offers a visceral poetics of survival, borderlands, and becoming. These poems extend a Muxerista pedagogy and praxis into the realm of language as affect, memory, and embodied testimonio. They remind us that knowledge is also carried in silence, in longing, in fractured language, and in the enduring desire to care across boundaries.

Finally, we end Part I of this special double issue by offering a critical Muxerista book review of *The Power of Latino Leadership*. In this review, Michelle Lopez and Arturo Servin challenge us to think beyond the essentialism of Latinidad within leadership models. They further complicate Latinx/a/o leadership by naming that this identity is deeply rooted in history, politics, culture, and lived experience. The authors offer readers to engage Muxerista pedagogy and praxis as one critical approach to thinking about Latinx leadership models to engage more critically with decolonial and intersectional frameworks, move beyond broad generalizations to recognize the multiplicity of Latinx identities, challenge rather than conform to dominant leadership paradigms, and center community-based and movement-based leadership rather than institutionalized and elite figures.

Lastly, we are extremely thankful to our reviewers for all the feedback they provided to the authors of the manuscripts in both special issues. Their labor and feedback were immensely valuable to our process and the final versions of this special double issue!

To Anita, thank you for your fierce femtorship and queertorship! It has been an honor to continue to imagine Muxerista futures and possibilities alongside each other. To Jerry, Patricia, and Lucila, thank you all for the support and grace throughout the process of putting together this special double issue! To Jerry, thank you for making our vision of this special double issue come together so beautifully!

To current and future Muxeristas, may we continue to move in ways that honor our Muxerista values and ways of being in community with one another. ¡En la lucha, para siempre!

As a reminder, we invite you to visit Part II of this special double issue!

References

- Alarcón, J. D. & Bettez, S. (2017). Feeling Brown in the academy: Decolonizing mentoring through a disidentification Muxerista approach. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 50(1), 25-40. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2016.1250234>
- Alemán, S. M. & Olivo, F. M. (2018). Guerrillera editorship enacts the decolonial imaginary of Chicana editors. *Feminist Media Studies*, 19(4). <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2018.1488148>
- Anzaldúa, G. E. (2002). Now let us shift... *the path of conocimiento...* inner work, public acts. In G.E. Anzaldúa & A. Keating (Eds.), *This bridge we call home: Radical visions for transformation* (pp. 540-578). Routledge.
- Ek, L. D., Quijada Cerecer, P. D., Alanís, I. & Rodríguez, M. A. (2010) "I don't belong here": Chicanas/Latinas at a Hispanic Serving Institution creating community through Muxerista mentoring. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 43(4), 539-553, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2010.510069>
- Fernández, E. & Paredes Scribner, S. M. (2020). "Queríamos algo bueno...para nuestros hijos y también para nosotras": Centering Latine parent organizing as Muxerista praxis. *Journal of Education Human Resources*, 38(4), 391-415. <https://doi.org/10.3138/jehr-2020-0008>
- Flores, A. I. (2022). The value of m(other)work: Reframing parent involvement through a Muxerista framework. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 55(4), 422-433. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2022.2158402>
- Morales, S. (2016). Fostering critical counterspaces in the borderlands: Engaging Latin@ elementary youth in Chican@ studies. (Publication No. 10240721). [Doctoral dissertation, University of Utah]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.
- Núñez, J. (2019). ¡Mi mamá me enseñó!: Teaching and learning Mexicana and Chicana feminisms in the home. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.
- Núñez, J., Rubalcava-Cuara, J., & Revilla, A. T. (2021). Triunfando con o sin papeles: Muxerista y jotx-historias of DACA-mentation and activism in Las Vegas. In E. D. Hernández, E. F. Alvarez Jr., & M. García (Eds.), *Transmovimientos: Latinx queer migrations, bodies, and spaces* (pp. 3-33). University of Nebraska Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1kbgstz.6>
- Oliva, N. (2017). Latina mothers as leaders: Toward a Muxerista perspective in educational leadership. (Publication No. 10273433) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Utah]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.
- Oliva, N. & Aleman Jr., E. (2019). A Muxerista politics of education: Latina mother leaders enacting educational leadership and policy advocacy. *Educational Policy*, 33(1), 67-87. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904818807323>
- Orozco, R. C. (2022). *Aquí entre nos: Identity and Socio-Political Consciousness Development of Queer Latinx/a/o College Student Activists through the Muxerista Activist Consciousness Development Framework*. (Publication No. 29061238). [Doctoral dissertation, Rutgers University]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.
- Orozco, R. C. (2025a). *Entre Ser y No Ser: Identity development negotiations of queer Latinx/a/o college student activists*. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 18(Suppl 1), S296–S305. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000569>
- Orozco, R. C. (2025b). Queer Latinx/a/o college student activist liberatory praxis: The Muxerista Activist Consciousness Development Framework. *Journal of College Student Development*, 66(5), 499-516. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/csd.2025.a970175>

- Revilla, A. T. (2003). Inmensa fe en la victoria: Social justice through education. *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 24(2-3), 282-301. <https://doi.org/10.1353/fro.2004.0003>
- Revilla, A. T. (2004). Muxerista pedagogy: Raza womyn teaching social justice through student activism. *The High School Journal*, 87(4), 80-94. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hsj.2004.0013>
- Revilla, A. (2005a). Raza womyn engaged in love and revolution: Chicana/Latina student activists creating safe spaces within the university. *Cleveland State Law Review*, 52(1), 155-172. <https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/clevstlrev/vol52/iss1/11>
- Revilla, A. T. (2005b). *Raza Womyn Mujerstoria*. *Villanova Law Review*, 50(4), 799-821. <https://digitalcommons.law.villanova.edu/vlr/vol50/iss4/7>
- Revilla, A. (2009). Are all raza womyn queer? An exploration of sexual identities in a Chicana/Latina student organization. *NWSA Journal*, 21(3), 46-62. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20628194>
- Revilla, A. (2010). Raza womyn—Making it safe to be queer: Student organizations as retention tools in higher education. *Black Women, Gender, + Families*, 4(1), 37-61. <https://doi.org/10.5406/blacwomegendfami.4.1.0037>
- Revilla, A. T. (2022). Resisting spirit murder: Nurturing spirit restoration and healing through Muxerista and Jotería mentorship. *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, 47(2), 191-203. <https://doi.org/10.1525/azt.2022.47.2.191>
- Revilla, A. T. & Rangel-Medina, E. M. (2011). The Las Vegas activist crew. In M. Berta-Avila, A.T. Revilla, & J. Figueroa (Eds), *Marching students: Chicana and Chicano activism in education, 1968 to the present* (pp. 167-187). University of Nevada Press.



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

Guest Editors

Roberto C. Orozco, PhD
University of Minnesota–Twin Cities

Anita Tijerina Revilla, PhD
California State University, Los Angeles

Editors

Patricia Sánchez, PhD
The University of Texas at San Antonio

Antonio J. Camacho, PhD
AMAE, Inc.

Associate Editors

Julie L. Figueroa, PhD
Sacramento State

Lucila D. EK, PhD
The University of Texas at San Antonio

Managing Editor

Jerry Romero Jr., PhD
The University of Texas at San Antonio

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

Roberto C. Orozco, PhD

<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

Roberto C. Orozco, PhD

University of Minnesota—Twin Cities

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).

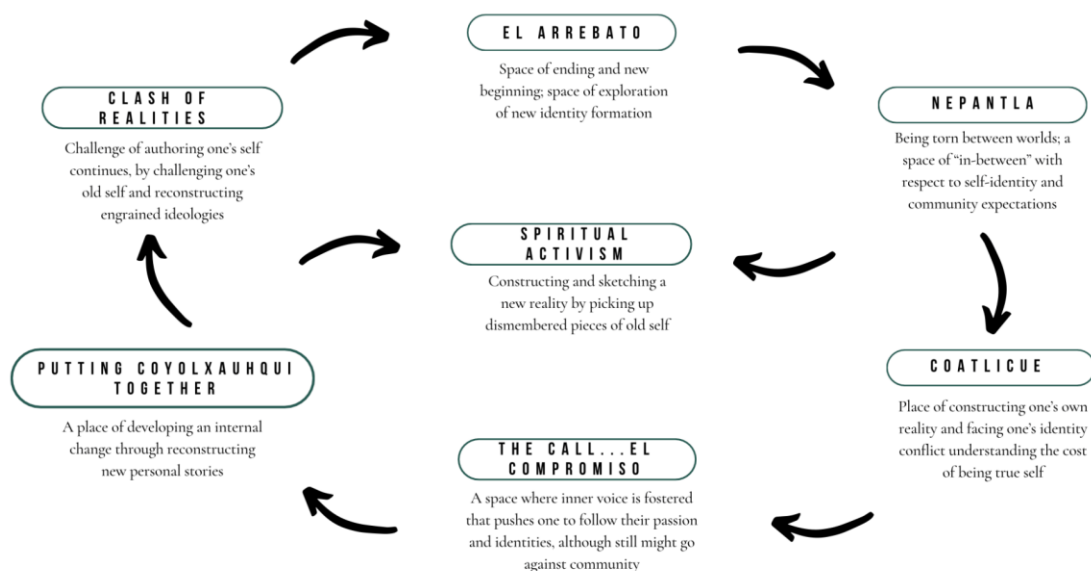
Using the Path of Conocimiento For Queer Latinx/a/o Research in Higher Education

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 *arrebataadas*, 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:

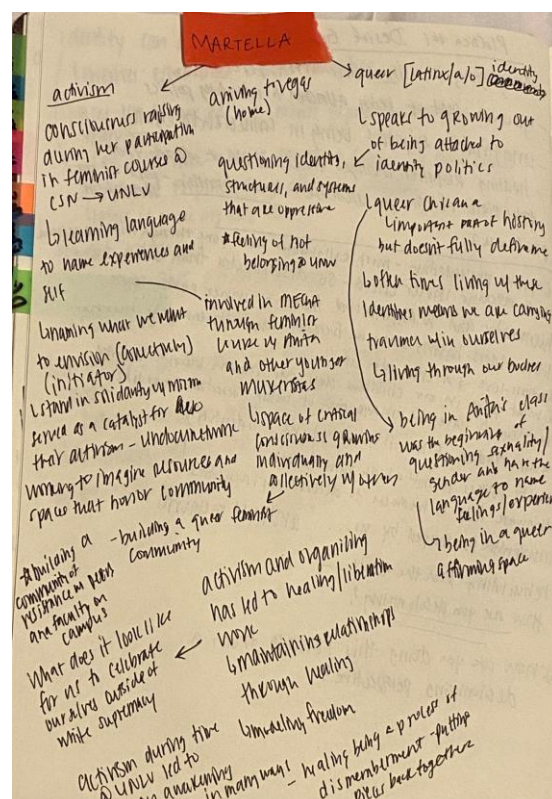
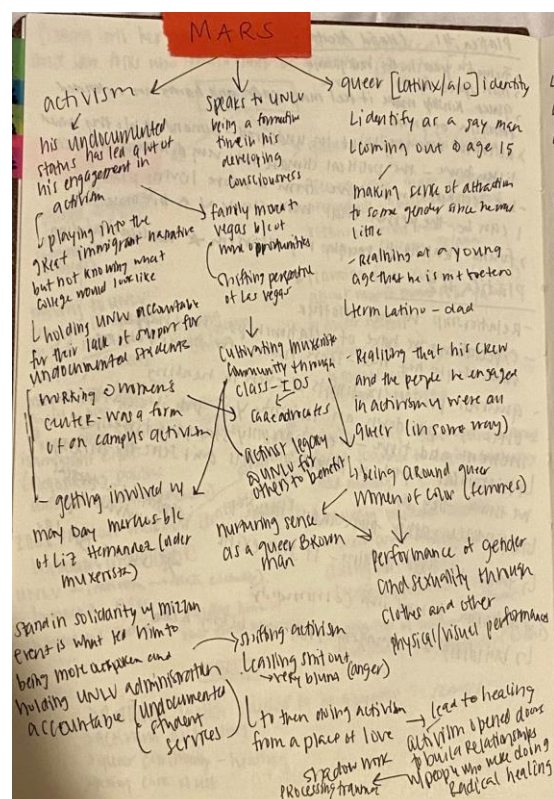
- How do my questions invite storytelling that is vulnerable, nonlinear, and rooted in lived experience rather than extraction?
- How am I attending to silence, emotion, and the body as forms of data and meaning making; and how might this be a part of the interpretive process?
- Where do contradictions 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

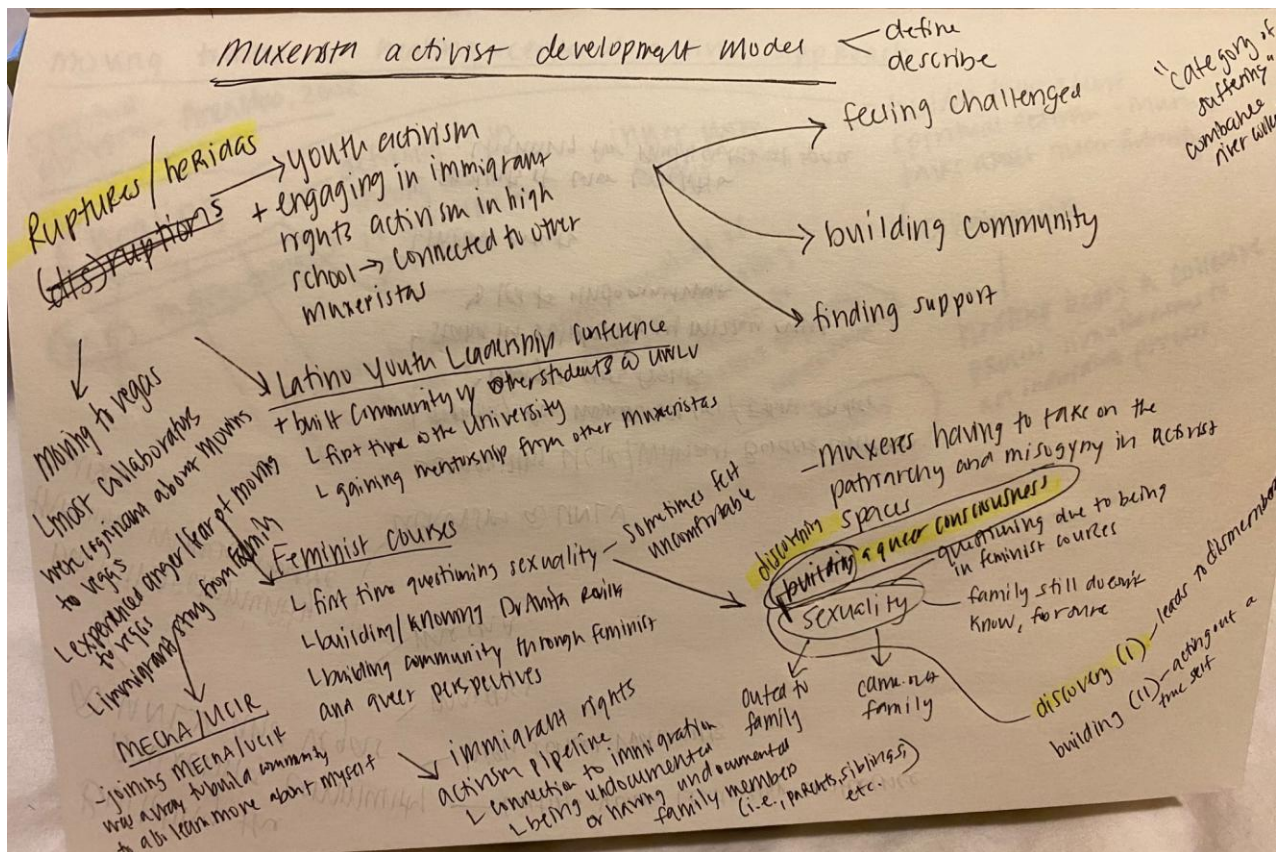
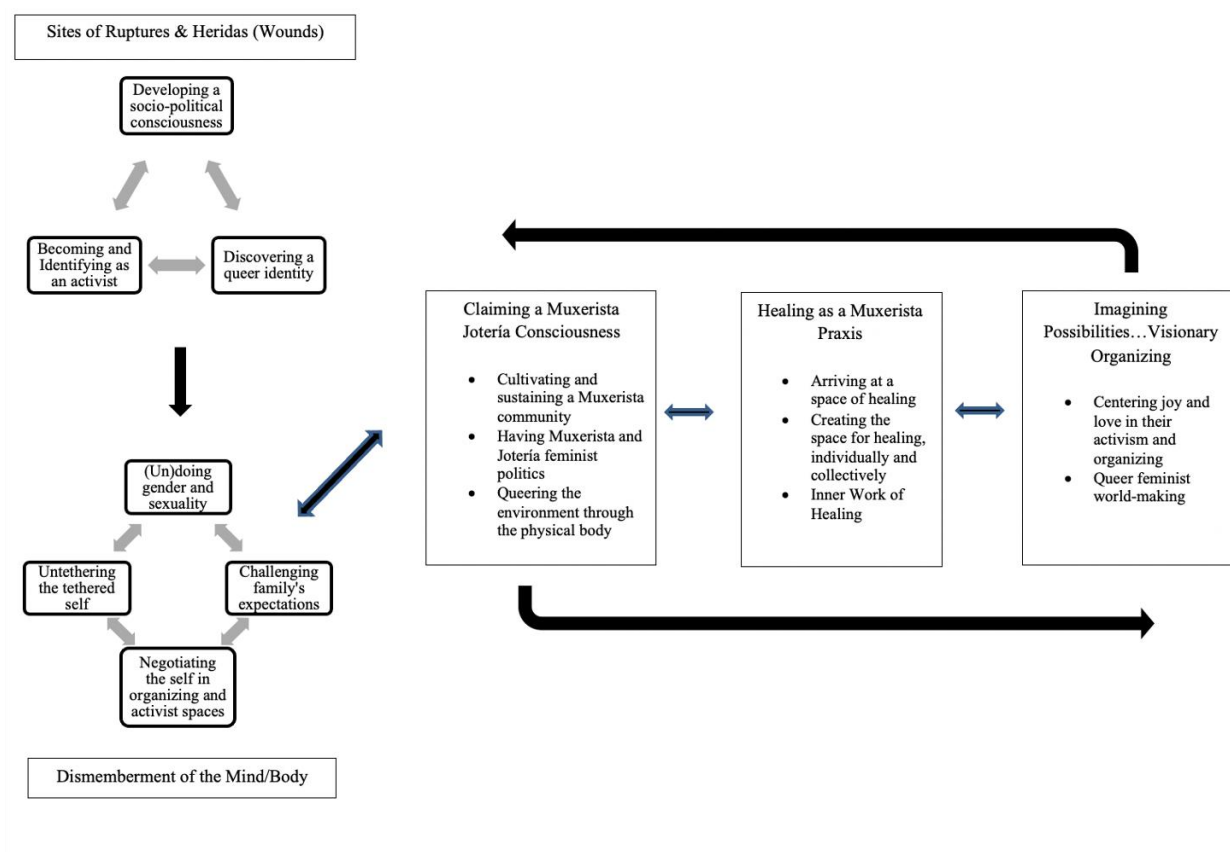


Figure 4

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.

References

- Abrego, L. (2024). Research as accompaniment: Reflections on objectivity, ethics, and emotions. In L. J. Chua & M. F. Massoud (Eds.), *Out of place: Fieldwork and positionality in law and society* (pp. 36–56). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009338219.003>
- Anzaldúa, G. E. (1987). *Borderlands/La frontera: The new mestiza*. Aunt Lute Books.
- Anzaldúa, G. E. (1994). Gloria E. Anzaldúa: Interviewed in Santa Cruz, CA, November 26, 1993. *Sinister Wisdom*, 52(Spring/Summer), 47-52.
- Anzaldúa, G. E. (2002). Now let us shift...the path of *conocimiento*...inner work, public acts. In G.E. Anzaldúa & A. Keating (Eds.), *This bridge we call home: Radical visions for transformation* (pp. 540-578). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1220hmq.10>
- Anzaldúa, G. E. (2015). Now let us shift...the path of *conocimiento*...inner work, public acts. In G.E. Anzaldúa & A. Keating (Eds.) *Light in the dark/Luz en lo oscuro: Rewriting identity, spirituality, reality* (pp.117-159). Duke University Press.
- Baxter Magolda, M. B. (2008). Three elements of self-authorship. *Journal of College Student Development*, 49, 269–284. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.0.0016>
- Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Cruz, C. (2001). Toward an epistemology of a brown body. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 14(5), 657–669. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518390110059874>
- Fierros, C. O. & Delgado Bernal, D. (2016). Vamos a platicar: The contours of pláticas as Chicana/Latina feminist methodology. *Chicana/Latina Studies*, 15(2), 98-121.
- Jones, S. R., Torres, V., & Arminio, J. L. (2023). *Negotiating the complexities of qualitative research in higher education: Essential elements and issues* (Third edition.). Routledge.
- Keating, A. (2015). Re-envisioning Coyolxauhqui, decolonizing reality: Anzaldúa's twenty-first century imperative. In G.E. Anzaldúa & A. Keating (Eds.) *Light in the dark/Luz en lo oscuro: Rewriting identity, spirituality, reality* (pp.ix-xxxvii). Duke University Press.
- Lara, I. (2002). Healing sueños for academia. In G. E. Anzaldúa & A. Keating (Eds), *this bridge we call home: radical visions for transformation* (pp. 433-438). Routledge.
- Malagon, M.C., Perez Huber, L., & Velez, V.N. (2009). Our experiences, our methods: Using grounded theory to inform a critical race theory methodology. *Seattle Journal for Social Justice*, 8(1), 253-272.
- Moraga, C. (1983). *Loving in the war years: Lo que nunca paso por sus labios* (2nd ed.). South End Press.
- Morales, S. & Gaxiola Serrano, T. G. (2020). Disrupting the colonial project: Walking the path of *conocimiento* in pedagogical practice of teaching research. In M. Cantú-Sanchez, C. de León-Zepeda, & N. E. Cantú (Eds), *Teaching Gloria E. Anzaldúa: Pedagogy and practice for our classrooms and communities* (pp. 222-239). The University of Arizona Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1595m67.21>
- Orozco, R.C. (2021). A futurity of Jotería Studies and higher education research: Epistemological and theoretical shifts. In N. Garcia, C. Salinas, & J. Cisneros, *Studying Latinx/a/o students in higher education: A critical analysis of concepts, theory, and methodologies* (pp. 175-187). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003008545-14>
- Orozco, R. C. (2022). *Aquí entre nos: Identity and Socio-Political Consciousness Development of Queer Latinx/a/o College Student Activists through the Muxerista Activist Consciousness Development Framework*. (Publication No. 29061238). [Doctoral dissertation, Rutgers University]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

- Orozco, R. C. (2025a). *Entre Ser y No Ser: Identity development negotiations of queer Latinx/a/o college student activists*. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 18(Suppl 1), S296–S305. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000569>
- Orozco, R. C. (2025b). Queer Latinx/a/o college student activist liberatory praxis: The Muxerista Activist Consciousness Development Framework. *Journal of College Student Development*, 66(5), 499-516. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/csd.2025.a970175>
- Orozco, R. C. & Pérez-Felkner, L. (2018). Ni de aquí, di de allá: Conceptualizing the self-authorship experience of gay Latino college men using *conocimiento*. *Journal of Latinos in Education*, 17(4), 386-394. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2017.1371018>
- Orozco, R. C. & Williams, J. A. (2025). The path toward spiritual activism: Queer Latinx/a/o college student (Muxerista) activism as sites of resistance, hope, joy, and futurity. *Journal of Queer and Trans Studies in Education*, 2(2), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.60808/rqdq-3z12>
- Pérez, D. E. (2014). Jotería epistemologies: Mapping a research agenda, unearthing a lost heritage, and building “Queer Aztlán”. *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, 39(1), 143-154. <https://doi.org/10.1525/azt.2014.39.1.143>
- Revilla, A. T. (2004). Muxerista pedagogy: Raza womyn teaching social justice through student activism. *The High School Journal*, 87(4), 80-94. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hsj.2004.0013>
- Revilla, A. T. (2022). Resisting spirit murder: Nurturing spirit restoration and healing through Muxerista and Jotería mentorship. *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, 47(2), 191-203. <https://doi.org/10.1525/azt.2022.47.2.191>
- Revilla, A. T., Núñez, J., Blanco, J. M. S., & González, S. A. (2022). Radical Joteria-Muxerista love in the classroom: Brown queer feminist strategies for social transformation. In *Handbook of Latinos and Education* (pp. 22-34). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429292026-4>
- Revilla, A. T. & Rangel-Medina, E. M. (2011). The Las Vegas activist crew. In M. Berta-Avila, A.T. Revilla, & J. Figueroa (Eds), *Marching students: Chicana and Chicano activism in education, 1968 to the present* (pp. 167-187). University of Nevada Press.
- Sanchez, G., Jaime-Diaz, J., & Negrete, J. M. (2022). "Self/other, other/self: *Conocimiento* as pedagogical practice". *NACCS Annual Conference Proceedings*, 8. <https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/naccs/2022/Proceedings/8>
- Vallone, M. (2014). The wound as bridge: The path of *conocimiento* in Gloria Anzaldúa's Work. *E-rea*, 12(1). <http://journals.openedition.org/erea/4135>. <https://doi.org/10.4000/erea.4135>



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

Guest Editors

Roberto C. Orozco, PhD
University of Minnesota–Twin Cities

Anita Tijerina Revilla, PhD
California State University, Los Angeles

Editors

Patricia Sánchez, PhD
The University of Texas at San Antonio

Antonio J. Camacho, PhD
AMAE, Inc.

Associate Editors

Julie L. Figueroa, PhD
Sacramento State

Lucila D. Ek, PhD
The University of Texas at San Antonio

Managing Editor

Jerry Romero Jr., PhD
The University of Texas at San Antonio

“It’s For My Science Daughters”: A Portrait of Dr. Leticia Márquez-Magaña’s [Counter]Storied Legacies for Latinas and STEM

Michael Angel Vázquez, PhD, Rama Ali Kased, PhD, Janin Guzman-Morales, PhD

<https://doi.org/10.24974/amae.20.1.534>

<http://amaejournal.utsa.edu>

ISSN: 2377-9187

“It’s For My Science Daughters”: A Portrait of Dr. Leticia Márquez-Magaña’s [Counter]Storied Legacies for Latinas and STEM

Michael Angel Vázquez, PhD

Mt. San Antonio College

Rama Ali Kased, PhD

San Francisco State University

Janin Guzman-Morales, PhD

San Jose State University

Abstract

Dr. Leticia Márquez-Magaña is used to being “the one” and “the first.” From the first in her family to graduate from high school to the first Latina faculty member at her institution’s College of Science and Engineering, she is determined not to be the last. This qualitative study blends portraiture and counterstory methodology to discuss Dr. Márquez-Magaña’s legacy on diversifying STEM, especially for Latinas and women of color scientists, whom she calls her “science daughters.” Dr. Márquez-Magaña has spent decades resisting patriarchy and racism in STEM and academia by bringing in her Mexican American culture and muxerista values. While encountering cultural taxation, microaggressions, and the double bind of being a woman of color in a field that suppresses discussions of race and gender and feigns objectivity, she persists, determined to make STEM and academia better for future generations. By promoting femtorship and developing strong relationships with her students and their extended science families—which include custodial workers in her labs and the loved ones of her research assistants—Dr. Márquez-Magaña has paved the way for hundreds of scientists of color, especially Latinas, to not just enter STEM but to thrive within it and continue to develop the field.

Keywords: cultural taxation, familia, femtorship, portraiture, STEM

Introduction

Dr. Leticia “Leti” Márquez-Magaña’s academic prowess is unparalleled. As a Professor of Biology at San Francisco State University (SFSU), the Principal Investigator of the SF Building Infrastructure Leading to Diversity (BUILD)—a grant funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH)—and the Director for the Health Equity Research (HER) Lab, Leti’s accomplishments include recognition by prestigious institutions like the National Science Foundation and her alma maters, Stanford University and the University of California at Berkeley (Cal), among many others. A Cell and Molecular Biologist with countless publications, her commitment to academia is remarkable. And yet, even with these accolades, academia and STEM do not define her, nor does her impressive curriculum vitae. What defines her? Family. Community. Culture. Femtorship¹ (Gomez et al., 2024). Pedagogy. Resilience. All aspects are at her core but are glaringly absent in the professional realms she navigates. By telling her [counter]story, she seeks to change that.

As a Chicana scientist, she redefines the terms “scientist” and “STEM.” STEM notoriously lacks diversity and feigns objectivity and apoliticism. (Bisson et al., 2022; King et al., 2023). Low enrollment and graduation rates of Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) students reinforce the absence of cultural, socioeconomic, and historical analysis in STEM curricula (Bisson et al., 2022; Flowers, 2021). For Leti, centering her culture within leadership—often to her peers’ dismay—emphasizes strong relationships and promotes the well-being and potential of her students. Evidently, Leti’s accomplishments and those of her femtees, whom she lovingly refers to as her “science daughters,” demonstrate the power in her approach.

That said, how are culture and relationship-building at odds with academia? How is STEM a hostile environment for minoritized peoples, particularly Latinas and other women of color? How do portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 2009) and counterstorytelling (Yosso, 2006) illuminate these narratives, and what impact do such approaches have? By telling Leti’s story, we hope to examine these questions through the eyes of three rising academics of color who follow in Leti’s footsteps. In this paper, we first examine potential approaches to identifying and addressing diversity issues in STEM and academia. We then examine further how

¹ We use the terms “femtor” and “femtorship” to describe a reciprocal, non-hierarchical, and caring-centered alternative to mentorship.

these issues manifest for Latine² scientists and compound for women of color. Afterward, we blend qualitative methodologies not only to share a powerful narrative but also to use it as a mandate for redefining scientists and STEM writ large. Through such a redefinition, we imagine a STEM that embraces diversity, emphasizes culture, prioritizes mentorship, and ultimately centers them as vehicles for strengthening the field's capacity to solve contemporary issues, such as climate change as a racial justice issue and health disparities that primarily affect BIPOC communities.

This story is told collectively by three scholars whose relationships to Leti span both long-standing collaboration and more recent academic encounters. Rama, who initiated this investigation, worked alongside Leti for many years through shared projects, networks, and institutional spaces. She witnessed and benefitted from Leti's impact on institutional change, particularly her imperative work in intervening and advancing equity-oriented practices, reshaping mentoring structures, and expanding access for minoritized scholars in STEM. Janin, a researcher and lecturer in Environmental Studies, and Michael, a former high school science teacher and current Ethnic Studies professor, came to know her more recently after learning of Leti's influence in the Bay Area, where each spent substantial time conducting research for their respective projects. These differing relational proximities allow us to reflect on the layered ways of knowing Leti's intellectual labor, activism, relational praxis, and commitments. By situating ourselves explicitly within the narrative, we reject the fiction of researcher neutrality and instead embrace an active and relational stance that aligns with portraiture and counterstorytelling, making visible how lived experience, collaboration, and care operate as legitimate and necessary forms of knowledge production. As minoritized scholars ourselves, Leti's story about structural conditions and lived experiences within academic spaces resonated with ours, shaping our commitment to telling her story.

² Our cited works use a variety of terms to refer to people of Latin American heritage (namely Latina, Latine, Latinx, Latino, and Hispanic). For this article, we chose "Latine" and "Latines" when referring to the community in a broad sense. We selected this term as an encompassing option for all gender identities and expressions. However, given our primary focus on women scientists of Latin American descent, we maintain the use of "Latina" and "Latinas."

Literature Review

As part of our exploration of muxerista³ pedagogy and femtorship in STEM, our literature review first examines demographics of Latines in the United States, particularly regarding their underrepresentation in these academic and professional fields. Though certainly capable of leading in STEM initiatives, as Leti demonstrates, various systemic barriers prevent the recruitment, growth, and development of Latine scientists. As such, Leti has often been the first and only Latine in her classes and labs. However, because she is determined not to be the last and to bring in more Latinas and other marginalized people into STEM, we examine factors that hinder the retention of these emerging scientists, including experiences described as cultural taxation. As a remedy to this issue, which would allow minoritized scientists to thrive rather than just stay afloat, femtorship is also explored, given its immense value for Leti’s own growth and for her implementation to support her femtees’ development. As such, this literature review concludes with an exploration of how culture can, and in Leti’s own words, “*should* be considered a strength” in STEM, as embracing one’s own culture can lead to a more welcoming environment within these fields and enrich its potential to resolve various social issues.

STEM’s storied lack of ethnic-racial and gender diversity

Comprising 18.7% of the U.S. population, Latines are the nation’s second-largest ethnic-racial group (Hernandez & McElrath, 2023). Among those 62.1 million people, 61% are under the age of 35—and 81% among U.S.-born Latines—with most making up one-fourth of the total under-18 community (Lopez et al., 2018). Often painted as a monolith, Latinidad is increasingly diverse in the U.S.; 59% of Latines are Mexican and nearly 11% are Central American, whereas 9% and 7% are of Puerto Rican and South American descent, respectively, followed by 4% for Dominicans and Cubans each (Krogstad et al., 2023).

Given their sheer size and diversity, it is essential for education researchers and practitioners to examine Latines’ unique experiences at all levels of schooling, particularly at the collegiate level, where they make up one-fifth of the student population (Hernandez & McElrath, 2023). Despite nearly doubling their representation on college campuses since 2000, Latines

³ Often spelled “mujerista,” Revilla (2004) writes this term with the just stay afloat, femtorship is also explored, given its immense value for Leti’s own growth and for “x” to recognize different gender identities and sexualities as well as Indigenous languages and practices of what is now referred to as the Americas.

still observe lower retention and graduation rates compared to their white, Asian, and Black peers; for students of Mexican heritage, those rates are lower compared to other Latines. Although the largest Latine community in the U.S., they account for fewer than 20% of all Latines with a bachelor's degree (Hernandez & McElrath, 2023). By the time Leti earned tenure in 2004, only 44% of Mexican-origin students had earned a high school diploma, with 7% receiving bachelor's degrees, 2% earning master's degrees, and fewer than 1% earning doctorates (Yosso, 2006).

Furthermore, Latines make up nearly 3% of all full-time faculty positions (Werner-Washburne et al., 2023). Latinas, specifically, are only 2.5% of full-time faculty, and, combined, Latinas of Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Central American heritage are estimated to be less than 1% of the full-time professoriate (Gaxiola Serrano, 2023; Werner-Washburne et al., 2023).

Regarding STEM, professional groups such as the American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) have long reported a shortage across the field. Citing that half of all engineering companies reject applicants due to a lack of sufficient engineering courses and work experience, ACEC's (2023) annual report suggests that the United States will fall short of a necessary increase of tens of thousands more engineers within the next decade. Whereas the rise in Latines pursuing higher education can help fulfill this need, the field remains overwhelmingly white and male, accounting for 64% and 65% of the workforce, respectively (National Science Foundation, 2017). Morales-Chicas et al. (2023) described that among all STEM professions, only 4.2% are occupied by Latine men. Latinas, who significantly outpace their male counterparts in college matriculation and graduation, however, only account for "just 3.5% of all STEM degree recipients," and research on their participation in STEM programs is sparse (Rodriguez & Blaney, 2021, p. 441; Contreras Aguirre et al., 2020).

Barriers to diversifying STEM emerge long before college. Valenzuela's (1999) seminal concept in education research, "subtractive schooling," theorizes that schools "encourage youth to de-identify from [their] culture and the immigrants in their midst, result[ing] in the latter becoming unavailable models" for academic success (p. 262). From criminalizing Spanish to disparaging Latine communities in curricula, subtractive schooling assimilates students into a minoritized other (Valenzuela, 2005). Largely manifested via tracking (separating students into different classes by perceived academic ability), subtractive schooling causes immense distrust between students and teachers, disengaging Latine youth from the values of education that their

families traditionally hold in high esteem (Valenzuela, 2005). Adding each variable together, this process results in lower reported fluency in both English and Spanish as well as increased academic difficulties in all subject areas, suggesting that subtractive schooling exists to build and maintain a seemingly low-skilled labor force (Menken & Kleyn, 2010).

Regarding STEM, doubting the academic prowess of Latines has systematic repercussions (Werner-Washburne et al., 2023). A lack of adequate course offerings results not only in less preparation for advanced STEM coursework but also in increased stress and anxiety about starting behind their peers (Fematt et al., 2024). Fueled by imposter syndrome, itself heightened in “weeder” or “gatekeeping courses,” Black and Latine students—even at Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs)—are often prevented from “advancing in STEM majors,” (p. 982). More prone to tracking within their K-12 education, Black and Latine students are weeded out from these courses at higher rates (Valenzuela, 1999; Fematt et al., 2024).

STEM’s lack of diversity and inclusivity in higher education and beyond is because the field “was born from white male supremacy” (McGee, 2016, p. 1630). From its inception, STEM justified racialized and gendered discrimination, feigning objectivity to cement social strata (Oksana et al., 2016). Although higher education is seen as a space for interrogating and combating these strata, the field enables harmful beliefs to persist (McGee, 2016). Latinas in STEM, for example, “encounter sexism, racism, and generally hostile climates in college,” placing them in “the double bind” (Rodriguez & Blaney, 2021, p. 443). Though they often seek community with white women and men of color because of shared affinity, these Latina scientists often feel further marginalized from those initially perceived as allies (Garcia et al., 2020; Banda & Flowers, 2018; Perez et al., 2024).

Cultural taxation: the cost of femtoring for Latina faculty members

In addition to a lack of diversity within the student body, STEM fields are notorious for a lack of women and people of color in academic ranks (Gaxiola Serrano, 2023; Fematt, 2024). Among the Latine faculty members who are present, they report racial microaggressions, inducing anxiety, stress, and pushout (McGee, 2016). Additionally, Latina faculty members feel a mix of desire and pressure to serve in unseen, unpaid femtor roles to ensure students receive support (Gomez et al., 2024; Fematt, 2024). Often labors of love, this unacknowledged work correlates with “depression, anxiety, lower self-rated health, and [poor] physical health” for these educators (Muñoz & Villanueva, 2022, p. 7). However, femtorship acknowledges that

sexism and racism were barriers for these faculty, so the desire to shed that for peers and future generations motivates such relationships (Gomez et al., 2024; Perez et al., 2024). For women faculty of color, being “the one” also means to “accept your own discomfort and quietly conform to whiteness” to absolve the institution of any perceived racism because of your presence (García Peña, 2022, p. 18). Essentially, being the one involves physical, mental, and emotional taxation, which necessitates shedding one’s cultural values to fit within the white, patriarchal, dominant norm (García Peña, 2022; McGee, 2016). This cost is ‘cultural taxation,’ which describes how faculty of color are drained by racism, sexism, and care, resulting in them postponing their research and committee expectations, inhibiting their likelihood for advancement (Reddick et al., 2020).

Furthermore, women faculty of color often consider their femtees *familia* (Rodriguez et al., 2019). Moraga and Anzaldúa (2015) described this as “entrusting” the next generation “with the legacy of [their] thoughts and activism into a flourishing planet and a just world” (p. xxiv). Their praxis is in service of “the next generation and the next one” (p. xxiv). For Latinas, Anzaldúa’s notion of “*mestiza* consciousness,” or a Chicana epistemology built on gendered intersections of culture, is grounded within their femtorship as “there are barriers and challenges that are particular” to them; as such, “the mentoring offered to these students [must consider] their particular social, cultural, and gendered contexts” (Villaseñor et al., 2014, p. 50). This dynamic recognizes how these same women of color faculty members are tasked with “the transfer of the cultural and spiritual values of one group to another,” even if they are seemingly incompatible (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 100). As a result, they encounter a “*choque*,” or a shock that comes from negotiating liminal spaces for those who, like them, sit on the margins of identities and realities (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 100). Still, they undertake these tasks because, as Leti says, they know how important it is to transform the process for femtees and subsequent generations.

This relationship is consistent with “*mu[x]erista* mentoring,” a “collectivist, assets-based model that values the lived experiences” and epistemologies of Latinas, one that “focus[es] on building communities and reciprocal” mentorship (Villaseñor et al., 2014, p. 50). One means of facilitating this femtorship is to create safe spaces that foster a “tenderness and caring culture” and a “commitment to social change,” and invite students from a hostile academic environment into one of love and shared learning (Revilla, 2004, pp. 203–206).

Regarding cultural values, Latine students encounter dissonance between their upbringing and STEM’s structures. Many come from families and communities that value collaboration and unity, but STEM “promotes competitiveness and includes negative interactions with peers and faculty,” contributing to “the lack of sense of belonging” (Fematt, 2024, p. 982). To illustrate objectivity, STEM curricula notoriously omit discussions of culturally sustaining pedagogy and social justice (Bisson et al., 2022; King et al., 2023), leaving Latine students disconnected from their transformative power. These compounding issues reify one of the largest issues facing Latines in STEM: stereotype threat. Defined as “when people feel at risk of confirming stereotypes about their social/racial/ethnic group,” stereotype threat requires students to assert their ability to succeed in these challenging fields while also positively representing their communities and aptly managing their emotions and obligations (Fematt, 2024, p. 982; McGee, 2016).

Culture as a strength: resilience through familial relationships

Although this portrait of Latines in STEM may appear grim, *Latinidad* offers strengths that foster resilience and hope for future students and faculty. Latines are known for being family-oriented; as such, building “family connectedness” solidifies feelings of belonging and counteracts the aforementioned negative aspects of the experience (Muñoz & Villanueva, 2022, p. 9). As García Peña (2022) described, “community is the most effective form of rebellion” (p. 30). By reshaping STEM and academia to reflect our experiences as Latines, students and faculty of color will benefit from a commitment to academic and personal success.

For Latinas specifically, *familismo*, a “prevalent cultural value [...] characterized by a strong sense of loyalty, interdependence, and attachment to one’s extended and nuclear family,” can serve as a force for building resilience in STEM (Cavazos et al., 2025, p. 4). Though complicated by a need to also fulfill the “good daughter persona,” or the idea that they must prioritize their immediate family’s well-being—something Leti certainly encountered—it also can be healing to have a familial figure in STEM who is aware of such pressures at home and at school as they can support with processing and managing them (Cavazos et al., 2025; Rodriguez et al., 2019). Muxerista mentoring embodies aspects of *familismo* by making Latina scientists feel like they are part of a larger collective within the academy (Ek et al., 2010); these are ties that promote a sense of belonging, help them feel cared for, and affirm their role in a shared goal of advancing within the field (Lopez et al., 2025; Garcia et al., 2020).

Bringing cultural heritage into STEM would change the environment from one that is about schooling to one that is about *educación* (Valenzuela, 1999). Livas Stein et al. (2013) demonstrated how Mexican American family and community values “promote resilience and positive academic outcomes” (p. 234). In various K-12 settings, they observed that “Mexican-origin youth who feel connected to their ethnic group experience fewer negative psychological outcomes,” exemplifying how positive ethnic-racial identities serve as protective factors (p. 236). At the collegiate level, the Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS) has already begun this shift toward *educación* through femtorships, conferences, professional development opportunities, and other culture-based programming that “empowers students to pursue their passions and see themselves in STEM” (Fematt, 2024, p. 996). Though much work is needed, the few STEM Latine faculty have and continue to fight hard, a legacy that paves the way “for the diversification and enrichment of the STEM fields as a whole” (Fematt, 2024, p. 997).

Methodology

As a self-proclaimed storyteller, Leti shares parables that blend her experiences with deep concepts. An homage to her *muxerista* pedagogy and a means of telling her story, we draw upon two qualitative methods that emphasize narrative storytelling: portraiture and counterstories. The former serves as our methodological framework, while the latter guides our data collection. Through these storytelling methods, we implement what Davidson (2019) described as the Indigenous research framework of interrelatedness, through which researchers are active listeners. As they listen to these stories, they become “increasingly aware of how [their] own life and experiences shaped” how they come to understand the story told to them (p. 35). Researchers are active participants in processing the story, showing respect for the elder by listening to every word and then formulating a research question with—not on behalf of—her. This approach is consistent with the distinction Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) make “between listening *to* a story and listening *for* a story” (p. 12). In the former, scholars are “more passive” and “receptive,” doing “little to give it shape and form,” while “the latter is much more active” and engaged with the storyteller (p. 12).

Portraiture is a co-constructed methodology. For too long, research has been extractive, with investigators bringing outside, often deficit-based lenses. More specifically, Lawrence-Lightfoot developed portraiture from ethnography after identifying qualms with that

more conventional methodology. Ethnography has a long legacy of juxtaposing a seemingly “civilized” West with “primitive” communities to justify their colonization (Alonso Bejarano et al., 2019, p. 17). Portraiture, on the other hand, has a history of embracing Indigenous and marginalized epistemologies because of its co-constructive approach to questions and methodology, as well as its centering of participants’ lived experiences (McCarthy, 2017). Lawrence-Lightfoot’s (1997) method ensures that participants have an active role not only in sharing their narratives but also in conceptualizing the research questions that arise, the specific methodological steps taken, and the purpose the research ultimately serves. Flores (2017) builds on portraiture by outlining muxerista portraiture as a method that centers Chicana feminist epistemology and cultural intuition. This intuition encompasses strong relationships that also necessitate confronting colonial lenses that have historically shaped academic research (Flores, 2017).

Using a similar framework to combat colonial perspectives, Yosso’s (2006) counterstory methodology—also informed through Chicana epistemology—flips narratives by centering community cultural wealth to tell a story in opposition to the “majoritarian story,” which essentially refers to mainstream versions that often use deficit-based lenses to characterize minoritized peoples (p. 2). Like muxerista portraiture, which interrupts overabundant deficit framing within education research, counterstorytelling pushes back against harmful narratives. In education research, conventional approaches dwell on lower academic metrics among Latines, for instance. Counterstories identify the issue as well while also elucidating the societal and institutional factors that Latines disproportionately confront. Counterstories also simultaneously reflect on the resilience and resistance of these communities in opposition to those structures, which Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (2009) call “goodness.” Counterstories resist the majoritarian story and serve a liberatory purpose, meaning they have a social justice purpose; in Leti’s case, this counterstory actively combats pathologizing Latines and women of color in STEM to demand better treatment, trust, and more opportunities for scientists who represent these underrepresented demographics.

Given muxerista portraiture’s commitment to building and sustaining relationships (Flores, 2016; Gaxiola Serrano, 2023), our research project was a semester-long series of personal conversations, interviews, classroom and workshop observations, and even cooking lessons. After months of coordinating as a research team—including with Leti—we decided to

observe her pedagogical methods and femtorship in action. To accomplish this, we attended a week-long class that trained students to engage in community-based research. During her sessions, we took field notes about the activities, student engagement, and her interactions with the students, among other pertinent observations. Moreover, we participated in a stereotype threat workshop she delivered to minoritized STEM students at SFSU and Cal. To supplement these observations, we also read various pieces Leti had published on STEM and its inextricable links to gender, sexuality, and race.

Most notably, we interviewed Leti as she led us through a cooking lesson. Over four hours, we recorded her experiences as “the one” Latina in STEM. Questions explored her upbringing and familial background, highlights from her work as a STEM educator, and hopes for the future of STEM, especially for Latinas and other students and faculty members of color. We also discussed her motivations for having this story told to a wider audience. These questions were co-created with Leti in preparation for our cooking lesson; after multiple conversations among the four of us, the authors reflected on Leti’s impact on Latinas and other marginalized communities in STEM at SFSU and beyond, and we thought these inquiries would best illustrate her legacy.

Lastly, portraiture and counterstories challenge conventional research in education. Rather than follow a strict format that details results first and then transitions into a discussion, portraiture and counterstories blend these components. As participants and researchers coalesce, data reporting and analysis occur in unison, challenging even readers accustomed to conventional approaches. With portraiture as our methodology and counterstory as our method, we invite the readers to reflect on Leti’s experience with us in the next section, which blends data reporting and analysis, and draw on their own experiences—perhaps as Latinas in STEM too—to inform their analysis and subsequent plan of action.

Herstory

According to Leti, science is storytelling. Having conducted hundreds of experiments, she’s encountered many null hypotheses. The null hypothesis implies a lack of relationship between variables, but it’s her job to find and test alternatives. Leti’s experiments tell a story about the field. STEM, in her view, inhibits relationship-building, especially for communities of color, suggesting that the null is the majoritarian story. Leti’s peers regularly state that science must be “flavorless” and “objective” with no room for discussions of race and gender.

Moreover, it is a realm that requires her to shed her culture. But as a woman of color whose heritage values relationship-building and views her culture as a strength, that null hypothesis is unacceptable. There must be alternative hypotheses; there must be counterstories to dispel the majoritarian story.

“It’s for my Science Daughters”: On being the first, but not the last.

As we interviewed her over the *comal*, our own safe space, Leti guided us through her mother’s salsa recipe. However, she is a scientist, so she challenged us to experiment with the salt, lime juice, onion, *chile*, *cilantro*, and tomato until we made our ideal concoction. As we tested different ratios, she shared about her upbringing. Sometimes our iterations were bland, just like how she describes conventional STEM. But after a while, she encouraged us to add the right amount of spice to suit our palates. When we dipped our chips into our final creations, it hit us: Leti was infusing STEM with cultural traditions via cooking and storytelling.

While enjoying our green enchiladas, rice, and beans—all complemented by our own takes on her mother’s salsa—Leti shared how her mother moved to the United States when she was seven months pregnant. Her mother, who did not finish second grade in Mexico, faced linguistic and cultural barriers upon her arrival, but she was determined to provide her children with a bright future. Her father was also a migrant, having relocated to California as a *bracero*, or a seasonal farmworker hired to fulfill a labor shortage during and after World War II. The first of three children, Leti described her work ethic as a legacy of her parents’ sacrifices. Given their work schedules, Leti’s parents entrusted her with ensuring she and her siblings would make it to and from school safely and that they would complete their homework.

She entered elementary school as a monolingual Spanish speaker but quickly adapted to learn English as well. Equipped with two languages—meaning she had double the vocabulary and could articulate concepts across cultures and communities—Leti learned that her school viewed her cultural assets differently. Discouraged from speaking Spanish at home, her teachers insisted that Leti be enrolled in special education classes, and she and her siblings were barred from more advanced courses. However, they strengthened their English and Spanish, resisting assimilation.

Her family’s approach paid off. The first in her extended family to attend high school, Leti matriculated at Stanford, where she earned her B.S. and M.S. in Biological Sciences. She then pursued her Ph.D. in Biochemistry at Cal, the first-ever Latina in her program, before

becoming the first Latina professor in the College of Science and Engineering (CoSE) at SFSU. From the first in her family to be born in the United States to the first Latina to receive tenure at SFSU's CoSE, Leti is no stranger to “firsts,” but she is adamant about not being the last.

Though Latines are vastly underrepresented among STEM faculty, those present understand the “critical role” Latine faculty play “through femtorship and advocacy” (Fematt et al., 2024, p. 980). Honored with the National Mentor Award by the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 2001, Leti recognized that due to a shortage of care from other professors, Latines feel neglected, leading to pushout. As such, office hours were not simply a space for quick questions about scientific concepts, but rather an opportunity to build meaningful relationships. She genuinely wanted to know her students, and she wanted them to know that she cared about their well-being and success, key factors that Fematt et al. (2024) described as motivators for Latines pursuing graduate school in STEM. Moreover, Leti was a regular figure at the Latine staff and faculty gatherings. Such a presence has an impact, even at HSIs, a designation SFSU has had since 2016. Still, Fematt et al. (2024) assert the distinction isn't enough, and that pushout from STEM fields in HSIs is a major problem. For Latines without Latine professors, they often feel disconnected and without femtors (Perez et al., 2024). That's why Leti knew that being the first is not enough; when students do not have faculty that look like them and do not respond in culturally responsive, authentically caring ways, pushout will continue. Leti described this underrepresentation as a daily microaggression, which is a taxing experience for students and faculty of color alike and is often unacknowledged by administrators.

Under her leadership, SFSU's CoSE has diversified its student body and faculty, especially regarding women of color. Serving as their femtor, Leti called these students her “science daughters,” staying true to Moraga & Anzaldúa's (2015) commitment to “familia” (p. xxiv). As they gravitated toward her, they all faced being the “unicorns in STEM” as “double minorities”; subject to the double bind, they must assert themselves against their counterparts who are men and/or white, an undue labor that causes isolation and internalized skepticism (Rodriguez & Blaney, 2021, p. 447). Ultimately, Leti's goal for them is to eventually manage their laboratories and other academic commitments without having their sense of belonging questioned in academia.

Leti knew this double bind all too well. Upon enrolling at Stanford, she took remedial coursework during the summer to catch up to her peers because her white administrators claimed her urban public district "could not possibly have been rigorous enough," she told us sarcastically. She aced those courses and eventually outperformed many of her peers who were not required to take them. As she continued with her research, Leti brought in her culture and spoke Spanish with the custodial workers, who were proud to see a Latina wearing a white coat; that pride was reciprocated, as she was proud to have Latine workers who truly cared for her well-being and sought to take steps to make her experience more welcoming. They may not have been faculty members, but they were cultural femtors who recognized her challenges.

Unfortunately, not all peers shared her belief. Subtractive schooling is so insidious that many people of color assimilate to get ahead. She recalled that when she joined an affinity space for Latines in STEM, she was told she needed to "take up golf," an activity associated with white-collared, white male counterparts who largely make up the field in its current iteration. This story obviates the culturally and racially charged ways of belonging and the subsequent demand to play politics of respectability. Uninterested in this approach, she remained connected with the peers and staff members who were, as she says, "invisibilized," just like her. Maintaining relationships with these invisibilized individuals may have restricted access to some research opportunities, but it allowed her to maintain her cultural spirit.

She encountered similar issues as a faculty member as well. When discussing how students can be better scientists, the only other woman on the panel urged bilingual students to "lose their accents." Evidently, the seemingly objective field of STEM reinforced a hidden curriculum, or an implicit set of messages and rules that required people to assimilate to a dominant norm (Jackson, 1968). There was apparently a right way to be a scientist, but rather than conform, Leti pushed back. "If you're going to say that I am not a scientist, even though I clearly am," she shared, mentioning her numerous accolades and publications, "then maybe it's how we define what a scientist is that is a problem." Channeling *muxerista* pedagogies, including centering care by establishing familial relationships while also combating harmful narratives in a seemingly objective field, that is how she continues to operate. She is close with her science daughters and their families. She celebrates birthdays and has intimate and personal conversations with them that do not always revolve around work or school. She has meals with them, just like the one we were having that day. Despite the overarching null hypothesis in

STEM, it's the relationships that matter to her, and it's those relationships that lead her science daughters toward fruitful personal and professional futures. She has mentored countless Latina would-be doctors, pharmacists, faculty members, and researchers. Leti knows that conformity would keep them at a disadvantage and would maintain the disparity, so she ensures they know they are cared for and feel a sense of belonging, which is key to their success.

“I’m very data-driven.”: Diversity as an evidence-based framework for STEM

Spanish is how Leti connects with her parents, and throughout our conversation, we switch between Spanish and English. This duality is how many migrants and their descendants maneuver through the world. So, when Leti was a young child who heard her teachers discourage Spanish, she thought to herself, “prove it.” When Californians passed Proposition 227 in 1998, banning bilingual education in public schools, Leti knew the claims were not founded in data. On the contrary, research demonstrates that multilingual youth typically outperform their monolingual peers (Chaudhary, 2018). But, as Leti moved further into her career, she observed how this data-driven field did not always use data to justify its practices. As a true scientist, she has been determined to tell the true story, and she uses plenty of data as evidence.

After working to diversify the students admitted to Cal's PhD program in her third year of graduate study, her leadership was called into question. Prior to Proposition 209, the 1996 ban on race-conscious admissions in California, Leti was one of two representatives—and the only student—on the admissions diversity committee. Administrators questioned the qualifications of the people she recruited. However, Leti was prepared. She challenged the notion that there was a decrease in rigor, showing that grades, test scores, publications, and other metrics were the same before and after her initiative. It wasn't the qualifications that changed but rather the approach to recruitment, one that actively welcomed people of diverse backgrounds. Regarding microaggressive statements like “work ethic,” she thought of her science family members—the custodians, the food service workers—who cared for her throughout the years. She grew up around people who held multiple jobs to sustain their families. They had strong work ethics and passed them on to their descendants, the people who looked like the incoming classes of students and instructors.

As she assumes the title of Professor Emerita, Leti's reflections show how stereotypes, also not founded in data, have been all too pervasive. According to Hernandez et al. (2017),

Latine scientists are disproportionately impacted by stereotype threat; their credentials are questioned, which "strongly impacts the[ir] academic performance" and subjects them to higher levels of physiological stress (p. 437). Luckily for Leti and her students, healing is her strength. In a field that purports to be objective, Leti has been there not only to listen to students as they discuss their hardships, but also to practice "stereotype inoculation," which describes how femtors positively counteract these harms (p. 439). Stereotype inoculation occurs when role models create safe spaces that affirm students' heritage, practice authentic care, and commit to their emotional, academic, and personal well-being.

During a workshop, we witnessed Leti's inoculation in action. She started by naming stereotype threat as a public health issue, describing that within STEM, students and faculty of color are subject to added scrutiny, which affects their health and academic progress. In this training, she went through case studies to help her mostly Latine student participants identify instances of stereotype threat. After equipping them to identify problems, Leti introduced methods to help them thrive. Microaffirmations, which resonated with us as researchers, were especially resonant with students who were familiar with microaggressions but not with their foils. Highlighting self-affirmations, bystander affirmations, and institutional affirmations, the students engaged in an activity that reaffirmed within themselves that they are scientists worthy in these exclusive spaces. She further equipped them with hope.

Naming this work as a labor of love, she recognizes that faculty of color endure cultural taxation, an added expectation of serving one's own community that is unacknowledged. These individuals, having been burdened as "the one," know how important it is to femtor students. But it's still taxing. This labor can be the difference between writing additional publications or serving on compensated committees. However, Leti cares so much for her science daughters that she will continue this work through retirement. Her hope is that these values will become the norm within STEM and academia, meaning that cultural taxation will cease.

As we concluded our interview, we asked: what is important about telling her story? Taken aback, Leti's physical response embodied authentic care. Her voice, her eyes, her affect—it was clear that she had years of data within her story to counteract the majoritarian story around STEM. It isn't objective. It isn't welcoming. It isn't living up to its potential. But, by sharing this alternative narrative, by amplifying the voices of so many of her students, and by providing concrete evidence about lived realities in science and higher education, it becomes

even more possible to foster change. Just as she equipped the students in her workshop to identify and disrupt stereotype threat, she teaches us to name issues within our respective fields and transform them for the better. But all that starts with counterstorytelling. This herstory is the alternative hypothesis.

As three scholars of color, our answer to this same question comes from the femtee perspective. For Rama, who has worked with Leti for years, Leti's impact on constructing a more welcoming campus is indelible. Her influence has reverberated beyond the CoSE and into the College of Ethnic Studies, where Rama teaches, which recently introduced a major that bridges social justice for BIPOC communities with health equity and justice. For Janin and Michael, this was an opportunity to honor a Latina academic trailblazer who paved the way for Latine scholars like them. Together, the three of us felt it was cathartic and humbling to see the sacrifices that Leti and other elders have made to allow us to enter and remain within the academy; after building this deeper relationship with her and telling her story, we feel compelled to model her form of muxerista pedagogy through femtorship for the next generation of minoritized scholars. After all, while we are not the first, we certainly do not wish to be the last.

Conclusion

One of Leti's biggest lessons was that STEM must redefine what a scientist is. Her *muxerista* pedagogy and femtorship, increased resources for the CoSE by way of millions in grants and donations, and theoretical and scientific breakthroughs all demonstrate that not only is she a scientist, but one of indisputably high caliber. And she accomplished all that as "the one." STEM grew because of her resilience against cultural taxation, the double bind, subtractive schooling, and stereotype threat. If these barriers were not there, what other accomplishments would Leti have been able to focus on? And, as such, what potential would there be for STEM if scholars like Leti could femtor without taxation?

STEM has a colonial legacy that has justified gender- and race-based discrimination, and those mindsets cemented a field that maintains white patriarchal supremacy. But, as Leti's commitment shows, STEM can—or rather, must—center *educación* and authentic care. The field can emphasize relationships and community building, as she has demonstrated through femtorship and centering culture and language within her own labs. Ensuring students have

femtors and feel cared for is her priority, and recruiting faculty who recognize the double bind and can use that experience to inform their praxis has always been her prerogative.

Leti's embodiment of muxerista pedagogy initially feels out of place within STEM, given how she and the aforementioned scholars described their experiences. However, because her commitment to care empowers Latines, and Latinas primarily, to thrive within this field, muxerista pedagogy enhances STEM's potential. Through Leti's incorporation of muxerista pedagogy, she trains other academics—including the authors—to expand their fields and sustain a diversified, culturally enriched community by practicing femtorship and building strong familial relationships. It is her muxerista pedagogical approach, after all, that expanded STEM at SFSU to explore themes of equity and engage in experiments to promote social justice.

Moreover, for Leti, who has since faced numerous attacks by right-wing groups due to her advocacy efforts to diversify STEM and promote scientific experiments intended to foster socially just outcomes, as evidenced by her leadership in HER and SF BUILD, another major implication is that higher education practitioners and industry leaders within STEM must build and reaffirm their commitments to center and authentically practice equity. As the federal government scrutinizes, defunds, and even criminalizes initiatives like the HER lab and SF BUILD, these same decisionmakers must heed the ACEC's warning. STEM professionals are increasingly necessary in our world, given threats of climate change, the material and energy demands of a rising population, the need for low-impact transportation systems, and technological infrastructure under current conditions of social inequality. Community-based and culturally directed research offers a path to dismantle hegemonic STEM practices that produce solutions that are technocratically naive, at best, or racist, at worst.

However, by reducing recruitment strategies to invite more BIPOC scientists into the field, the trend moves in the opposite direction. Coupled with xenophobic policies that target migrants and their descendants, these attacks on minoritized communities in higher education mean the country will significantly miss its STEM professional mandate. This is why counterstorytelling is essential; Leti's culturally sustaining leadership and data-driven recruitment strategies show us that Latines in STEM—and people of color in various esteemed fields, in general—are well-qualified for their positions, and minor adjustments to bring them into these spaces strengthens the fields rather than reduce their prestige.

The status quo is unacceptable. Its subtractive structure is unsustainable, and given the large global issues that rely on technological innovation, a shift is needed. The story of STEM as objective has caused harm, and the story that those in STEM have told about Latines in the field is defamatory. Leti's counterstory bridges the promise of STEM and the potential of Latinas to enrich it further.

References

- Alonso Bejarano, C., López Juárez, L., Mijangos García, M. A., & Goldstein, D. M. (2019). *Decolonizing ethnography: Undocumented immigrants and new directions in social science*. Duke University Press.
- American Council of Engineering Companies (2023). *ACEC calls for action on engineering shortage*. <https://www.acec.org/resource/acec-calls-for-action-on-engineering-shortage/>
- Anzaldúa, G. (2012). *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (25th anniversary, 4th Ed.). Aunt Lute Books.
- Banda, R. M., & Flowers, A. M. (2018). Critical qualitative research as a means to advocate for Latinas in STEM. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 31(8), 769–783. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2018.1479046>
- Bisson, L. F., Grindstaff, L., Brazil-Cruz, L., & Barbu, S. J. (Eds.), (2022). *Uprooting bias in the academy: Lessons from the field*. Springer.
- Cavazos, G., Leija, V., & Cavazos Vela, J. (2025). Latine students’ STEM identity development: reflecting on implicit biases, imposter syndrome, self-efficacy, and support systems. *Education Sciences*, 15(7), 865–886. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci15070865>
- Chaudhary, A. A. (2018). Enhancing academic achievement and language proficiency through bilingual education: A comprehensive study of elementary school students. *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 24(4), 803–812. <https://doi.org/10.53555/kuey.v24i4.7268>
- Contreras Aguirre, H. C., Gonzalez, E., & Banda, R. M. (2020). Latina college students’ experiences in STEM at Hispanic-serving institutions: framed within Latino critical race theory. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 33(8), 810–823. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2020.1751894>
- Davidson, S. F. (2019). Following the song of k’aad’aww: Using Indigenous storywork principles to guide ethical practices in research. In J. Archibald, Q. Q. Xiiem, J. B. J. Lee-Morgan, & J. De Santolo (Eds.), *Decolonizing research: Indigenous storywork as methodology* (pp. 23–39). Zed Books.
- Ek, L. D., Cerecer, P. D. Q., Alanís, I., & Rodríguez, M. A. (2010). “I don’t belong here”: Chicanas/Latinas at a Hispanic Serving Institution creating community through Muxerista mentoring. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 43(4), 539–553. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2010.510069>
- Fematt, V. L., Puente, M., Garcia, K. A., & Mireles-Rios, R. (2024). “You didn’t go by choice!”: Exposing institutional barriers leading to Latinx STEM pushout at a Hispanic-serving research institution. *Education Sciences*, 14, 979–1000. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14090979>
- Flores, A. F. (2016). *De tal palo tal astilla: Exploring Mexicana/Chicana mother-daughter pedagogies* (Publication No. 15001) [Doctoral dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles]. eScholarship.
- Flores, A. I. (2017). The muxerista portraitist: Engaging portraiture and Chicana feminist theories in qualitative research. *Chicana/Latina Studies*, 17(1), 60–93. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45186470>
- Flowers, J. (2021). The folly of apolitical science. *Bioethics Today*. <https://bioethicstoday.org/blog/the-folly-of-apolitical-science/#>
- Garcia, A.L., Rincon, B., & Hinojosa, J.K. (2020). “There was something missing”: How Latinas construct compartmentalized identities in STEM. In E. Gonzalez, F. Fernandez, & M.

- Wilson (Eds.), *An Asset-Based Approach to Advancing Latina Students in STEM* (pp. 181-192). Routledge.
- García Peña, L. (2022). *Community as rebellion: A syllabus for surviving academia as a woman of color*. Haymarket Books.
- Gaxiola Serrano, T. J. (2023). Three Decades of a Mexicana Community College Professor's Practices to Keep Students Coming Back and Moving Forward. In J. R. Del Real Viramontes & M. C. Vasquez, *Community college and beyond: Understanding the transfer pipeline for Latina/o/x students* (pp. 167-180). Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Gomez, M., Rodriguez-Rico, M., & Frederick, C. (2024). Humanizing undergraduate fellowship experiences: Critical reflections on femtorship in the Adobe Tower. *Regeneración: A Xicanacimient Studies Journal*, 1(1), 101–110. <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/rxsj>
- Hernandez, D., Rana, S., Rao, A., & Usselman, M. (2017). Dismantling stereotypes about Latinos in STEM. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 39(4), 436–451. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739986317731100>
- Hernandez, E. L., & McElrath, K. (2023). *Gains in educational attainment, enrollment in all Hispanic groups, largest among South American population*. United States Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2023/05/significant-educational-strides-young-hispanic-population.html>
- King, G. P., Russo-Tait, T., & Andrews, T. C. (2023). Evading race: STEM faculty struggle to acknowledge racialized classroom events. *CBE—Life Sciences Education*, 22(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.22-06-0104>
- Krogstad, J. M., Passel, J. S., Moslimani, M., & Noe-Bustamante, L. (2023). *Key facts about U.S. Latinos for National Hispanic Heritage Month*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/09/22/key-facts-about-us-latinos-for-national-hispanic-heritage-month/>
- Lawrence-Lightfoot, S., & Davis, J. H. (1997). *The art and science of portraiture* (1st ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Livas Stein, G., García Coll, C., & Huq, N. (2013). Fostering resilience in Mexican American youth through cultural and family assets. In B. Jensen & A. Sawyer (Eds.), *Regarding educación: Mexican-American schooling, immigration, and bi-national improvement* (pp. 234–254). Teachers College Press.
- Lopez, M. H., Krogstad, J. M., & Flores, A. (2018). *Key facts about young Latinos, one of the nation's fastest-growing populations*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2018/09/13/key-facts-about-young-latinos/#:~:text=The%20number%20of%20young%20Latinos,major%20racial%20or%20ethnic%20group>
- Lopez, N., Chaidez, C., Matamoros, D., Parker, D., & Morgan, D. L. (2025). Cultivating comunidad: The role of collectivism on Latina/x STEM identity. *Journal of Postsecondary Student Success*, 5(1), 110–130. https://doi.org/10.33009/fsop_jpss13777
- McCarthy, K. W. (2017). *Full Circle: A portraiture study of three successful Indigenous educators and community leaders who experience personal renewal in their practice of cultural restoration* [Doctoral dissertation, Lesley University]. DigitalCommons@Lesley.
- McGee, E. O. (2016). Devalued Black and Latino racial identities: A by-product of STEM college culture? *American Educational Research Journal*, 53(6), 1626–1662. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831216676572>

- Menken, K., & Kleyn, T. (2010). The long-term impact of subtractive schooling in the educational experiences of secondary English language learners. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 13(4), 399–417. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050903370143>
- Moraga, C., & Anzaldúa, G. (Eds.). (2015). *This bridge called my back: Writings by radical women of color* (4th ed.). Third Woman Press.
- Morales-Chicas, J., Ortiz, J., Tanimura, D. M., & Kouyoumdjian, C. (2023). Understanding Latino boys' motivation to pursue STEM while navigating school inequalities. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 22(3), 1268–1280. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2021.1944864>
- Muñoz, J. A., & Villanueva, I. (2022). Latino STEM scholars, barriers, and mental health: A review of the literature. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 21(1), 3–16. <https://doi.org/10.1177/153819271989214>
- National Science Foundation. (2017). *Women, minorities, and persons with disabilities in science and engineering: 2017*. www.nsf.gov/statistics/wmpd/
- Oksana, Y., Hoffman, L., Morgan Consoli, M. L., & Lee, G. (2016). On methods, methodologies, and continued colonization of knowledge in the study of "ethnic minorities": Comment on Hall et al. (2016). *The American psychologist*, 71(9), 890–891. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000060>
- Perez, E. C., Gonzalez, E. M., White, J. A., Deis, C., Pacheco, H., & Corral, J. (2024). Servingness in action: Peer mentoring among Latinas in STEM. In J. A. Gutierrez, R. M. Banda, N. Grafnetterova, A. M. Flowers, & J. T. Lujan (Eds.), *Student success and intersectionality at Hispanic-serving institutions: Policy and practice* (pp. 65–75). Springer.
- Reddick, R. J., Bukoski, B. E., & Smith, S. L. (2020). (Cultural) taxation without representation? How educational developers can broker discourse on Black faculty lives in the #BlackLivesMatter era. *To Improve the Academy: A Journal of Educational Development*, 39(1). <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/tia.17063888.0039.103>
- Revilla, A. T. (2004). *Raza women reconstructing revolution: Exploring the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality in the lives of Chicana/Latina student activists* (Publication No. 3154982) [Doctoral dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses.
- Rodriguez, S. L., & Blaney, J. M. (2021). "We're the unicorns in STEM": Understanding how academic and social experiences influence sense of belonging for Latina undergraduate students. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 14(3), 441–455. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000176>
- Rodriguez, S., Pilcher, A., & Garcia-Tellez, N. (2019). The influence of *familismo* on Latina student STEM identity development. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 20(2), 177–189. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2019.1588734>
- Valenzuela, A. (1999). *Subtractive schooling: U.S.-Mexican youth and the politics of caring*. State University of New York Press.
- Valenzuela, A. (2005). Subtractive Schooling, Caring Relations, and Social Capital in the Schooling of U.S.-Mexican Youth. In L. Weis & M. Fine (Eds.), *Beyond Silenced Voices: Class, Race, and Gender in United States Schools*, Revised Edition (pp. 83–94). State University of New York Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.18254984.9>
- Villaseñor, M. J., Reyes, M. E., & Muñoz, I. (2013). *Mujerista* mentoring for Chicanas/Latinas in higher education. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 15(1), 49–64. <https://doi.org/10.2190/CS.15.1.d>

- Werner-Washburne, M., Trejo, J., Zambrana, R. E., Zavala, M. E., Martinic, A., Riestra, A., Delgado, T., Edwards, S., Escobar, T., Jamison-McClung, D., Vazquez, M., Vera, I., Guerra, M., Marinez, D., Gonzalez, E., & Rodriguez, R. L. (2023). Early career Latinas in STEM: Challenges and solutions. *Cell*, 186(23), 4985–4991.
[https://www.cell.com/cell/fulltext/S0092-8674\(23\)01132-7](https://www.cell.com/cell/fulltext/S0092-8674(23)01132-7)
- Yosso, T. (2006). *Critical race counterstories along the Chicana/Chicano educational pipeline*. Routledge.



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

Guest Editors

Roberto C. Orozco, PhD
University of Minnesota–Twin Cities

Anita Tijerina Revilla, PhD
California State University, Los Angeles

Editors

Patricia Sánchez, PhD
The University of Texas at San Antonio

Antonio J. Camacho, PhD
AMAE, Inc.

Associate Editors

Julie L. Figueroa, PhD
Sacramento State

Lucila D. Ek, PhD
The University of Texas at San Antonio

Managing Editor

Jerry Romero Jr., PhD
The University of Texas at San Antonio

Acuer(pan)do la pedagogía muxerista

Chantal Figueroa, PhD

<https://doi.org/10.24974/amae.20.1.535>

Acuer(pan)do la pedagogía muxerista

Chantal Figueroa, PhD

Colorado College

Resumen

En este escrito presento cuatro lecciones muxeristas aprendidas al diseñar e implementar un taller de pan donde hacemos conchas con diferente grupo de personas latinas en Estados Unidos y en Guatemala. El taller centra el descanso, el encarnar, el diálogo abierto sobre nuestra salud mental, y el apoyo mutuo. Presento este taller de pan como una vía para sostener y alentar el espíritu, un espacio para aprender a hablar sobre salud mental, y tejer una comunidad de apoyo mutuo, las cuales son habilidad claves para encarnan la pedagogía muxerista. Así argumento que hornear conchas crea un espacio pedagógico para acuerpar, algo que nombro como acuer(pan)do. Este concepto refiere al acto de ocupar intencionalmente un espacio a través de la elaboración de pan para accionando una comunidad de apoyo mutuo, enfocado en salud mental. Como práctica corporal de cuidado, acuer(pan)do amplifica la pedagogía muxerista que busca recuperar la dignidad y las fuerzas necesarias para seguir en la lucha por dismantelar los paradigmas de dominio y crear mundos que centran la vida. Acuer(pan)do entonces es una apuesta a la dulzura, a la transparencia de nuestro bienestar y al cuidado mutuo.

Keywords: pan dulce, conchas, acuerpar, cuidado mutuo, pedagogía muxerista

Introducción

Muxerista es la red que teje para dar vida, y fue la red con la que me encontré en la Universidad de Minnesota, a través de mis compañeras Chicanas que fueron mis colegas de la beca de doctorado. Allí, con la ahora profesora Joanna Núñez y su comunidad Chicana, me abrazo un modelo de mentoría que, al observarlo, me ayudó a encontrarme, a tejermé, a reclamar mi lugar en la academia y a ver la posibilidad de hacer activismo en el aula. Pasé de ser estudiante de postgrado, a ser profesora asociada de sociología, en década y media de trabajo académico. Durante este tiempo, necesité volver al espíritu, a darme un respiro, a descansar, lo que Aura Cumes y Lorena Cabnal, feministas Mayas decoloniales, llaman *acuerpar*.

En este escrito comparto las cuatro lecciones sobre la pedagogía muxerista que aprendí al conducir un taller de pan y cómo encontré el hornear conchas y hacerlo en comunidad como una forma de *acuerpar*. Presentó como este taller de conchas se vuelve un espacio interseccional—entre académico, terapéutico y activista—como un ejemplo de pedagogía muxerista, que abre un espacio/tiempo para construir redes de ayuda mutua, que lidera un relacionamiento comunitario recíproco, y que modela un diálogo sobre salud mental y buen vivir individual, y comunitario. Así como la pedagogía muxerista es un posicionamiento hacia la liberación de la Jotería, presento este taller de conchas como una, entre muchas formas de encarnar esta pedagogía.

Así, a través de este escrito, subrayo cuatro lecciones que este taller de pan —que desarrollé e impartí en distintas comunidades latinas desde el 2023—me dio sobre encarnar la pedagogía muxerista. Primero, el encarnar una temporalidad decolonial; segundo, tomarse el tiempo de hacer con las manos; tercero, politizar la salud mental y el bienestar; cuarto, convivir en reciprocidad. Estas cuatro lecciones muestran cómo el taller de pan permite un espacio donde vamos *acuer(pan)do* la pedagogía muxerista. Como una práctica encarnada, hacer conchas se vuelve un espacio importante para la Jotería, porque da lugar para politizar nuestra salud mental, conectar con el cuerpo, tejer una comunidad y compartir una memoria histórica—especialmente la nostalgia que las conchas despiden.

Entonces, me presento: soy una mujer cuir cisgénero, franco-guatemalteca y me identifico como femme. Nací y viví en Guatemala hasta mis 18 años; al graduarme del colegio francés viajé a Montpellier, Francia para estudiar mi bachillerato y maestría, principalmente porque la educación universitaria me era gratuita como francesa—pagué 3.80 euros al año de

matrícula universitaria. Llegué a Estados Unidos para enseñar francés en la Universidad de Minnesota tras ganarme el puesto de especialista de idioma en mi universidad en Montpellier. Fue al llegar a Estados Unidos que me enteré de que era latina, del mismo modo que en Francia me habían leído como marroquí—pero esa es otra historia. Llevo diecinueve años en este país y, aunque fue la educación francesa la que me abrió las puertas de la academia, he navegado y la academia estadounidense me ha leído como mujer cisgénero Latina. Ser mujer latina y mujer cuir en la academia implica ser vista a través de un lente de déficit: sin importar los logros, o los privilegios. Las personas latinas en la academia, somos interpretadas desde la carencia (Gutierrez y Muhs et. al, 2012), porque la latinidad como categoría racial, y el ser mujer como categoría de género, y ser cuir como categoría sexual no están construidas para garantizarnos acceso a recursos, poder o conocimiento. Por eso fue tan vital para mí ser tejida dentro de una comunidad muxerista que me alentó a seguir y que me recordaba, que la academia también es un lugar para mí y que la resistencia y la enseñanza van de la mano.

Me encontré tejida en la comunidad muxerista especialmente por mis colegas de beca de doctorado de la Universidad de Minnesota, de postdoctorado en la Universidad Estatal de Arizona (ASU) y a través de participar en la conferencia AJAAS por sus siglas en inglés *Association for Jotería Arts, Activism and Scholarship*, La Asociación de Arte, Activismo y Saberes de la Jotería. Participé en AJAAS en 2015 en Arizona, en 2017 en Minneapolis, y en 2024 en Los Ángeles. Fue en esta última conferencia que conduje el taller *Pan Dulce con Café*, el cual venía afinando desde el 2023, después de una rehabilitación de seis meses por un fuerte golpe a la cabeza, que me dejó con un traumatismo cerebral y donde hacer pan fue clave para mi rehabilitación.

En febrero del 2024, cuando finalizaba el taller en AJAAS, y que el olor a conchas recién horneadas llenó el centro comunitario donde estábamos, y le pinto una sonrisa a quienes pasaban y percibían ese olor, confirmé que hacer pan, igual que la pedagogía muxerista, abre posibilidades de resistencia y de imaginación comunitaria para sanar nuestro espíritu y nos conecta a un “acto de conocer y recordar íntimamente, con el propósito de sanar nuestras comunidades de estudiantes y profesores” (Revilla, 2022, p.2002) [traducción propia].

Así como la pedagogía muxerista convoca un conocimiento íntimo, una manera de recordar y sanar juntas¹ (Orozco, 2025; Revilla, 2022), hacer conchas es una experiencia encarnada que crea un espacio íntimo que nutre la posibilidad de imaginación y sanación necesaria para crear comunidad. Este espacio y proceso de hacer pan nos lleva a encarnar, a hablar sobre nuestra salud mental, a descansar y a tejer una comunidad de ayuda mutua, por lo que entiendo este taller como un espacio/tiempo donde aprendemos a acuerpar, lo que llamo acuer(pan)do. Así, este taller se vuelve un ejemplo de pedagogía muxerista.

Acuer(pan)do: practicar la pedagogía muxerista

La pedagogía muxerista, enraizada en las epistemologías Chicanas y Jotas, es una práctica feminista que coloca el cariño, el cuidado mutuo y la sanación colectiva en el centro del proceso educativo. Esta pedagogía denuncia y desmantela la violencia epistémica de la supremacía blanca, el patriarcado y la heteronorma —sistemas que dependen de jerarquías para producir conocimiento y organizar el mundo (Revilla, 2004). Frente a ello, la pedagogía muxerista propone que el aula sea un espacio de posibilidad colectiva donde aprender, sentir y resistir se entrelazan (Orozco, 2025). En este marco, enseñar es un acto de afirmación comunitaria: una praxis que recupera la capacidad de imaginar y construir mundos solidarios y desnaturalizar el “asesinato espiritual,” requerido para sostener un sistema colonial, como lo es la academia (Revilla, 2022, p.192).

Como profesora guatemalteca de sociología —y anteriormente como estudiante de doctorado en Minneapolis— fue la mentoría muxerista y la jotería lo que me sostuvo y me enseñó de una convicción muxerista, podía tomar el lugar para resistir y tener comunidad en la academia y especialmente en el aula. Lo que la pedagogía muxerista tiene muy claro es que resistir desde la academia requiere recuperar fuerzas, tender al espíritu y proteger el corazón, lo que feministas Mayas en Guatemala han conceptualizado como “acuerpar” (Cabnal, 2010; 2019; 2020).

Acuerpar resalta el cuidado corporal y espiritual necesario para “recuperar la alegría sin perder la indignación” (Cabnal, traducción de Méndez, 2023). Cabnal (2020) lo describe como una política de cariño mutuo que restaura la energía para continuar luchando. Esto se enlaza con la “restauración y protección espiritual” que desarrolla Revilla (2022, p.192), ambas

¹ Al hablar de personas o comunidad, utilizo la desinencia “e” en vez de “a” u “o” para marcar un género neutro y no binario.

llamando a crear espacios íntimos y comunitarios donde podamos revitalizar cuerpo y espíritu. María José Méndez (2023), al observar a activistas centroamericanas, define acuerpar como una participación política que va más allá de la empatía. Acuerpar, dice, es “atar nuestros zapatos con los de les otros y comprometer nuestros cuerpos para rehacer el mundo desde la ayuda mutua” (p. 58) [traducción propia]. La pedagogía muxerista toma esta invitación y la encarna en el aula, extendiendo el potencial de la academia a crear un espacio para restaurar, nutrir y fortalecer nuestro espíritu colectivo.

Así, presento el taller *pan dulce con café* como un espacio y una actividad profundamente muxerista y con el potencial para acuerpar. El taller, expande el aula, y nos permite un espacio de descanso, reflexión, degustación y convivencia potencializando la solidaridad mutua y la recuperación de energía para seguir resistiendo.

Particularmente en este momento político, donde las personas Latines, Trans, y Pro-Palestina son el blanco de políticas de deportación, desaparición y de separación de familias. Lo que aprendemos de Guatemala, es que usar terror como arma de guerra viene a través de una acción y una inacción (Sanford, 2008). La acción la podemos ver en políticas migratorias que son intencionalmente traumatizantes y crueles, que buscan separar menores de sus cuidadores, o de desaparecer a personas. La meta de estas acciones es el de traumatizar para dominar lo cual tiene repercusiones generacionales. Las inacciones es la falta de servicios de salud mental, de apoyo terapéutico, o la individualización de estos modelos (Figueroa, 2021). Juntas, estas estrategias buscan oprimir física, mental y espiritualmente a las comunidades latines por generaciones. En 2026 seguimos presenciando esta violencia estatal con la violencia de ICE por ejemplo.

En Estados Unidos en el 2023, el suicidio fue la segunda causa de muerte de la población Hispana de entre 25-34 años (Departamento de Salud y Servicios Sociales de Estados Unidos, 2024). Al mismo tiempo, la población latina es la más deservida en salud mental, con solo 5% de los terapeutas en Estados Unidos siendo Latines y con la comunidad Latina recibiendo 28% menos servicios que sus pares blancos (Departamento de Salud y Servicios Sociales de Estados Unidos, 2024). Así, el trauma es utilizado como arma de guerra para “debilitar” a las personas Latinas, Trans, Negras y Pro-palestina psicológicamente, emocionalmente y espiritualmente (Puar, 2017). Usar el trauma como arma de opresión hacia un grupo de personas también es parte de racializar a un grupo, (Hemphill, 2024), además normaliza las relaciones de dominio,

naturalizando la crueldad, relacionamiento necesario para que el sistema colonial continúe desapercibido (Lugones, 2018), justo aquello que la pedagogía muxerista busca desnaturalizar. Entonces, en un contexto donde la población latina es sistemáticamente desatendida en servicios de salud mental y simultáneamente es el blanco del trauma como arma de violencia estatal, la pedagogía muxerista centrada en salud mental y en acuerpar se vuelve no solo necesaria, sino urgente.

Por lo que propongo el taller de pan para delinear un posible camino para irnos acuer(pan)do en comunidad, y estirar la pedagogía muxerista del aula a la cocina. Acuer(pan)do muestra que un taller de conchas puede convertirse en una práctica concreta de pedagogía muxerista. Hacer pan abre tiempo para hablar de salud mental y tejer una red de cuidado mutuo: justamente los elementos que la pedagogía muxerista identifica como necesarios para la resistencia y la creación de comunidad. A partir de los talleres de pan que he conducido desde el 2023, comparto cuatro lecciones que muestran cómo el acto cotidiano de hacer pan dulce en comunidad puede encarnar una pedagogía muxerista y, al mismo tiempo, permitirnos acuerpar, un posicionamiento político del estar juntos: en diálogo, descanso, cuidado mutuo, convivencia y dulzura.

Los ecos entre acuerpar y la pedagogía muxerista amplifican que salvaguardar la alegría es resistir; y afirman que es trabajo político revivir el espíritu, recargar el aliento y tejer comunidad con quienes ir acuer(pan)do. Al recalcar el “pan” en “acuerpando” subrayo como hacer pan en comunidad es poner en acción el acuerpar. Acuerpando es el gerundio del verbo acuerpar, que describe una acción en curso, entonces cuando hacemos pan, ponemos en marcha una pedagogía muxerista y aprendemos a acuerpar, lo que llamo acuer(pan)do. Acuer(pan)do es mi contribución para sostener el espíritu, alentar la causa, y nutrir la imaginación de estudiantes, profesores, activistas, y sanadores, para construir mundos que centran la vida.

Las Conchas

Las conchas son un pan dulce de levadura tradicional tipo brioche muy querido en muchos países de Latinoamérica. Las conchas son suaves, esponjosas y su forma característica —una bolita cubierta por un “sombbrero” de azúcar que al hornearse deja un nácar, como el de las conchas de mar— las convierte en un pan profundamente nostálgico. Esta nostalgia que nos induce las conchas no es totalmente por casualidad.

En la historia del trigo desenhebrada por Aguilar-Rodríguez (2020) nos muestra que en México la introducción del trigo —y en particular la panadería europea— se implementó como una estrategia publica de mestizaje. A través del control alimenticio, el pan de trigo fue una de las vías primordiales por la cual se “modernizo” a un pueblo mayoritariamente indígena en ciudadanos mexicanos (Aguilar-Rodríguez, 2020).

En su escrito ‘Las penas con pan son menos’, Aguilar-Rodríguez (2020) nos muestra como el pan se presentó como una herramienta doblemente útil para moldear al ciudadano moderno. Por un lado, ya que el trigo requiere de más espacio para ser cultivado, de maquinaria pesada para convertirlo en harina y de un horno para hacerlo pan, el ciudadano moderno debía ahora pagar por obtener un alimento base. Así la “modernización” dejó detrás el autosostenimiento que les ofrecía los alimentos a base de maíz a las familias mexicanas. Este cambio, que se intensificó en la década de 1960, con la industrialización del trigo estadounidense, tuvo como meta moldear el espacio íntimo del hogar, a través de la comida, y lo que es ser buena madre. El trigo tomó el lugar del maíz como alimento base, nos demuestra Aguilar-Rodríguez (2020), a través del ser buena madre y celebrar los cumpleaños con pastel y las meriendas infantiles con sándwiches de pan de caja.

Para quienes el pan —y particularmente el pan dulce como la concha— ocupa un lugar afectivo, una nostalgia, un recuerdo de pertenencia y de hogar, lleva en el corazón la evidencia que la comida carga con políticas de mestizaje diseñadas para invisibilizar y cortar con las costumbres afectivas de los pueblos originarios y negros, y así asimilar nuestros deseos, gusto y sentires al imaginario europeo y anglosajón.

Así el pan se popularizó no solo como eje mestizador, sino también en paralelo con la “revolución del trigo” en Estados Unidos, que expandió su alcance e influencia imperial en América Latina. Al mismo tiempo que Estados Unidos despojaba a las comunidades nativo-americanas negándoles su autosostenimiento, cortando su relación con la tierra y, por extensión, su relación con la comida, la harina de trigo se popularizaba en Estados Unidos y Latinoamérica. El *fry bread* o pan frito, un platillo Navajo, por ejemplo, evidencia el ingenio culinario que conllevó a resistir y sobrevivir a estas políticas genocidas y de despojo. Hay que reconocer que la harina de trigo y por ende el pan se usó para mestizar a los pueblos originarios de Abya Yala, y moldear al continente como un mercado de consumidores que le dan una ventaja económica al imperio estadounidense.

Reconociendo la historia que hizo que nuestra relación con la tierra, con la comida esté intencionalmente interrumpida, permitirnos reconectar con la comida que nos da un sentido de pertenencia, nos da acceso a una bitácora de nuestra historia. Y qué hermoso que el pan —con su olor tibio, sus memorias de hogar— evidencie las políticas coloniales que nos mestizaron y que viven en nosotros. Por eso mismo, propongo un taller de conchas, como un espacio para discutir y asumir este mestizaje, y encarnar una práctica de solidaridad, de descanso y de conexión para poder hablar de esta historia colonial y de las prácticas cotidianas de resistencia que viven en ella.

El taller de Pan

Para hacer este taller de pan se necesita de una receta de un pan dulce de levadura, algo familiar, de un grupo de personas dispuestas, y de un lugar donde se pueda hornear y también descansar. Se necesita una mesa de trabajo, una pesa de comida, un plato hondo en el cual pesar los ingredientes y listo.

Las conchas, como todo pan dulce de levadura, requieren de dos momentos de reposo: uno para que la masa fermente en bloque y otro después de darle forma de bolita, que dependiendo del clima puede durar de hora y media a tres horas. Aprovecho de esos dos momentos de reposos para hacer preguntas sobre las necesidades básicas para tener salud mental, y luego, para tomar un descanso. Concluimos comiendo conchas recién horneadas con café y llevándonos algunas para compartir con nuestras familias y amigos. Así de simple es este taller.

Diseñé este taller después de recuperarme de una lesión cerebral que requirió seis meses de terapias de rehabilitación. Hacer pan fue mi cómplice en mi recuperación: me ayudó a tomarme el tiempo de descansar y me permitió reciprocarme el cuidado que había recibido con pan fresco. Las conchas especialmente me cubrieron de una nostalgia sobre mi niñez y de cuando hacía conchas con mi abuelo. Justamente una prima había compartido conmigo la receta pan dulce de mi abuelo, y ha sido la que he utilizado en el taller.

Durante el primer reposo de la masa, para abrir una conversación intencional sobre salud mental me baso en la metodología diseñada en el Instituto Austral de Salud Mental, de Neuquén, Argentina, que tuve el privilegio de evaluar en el 2019 (Figuerola, 2023). El Austral sigue el método de la alta simplicidad donde aprendí que hay necesidades básicas requeridas para tener salud mental, las cuales son: la higiene personal y de casa, el comer sanamente, el

poder dormir en un lugar seguro, la conciencia de la enfermedad, el administrar la toma de medicinas, tener un amigo y sueños a futuro. Estas necesidades básicas son las que inspiran las preguntas que guían nuestro primer reposo: ¿Estas durmiendo bien, tienes un lugar seguro dónde dormir? ¿Tienes acceso a comida saludable, estas comiendo bien? ¿Sabes si necesitas algún medicamento, tienes acceso a las medicinas que necesitas? ¿Necesitas ayuda con el aseo del espacio donde vives? ¿Tienes un amigo con quien contar? Responder a algunas o a todas estas preguntas nos permite una estructura para hablar de nuestra salud mental de forma pragmática y material y permite hacer un inventario de los recursos necesarios para que los participantes puedan sostener su salud mental.

Al terminar el primer reposo, tomamos la masa y la dividimos en 15 bolitas (por cada receta). Ahora toca hacer los sombreritos. Para ellos, tomamos la masa de azúcar y hacemos tortillitas que colocamos sobre las bolitas de masa. El siguiente paso es decorar con un cuchillo tajando la masa de azúcar suavemente con líneas para que nuestro pan parezca una concha de mar. Ahora que las conchas están formadas, dejamos reposar una segunda vez por hora y media a dos horas, dependiendo del clima.

Durante este segundo reposo, simplemente descansamos haciendo una siesta colectiva, un momento de pausa que rara vez nos permitimos. Durante este momento de descanso mi meta es que tomemos una siesta, pero primero invito a los participantes a estar sin pantallas, a reflexionar y observar, a escribir en un diario, o a dibujar. Al principio no todas las personas se sienten cómodas durmiendo, pero el simple hecho de estar en silencio, sin pantallas, y viendo a otros dormir, induce el sueño.

Para despertar a los participantes, empiezo a hornear las conchas, para que el olor les reciba. Hornear las conchas toma entre 13 a 15 minutos, durante este tiempo, hacemos café, y los participantes se van despertando. Después de cuatro o cinco horas de trabajo estamos listos para comer las conchas recién horneadas con café, mientras compartimos consejos, recursos y contactos. Así concluimos, acabamos con algo tan común para nuestra cultura, platicar mientras comemos pan dulce con café compartiendo consejos y recursos. Y porque las conchas son abundantes, llevamos conchas para compartir para más tarde, o en casa, o con los que nos sostienen, lo cual también hace parte del taller. Y así terminamos el taller, compartiendo conchas con quienes nos sostienen, reciprocando.

He implementado el taller en diversas instituciones centradas en el bienestar de comunidades Centroamericanas y Chicanas: en 2023 con líderes de la Asociación de Estudiantiles Latines de Colorado College, SOMOS; en 2024 con la Jotería en AJAAS y con el colectivo Food to Power en Colorado Springs; y en 2025 en Ciudad de Guatemala con madres que se salieron de una situación de calle a través del Movimiento de Jóvenes de la Calle (MOJOCA), cuya estrategia incluye una panadería. Ese mismo año ofrecí el taller en La Nueva Fábrica en Antigua Guatemala, como un taller de artivismo y sanación, como parte de la exhibición *Para Curarnos el Susto*.

En esta convivencia intencional sostengo que hornear conchas crea un espacio pedagógico para acuerpar; a esto lo nombro acuer(pan)do. Como posición política para recuperar la fuerza, acuer(pan)do propone el hacer pan en colectividad como un espacio donde nos recuperarnos a través del descansar, hacer con las manos, hablar de salud mental, compartir y comer pan dulce donde se puede tejer una red de cuidado mutuo en donde compartir recursos y consejos. Como práctica corporal, acuer(pan)do se suma a la pedagogía muxerista que busca restaurar la dignidad y la fuerza necesarias para crear mundos que centran la vida. Comparto aquí las cuatro lecciones que este taller de conchas me enseñó sobre cómo acuerpar desde la pedagogía muxerista.

Lección I: Descansar

La primera y más generosa enseñanza que me dio el pan fue permitirme una temporalidad que centra el descanso, y ver el descanso como necesario para la vida, pero especialmente para el activismo. El ritmo del pan dulce es propio al agente leudante, como la masa madre o la levadura. Las conchas son panes de levadura dulces que se hacen usualmente con levadura seca, aunque se puede hacer también de masa madre. Para el taller, utilizo la levadura. Todas las recetas de pan dulce de levadura (concha, challa, brioche etc.) requieren dos momentos de descanso, durante los cuales la levadura fermenta las azúcares en dióxido de carbono y aérea la masa haciéndola crecer lo cual vuelve al pan esponjoso. Estos descansos son largos, de hora y media a casi tres horas dependiendo de muchas cosas como por el ejemplo, el estado de ánimo del panadere, la temperatura, la presión atmosférica o la humedad ambiental en el momento de hacer y reposar la masa. Así la levadura me enseñó que sin reposo no hay pan. Y tome esa lección muy literalmente. La levadura nos modela que el descanso es

imprescindible, que, sin él, no alcanzamos la meta. Así el taller de pan permite el espacio para descansar y descansar en comunidad.

Esta idea no es nueva, Tricia Hersey (2022), a través de su Ministerio del Descanso [Rest Ministry] guía siestas comunales como un proceso espiritual, como un portal de resistencia, donde nos desconectamos del sistema capitalista. A mí me llevo recuperarme de un traumatismo cerebral haciendo pan, para internalizar lo que Hersey nos predica: hay que descansar sin culpa o ansiedad, y resguardar nuestro descanso celosamente. Sin descanso el gluten no desarrolla la fuerza de resistir la aeración que le permite la levadura, la cual también necesita tiempo para fermentar. Así la primera lección del pan, darle prioridad al descanso como paso necesario para resistir, y para sostener un espíritu crítico y una organización política.

Esta lección es una de las más fuertes, especialmente en una sociedad donde el valor de las personas Chicanas, Latinas, Centroamericanas, Trans y Queers es basado en el nivel de rendimiento, esfuerzo y productividad que da la persona. Durante el taller con las mujeres de MOJOCA, por ejemplo, compartieron que solo duermen 3 horas, porque tienen que trabajar, hacer toda la labor doméstica y contundir con el tráfico de Guatemala, que roba horas de vida. Durante el descanso, la siesta duro más de dos horas. Mientras dormían, unos de los nenes entro al salón buscando a su mama (la organización ofreció guardería durante el taller). El niño no entendía que estaba pasando y le expliqué que su mama estaba tomando una siesta. El niño se sorprendió, y sentí que tal vez nunca había visto a su mama dormir. Al despertar, las mujeres remarcaron lo bien que se sentían y se prometieron dormir con más intención. Las lecciones del descanso del Ministerio de Tricia Hersey se pueden encarnar a través del taller de pan que nos da un modelo para tomarnos el tiempo de descansar, un paso primordial para imaginarnos la posibilidad de otros mundos.

Hacer pan nos invita a encarnar la temporalidad del fermento, y nos modela lo que es el descanso fuera de una lógica capitalista. Así, el taller de pan acciona una pedagogía muxerista donde aprendemos a sostenernos a través del descanso en comunidad, apostándole a nuestra humanidad.

Lección 2: Hacer con las manos

Amasar, o el proceso de mezclar los ingredientes con la mano hasta formar la masa del pan, es un proceso accesible para un gran rango de edades. Mas que eso, el proceso de amasar es terapéutico porque al hacer cosas con nuestro cuerpo reducimos el estrés y la ansiedad, porque pasamos del pensar, de vivir en nuestra cognición, a vivir en nuestro cuerpo, hacer con las manos nos enraíza, nos enfoca, nos encarna. En contextos de trauma, por ejemplo, hacer pan se ha considerado como una terapia, porque el hacer algo con las manos, como amasar, interrumpe los ciclos cognitivos repetitivos y nos lleva al presente a través de la percepción háptica, lo que fomenta la conexión cuerpo-mente y promueve la atención plena (Zuidema, 2023). Asimismo, crear en comunidad, nos ayuda a satisfacer nuestra necesidad esencial de crear, lo cual refuerza nuestra humanidad. Hacer pan se convierte en una forma de sostener y nutrir nuestro impulso artístico resultando en un sentido de satisfacción y bienestar (Zuidema 2023, p. 14).

La segunda lección del taller de pan entonces fue la de hacer algo con las manos, y de participar en un proceso creativo en comunidad. Esta combinación, hacer con las manos en comunidad torna algo terapéutico que nos encarna a nosotres mismas y nos ancla al grupo de personas con las que hacemos el pan. Así, practicamos conectar con nuestro cuerpo, con una comunidad, y con la tierra a través del pan. Este proceso de conexión es un acto muxerista que busca la plenitud de nuestro espíritu y honra su conexión con todo lo que tiene vida.

Lección 3: Preguntar sobre nuestra salud mental

Durante el segundo descanso de la masa, podríamos abordar cualquier tema, o ninguno y solo platicar, pero para mí, la salud mental es el tema más importante por lo que lo centro en el taller. Especialmente porque la comunidad latina es racializada a través del trauma, saber hablar de salud mental es una habilidad crucial. Como investigadora especializada en como definimos la salud mental, me guió de la metodología que observe en el Instituto Austral de Salud Mental de Neuquén Argentina. Como parte de mi trabajo como consultora, tuve el privilegio de evaluar el Instituto Austral en el 2019 (Figuerola, 2023). El Austral es reconocido mundialmente por ser uno de los mejores y más exitosos hospitales psiquiátrico del mundo, y concuerdo. El Austral utiliza el método de la alta simplicidad para crear soluciones sostenibles, y con esa misma simplicidad, el Austral tiene una definición clara de lo que es la salud mental y lo que conduce a ella: llevar una vida independiente, tener un amigo, tener sueños a futuro. Por

eso, tomé prestadas las preguntas de la terapia grupal llamada “necesidades básicas” del Austral para modelar durante el taller como se habla de nuestra salud mental. Y por eso, las preguntas son sencillas: ¿Estás durmiendo? ¿Estás comiendo bien? ¿Tienes acceso a la medicina que requieres? ¿Tienes un amigo? Tan sencillas son estas preguntas que rara vez se las haríamos a alguien que acabamos de conocer. Así, con estas preguntas vamos pasito a pasito y en el camino nos quitamos la pena, la culpa, o el estigma de hablar de nuestra salud mental. Estas preguntas nos ayudan a nombrar si necesitamos ayuda o recursos, y nos dan la oportunidad como comunidad de ayudarnos entre sí, compartiendo consejos, recursos o contactos.

Lo que he aprendido en mis investigaciones es que el sistema psiquiátrico es complicado a propósito y sus reglas cambian por región, o hasta por municipio (*county* en inglés), por lo que es aún más necesario crear redes de ayuda mutua, aunque sean informales. La tercera lección muxerista del taller de pan es el crear un espacio seguro para hablar abiertamente de nuestra salud mental, y responder a nuestras necesidades básicas con ayuda mutua compartiendo recursos y conocimientos.

Lección 4: Compartir

Mi rehabilitación tomó mucha energía de mi pareja y de mis amigas y me pareció difícil dejarme cuidar: que me manejaran, el no poder contribuir a las labores doméstica, y el no poder leer, o ver una pantalla. El hacer y regalar pan fue un logro que me dio mucha satisfacción, porque me permitió ser recíproca con mi comunidad de cuidado. Esa reciprocidad me dio dignidad. El compartir es parte natural del pan, porque el pan es abundante, cada receta resulta en 15 a 16 conchas, por lo que parte del taller siempre será llevar conchas a casa para compartir. Ese compartir, aunque se hace afuera del taller, es una parte importante. La satisfacción de regalar, de compartir algo que hemos hecho con nuestras manos, crea un momento de conexión y de oportunidad para tejer comunidad recíproca, la base del cuidado mutuo.

Por eso, la lección cuatro, evidencia como el hacer pan con un grupo de personas, acciona el tejer comunidad, dándonos el espacio y el tiempo para conectar con nuestro cuerpo, con la tierra, con las personas a nuestro alrededor y compartir pan con nuestra comunidad. Así este taller enmarca y posibilita ser parte de una red de cuidado mutuo.

Conclusión

En las cuatro o cinco horas que toma este taller de pan, aprendemos a acuerpar, porque cambiamos de temporalidad, centramos el descanso, dialogamos sobre salud mental, tejemos comunidad, comemos y compartimos conchas. Estas lecciones fomentan la recuperación de energía a través del cuidado mutuo y de la politización de nuestra salud mental, instrumento clave para la comunidad Latine para sostener nuestra resistencia diaria.

En esta convivencia y en la intención de hacer un diálogo sobre salud mental, argumento que hornear conchas crea un espacio pedagógico para acuerpar, algo que nombro como acuer(pan)do. Este concepto refiere al acto de ocupar intencionalmente un espacio a través de la elaboración de pan para accionando una comunidad de apoyo mutuo, enfocado en salud mental. Como práctica corporal de cuidado, acuer(pan)do amplifica la pedagogía muxerista que busca recuperar la dignidad y las fuerzas necesarias para seguir en la lucha por dismantelar los paradigmas de dominio y crear nuevos mundos. Acuer(pando) entonces es una apuesta a la dulzura, a la transparencia de lo que necesitamos para nuestro buen vivir.

Acuerpar aquí propone una epistemología centroamericana: una invitación a tomar una postura política de dulzura y cuidado mutuo. Hacer pan se vuelve un espacio pedagógico muxerista porque permite crear lugares de sanación colectiva, donde regeneramos fuerzas para resistir las políticas supremacistas que utilizan el trauma como arma de guerra. Al hornear conchas en comunidad, honramos nuestros cuerpos latines, nuestros conocimientos y nuestra historia. A través del diálogo, el descanso y la convivencia, aprendemos a presentarnos en el mundo desde una posición política de resistencia mutua. Acuer(pan)do es una apuesta por la dulzura, la colectividad y el cuidado de la pedagogía muxerista: una práctica que acciona el cuidado.

Agradezco a este número especial, y la retroalimentación de los revisores y editores por darme el espacio para compartir esta pedagogía del pan.

Referencias

- Aguilar-Rodríguez, S. (2020). 'Las penas con pan son menos': Race, modernity and wheat in modern Mexico. *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 97(4), 539-565.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14753820.2020.1701330>
- Cabnal, L. (2010). *Acercamiento a la construcción de la propuesta de pensamiento epistémico de las mujeres indígenas feministas comunitarias de Abya Yala*. En Asociación para la Cooperación con el Sur (Ed.), *Feminismos diversos: El feminismo comunitario*. Ciudad de Guatemala: ACSUR-Las Segovias. <https://elizabethruano.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Cabnal-2010-Propuesta-de-Pensamiento-Epistemico-Mujeres-Indigenas.pdf>
- Cabnal, L. (2019). El relato de las violencias desde mi territorio cuerpo-tierra. En R. Icaza & X. Leyva (Eds.), *En tiempos de muerte: Cuerpos, rebeldías, resistencias* (pp. 113–123). Buenos Aires y San Cristóbal de las Casas, Clacso.
https://om.juscatamarca.gob.ar/libros/En_tiempos_de_muerte_cuerpos_rebeldias_r.pdf
- Cabnal, L. (2020, Febrero 17). Defensa y recuperación del territorio de la sanación ancestral originaria. *Pikara Magazine*. <https://www.pikaramagazine.com/2020/02/defensa-y-recuperacion-del-territorio-de-la-sanacion-ancestral-originaria/>
- Cumes, Aura. (2014) Acuerpamiento y feminismos comunitarios. En Y. Espinosa Miñoso, D. Gómez, y K. Ochoa (Eds.), *Tejiendo de otro modo: Feminismo, epistemología y apuestas descoloniales* (pp. 237-252). <https://metodologiainvestigacionfeminista.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/gocc81mez-d-2014-feminismo-y-modernidad-colonialidad.pdf>
- Curiel, O. (2007). Crítica poscolonial desde las prácticas políticas del feminismo antirracista. *Nómadas*, 26, 92–101. <https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/1051/105115241010.pdf>
- Figueroa, C. (2021). *Inclusive mental health education in dis/ability the intersection of identity, power and education*. Palgrave Mcmillan
- Figueroa, C. (2023). Salud mental como resultado educativo: Lecciones para la educación inclusiva desde el Austral en Neuquén Argentina. *Disability and the Global South*, 10(1), 2307-2317. https://dgsjournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/06_10_01.pdf
- Gutierrez y Muhs, G., Niemann, F. Y., Gonzalez, C., Harris, A. P. (Eds.). (2012). *Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of race and class for women in academia*. Utah State University Press.
- Hemphill, P. (2024). *What it takes to heal: How transforming ourselves can change the world*. Penguin Random House.
- Hersey, T. (2022). *Rest is resistance: A manifesto*. Little, Brown Spark.
- Lugones, M. (2018). *Contra pedagogías de la crueldad*. Universidad de Glascow.
- Méndez, M. J. (2023). Acuerpar: The decolonial feminist call for embodied solidarity. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 49(1), 37-61. <https://doi.org/10.1086/725839>
- Orozco, R. C. (2025). Queer Latinx/a/o college student activist liberatory praxis: The Muxerista Activist Consciousness Development Framework. *Journal of College Student Development*, 66(5), 499-516. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/csd.2025.a970175>.
- Puar, J. K. (2017). *The right to maim: Debility, capacity, disability*. Duke University Press.
- Revilla, A. T. (2004). Muxerista pedagogy: Raza womyn teaching social justice through student activism. *The High School Journal*, 87(4), 80-95.
- Revilla, A. T. (2022). Resisting spirit murder: Nurturing spirit restoration and healing through Muxerista and Jotería mentorship. *Aztlán*, 47(2), 191-203.
<https://doi.org/10.1525/azt.2022.47.2.191>

- Sanford, V. (2008). From genocide to femicide: Impunity and human rights in twenty-first century Guatemala. *Journal of Human Rights*, 7(2), 104–122.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14754830802070192>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2024). *U.S. Mental and Behavioral Health in Hispanic/Latinos*. <https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/mental-and-behavioral-health-hispaniclatinos>
- Zuidema, A. J. (2023). *Haptic healing: Hands and bread*. Pratt Institute.



Association of Mexican American Educators Journal

A peer-reviewed, open access journal

Volume 20 Issue I

2026

AMAE Special Double Issue

Muxerista Pedagogies and Praxis:

Art, Activism, and Scholarship as Resistance and Restoration

Guest Editors

Roberto C. Orozco, PhD
University of Minnesota–Twin Cities

Anita Tijerina Revilla, PhD
California State University, Los Angeles

Editors

Patricia Sánchez, PhD
The University of Texas at San Antonio

Antonio J. Camacho, PhD
AMAE, Inc.

Associate Editors

Julie L. Figueroa, PhD
Sacramento State

Lucila D. Ek, PhD
The University of Texas at San Antonio

Managing Editor

Jerry Romero Jr., PhD
The University of Texas at San Antonio

***Transnacionalizando y Transfronterizando: Arte, Expresiones e
Iniciativas de la Jotería desde abajo del Globo Sur en México***

Luis Oswaldo Esparza, PhD, José Ramón Ramírez, BA, Mario Marín, MA,
Geovani Temich, BA

Transnacionalizando y Transfronterizando: Arte, Expresiones e Iniciativas de la Jotería desde abajo del Globo Sur en México

Luis Oswaldo Esparza, PhD

California State University, Northridge; Jotería Transfronteriza Rural

José Ramón Ramírez, BA

Misiones Culturales Rurales; Jotería Transfronteriza Rural

Mario Marín, MA

Universidad de Guadalajara; Jotería Transfronteriza Rural

Geovani Temich, BA

Hospital Comunitario Ocotlán SSJ; Jotería Transfronteriza Rural

Abstract

This article offers a response to the asymmetrical power relations between the Global North and Global South (Dussel, 1993). We affirm that the future of Jotería Studies depends on the inclusion, visibility, and theoretical recognition of Jotería projects desde abajo, or from the subaltern, the pueblos, and the rural communities of the Global South. We ask the following question: How can Jotería Studies engage a transnational relationship with Global South Jotería scholars, activists, and artists? We offer several narratives of art, activism, and scholarship from Mexico as living examples of Jotería projects from the Global South that bridge dialogue with Jotería from the Global North. Furthermore, we use a Muxerista–Jotería framework to show how these projects operate as the nagueal across borders, a transformative and shape-shifting force that traverses geopolitical, linguistic, theoretical, and epistemic boundaries to create horizontal spaces of exchange and solidarity.

Keywords: rurality, Muxerista–Jotería, Global South, Jotería Studies, transnational

Introduction

Jotería is a movement, a consciousness, and a mode of world-making that refuses coloniality in all its forms (Bañales, 2014). With its emergence in Chicanx/Latinx studies, queer and trans studies, and a particular focus on Chicana Latina feminism, Jotería Studies serves as a decolonial site that challenges and transcends “histories, identities, scholarly works, and artistic and activist practices of queer Chicanx and Latinx peoples” (Alvarez Jr. & Estrada, 2019, p. 864). Additionally, scholars and activists have turned to Jotería Studies, as an individual and political identity (Revilla & Santillana, 2014), epistemology (Pérez, 2014), and a praxis (Alvarez Jr., 2014) that brings together art, activism, and scholarship to create spaces of healing, resistance, and collective transformation (Alvarez Jr. & Estrada, 2019; Orozco, 2021; Revilla, 2014). Extending the work of Jotería Studies and the many scholars, activists, and artists, we assert that its institutionalization in the Global North has sometimes reproduced hemispheric hierarchies that privilege Northern academic discourses over Southern community knowledges. Therefore, we ask the following question: How can Jotería Studies engage a transnational relationship with Global South Jotería scholars, activists, and artists?

This article offers a response to the asymmetrical power relations between the Global North and Global South (Dussel, 1993). We affirm that the future of Jotería Studies depends on the inclusion, visibility, and theoretical recognition of Jotería projects *desde abajo*¹, or from the subaltern, the pueblos, and the rural communities of the Global South. We offer several narratives of art, activism, and scholarship from Mexico as living examples of Jotería projects from the Global South that bridge dialogue with Jotería from the Global North. Furthermore, we use a Muxerista–Jotería framework to show how these projects operate as the *nagual*² across borders, a transformative and shape-shifting force that traverses geopolitical, linguistic, theoretical, and epistemic boundaries to create horizontal spaces of exchange and solidarity.

We first begin by naming our communion with a Muxerista–Jotería epistemology, taking our learnings from Muxerista practices to how we engage our Jotería projects. We then provide our own *jotería-historias* (Revilla & Santillana, 2014) to situate how we come to this work and the ways we continue to enact it in our praxis. Following this, we provide several

¹ Defined by Bañales (2017) as Jotería activism from below as decolonial praxis.

² Anzaldúa (1987) defines *nagual* as a shape-shifting power to transform themselves and their reality, often representing the psychic, animal, and indigenous self, moving between worlds.

examples of Jotería projects desde abajo, asserting the many ways that the Global South, in particular Mexico, builds on the field of Jotería Studies. We end by providing final reflections and asking critical questions for scholars, artists, and activists that want to engage in intentional and relational responsibility with Jotería desde el Globo Sur.

In Communion with a Muxerista–Jotería Epistemology

We explicitly lean on a Muxerista–Jotería framework to guide how we present the different Jotería projects desde abajo, from the Global South. Revilla et al. (2022) name Muxerista–Jotería as an identity, thought, and politic that builds upon the legacy of Chicana/x and Latina/x feminism and contemporary works of Muxeristas (Santillana, 2011); and a Muxerista is defined as “a nonbinary, gender-fluid, gender-inclusive, trans, queer, and/or sexually inclusive Chicanx/Latinx (including people of Indigenx, African, and Asian ancestry) identity that honors our multiple, intersecting identities and communities while uplifting our radical commitment to activism, organizing, personal and collective liberation, and social transformation (Revilla et al., 2022, p. 24). A Muxerista–Jotería epistemology refuses the separation between theory and practice, insisting instead on their unity. In this spirit, we approach the Jotería narratives of the Global South as co-authored knowledges that embody what Muxerista love, care, and spirituality look like in *transfronterizo* action in communion. They teach us that the border, theoretically and physically, is not simply a line to be crossed but a living space of relation, contradiction, and creativity.

This commitment to relationality is why we invoke and name the *nagual* across borders. In Mesoamerican cosmology, the *nagual* is a shapeshifter, capable of traversing worlds and embodying multiple forms. As such, our Muxerista–Jotería communion becomes a *nagual* across borders, crossing national, linguistic, theoretical, and epistemic divides to foster understanding without assimilation. It translates without extracting, listens without consuming, and builds bridges that are reciprocal rather than exploitative. The Jotería artists and activists featured in this article embody this *nagual* energy through their creative and political labor, which reimagines what it means to organize, theorize, and love across hemispheres. In centering these narratives, this essay asserts that the most transformative work in Jotería Studies is already happening outside the metropolises of the North, in the rural collectives, drag stages, and community airwaves of the South. These are not peripheries of theory, but it's the beating heart. They remind us that the decolonial horizon of Jotería is not a distant goal, it is already

here, unfolding in the voices, bodies, and movements of Jotería who continue to teach us how to cross borders with love, accountability, and imagination.

Jotería-Historias

As we engage with a Muxerista–Jotería epistemology, it becomes essential to locate ourselves within the work. Our commitments to community, activism, and knowledge production are inseparable from our lived experiences and social positions. Recognizing our own roles within structures of privilege and marginalization allows us to practice the accountability that Muxerista praxis demands from each one of us. In the following, we present our individual and collective jotería-historias (Revilla & Santillana, 2014) to honor transparency, relationality, and the deep interconnection between who we are and the transformative work we carry out alongside our communities.

Luis grew up for part of his life in rural Tototlán and Ocotlán, Jalisco, where his ancestors have resided since the 1800s, according to birth records. While Luis is now mostly situated in the Global North, he has done his due diligence to maintain his familial, spiritual, and cultural connection to the Global South. They are Two-Spirit, Citizen of the N'de Apache Nation, Jotx, Chicanx, Transfronterizo. They are also a Professor of Queer Studies and Chicanx Studies at California State University, Northridge. Additionally, they are the co-founder of Toto-Diverso and Jotería Transfronteriza Rural, both rural collectives dedicated to organizing initiatives, marches, and protests across rural México. Luis acknowledges their privileges of holding a PhD, being a triple citizen, United States, México, and N'de Apache Nation, educated in the Global North, and (recently) forming part of the middle class (but was of a working-class background when they started working with fellow members of Jotería Transfronteriza Rural and Toto-Diverso). They also pledge to use their privileges to advance activist work in the Global South in a manner that embraces reciprocity, transactional exchange, and consistent accountability work. Luis's love for their Jotería community informs their activism in the Global South, a community they have been working with since 2018; pledge to use their social position and location to advance activist work in the Global South in a manner that embraces reciprocity, transactional exchange, and consistent accountability.

Geovani Temich is situated in the Global South. Originally from Veracruz and now living in Jalisco, they identify as Mexicanx, gay, activist, migratory, and as a co-founder of Radio Diversa, a radio program dedicated to theorizing and uplifting rural Jotería voices, as well as

Jotería Transfronteriza Rural. They are also an accomplished radiologist and health professional. Geovani recognizes the privilege that comes with being college-educated and commits to using that privilege and their access to university spaces to uplift their communities. Their dedication, love, and connection to Ocotlán deeply inform their activist praxis.

Mario Marín also resides in the Global South. Born and raised in Ocotlán, Jalisco, they identify as gender-fluid, Mexicanx, rural, and as an activist. They are a professor at the University of Guadalajara's Ocotlán campus and co-founder of Radio Diversa and Jotería Transfronteriza Rural. Holding a master's degree in psychology, they acknowledge the privilege of higher education and university affiliation. Their dedication, love, and connection to Ocotlán likewise shape their activist praxis.

Lastly, José Ramón Ramírez Vega lives and is situated in the Global South town of Poncitlán, Jalisco, but working in Ocotlán, Jalisco. They identify as gender-fluid, Mexicanx, shaman, and activist. As a physical fitness instructor at Misiones Cultural Rurales and co-founder of Jotería Transfronteriza Rural, they also recognize the privilege that comes with holding a bachelor's degree and participating in university spaces. Their dedication, love, and connection to Ocotlán continue to inform their activist praxis.

Building upon our shared commitments to activism, education, and community transformation in Ocotlán and beyond, the collective work of Jotería Transfronteriza Rural emerges as ways of being and doing with Jotería in the Global South. Rooted in the lived experiences of rural queer and trans communities in western Mexico, this project bridges academic inquiry, artistic expression, and grassroots organizing. It represents an ongoing dialogue between local realities and transnational networks of resistance. The following section traces the evolution of these efforts and situates them as liberatory and social justice examples that respond to our question at the beginning of this article.

La Jotería Transfronteriza Rural: Activismos, Transformismo, y Conocimiento al Aire

In 2023, I, Luis joined the Toto-Diverso committee and helped to organize the first Pride *Marcha* in Tototlán's history that same summer. It was through Toto-Diverso that I met José, a member of Poncitlán Diverso, the organizing committee for the neighboring municipalities *marcha* de Poncitlán. As José and I found, enclave tactics are pervasive across

Official Banner for the GDL Pride 2025 Float



2026 GDL Parade Float



Association of Mexican American Educators (AMAE) Journal © 2026, Volume 20, Issue 1

horizontal knowledge production by transcending various borders including chronemic borders, municipal borders, cosmopolitan/rurales borders, state borders, nation-state borders, internacionales, and ultimately, bridging and horizontalizing the unequal axis of the Global North and Global South border in the context of Jotería activism. This has led to forming alliances with rural collectives in Veracruz and Oaxaca, hoping to further extend the coalition of *marchas* across rural México.

Figure 3

La Jotería Transfronteriza Rural Logo



As a collective, we have organized various initiatives across rural Mexico . Our main objective is to support each other when organizing our *marchas*. However, we have also formulated other projects and initiatives that go beyond Pride Month. These initiatives are one way that we center Jotería as a practice of occupying space in rural México. In the following, we share several intimate reflections of our projects that contribute to the broader engagement of La Jotería Transfronteriza Rural. For example, in 2024, one of our committee members, Jessica, became the CEO of El VIP, a Drag and *transformista* bar in rural Poncitlán, Jalisco.

El VIP as CounterStory Space of Resistance as told by José Ramón Ramírez

El VIP is a drag and *transformista* bar that hosts drag shows, *transformismos* and *certámenes* every weekend since its opening in 2021. *El VIP* is also the space where the planning for the first *marcha* of Poncitlán took place. The uniqueness of this space is brought to life because the pueblo of Poncitlán is very small. In fact, Ocotlán has more resources and a larger population than Poncitlán, yet Ocotlán has yet to open an queer and trans friendly space. Due to the advocacy of Jessica, a committee member of La Jotería Transfronteriza Rural, and José, one of the authors of this article, *El VIP* was able to serve the community of Poncitlán. José shares,

El escenario VIP que es este un bar que también se abrió hace apenas poco aquí en Poncitlán, y es un espacio dedicado a dar shows. Es como para las personas que no podíamos asistir allá en Guadalajara. La creadora de este bar, como que dijo, Bueno, luego [necesitamos un bar LGBTQIA+] aquí en Poncitlán. Y fíjate que pegó muy bien, o sea, imagínate que había tanta necesidad. Se lo volvió un lugar muy icónico. De repente, todos nos reunimos. Ahí invitaron a muchas drag queens y organizaron este concurso de drag. Y fíjate que algo bien curioso de este concurso que, por cierto, gané a este fue que cuando sale, o sea, lo publica la convocatoria. Me ha tocado ver parejas heterosexuales, estando ahí por entre, por irse a divertir parejas lesbi lésbicas, parejas homosexuales.

José reflection of what *El VIP* has become for Poncitlán speaks to the way Jotería practices transcend across the municipality. What makes *El VIP* even more special is that it is now Jotería-owned, as Jessica recently purchased it, and became the first Trans CEO, and re-inaugurated it the same day as Tototlán's second Pride *Marcha*. The space serves as a site of resistance like the performances of drag and transformismo cultural production co-organized and funded by members of the collective. Figure 4 shows the inside of the bar as an example of a Jotería space in rural México, namely, Poncitlán.

Figure 4

El escenario dentro de EL VIP



Radio Diversa

The second initiative we highlight is Radio Diversa, a radio show launched by founders and hosts Geovani Temich and Mario Marín, see Figure 5. Radio Diversa is housed at Radio Universidad de Guadalajara on the Ocotlán, Jalisco campus. The purpose of this radio show is to make knowledge accessible to communities across rural zones of Los Altos De Jalisco. Every Friday, Geovani and Mario invite artists, activists, and academics from across Mexico to share their experiences and conocimiento on their show. This is done through the

embrace of Jotería vernaculars and modes of communication such as chisme (Gutierrez-Perez, 2017; Gonzalez et al., 2023). When asking them about their experience as co-hosts and founders, Geovani and Mario reflected on the following,

Radio Diversa para mí, Geovani, significa el fin y el inicio de una nueva historia, desde el interior de mi alma y desde los sueños que tenía aquel Geovani de 6 años de edad, que quería ser actor, bailarín, locutor... Quería ser una estrella y salir en la radio y la televisión. Hoy, a casi un año de ser uno de los locutores de un programa de radio enfocado a la diversidad sexual en la región ciénega, me siento muy orgulloso y muy contento de todo lo que se ha logrado con la incidencia y de los resultados que hemos tenido al tener tantos contactos, con tantas colectivas de la región ciénega y de la zona metropolitana de Guadalajara, Tlajomulco de Zúñiga. Solo quiero agradecer el apoyo que me ha brindado mi familia, mi esposo, y sobre todo por el apoyo que nos ha brindado la maestra Claudia Contreras, Directora de la Radio UDG Ocotlán. Y agradecimiento en especial a mi compañero de esta lucha, a mi manina, al gran Mario Marín.

Mario Marín goes on to share,

El significado que para mí, Mario Marín, ha tenido este programa, el cual, busca incidir en materia de las poblaciones de la diversidad sexogenérica, "Radio Diversa" se ha convertido en un lugar seguro, un lugar donde he encontrado un sentido de pertenencia, un lugar que hizo que recobrara la confianza, el poder y la autoestima en mi persona, sé que puede llegar a parecer superfluo, esto que narro para algunas personas, pero el hecho de haber cumplido este sueño que durante mi infancia, adolescencia, y parte de mi adultez temprana tuve, me hizo saber que los objetivos son alcanzables, y gracias a ellos hoy me siento imparable. Radio Diversa se ha convertido en un referente dentro de nuestra comunidad, donde hemos tejido grandes redes de apoyo para así sostenernos y entendernos, Radio Diversa cómo su eslogan lo dice, *"Es un lugar donde todas las voces son escuchadas y valoradas"*.

As highlighted in their reflections, Geovani and Mario created a space for Jotería communities in rural México to have their realities and narratives represented via a more accessible communication medium that reaches across time and space.

Figure 5

Pictures from Radio Diversa/Jotería Transfronteriza Rural Collective 2024



Radio as a Decolonial Bridge: Rumbo al Norte and Transfronteriza Dialogue

In the aftermath of the *marcha*, Professor of Journalism and Radio Universidad de Guadalajara's director, Dra. Claudia Contreras, invited members of the Association for Jotería Arts, Activism, and Scholarship (AJAAS), to guest star on her show *Rumbo Hacia el Norte*. This program aired across Guadalajara and rural zones of Jalisco, reaching some of the most vulnerable and subaltern communities in Mexico, which highlighted the relationship between Jotería of the Global North and Global South.

As part of La Jotería Transfronteriza Rural's ongoing effort to transfronterizar knowledge and expand accessible communication channels, the relationship with AJAAS and Radio Universidad de Guadalajara has become a vital bridge connecting academic and community-based Jotería work. This partnership has been nurtured through *confianza* and a shared commitment to amplifying Jotería voces *desde abajo*. Dra. Claudia Contreras continuously reminds us that radio, when guided by love and community care, can become a decolonial practice of listening. Her solidarity and belief in accessible communication have inspired many of our projects that bridge academic and community spaces.

More recently, La Jotería Transfronteriza Rural collaborated with Radio Universidad de Guadalajara to host a special live broadcast of *Rumbo Hacia el Norte*, see Figure 6. This was a two-part episode titled, "*Jotería Transfronteriza, Sanación, Arte y Resistencia*" (Episodes 119–120), to brought together members of La Jotería Transfronteriza Rural and the Association for Jotería Arts, Activism, and Scholarship (AJAAS) for a public conversation about the future of Jotería Studies and the importance of rural Jotería in México. This program aired across

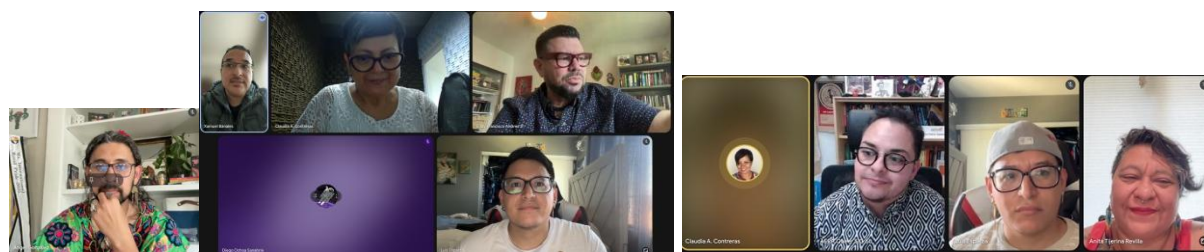
Ocotlán and Guadalajara, Jalisco, serving as both a literal and symbolic platform for cross-border dialogue between the Global North and the Global South.

The two-part episode featured several foundational scholars of Jotería Studies and long-time board members of AJAAS, including Dr. Anita Revilla-Tijerina, Professor of Chicana/o and Latina/o Studies at California State University, Los Angeles, Dr. Xamuel Bañales, Professor of Ethnic Studies at California State University, Stanislaus, Dr. Eddy Alvarez, Chair of Chicana/o Studies at California State University, Fullerton, Dr. Ángel González, Assistant Professor of Higher Education Administration and Leadership at Fresno State University, and Dr. Omi Salas-SantaCruz, Assistant Professor of Education at the University of Utah. Together, these Jotería scholars and activists engaged in a heartfelt discussion about art, organizing, and pedagogy as interconnected forms of liberation. The panel highlighted how Jotería Studies continues to evolve as a transnational project that connects and is accountable to communities across hemispheres.

Beyond its symbolic importance, *Rumbo Hacia el Norte* exemplifies how radio functions as an accessible and decolonial medium of knowledge production. In regions where academic institutions remain geographically or linguistically distant, radio provides a horizontal platform for Jotería voices to circulate beyond the paywalls of the university. Radio becomes both a tool and a metaphor for Muxerista–Jotería praxis: it transmits across boundaries, amplifies silenced voices, and connects those on the peripheries to a wider network of care and consciousness. It is, in essence, the nagual across frequencies, carrying stories and theory from the pueblos of the South to the academic spaces of the North, and back again.

Figure 6

AJAAS Members on Rumbo Hacia el Norte



Jotería Reflexiones

The Muxerista ethos guiding these projects demands that knowledge production be accountable, relational, and loving. It requires scholars and organizers alike to ask what they

know and how their knowing transforms their communities. This ethical commitment also means acknowledging privilege, linguistic, academic, and geopolitical, and using it to open pathways for others. The members of La Jotería Transfronteriza Rural actualize this through their dedication to reciprocal exchange with Jotería in rural México. This praxis reminds us that solidarity is not symbolic; it is built through daily acts of accompaniment, translation, and shared labor.

In this article, we have shared how La Jotería Transfronteriza Rural has initiated different projects to highlight the stories, activism, and organizing of Jotería in rural México. As demonstrated in *El VIP*, *Radio Diversa*, and the collaborative work with AJAAS and *Rumbo Hacia el Norte*, these projects and relationships move beyond theorizing about decolonization; toward enacting it. Through collective organizing, artistic expression, and community-centered media, these projects demonstrate that Jotería knowledge is conceptual, embodied, and circulated across hemispheres. In doing so, they bridge the epistemic divide between the Global North and the Global South, establishing a horizontal dialogue in which both regions produce and share *conocimiento* as equal sites of theorizing.

Furthermore, it is clear that Jotería Studies offers possibilities to transform into a transnational project that can bridge discourses between Global North and Global South. The continued evolution of Jotería Studies depends on a collective willingness to engage in reciprocal dialogue that honors the epistemic labor of marginalized communities. The praxis-based initiatives highlighted in this work, particularly those emerging from rural Mexico, demonstrate that theory and activism are most powerful when they are co-created through love, accountability, and community care. By following the guiding spirit of Muxerista ethics and the transformative energy of the *nagual*, Jotería Studies can move beyond institutional boundaries and become a living practice of transnational solidarity. This approach bridges hemispheric divides and also reimagines what it means to produce knowledge *con corazón*, affirming that liberation is both an intellectual and communal endeavor.

References

- Alvarez, E. (2014). Jotería pedagogy, SWAPA, and Sandovalian approaches to liberation. *Aztlan: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, 39(1), 215-227. <https://doi.org/10.1525/azt.2014.39.1.215>
- Alvarez Jr., E. & Estrada, J. (2019). Joteria studies. In *Global encyclopedia of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) history* (pp. 863-867). Global Encyclopedia.
- Anzaldúa, G. (1987). *Borderlands/La frontera: The new mestiza*. Aunt Lute Books.
- Bañales, B. (2014). Jotería: A decolonizing political project. *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, 39(1), 155-165. <https://doi.org/10.1525/azt.2014.39.1.155>
- Bañales, X. (2017). Cambios sociales distintos: Jotería en los EE.UU. y la Ciudad Amigable LGBTTTI en México. *The Bilingual Review/La Revista Bilingue*, 33(4), 15-33. <https://bilingualreviewjournal.org/index.php/br/article/view/278/266>
- Dussel, E. (1993). Eurocentrism and modernity. *Boundary*, 25(3), 65-76.
- Esparza, L. (2023). Desde la periferia de la milpa: Testimonios de Jotería rural de los ranchos y pueblos del sur de México. *Borderlines*, 14, 68-88. <https://scholarwolf.unr.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/6c10f49b-30ac-44ab-90a3-d86e39f69d14/content>
- González, Á. J., Orozco, R. C., & González, S. A. (2023). Joteando y mariconadas: theorizing queer pláticas for queer and/or trans Latinx/a/o research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 36(9), 1741-1756. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2023.2181433>
- Gutierrez-Perez, R. (2021). *Jotería communication studies: Narrating theories of resistance*. Peter Lang.
- Orozco, R.C. (2021). A futurity of Jotería Studies and higher education research: Epistemological and theoretical shifts. In N. Garcia, C. Salinas, & J. Cisneros, *Studying Latinx/a/o students in higher education: A critical analysis of concepts, theory, and methodologies* (pp. 175-187). Routledge.
- Pérez, D. E. (2014). Jotería epistemologies: Mapping a research agenda, unearthing a lost heritage, and building "Queer Aztlán". *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, 39(1), 143-154. <https://doi.org/10.1525/azt.2014.39.1.143>
- Revilla, A. T. (2014). The Association for Jotería Arts, Activism, and Scholarship: A movimiento for queer Chicanas/os and Latinas/os. *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, 39(1), 253-259. <https://doi.org/10.1525/azt.2014.39.1.253>
- Revilla, A. T. & Santillana. (2014). Jotería identity and consciousness. *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, 39(1), 167-179. <https://doi.org/10.1525/azt.2014.39.1.167>
- Revilla, A. T., Núñez, J., Blanco, J. M. S., & González, S. A. (2022). Radical Joteria-Muxerista love in the classroom: Brown queer feminist strategies for social transformation. In *Handbook of Latinos and Education* (pp. 22-34). Routledge.



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

Guest Editors

Roberto C. Orozco, PhD
University of Minnesota–Twin Cities

Anita Tijerina Revilla, PhD
California State University, Los Angeles

Editors

Patricia Sánchez, PhD
The University of Texas at San Antonio

Antonio J. Camacho, PhD
AMAE, Inc.

Associate Editors

Julie L. Figueroa, PhD
Sacramento State

Lucila D. Ek, PhD
The University of Texas at San Antonio

Managing Editor

Jerry Romero Jr., PhD
The University of Texas at San Antonio

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

Pablo Montes, PhD, MA, Omar Serna, MA, Garrison Daly, MPH,
Katherine Crowe, Maria O'Connor, MA, MEd, Anna Block, MLA

<https://doi.org/10.24974/amae.20.1.537>

<http://amaejournal.utsa.edu>

ISSN: 2377-9187

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

Pablo Montes, PhD, MA

Omar Serna, MA

Garrison Daly, MPH

Katherine Crowe

Maria O'Connor, MA, MEd

Anna Block, MLA

Texas Christian University

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 (Rodríguez 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 (Rodríguez 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; Licon, 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.



References

- Alarcón, J. D., & Bettez, S. (2017). Feeling brown in the academy: Decolonizing mentoring through a disidentification muxerista approach. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 50(1), 25-40. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2016.1250234>
- Annamma, S. A., Jackson, D. D., & Morrison, D. (2017). Conceptualizing color-evasiveness: Using dis/ability critical race theory to expand a color-blind racial ideology in education and society. *Race, Ethnicity, and Education*, 20(2), 147-162. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2016.1248837>
- Anzaldúa, G. (1987). *Borderlands/La frontera: The new mestiza*. Aunt Lute Books.
- Aparicio, F. R. (2017). Latinidad/Es. In D. R. Vargas, L. La Fountain-Stokes, & N. R. Mirabal, *Keywords for Latina/o Studies* (1st ed.). New York University Press.
- Bettez, S. C. (2011). Building critical communities amid the uncertainty of social justice pedagogy in the graduate classroom. *The Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, 33(1), 76-106.
- Bradley, L., Ptolomey, A. M., & Mirza, N. (2025). From emotional interruptions to wilful disruptions: Zine-making as a post-qualitative method for locating, articulating, navigating, and doing emotion in research. *Social Science Research Network*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5141755>
- The Concrete Collective, Ghaffar, F., Kamtam, M., Mir, T., Nakibuuka, L.-M., Priyadharshini, E., Ramakrishnan, K., Martinez Renteria, A., Thomas, T., & Wang, Q. (2024). Crafting Solidarities, Crafting a Zine: Methods for Resistance and Recovery in Higher Education amongst Doctoral Researchers of Colour. *ACME*, 23(5), 310–337. <https://doi.org/10.14288/acme.v23i5.2308>
- Creasap, K. (2015). Zine-making as feminist pedagogy. *Feminist Teacher*, 24(3), 155–168. <https://doi.org/10.5406/femteacher.24.3.0155>
- Delgado Bernal, D., Flores, A. I., Gaxiola Serrano, T. J., & Morales, S. (2023). An introduction: Chicana/Latina feminista pláticas in educational research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 36(9), 1627–1630. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2023.2203113>
- Desyllas, M. C., & Sinclair, A. (2014). Zine-making as a pedagogical tool for transformative learning in social work education. *Social Work Education*, 33(3), 317–336. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2013.805194>
- Duncombe, S. (1997). *Notes from underground: Zines and the politics of alternative culture*. Verso.
- Ek, L. D., Cerecer, P. D. Q., Alanís, I., & Rodríguez, M. A. (2010). “I don't belong here”: Chicanas/Latinas at a Hispanic serving institution creating community through muxerista mentoring. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 43(4), 539-553. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2010.510069>
- Elenes, C. A. (2006). Transformando fronteras: Chicana feminist transformative pedagogies. In D. Delgado Bernal, F. E. Godinez, & S. Villenas (Eds), *Chicana/Latina education in everyday life* (pp. 245–259). SUNY Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780791481516-019>
- Fernández, A., & Hammer, Z. (2012). Red scare in the red state: The attack on Mexican-American studies in Arizona and opportunities for building national solidarity. *Association of Mexican American Educators Journal*, 6(1).

- Fierros, C.O., & Delgado Bernal, D. (2016). Vamos a platicar: The contours of pláticas as Chicana/Latina feminist methodology. *Chicana/Latina Studies*, 15(2), 92-121. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43941617>
- Flores, A. I., & Morales, S. (2021). A Chicana/Latina feminist methodology: Examining pláticas in educational research. *Handbook of Latinos and education*, 35-45.
- Gonzalez, C. D. (2020). *Sexuality education, Latinx zines, and Anzaldúan theories of conocimiento* (Doctoral dissertation, University of San Francisco).
- Hannegan-Martinez, S. (2023). Pláticas as a methodological praxis of love. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 36(9), 1702–1713. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2023.2181437>
- hooks, b. (2015). Choosing the margin as a space of radical openness. In A. Garry & M. Pearsall (Eds.), *Women, knowledge, and reality* (pp. 48-55). Routledge.
- Ikas, K. R. (2002). *Chicana ways: Conversations with ten Chicana writers*. Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press.
- Keating, A. (2006). From borderlands and new mestizas to nepantlas and nepantleras: Anzaldúan theories for social change. *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*, 4(3), 5–16.
- Licona, A. C. (2012). Chapter 5 epilogue: Zines in third space. In *Zines in third space: Radical cultural production and feminist pedagogy* (pp. 129–138). SUNY Press.
- Licona, A. C. (2005). (B) orderlands' rhetorics and representations: the transformative potential of feminist third-space scholarship and zines. *NWSA Journal*, 104-129.
- Lopez, C., & Calderón, D. (2023). Remembering cafecito and other practices for resiliency and survival in the academy. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 36(9), 1675–1688. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2023.2181439>
- Nijsten, N. (2017). Unruly booklets: Resisting body norms with zines. *Digest. journal of diversity and gender studies*, 4(2), 75-88.
- Norell Martínez. (2018). Femzines, Artivism, and Altar Aesthetics: Third Wave Feminism Chicana Style. *Chiricú Journal: Latina/o Literatures, Arts, and Cultures*, 2(2), 45–67.
- McCormack-Whittemore, C., & García, C.S. (2025). (Re)Designing Nepantla Lived Experiences Through Zine-ing. *Visual Arts Research* 51(1), 97-109.
- Mendoza Aviña, S. (2016). “That's ratchet”: A Chicana feminist rasquache pedagogy as entryway to understanding the material realities of contemporary Latinx elementary-aged youth. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 49(4), 468-479. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2016.1227158>
- Orozco, R. C. (2025). Queer Latinx/a/o college student activist liberatory praxis: The Muxerista Activist Consciousness Development Framework. *Journal of College Student Development*, 66(5), 499-516. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/csd.2025.a970175>.
- Pérez Huber, L. (2009). Disrupting apartheid of knowledge: Testimonio as methodology in Latina/o critical race research in education. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 22(6), 639–54. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518390903333863>
- Piepmeier, A. (2008). Why zines matter: Materiality and the creation of embodied community. *American Periodicals*, 18(2), 213–238. <https://doi.org/10.1353/amp.0.0048>
- Piepmeier, A. (2009). *Girl zines: Making media, doing feminism*. New York University Press.

- Prieto, L., and Villenas, S.A. (2012). Pedagogies from Nepantla: Testimonio, Chicana/Latina feminisms and teacher education classrooms. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 45(3), 411–29. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2012.698197>
- Quiñones, S. (2016). (Re)braiding to tell: using trenzas as a metaphorical-analytical tool in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 29(3), 338–358. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2015.1041168>
- Revilla, A. T. (2004). Muxerista pedagogy: Raza womyn teaching social justice through student-centered practices. *The High School Journal*, 87(4), 80–94. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hsj.2004.0014>
- Revilla, A. T. (2010). Raza womyn—Making it safe to be queer: Student organizations as retention tools in higher education. *Black Women, Gender & Families*, 4(1), 37–61. <https://doi.org/10.5406/blacwomgendfami.4.1.0037>
- Revilla, A. T. (2022). Resisting spirit murder: Nurturing spirit restoration and healing through muxerista and jotería mentorship. *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, 47(2), 191–203. <https://doi.org/10.1525/azt.2022.47.2.191>
- Revilla, A. T., Núñez, J., Blanco, J. M. S., & González, S. A. (2021). Radical Joteria-Muxerista love in the classroom: Brown queer feminist strategies for social transformation. In *Handbook of Latinos and Education* (pp. 22–34). Routledge.
- Revilla, A. T., & Santillana, J. M. (2014). Jotería identity and consciousness. *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, 39(1), 167–179. <https://doi.org/10.1525/azt.2014.39.1.167>
- Rodriguez Castro, L., Watson, A., & Trayhurn, S. (2025). Critical feminist zine-making as method and pedagogy: reflections on a zine workshop series. *Gender and education*, 37(7), 725–740.
- Solórzano, D. G., & Delgado Bernal, D. (2001). Examining transformational resistance through a critical race and LatCrit theory framework. *Urban Education*, 36(3), 308–342. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085901363002>
- Uribe Kozlovsky, M. (2022). Saints and Zinesters: Fandom and Legacy in the Zine St. Lucia. *react/review: a responsive journal for art & architecture*, 2, 98–117.



Association of Mexican American Educators Journal

A peer-reviewed, open access journal

Volume 20 Issue I

2026

AMAE Special Double Issue

Muxerista Pedagogies and Praxis:

Art, Activism, and Scholarship as Resistance and Restoration

Guest Editors

Roberto C. Orozco, PhD
University of Minnesota–Twin Cities

Anita Tijerina Revilla, PhD
California State University, Los Angeles

Editors

Patricia Sánchez, PhD
The University of Texas at San Antonio

Antonio J. Camacho, PhD
AMAE, Inc.

Associate Editors

Julie L. Figueroa, PhD
Sacramento State

Lucila D. Ek, PhD
The University of Texas at San Antonio

Managing Editor

Jerry Romero Jr., PhD
The University of Texas at San Antonio

¡Mi Mamá Me Enseñó a Luchar!: Muxerista Mothering Pedagogy

Joanna Nuñez, PhD

¡Mi Mamá Me Enseñó a Luchar!: Muxerista Mothering Pedagogy

Joanna Nuñez, PhD

California State University, Sacramento

Abstract

This article examines how working-class Mexican and Chicana mothers teach Muxerista and feminist values in the home. I argue that Muxerista mothering is a praxis—a living pedagogy rooted in memory, political commitment, and queer chosen kinship. Drawing on six testimonios I collected, I center the voices of mothers and their hijxs who identify their maternal figures as their first teachers of feminisms. I introduce a model of Muxerista mothering I developed by highlighting thematic intersections in the testimonios of hijxs and mothers. Muxerista mothering teaches emancipatory belonging, accountability, visionary imagination, multidimensional lucha, and enacting transformative justice. I ground my project in Muxerista pedagogy, identity, and politics. Through the stories of mothers like Del, Juana, and Blanca, I show how Muxerista teachings are passed down and used to inform the radical visions hijxs carry into our organizing, scholarship, and everyday life. This article contributes to Chicana and Latina feminist scholarship by documenting how feminisms are formed not only in classrooms and public movements but also within the intimate space of the home.

Keywords: Muxerista mothering, jotería politics, Chicana/Latina feminisms, pedagogies of the home, testimonio

¡Mi Mamá Me Enseñó a Luchar!: Muxerista Mothering Pedagogy

I grew up hearing the women in my family who are from rural Northern Mexico proudly refer to themselves as *luchadoras/luchonas*, *fregonas*, *peleadoras*, y *fuertes*, but they did not identify themselves as feminists then. I first heard a Chicana college student self-identify as a feminist and explain what feminism meant during an organizing meeting in Las Vegas, Nevada. I was 16 years old. I immediately thought of the women in my family as my reference point for my feminism. My mother, my grandmothers, and my aunties had filled my life with their stories of survival, resistance, and self-determination.

Several years later, in a Chicana Feminisms class taught by Dr. Anita Tijerina Revilla, I named that my mother and maternal figures were my first teachers of feminism and Muxerismo, and my Latinx¹ activist friends and women's studies peers erupted with enthusiastic agreement. In that class, I began gathering mother-*hijx*² coupled *testimonios*, including *hijxs* who identified their mothers as their teachers of Muxerismo and their mothers' *testimonios*, and I continued gathering *testimonios* after that class. Grounded in Chicana and Latina feminist epistemologies, characterized by an attentiveness to the correspondence between knowledge, social location, embodiment, and identity, I saw *testimonio* as the most fitting method for this project. I gathered *testimonios* as an undergraduate in Las Vegas and later as a graduate student.

Chicana and Latina feminists and queer and trans historians use *testimonios* to actively resist the erasure of our histories. As queer Salvadoran oral historian Horacio Roque Ramirez (2005) argues, *testimonios* are a critical form of documentation, as they stand “against the detached and monumental over-shadowing of national and institutional histories” (p. 132). For this project in specific, I chose *testimonio* because it acknowledges that the mothers in my study are epistemic agents (active thinkers and knowers who generate knowledge and critiques of

¹ I use Latinx (pronounced Latin-ex) to refer to people who were born in Latin America or who descend from people born in Latin America and may now reside in the United States. Here I am following the lead of non-binary, queer, and transgender activists who created the term as they organize across and build coalitions with South American, Caribbean, Central American, and North American peoples with distinct racial, ethnic, linguistic, national, and indigenous identities.

² “*Hijx*”/ “*hijxs*” is Spanish for child/children. *Hijx(s)* is an adaptation of *hija*, *hijo*, *hijos*. An “x” replaces the traditional gendering of nouns in Spanish that denotes either a feminine or masculine gender using an -a/-o. This spelling choice is made to be inclusive of gender non-binary participants and the choice of the Spanish term is to avoid suggesting that participants are young, (e.g. “child” being associated with childhood). *Hijx* is used in Spanish across age groups, is not infantilizing, and signals a relationship to a parent more than anything else.

their experiences) and teachers despite their exclusion from the historical record as such. I collected a total of 28 *testimonios* during my dissertation research, and I drew on six *testimonios* for this article. The *testimoniante*s I feature in this article are the following *hijx*-mother(s) sets: 1) Anita, daughter of Del, 2) Adan, son of Juana, 3) Xuanito, *hijx* of Blanca, and grandchild of Mari (paternal grandmother, not interviewed). I selected these six *testimoniante*s from my larger study because their *testimonios* most clearly exemplified the themes developed in this article. The research I am drawing from was collected in person over a period of ten years, from 2007-2017. I met with *testimoniante*s individually in informal settings that offered *testimoniante*s comfort as they shared their stories aloud, such as their patio or living room. *Hijxs* played a major role in helping me arrange meetings with their mothers. As a queer *hijx* myself, I intentionally prioritized including *hijxs* of all genders and those who identified as Jotería (four out of six *testimoniante*s featured here identify as queer, lesbian, gay, or bisexual). For those ten years of research collection, I was in personal, organizing, and movement-based relationships with the *testimoniante hijxs*. I met every mother previously as well, attending life celebrations, family dinners, marches, demonstrations and cultural events together.

In what follows, I provide definitions of Muxerista-Jotería politics, Muxerista identity and Muxerista pedagogy as they relate to this project. I propose a Muxerista mothering framework that understands mothering as a living pedagogy through which emancipatory belonging, accountability, visionary imagination, multidimensional *lucha*, and transformative justice are taught, modeled, and lived. This model was developed by highlighting thematic intersections in the *testimonios* of *hijxs* and mothers in my larger study.

Feminist and Muxerista Identity

Revilla's (2010) trailblazing participatory action research with the student organization Raza Womyn de UCLA and Las Vegas' feminist and queer immigrant youth activists informed her development of this definition of Muxerista, "A Muxerista is a person whose identity is rooted in a Chicana/Latina feminist vision for social change committed to ending all forms of oppression, including but not limited to racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, and citizenism" (p. 56). My research originated amongst the feminist, queer, and immigrant rights activist community, where I was a youth organizer at the time of Revilla's research in Las Vegas. Our organizing work and community building resulted in relationships across our families in some

cases. Among my *testimoniales* are Anita and her mother, Del (I refer to Revilla as Anita when discussing the *testimonio* I documented and as Revilla when engaging her scholarship). This article contributes to Muxerista, Chicana, and Latina feminist scholarship by documenting how feminisms are formed not only in classrooms and public movements but also within the intimate relationships and interactions rooted in home-based practices. I understand “the home” as extending beyond a single physical locality, carried in acts of mothering that persist across nation-states, borders, and prison walls.

Muxerista and Jotería (queerness) are deeply interlinked politics and identities; they both undo Eurocentric norms of gender and sexuality, heteropatriarchal control, racism, and settler colonialism (Jotería politics, as defined by Xamuel Bañales, 2014, p. 159). In our co-authored article, “Radical Jotería-Muxerista Love in the Classroom,” my co-authors and I deliberately joined “Jotería-Muxerista” with a hyphen to signal that these politics must be practiced together if we are to create social justice in schools as educators. Michael Hames Garcia (2014) documents the intertwined development and praxis of Jotería and Muxerista politics, highlighting how Chican@ and Latin@ Jotería studies scholars were trained and nurtured by the labor and care of feminist women of color (p.138). As I will demonstrate throughout, Muxerista mothers also enact both politics when they labor to abolish heteropatriarchal white supremacy and domination with their everyday actions and teachings in the home, constructing queered forms of belonging and kinship.

While collecting *testimonios*, I listened closely to discern why my participants identified their mothers and maternal figures as Muxeristas; they made this determination based on the values their mothers used to make decisions, the practices they enacted, and the lessons they taught. They experienced Muxerismo as relational, as pedagogical, as rooted in praxis. Grandmothers, mothers, and aunties are recognized as feminists and Muxeristas because they resisted heteropatriarchal expectations and norms in their homes, carried families forward, taught others how to survive and outlive heteropatriarchal and systemic violence, and protected one another and fought back, ultimately transforming each other’s futures.

Muxerista Pedagogy

Revilla states, “At the root of a Muxerista identity is the need to educate self and others for the purpose of social change” (2025, p.2). Revilla (2004) defines Muxerista pedagogy in accordance with the practices she observed members of Raza Womyn engage in,

Muxerista Pedagogy involves dialogue, praxis (theory and action), and dialectical exchange between participants... The common factor that brings participants together is a commitment to creating social change through Chicana/Latina resistance to subordination, and this goal is coupled with warmth, love, and fun (p.83).

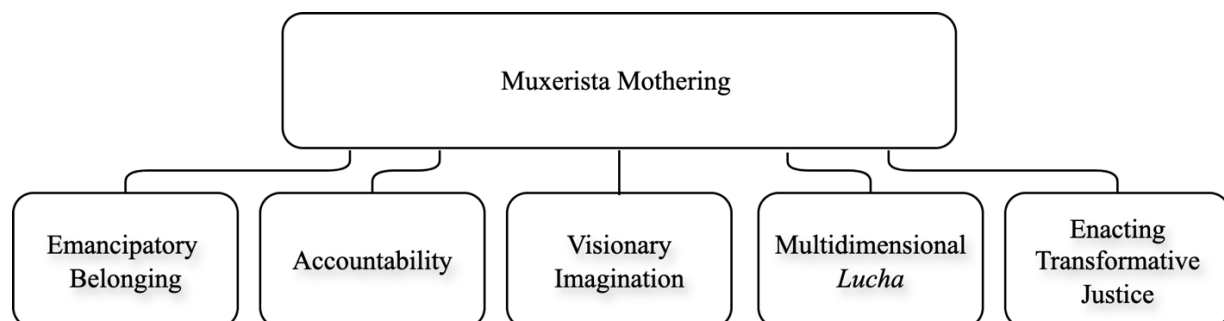
She includes that a culture of care in Raza Womyn created a safe space and queer space where belonging and connection were a constant for those who were marginalized in other spaces for being women, feminist, queer, or too radical. Raza Womyn remained a “safe space” because they constantly recreated that safety through education and dialogue (p. 84).

The *testimonios* I collected from working-class feminist and Muxerista Mexican and Chicana mothers and their *hijxs* reveal an expansive repertoire of Muxerista epistemologies and teaching practices that mothers have cultivated and practiced in their homes for multiple generations. Daughters, sons, and genderqueer/non-binary *hijxs* self-identify as feminists and Muxeristas because they credit the mothers of their families for teaching them to be Muxeristas. Their crediting acknowledges that a transmission of Muxerista knowledge and teachings occurred within their families. Often, the source of a Muxerista value in a family reaches further back than two or three generations. When I interviewed mothers for my research, they, too, shared stories about their mothers, grandmothers, sisters, and aunts. This intergenerational remembering reflects what Black feminist novelist Toni Cade Bambara (1982) described when asked about the visionary nature of her work, “It has to do with memory, with what I know is possible because it has already happened” (22:15). I contend that the mothering and pedagogies of working-class Muxerista Mexican and Chicana mothers are revolutionary and transformative because we remember them as such—because Mexican and Chicana motherwork has already shown us it can remake futures.

Indigenous, Black and mestiza women, like the working class, immigrant Mexican and Chicana mothers whose *testimonios* I draw from, have long been marginalized and overlooked in mainstream white feminist scholarship and movements. It is the work of Chicana/ Latina/ x feminists and Muxerista scholars and activists that has refuted deficit narratives about Mexican and Chicana mothers and asserted that they embody and impart transformational knowledge in their homes and communities. My work draws upon and contributes to the work of Chicana and Latina feminists and critical race scholars in education that theorizes Chicana/Latina mothers as carriers and transmitters of cultural wealth (Yosso, 2006), pedagogies of the home (Bernal, 2001), educational success (Bernal, 2001; Flores, 2022), leadership (Oliva & Alemán, 2019), homemade theories (Levins Morales, 2001), organic knowledge (Levins Morales, 2001), Chicana motherwork (Téllez, 2011; Caballero et al., 2019), and feminisms (Villenas & Moreno, 2001; Téllez, 2011; Duran, 2019; Spears-Rico, 2019). The sections that follow are organized as a sequence of interrelated lessons and testimonios that clarify the themes that inform the Muxerista mothering framework I articulate (Figure 1). I begin with emancipatory belonging, as it is the pedagogical foundation through which accountability, visionary imagination, multidimensional *lucha*, and transformative justice are made possible.

Figure 1

Muxerista Mothering



Muxerista Mothering is Emancipatory Be-longing

I begin with Del's *testimonio*, recorded in 2016, when she was in her early 60s. Del, mother of Anita, became a single mother to three young children after her husband's death at 31. A proud *Tejana*, Del fought for her and her children's survival navigating working motherhood, extreme poverty, and disability. Del grew up in a conservative household in San

Antonio, Texas. She was forced by her parents to attend a Catholic school where she was abused and discriminated against for being *Tejana* and Mexican. She described her childhood as one in which her parents never believed her, forcing her to constantly fight and stand up for herself.

I made myself pensar por mi misma. Feminist. Porque mi 'ama hacía lo que decía su 'ama o mi 'apa. Yo cuando estaba creciendo, a mí nunca me gustó eso que me mandaran o que me dijeran que hiciera. I didn't think that was right y todavía hasta la fecha yo pienso así. Que el hombre te diga como vivas tu vida o tus abuelos que te digan, "Tienes que hacer esto o 'l otro." Yo nunca hacía caso. 'Cause decía, "Yo no voy a andar haciendo lo que a mi no me gusta y no me van a hacer que lo haga." ...Aunque mi 'ama decía y mi 'apa que yo era cabeza dura porque yo no hacía lo que ellos me mandaban hacer.

(I made myself think for myself. Feminist. Because my mom would do as her mom said or as my dad said. Me, when I was growing up, I never liked being bossed around or told what to do. I didn't think that was right. To this day, I think like that. That a man tells you how to live or your grandparents tell you, "You have to do this and that." I would never abide. Cause I would say, "I'm not going be doing what I don't like, and they're not going to make me do it." ...Even if my mom and my dad said that I was hardheaded because I would not do what they told me to.)

As a child, Del was surrounded by people who were loyal to patriarchy and Catholicism. Her resolve to think for herself and be a feminist and Muxerista came from deep within her. Her parents were financial providers, stable caretakers, and "responsible parents," but they were socializing her and disciplining her into heteropatriarchal ideologies, something she adamantly rejected and resisted. Her organic Muxerista intellect oriented her towards nurturing a different way of being, a relationality with herself and with others that emancipated, and principally informed her mothering. This type of conscious, purposeful and critical nurturing/mothering in the face of dehumanization is the type of mothering I am concerned with.

Repeatedly, the mothers and *hijxs* who I listened to offered that it was not socially constructed notions of obligation or sacrifice that united them to one another. It was intentionality and a political commitment to one another's liberation, care, healing, and survival. Muxerista *familia* was chosen family, biological and non-biological. For example, Anita recalled that when an aunt, Del's little sister, came out in high school as a lesbian, Del did not hesitate to offer her home, defending her sister after she was kicked out and rejected by their mother. Anita, age 42 at the time of our meeting and a professor of gender and sexuality studies, remembers not understanding queerness yet, but being told by her mother "That's my sister. I love her, and she loves this girl. That's fine with me." Muxerista mothers did not shy away from cutting-off patriarchal family members, nor did they hesitate to adopt people as *hijxs*/family when someone needed to be mothered. I believe the decision for *hijxs* to remain in relation with their mothers beyond childhood is evidence of a constant recreation/rebuilding of belonging and safe space, much like the safe spaces built and rebuilt by Raza Womyn as described by Revilla (2004).

Queer studies scholar Elizabeth Freeman (2007) proposes there is a form of relationality and kinship that exceeds the attachments of heterosexual coupling, financial benefit, parent-child rearing, and "family" as we know it. This form of kinship is informed by a sense of "queer belonging." She defines Queer belonging as,

The longing to "be *long*" to endure in corporeal form over time, beyond procreation. ...To want to belong, let us say, is to long to be bigger not only spatially, but also temporally, to "hold out" a hand across time and touch the dead or those not born yet, to offer oneself beyond one's own time (p. 299).

Belonging to one another is an intentional decision, as is the Muxerista mothering done by Mexican and Chicana mothers. It is a reciprocation by their *hijxs* to belong queerly to their mothers and be Muxerista-Jotería family.

Visionary Imagination

In this section, I expand on the unique ways *hijxs* and mothers characterized their Muxerismo as visionary. Xuanito (he/him/ella pronouns) is a genderqueer Jota born in Aguascalientes, Mexico and *hijx testificante*. An educator and PhD student, Xuanito was 30

when I recorded ella's *testimonio*. He lived in Las Vegas, Nevada, the city his family immigrated to from Mexico. His mother, Blanca, also participated as a *testimoniante*. She was in her 50s at the time of our meeting in 2016; a mother of six and a full-time construction worker in the carpenters' union. Xuanito is her eldest *hijx*. During his *testimonio*, Xuanito recalled being raised by a community of women that included his mother, Blanca, his aunts, and his maternal and paternal grandmothers in Aguascalientes. Though Xuanito's father was physically abusive to Blanca and neglectful as a father to his children, Blanca formed a strong relationship with her mother-in-law, Mari. Mari was, in the words of Blanca, "*una mujer muy luchona*," a woman who was a real fighter; Mari was a single mother, a migrant worker, and a sexually liberated woman who had been politically involved most of her life. While Blanca was caught in a cycle of leaving and returning to her abusive partner, it was Mari who would ask Blanca to "open her eyes," to think critically about the future that awaited her if she stayed in Aguascalientes. With Mari's encouragement and Blanca's own mother's blessing, Blanca devised a plan and left for the U.S. to work and build a home for her three children while Mari and a community of women helped her raise her kids in Mexico. Once Blanca got settled in, Mari helped Blanca's kids cross the border, staying with Blanca afterward to support them through their transition. Blanca and Xuanito both believe Mari was central to their survival and to their understanding that no matter the systems and individuals that devalued, abused, and abandoned them, they were worthy of more care.

Blanca and her mother-in-law, Mari, modeled for their *hijxs* the power of interdependency, interbeing, and partnership. Black feminist theorist bell hooks (2004) argues that replacing dominator models like heteropatriarchal masculinity requires modeling interdependence as an organic part of the lives of all living beings (p. 117). For Xuanito, experiencing interdependence at the level that was created among the women of his community was transformative—it steered him away from heteropatriarchal masculinity and the violence normalized around him and took him beyond masculinity altogether. Xuanito's mother, Blanca, his grandmothers, and his aunts created women-centered sanctuaries where they regularly engaged one another through *pláticas*, singing, and spiritual ceremony. They welcomed him in as witness and participant. His mothers and those spaces nurtured something in him that was already there, his genderqueer self. He says, in many ways, "they were training

me to be a strong woman. I think they were training me to be a new man. They were training me to be a genderqueer person without knowing—or I don't know, maybe they knew.” The visionary imagination cultivated within Xuanito's mother's community nurtured in him an expansive sense of self, unrestrained by toxic patriarchal expectations.

Accountable Muxerismo

Mother *testimoniantes* explicitly stated how they also felt freed and liberated by their *hijxs*, challenged to be accountable to them and to themselves, and to abandon the internalized heteropatriarchal and colonial domination they learned. When Anita came out as bisexual to her mother after starting college, Del was able to say, “You know that's good *mija*, I think I'm bi too... I only married your dad because I was expected to.” The relationship Del co-created with her daughters was a kind of Freirean space that allowed a daughter to be a teacher and a mother to name her queerness after learning from her daughter. Del's intentional family structure subverted a traditional hierarchal one where learning only occurs from top to bottom. One of the most compelling aspects of interviewing mothers was witnessing their reflexivity, their ability to reflect on their practices with the same critical consciousness they inspired in their children. As earnest teachers for liberation, they gained new insights by observing the impact of their practices and by dialoguing with their children. They defied hegemonic norms and hierarchies in parent-child relationships.

Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (2005) argues that in oppressive social structures such as white supremacy and heteropatriarchy, parents may internalize authoritarian patterns of domination, leading children to either rebel against or reproduce those same dynamics (pp. 154-155). Within this context, it is a radical *movida* for mothers to reject the authoritarianism expected of “good mothers”³ of color, and equally radical that *hijxs* came to see their mothers as teachers and partners in liberation rather than obstructers to their freedom.

Juana was a mother who continually moved me with her reflections on her mothering practices. Juana is a Mexican immigrant from Guanajuato, Mexico, who spent a significant part

³ Stacey Patton critiques norms that suggest that “good mothering” of Black children necessitates authoritarianism and corporeal punishment. She examines this idea alongside a larger history and culture that normalizes corporeal punishment of Black communities. see her book *Spare the Kids: Why Whipping Children Won't Save Black America* (2017).

of her life undocumented in the U.S. She is a single, disabled mother of three, Adan and two other sons, whom she raised in Phoenix, Arizona, and in Las Vegas, Nevada. She sustained them by working every type of job she could get, from factories to kitchens and domestic work. She was in her late 40s when she shared her *testimonio* with me. In 2015, Adan, who identifies as a Chicano Joto, was 26 and beginning his graduate studies in the Midwest. Adan saw Juana's intentional decision to teach her boys to do housework and care work as a Muxerista intervention. Juana identified the complexity in her decision making by reflecting on how being a single parent led her to feel anxious about having a clean home environment and motivated her decision-making. She taught her boys to clean, cook, do laundry, and sustain a home, and she expected them to keep up the work to provide order in their lives. She believed deeply that they should have those skills as boys and that they should reject gendered divisions of labor, but she questioned if she had been too harsh with her demands and put too much responsibility on them to quell her anxiety about having a "clean" home. She said when her sons all got older, she consciously decided not to require so much of them anymore. Not because they shouldn't contribute as men, but because she didn't want all their time to be spent cleaning. As Adan expressed, surviving abuse, working full-time, and living with several disabilities left Juana feeling drained. She chose to change her priorities. She prioritized disrupting notions of capitalist productivity and "order" and gendered and racialized expectations of "cleanliness." She wanted time with her sons to be centered around rest and joy.

Juana had so many observations like this one. She transformed her approach to disciplining when she realized she was hurting her sons and herself in the process. Juana prioritized dialogue and healing as her children grew. I believe her response to Adan's coming out was also telling regarding her journey of healing her family. She sat down all three of her sons for a conversation when Adan came out as queer and asked them to commit to his safety and well-being in their home. She wanted Adan to live authentically, queerly, and as flamboyantly as he desired in their home. She joked about how Adan was her "*princesa*" after he came out, but she wanted Adan to know that his family would protect him and always step in if anyone threatened him. She knew Adan would only come to his family if he were ever in a situation of domestic violence like she was throughout her relationship with their father, if he was confident his sexuality would not be judged. In this way, she worked to close the cycle of

intimate partner violence in their family, so they could collectively heal. Juana modeled accountability and prioritized healing. I believe Juana's mothering was *medicina* to her family. She exemplifies how revolutionary mothers are accountable and reflexive.

Multidimensional *Lucha*

Mothers and *hijxs* understood oppression as simultaneous, interconnected, and compounding based on their race, class, genders, immigration statuses, sexualities, and disabilities, and as such, developed an intersectional political analysis that they translated into a multidimensional approach to *luchar*, or fight, against oppression. Prior to being introduced to frameworks of and activism that were recognized in the feminist/women's studies classroom, *hijxs* witnessed their mothers theorize and engage in fights with family members, doctors, teachers, administrators, and politicians over the systemic perpetuation of oppression. Adan remembered learning about the concept of intersectionality in his women's studies undergraduate class, "The first thing that I thought of were my mom's experiences... I was able to understand intersectionality in that way through her. And an understanding and questioning of power." *Hijxs* had to consider whether their mother's politics and *luchas* were their own, and if they would adopt the same politics and tactics. Through dialogue, questioning, and joining their mothers' *luchas*, many *hijxs* came to understand the "why" behind their mothers' fights and ultimately made those *luchas* their own. Multiple testimoniantes *hijxs*, including Xuanito and Anita, described their mothers as "fighters," and fighting as the foundation of their Muxerismo. Their mothers, and in Xuanito's case, his grandmother, are women who would initiate fights or fight back when they sensed an injustice; they are strong-willed, opinionated women who did not back down when they were disrespected or oppressed.

Anita described this impetus in Del as a "*guerrillera*" or warrior-woman mentality: "we were going to survive, and we were not going to get pushed around, nobody was going to tell us what to do." Anita said she adopted that "I'm a fighter" mentality modeled by her single mother during her childhood and youth, and observed it in her younger sister, who was six years younger than her. She described her as tiny in stature but with a fierce spirit. Though she is younger than her, she feels her sister always had a *brava* way to her. *Brava*, like *fiera*, are words that are often used to describe animals and women by association who are assumed to be wild, fierce, vicious, distrustful, untamable, or ferocious; traits that are believed to come

from within and expressed even without provocation. *Fiera* is a term that Anita adopted for herself and reclaimed, branding herself as *Mujer Fiera*, though she is critical of solely being identified as a fighter because she said, “I don’t want to constantly be fighting with people. I want to be on a healing journey.” She recognized, like Xuanito, that fighting was an integral part of how mothers, grandmothers, and sisters survived, resisted, and transformed their surroundings. Anita says of her sister, “I think what I learned from my sister was just like this incredible spirit of resilience, of resistance. It’s feminist, and race consciousness, and class consciousness, and disability consciousness. That multi-dimensional consciousness.” Some mothers from my study taught their *hijxs* a form of *Muxerismo*, a *brava* feminism that refused respectability, domination, and taming and did not shy away from confrontation.

Xuanito’s paternal grandmother Mari, taught him to question authority and be skeptical of those who claimed to represent the interests of the poor, while exploiting them and stealing from them. Xuanito recalled many stories of actions his grandmother took that conveyed her politics. He shared, “She loved raising hell. That was her thing. She would go to meetings. She would go to government shit, and she would just cuss people out. She would just go on her own sometimes and just fuck shit up.” He recalled that on one occasion, the mayor of Aguascalientes called a press conference to deny he was stealing from the municipal government. His grandma interrupted his press conference yelling, “¡*Pinche ratero!* (Fucking thief!) I know you stole the money. You piece of shit.”

Blanca, Xuanito’s mother, related that Mari also spearheaded efforts to institutionalize social welfare policies targeted at assisting poor mothers and children in their town. Blanca and Xuanito accompanied her to gather signatures and speak to the community on numerous occasions. The lessons Mari taught Xuanito on engaging in multidimensional struggle were many,

She taught me not to be afraid to contest, to respond. *Mi abuela me dio el regalo de la lengua, de defenderme* (My grandmother gave me the gift of language, of defending myself). ...She was not afraid to be verbal or physical. She stood in her power. She stood very strongly in her power, and she was unmovable. She was a very intense woman, very fucking intense. She was very hard to have an argument with, but she also taught me a lot of emotional wealth because she was

not afraid to cry. She was not afraid to show emotions; she was not afraid to be angry. She taught me that.

Mari's tactics and responses to injustice were raw, uncensored, and reflective of her anti-capitalist and revolutionary politics. She demonstrated that emotional vulnerability did not make her less radical.

The *testimonios* of *hijxs* demonstrate that they were initiated and immersed in learning about multidimensional forms of *lucha* since childhood. Witnessing was instructional but understanding the reasoning and intersectional politics behind their mother's *brava* feminisms and direct-action tactics ultimately led *hijxs* to consciously participate in struggles. All of the *hijxs* I interviewed for my larger study, including the ones featured here, became feminist organizers, activists, and teachers; they have continued building upon the legacy of their mother's struggles for transformational justice and liberation.

Conclusion

Against a capitalist landscape that sees no value in poor people of color, women, and queers, Muxerista mothers insist on the survival and liberation of their children, families, and communities. Mothering while marginalized requires vision, creativity, interdependence, and love—a radical visionary imagination. As Toni Cade Bambara (1982) suggested of artists, this article asserts that working-class feminist and Muxerista Mexican and Chicana mothers labor to create worlds that are more just, more beautiful, and more livable. By centering practices such as teaching accountability and enacting transformation, I have shown that Muxerista mothering is an abolitionist, world-making practice grounded not in reaction only, but in what else is possible.

This article has traced Muxerista mothering as a living pedagogy through which emancipatory belonging, accountability, visionary imagination, multidimensional *lucha*, and transformative justice are taught, modeled, and lived. I contribute to and expand upon existing scholarship on pedagogies of the home (Bernal 2001) and Muxerista/feminist mothering by insisting on using a *Jotería*-Muxerista lens that treats these politics as inseparable.

Muxerista pedagogy has been largely theorized through studying practices within organizations, classrooms, and activist collectives. In this article, I theorize that Muxerista

mothering is itself a pedagogy. The teachings and lessons I study are carried through memory, lineage, and queer chosen kinship rather than confined to formal classrooms or institutional spaces. I argue that there is much more fluidity between “home” and what we have historically understood as spaces of social transformation. What happens in activist collectives certainly informs how we navigate home and build our intimate lives, as Revilla’s (2009) work demonstrated, and as is intended in feminist organizing where “the personal is political” is a common slogan. But Muxerista mothering *also* moves beyond home as a fixed place, extending beyond a single physical location, carried with us across generations, borders, institutions, and conditions of constraint. Amid the generational wounds our communities carry, I find purpose in witnessing how Muxerismo is carried forward through intentional Muxerista practice.

Black feminist poet and scholar Alexis Pauline Gumbs (2016) asks, “What would it mean for us to take the word ‘mother’ less as a gendered identity and more as a possible action, a technology of transformation that those people who do the most mothering labor are teaching us right now?” (pp. 22–23). I sit with this question all the time as someone who only recently became a mother and as a lifetime student of feminist and queer mothering. I invite all Muxeristas to consider how they will be guided by the radical, visionary imagination of Muxerista mothers in their given and chosen lineages, and to use those teachings to further the legacies of Muxerista political struggle.

References

- Bañales, X. (2014). Jotería: A Decolonizing Political Project. *Aztlán*, 39(1), 155–166.
- Bambara, T. C. (1982, February). Interview by Kay Bonetti [Audio Interview]. American Audio Prose Library.
- Bernal, D. D. (2001). Learning and Living Pedagogies of the Home: The Mestiza Consciousness of Chicana Students. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 14(5), 623–639. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518390110059838>
- Caballero, C., Martínez-Vu, Y., Pérez-Torres, J., Téllez, M., & Vega, C. (Eds.). (2019). *The Chicana M(other)work Anthology*. The University of Arizona Press.
- Duran, V. I. (2019). MALA: Mama Academic Liberadora Activista. In Caballero, C., Martínez-Vu, Y., Pérez-Torres, J., Téllez, M., & Vega, C. (Eds.). *The Chicana M(other)work Anthology* (pp. 146–159). The University of Arizona Press.
- Flores, A. I. (2022). The Value of M(other)work: Reframing Parent Involvement Through a Muxerista Framework. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 55(4), 422–433. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2022.2158402>
- Freeman, E. (2007). “Queer Belongings: Kinship Theory and Queer Theory.” In Haggerty, G. E. & McGarry, M. *A Companion to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Studies* (pp. 295–314). Blackwell Publishing.
- Freire, P. (2005). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. The Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Gumbs, A. P., Martens, C., & Williams, M. (Eds.). (2016). *Revolutionary Mothering: Love on the Front Lines*. PM Press.
- Hames-García, M. (2014). Jotería Studies, or the Political Is Personal. *Aztlán*, 39(1), 135–142. <https://doi.org/10.1525/azt.2014.39.1.135>
- hooks, b. (2004). *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love*. Washington Square Press.
- Levins Morales, A. (2001). Certified Organic Intellectual. In The Latina Feminist Group (Eds.) *Telling to Live: Latina Feminist Testimonios* (pp. 27–32). Duke University Press.
- Oliva, N., & Alemán, E. (2019). A Muxerista Politics of Education: Latina Mother Leaders Enacting Educational Leadership and Policy Advocacy. *Educational Policy*, 33(1), 67–87. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904818807323>
- Patton, S. (2017). *Spare the Kids: Why Whipping Children Won't Save Black America*. Beacon Press.
- Ramírez, H. N. R. (2005). A Living Archive of Desire: Teresita la Campesina and the Embodiment of Queer Latino Community Histories. In A. Burton (Ed.), *Archive Stories* (pp. 111–135). Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822387046-006>
- Revilla, A. T. (2004). Muxerista Pedagogy: Raza Womyn Teaching Social Justice Through Student Activism. *The High School Journal*, 87(4), 80–94. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hsj.2004.0013>
- Revilla, A. T. (2009). Are All Raza Womyn Queer? An Exploration of Sexual Identity in a Chicana/Latina Student Organization. *NWSA Journal*, 21(3), 46–62.
- Revilla, A. T. (2010). Raza womyn – Making it Safe to be Queer: Student Organizations as Retention Tools in Higher Education. *Black Women, Gender and Families*, 4(1), 37–61. <https://doi.org/10.1353/bwg.0.0017>
- Revilla, A. T., Nuñez, J., Blanco, J. M. S., & Gonzalez, S. A. (2021). Radical Jotería-Muxerista Love in the Classroom: Brown Queer Feminist Strategies for Social Transformation. In E. R. Bybee, D. Villanueva, M. Machado-Casas, E. G. Murillo, V. Sáenz, K. Espinoza, D. D.

- Bernal, L. Urrieta, J. S. Muñoz, & S. Morales (Eds.), *Handbook of Latinos and Education* (2nd ed., pp. 22–34). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429292026-4>
- Revilla, A. T. (2025). Muxerista Pedagogy [Unpublished manuscript]. Department of Chicana(o) and Latina(o) Studies, California State University, Los Angeles.
- Spears-Rico, G. (2019). Decolonial P'urhépecha Maternalista Feminist Motherwork and Pedagogy. In Caballero, C., Martínez-Vu, Y., Pérez-Torres, J., Téllez, M., & Vega, C. (Eds.). *The Chicana M(other)work Anthology* (pp. 243-262). The University of Arizona Press.
- Téllez, M. (2011). Mi Madre, Mi Hija y Yo: Chicana Mothering Through Memory, Culture, and Place. In Smith Silva, D. (Ed), *Latina/Chicana Mothering* (57-71). Demeter Press.
- Villenas, S. & Moreno, M. (2001) To Valerse Por Si Misma between Race, Capitalism, and Patriarchy: Latina Mother-Daughter Pedagogies in North Carolina. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 14(5), 671-687.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09518390110059883>
- Yosso, T. J. (2006). *Critical Race Counterstories along the Chicana/Chicano Educational Pipeline*. Routledge.



Association of Mexican American Educators Journal

A peer-reviewed, open access journal

Volume 20 Issue I

2026

AMAE Special Double Issue

Muxerista Pedagogies and Praxis:

Art, Activism, and Scholarship as Resistance and Restoration

Guest Editors

Roberto C. Orozco, PhD
University of Minnesota–Twin Cities

Anita Tijerina Revilla, PhD
California State University, Los Angeles

Editors

Patricia Sánchez, PhD
The University of Texas at San Antonio

Antonio J. Camacho, PhD
AMAE, Inc.

Associate Editors

Julie L. Figueroa, PhD
Sacramento State

Lucila D. Ek, PhD
The University of Texas at San Antonio

Managing Editor

Jerry Romero Jr., PhD
The University of Texas at San Antonio

Collection of Poetry: Literacy, Bridge a Dream, The Border to Me

Xuanito Espinoza-Cuellar, MEd

Xuanito Espinoza-Cuellar, MEd

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Literacy

Literacy

“Please don’t tell anyone

My husband beats me...

I am undocumented, I don’t speak English...

And my child, el pobrecito, thinks he’s the only one who can defend me

He thinks he’s the man of the house...”

His eyes get lost on the spotless white wall,

Wondering if his dad got home...

Yelling in that cursed language his mom can’t understand,

Language becomes a violent beast coming out of his dad’s mouth.

A monster that smells like alcohol and burnt tires,

Feels like broken glass, blood... and fear,

And he ain’t there to stop it.

What if his mom is calling him for help... in Spanish?

And he’s there instead,

Encased amongst all this English and them four pristine white walls,

“What are these letters good for if they won’t save my mom...” he thinks.

A teacher tells him

That he should learn how to read in English...

He then could teach his mom,

And one day, she could defend herself from the beast.

He devours below-his-grade-level books.

Each letter: a weapon.

Each word: a shield.

And he begins to believe that through knowledge, he could save her.

Every time he writes a word

He imagines himself as a victorious warrior,

The beast is tamed,

And his mom will one day be safe.

Yesterday, he smuggled words inside his old, torn backpack,

Stole a fruit cup and the entire alphabet, taking them home.

“Here, ama, this is for you!

One day, you’ll talk so much English, you’ll be free.”

Bridge a Dream

A shadow we become in the midst of promise and peril.

A tingling voice fed by the imaginary monster of hope and prosperity.

They sell us a dream from which constant rude and lethargic awakenings auction us to the highest bidder.

We are political bargaining chips, fillers, collateral, surplus aims, and aspirations.

We are worth our blood but never true citizenship, but what does citizenship mean when our siblings are murdered with no consequence?

Quickly, some of us fantasize about trading fences and walls for humanity.

Ignoring that the very potion that will hold those borders together is our flesh and the dreams of our children.

I always hoped for more out of this narrative, some sort of comedic relief or an alternative ending. But I'm just sitting here in this never-ending opera with horrible singing and beer.

II.

Aquí, behind this rock I call my safe voice, I stay rooting for you. I just don't have it in me. The more crumbs we get, the closer we are to the cake, but if you get the bakery, I promise you I'll be your cashier, plus I love cheesecake.

Waiting games... I don't recall the last time you looked at me. Can you stamp me, please?
Something within me still longs to be free, and I don't know what to do.

Fear of repatriation, when there's really no country for you, you nationless, culturally ambiguous neoliberal residue.

One day, they will ask me to speak. I will walk slowly towards the podium as people await to hear what I have to say. They imagine I'll sing an anthology of resilience, but instead I'll just say, "ya pa' que!"

The Border to Me

The border to me is constant anguish,
A big pause button,
Often in dreams, I dream of Mexico as my lover
And he waits for me,
And waits.
The border to me is my grandma's rosary,
She said she'd hold on until I could go back,
Until she couldn't.
I recently found out that for years she'd scold my cousins for using my table games. "He's coming back,
and he'll ask for them..."
And she'd save them in her old, rusty closet.
The border to me is a big pause button,
I often dream of going back,
Who will I be then, when I hit play?
Who will I speak with to recover my grandmother's prayers?
To collect 12 years of unclaimed hugs,
All the wrinkles and gray hairs I missed in her hair,
And every step, I couldn't walk by her.
But one day I will cross back,
In the middle of songs and candles, I will conjure her spirit,
And I will look in the back of that old closet
Where she saved my table games
And there I will find her love
And her songs, her advice, her songs,
And the little pieces she left for me, hidden for me,
When she envisioned the day
That this pause would be over.



Association of Mexican American Educators Journal

A peer-reviewed, open access journal

Volume 20 Issue I

2026

AMAE Special Double Issue

Muxerista Pedagogies and Praxis:

Art, Activism, and Scholarship as Resistance and Restoration

Guest Editors

Roberto C. Orozco, PhD
University of Minnesota–Twin Cities

Anita Tijerina Revilla, PhD
California State University, Los Angeles

Editors

Patricia Sánchez, PhD
The University of Texas at San Antonio

Antonio J. Camacho, PhD
AMAE, Inc.

Associate Editors

Julie L. Figueroa, PhD
Sacramento State

Lucila D. Ek, PhD
The University of Texas at San Antonio

Managing Editor

Jerry Romero Jr., PhD
The University of Texas at San Antonio

Book Review of The Power of Latino Leadership

***Tamales and Maracas Are Not a Framework: A Muxerista Critique of
The Power of Latino Leadership***

Michelle Lopez, MA, MFA, Arturo Servin, MA

Review of *The Power of Latino Leadership*

Bordas, J. (2023). *The power of Latino leadership: Culture, inclusion, and contribution* (2nd ed., rev. & updated). Berrett-Koehler Publishers. Pp. 288. ISBN-13: 978-1523004089. Paperback: \$26.95.

**Tamales and Maracas Are Not a Framework:
A Muxerista Critique of *The Power of Latino Leadership***

Michelle Lopez, MA, MFA

California State University, Los Angeles / University of San Diego

Arturo Servin, MA

University of San Diego

The book *The Power of Latino Leadership* by Juana Bordas attempts to honor Latinx cultural values and advocate for a model of Latino leadership but falls short by relying on idealistic representations and romanticized depictions of Latinx identity. The author's love for Latinx people is clear in the storytelling and enthusiasm of the writing. That said, Bordas's attempt to provide a theoretical framework for understanding Latinx leadership is plagued with generalizations and contradictions, is outdated, and lacks theoretical depth. One of the most glaring weaknesses of Bordas' framework is its absence of meaningful scholarship. The framework presented by the author is not substantiated by empirical research nor grounded in established leadership or identity theories. The framework includes ten principles, all of which have catchy Spanish titles, including "Personalismo," "Conciencia," "Destino," "De Colores, Fe y Esperanza," "Juntos," "¡Adelante!," "Sí Se Puede," "El Círculo," and finally, "Gozar la Vida" (p. 10). Unfortunately, the way Bordas uses Spanish terminology and cultural references feels more performative than substantive, resembling a simplified, surface-level portrayal akin to a grown-up version of Dora the Explorer.

Rather than providing depth to understanding leadership within Latinx communities, the author's framework suggests that Latinx people share certain traits, such as valuing family,

generosity, respect, honesty, and service to others. (p. 105). Statements such as "my definition of Latino is anybody who wants to be a Latino" (p. 109), and invites others to be "Latino by Corazon" (p. 241) reflect an assimilationist perspective that misrepresents Latinidad. Latinx identity is deeply rooted in history, politics, culture, and lived experience; it is not something one can simply opt into.

Those unfamiliar with the diverse and nuanced Latinx peoples, cultures, and communities could treat the information presented in the book as fact. Frequently mentioning "salsa" and Mexican food, connecting the idea of "spice" and "flavor" with the perceived vibrancy and energy of Latinx, and attributing specific characteristics to an entire group, such as being "touchy-feely" (p. 229), ignores individual differences within the Latinx population. Bordas describes Latinx peoples as "fiesta-loving, family-centered, hardworking, tamale- and salsa-eating" (p. 105), reinforcing a stereotypical understanding of Latinx identity. The reductive framing reduces Latinx peoples and their leadership to a performative celebration of culture rather than engaging with the structural, historical, and political forces that shape Latinx experiences.

However, Muxerista pedagogy offers precisely the grounded, intersectional framework Bordas's model lacks. Rather than collapsing Latinx identity into a set of shared cultural traits, a Muxerista framework is explicitly committed to challenging all forms of oppression simultaneously, including racism, imperialism, patriarchy, heterosexism, homophobia, nativism, and monolingualism, while making distinctions between Chicanas, white women, and other women of color by understanding the specificity and intersectionality of their experiences (Orozco, 2025; Revilla, 2004, 2022).

Future scholarship on Latinx leadership should engage more critically with decolonial and intersectional frameworks, move beyond broad generalizations to recognize the multiplicity of Latinx identities, challenge rather than conform to dominant leadership paradigms, and center community-based and movement-based leadership rather than institutionalized and elite figures. By adopting a more critical and nuanced approach, leadership studies can better reflect the diverse realities, struggles, and contributions of Latinx leaders, resisting stereotypes and oversimplifications rather than reinforcing them.

This book should be read with a critical eye. Bordas' politics reflect a leadership framework rooted in a different generation, shaped by a more conformist perspective grounded

in respectability politics. Readers should approach the book as a personal and historical account rather than as a guide to the transformative, radical leadership needed for Chicanx and Latinx communities today. The critical questions that came to the forefront as we read this book were,

1. How can ethnic studies, namely Chicanx/a/o and Latinx/a/o Studies provide a more critical analysis?
2. How can a focus on critical consciousness and its role in organizing and serving communities inform a leadership model grounded in a Muxerista pedagogy and framework (Orozco, 2025; Revilla, 2004)?
3. How can we problematize an essentialist conceptualization of Latinidad to inform a more complex and nuanced leadership model?

Unfortunately, these critical conversations are missing from the current book's form.

As scholars in ethnic studies and leadership, we recommend a Muxerista Leadership lens that includes and builds on intersectionality, Chicanx/Latinx feminism, disability justice, Jotería Studies, Latina/o Critical Race Theory, and Critical Race Theory. As many critically conscious scholars have learned from Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, education must be student-centered and dialogic to be liberating for marginalized people. As Freire argues in his visionary text, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*,

A revolutionary leadership must accordingly practice co-intentional education. Teachers and students (leadership and people), co-intent on reality, are both Subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge. As they attain this knowledge of reality through common reflection and action, they discover themselves as its permanent re-creators. In this way, the presence of the oppressed in the struggle for their liberation will be what it should be: not pseudo-participation, but committed involvement (p. 72).

A Muxerista Leadership lens enacts precisely this co-intentional vision. It involves natural dialogue, questioning, and reciprocal exchange between equal participants; is based on lived experiences; and creates mentoring and novice relationships that respect the different levels of consciousness among participants—a model of leadership development that is both relational and politically grounded. Importantly, it does this without romanticizing community: it rejects patriarchal forms of power and leadership and is critical of social justice movements that

maintain patriarchal, racist, homophobic, and imperialist structures (Revilla, 2004). Where Bordas offers *Personalismo* and *Conciencia* as neoliberal leadership values, Muxerista grounds these same relational commitments in a politics of liberation. As Garcia et al. (2024) demonstrated, Muxerista mentoring among doctoral Chicanas is not a cultural celebration but a deliberate survival strategy against tokenism, isolation, and white supremacist institutional norms—a form of radical care done *con corazón* and collective commitment to *conciencia*.

Muxerista pedagogy extends Chicana feminist theory into pedagogical and organizational practice, offering a framework that is committed to challenging all types of oppression, addresses the holistic needs of Chicana/Latina/o communities, bridges lived experience with academia through theory in the flesh (Moraga, 2021) and offers a liberatory solution to racial, gender, sexuality, and class discrimination. Muxerista pedagogy does not romanticize community—it theorizes it from the inside, through collective knowledge production and dialectical exchange. Subsequent scholarship demonstrates the framework's versatility: Flores (2022) showed how a Muxerista lens reframes parent involvement to center the epistemologies of Mexican immigrant mothers—including through m(other)work, spirituality, and storytelling—revealing forms of pedagogical care that schools actively render invisible. Garcia et al. (2024) extended Muxerista into graduate education, theorizing how doctoral Chicanas build critical *conciencia* and collective transformation through peer mentoring in spaces that honor their multidimensional identities. Orozco (2025) provides a Muxerista Activist Consciousness Development Framework that captures the identity and sociopolitical consciousness of queer Latinx/a/o student activists. Together, these works model what Latinx leadership scholarship can look like when it refuses to separate cultural affirmation from structural critique.

Latinx leadership, particularly in social movements, is not just about participation and inclusion but about dismantling systemic barriers. Without this critical analysis, there is a risk of reproducing a *false generosity*, in which leadership is seen as a gift bestowed rather than a collective, liberatory struggle. Bordas' work celebrates cultural hybridity but does not recognize the tensions that come with being a leader in the borderlands.

References

- Flores, A. (2022). The value of m(other)work: Reframing parent involvement through a muxerista framework. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 55(4), 422-433.
- Freire, P. (2014). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (M. B. Ramos, Tran.; 30th-anniversary edition.). Bloomsbury Academic, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing.
- García, J., Gonzales, G., & Estrada, O. (2024). How doctoral chicanas resist white supremacist political erasure through Muxerista mentoring. *Bravo Journal*, 25. 131—144.
- Moraga, C. (2021). *This bridge called my back: Writings by radical women of color*. University of New York Press.
- Orozco, R. C. (2025). Queer Latinx/a/o college student activist liberatory praxis: The Muxerista Activist Consciousness Development Framework. *Journal of College Student Development*, 66(5), 499-516. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/csd.2025.a970175>.
- Revilla, A. T. (2004). Muxerista pedagogy: Raza womyn teaching social justice through student activism. *The High School Journal*, 87(4), 80-95.
- Revilla, A. T. (2022). Resisting spirit murder: Nurturing spirit restoration and healing through Muxerista and Jotería mentorship. *Aztlán*, 47(2), 191-203. <https://doi.org/10.1525/azt.2022.47.2.191>

Volume 20 Issue 1
AMAE Special Double Issue 2026
Muxerista Pedagogies and Praxis: Art, Activism, and Scholarship as Resistance and Restoration

Author Biographies

Anna Block, MLA

Texas Christian University
anna.block@tcu.edu

Anna Block is a doctoral researcher in Curriculum and Education at Texas Christian University. Her scholarship explores curriculum, pedagogy, and communal forms of knowledge-making. Her work examines how learning emerges through dialogue, lived experience, and relational spaces. She is particularly interested in creative pedagogies, such as zine-making, and in how everyday sites of gathering, memory, and shared reflection function as epistemological spaces within educational life.

Katherine Crowe

Texas Christian University
k.crowe@tcu.edu

Katherine (Katie) Crowe is a second-year PhD student in Rhetoric and Composition with interests in community literacies, queer rhetorics, and Black feminist pedagogies. They graduated from the University of North Texas with a bachelor's degree in literature in the spring of 2024. In their research and pedagogy, they center linguistic and epistemic justice, seeking and creating opportunities to write toward a world structured through transformational and relational ways of being and knowing. You can find more information about their work at www.allthatwetouchwechange.org

Garrison Daly, MPH

Texas Christian University
g.daly@tcu.edu

Garrison Daly is pursuing a PhD in Curriculum Studies alongside an MD at TCU. Her research focus is on critical pedagogy, educational equity, and the sociopolitical dimensions of curriculum. By developing interdisciplinary projects that blend critical theory with imaginative formats, her work interrogates the hidden curriculum, disrupts normative structures of medical training, and invites more humanizing, inclusive, and justice-centered possibilities for teaching and learning in clinical education and beyond. Her background brings a unique perspective grounded in lived experience, informed by critical theory, and driven by a commitment to transformative change.

Luis Oswaldo Esparza, PhD

California State University, Northridge; Jotería Transfronteriza Rural

luis.esparza@csun.edu

Shíi Luis shiizhi. Shíi N'de nishíi. Luis Oswaldo Esparza, PhD, is originally from the pueblo of Tototlán, Jalisco, Mexico, but raised in the Inland Empire region of California. He is also a citizen of the N'de Apache Nation. He identifies as N'de Apache (Mescalero and Lipan), Two-Spirit, Mexican@, Jot@, Xicano, Nepantlero, and as a transnational activist-scholar. He serves as an Assistant Professor in the Queer Studies Program and the Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies at California State University, Northridge. He is the co-founder of Toto-Diverso & Jotería Transfronteriza Rural, organizations that coordinated the inaugural Pride March in Tototlán, Jalisco.

Xuanito Espinoza-Cuéllar, MEd

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

juan.espinoza-cuellar@unlv.edu

Xuanito Espinoza-Cuéllar is a doctoral student, Lukumí priest, high school teacher, and writer whose work centers on social justice, spirituality, and queer decolonial imagination. His writing explores the intersections of education, liberation, memory, and Jotería epistemology. Juan understands poetry and prose as transformative practices, where cada palabra can spark consciousness and cada texto can open the possibility of deep change. His work moves through cabaret, slam poetry, humor, language, and storytelling as tools for healing, interruption, and resistance.

Chantal Figueroa, PhD

Colorado College

cfigueroa@coloradocollege.edu

Chantal Figueroa, PhD, is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Colorado College. In her research, she has developed a sociological understanding of mental health in Guatemala, spanning policy development, educational systems, and pedagogical practice. Her work explores mental health as a critical issue of both educational and social justice, relevant to psychiatric systems and broader societal structures alike. Through interdisciplinary research, she has demonstrated the theoretical and practical implications of mental health across the fields of sociology, education, behavioral health, and immigration law.

Janin Guzman-Morales, PhD

San Jose State University

janin.guzmanmorales@sjsu.edu

Janin Guzman-Morales, PhD, is a Mexican immigrant, educator, researcher, and organizer motivated by climate justice and data equity. She is passionate about the intersections between regional climate, Traditional Ecological Knowledges, and Indigenous and Latinx relationships with their environment. Janin is the co-founder of the [Center for Interdisciplinary Environmental Justice](#), an independent collective of scholars, educators, and artists advocating for environmental justice through a decolonial-feminist approach. Janin completed her PhD in Earth Sciences at Scripps Institution of Oceanography, UC San Diego. She has also held postdoctoral positions at Scripps Institution of Oceanography, UC San Diego, and at the Department of Geography, UC Santa Barbara.

Rama Ali Kased, PhD

San Francisco State University

ramak@sfsu.edu

Dr. Rama Ali Kased, PhD, is an Associate Professor of Race and Resistance Studies in the College of Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State University. She is a seasoned community organizer whose work spans major cities across the United States. Dr. Kased has served on the boards of multiple community-based organizations and has founded and co-founded numerous initiatives in New York City and the Bay Area. Her teaching and scholarship focus on educational equity, racial and economic justice, and community organizing. She currently teaches courses on racial capitalism, social movement history, community organizing, and introductory Ethnic Studies and Race and Resistance Studies.

Michelle L. Lopez

California State University, Los Angeles / University of San Diego

mlopez68@calstatela.edu

Michelle L. Lopez, MA, is a faculty member in the Chicana(o) and Latina(o) Studies Department at Cal State LA. She is a mother, curator, artist, and educator. Her work is grounded in Chicana feminist praxis and decolonial methodologies. Michelle holds an MFA in Studio Art and an MA in Art History from Cal State LA. She is currently completing a PhD in Leadership Studies at the University of San Diego. Her forthcoming dissertation employs arts-based research methods to examine decolonial leadership, embodied knowledge, and cultural production as sites of healing and transformation.

Mario Marín

Universidad de Guadalajara; Jotería Transfronteriza Rural

radiodiversaocotlan@gmail.com

Mario Vela Rodríguez, MA, known as “Mario Marín” within the LGBT+ community, is a university professor at the University of Guadalajara. He has training in psychology and nursing, as well as a master’s degree in education. He is an active member of the Mexican Network of Positive Youth and Adolescents, where he conducts detection, support, and accompaniment actions for people living with HIV, a condition he has lived with since 2017. He has participated in international LGBT+ leadership spaces in Latin America. He is the host of “Radio Diversa,” coordinator of CECOSAMA Ocotlán, and collaborator in diversity initiatives and projects such as Rural Transborder Jotería.

Pablo Montes, PhD, MA

Texas Christian University

p.montes@tcu.edu

Pablo Montes, PhD, (any pronouns) is a descendant of the Chichimeca Guamares and P’urhépecha people from the valley of Huatzindeo (Salvatierra, Guanajuato, MX), specifically from a small rancho called *La Luz* at the foot of the Culiacán mountain. They are an Assistant Professor of Curriculum Studies at Texas Christian University and received their Ph.D. in Cultural Studies in Education from the University of Texas at Austin (specialization in Native American and Indigenous Studies and Mexican American and Latine Studies). Their main research interests are at the intersection of queer settler colonialism, Latinx Indigeneities, and Land education.

Joanna Nuñez

Sacramento State University

j.nunez@csus.edu

Joanna Núñez, PhD, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Women's and Gender Studies at California State University, Sacramento. She is a queer Chicana feminist activist scholar-mother. She is the proud daughter of immigrant parents from Baja California, Mexico. She received her BA/BSW in Women's Studies and Social Work from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and her Ph.D. in Feminist Studies at the University of Minnesota. Her primary research interests are in feminist and queer mothering, Jotería-led social movements, Chicana feminist epistemologies and pedagogies, and community-based participatory methods. Her work explores the connection between home and intimate community-building practices in facilitating movements for social transformation.

Maria O'Connor, MA, MEd

Texas Christian University

maria.oconnor@tcu.edu

Maria O'Connor is a former public-school educator and current doctoral student studying PK-12 Educational Leadership in the College of Education at Texas Christian University. She received a Bachelor of Music in music education along with a Master of Arts in teaching and a Master of Education in school leadership from Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas. Her experience working with diverse populations in historically underfunded schools informs her research interests of equity in schools for systemically oppressed groups and culturally relevant leadership, particularly as pertaining to issues of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

Roberto C. Orozco, PhD

University of Minnesota–Twin Cities

orozco100@umn.edu

Roberto C. Orozco, PhD, is an Assistant Professor of Higher Education in the Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development at the University of Minnesota–Twin Cities. He is also an affiliate faculty with the Department of Chicano Latino Studies and Race, Indigeneity, Disability, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. His research explores questions around race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality in relation to college student activism, student development, and queer resistance and worldmaking in and outside of higher education contexts. He grounds his work at the intersection of Jotería Studies, Critical Race Theory, and Chicana Latina Feminisms to examine the identities and socio-political consciousness of queer Latinx/a/o student activists in higher education.

José Ramón Ramírez, BA

Misiones Culturales Rurales; Jotería Transfronteriza Rural

ramirez.jose.cm@gmail.com

José Ramón Ramírez, BA, is an activist, a Recreational Teacher for Rural Cultural Missions, and a Fashion Design student seeking to highlight 'MEXA' art and culture through fashion. They also dedicate their time to community spiritual healing, and they are a part-time drag artist. They are a co-founding member of the Poncitlán Diverso and Jotería Transfronteriza Rural collectives.

Omar Serna, MA

Texas Christian University

omar.serna@tcu.edu

Omar Serna is a Ph.D. candidate in Curriculum Studies at Texas Christian University, where he is also pursuing a graduate certificate in Critical Race and Ethnic Studies. His scholarship explores the intersections of language, race, and schooling within Mexico–U.S. transnational contexts. His work is grounded in decolonial and critical frameworks that engage in questions of identity, migration, and raciolinguistic ideologies. His current dissertation work is tentatively titled “*Tracing Raciolinguistic Ideologies Across Borders: Transnational Youth and Schooling in Mexico and the United States*”.

Arturo Servin, MA

University of San Diego

arturoservin@sandiego.edu

Arturo Anaya Servin is a Ph.D. candidate in Leadership Studies at the University of San Diego and an academic advisor at San Diego State University. His dissertation develops Mothership Praxis, a critical feminist leadership framework that theorizes how rural Latine community members form leadership through the everyday practices of care, navigation, and collective responsibility. A first-generation, queer, Chicanx scholar, Arturo is committed to community-rooted scholarship that centers the leadership and knowledge of communities that the field of education has historically refused to see.

Geovani Temich, BA

Hospital Comunitario Ocotlán SSJ; Jotería Transfronteriza Rural

geo_rute@hotmail.com

Geovani Temich, BA, is originally from Veracruz. They currently reside in Ocotlán, Jalisco, and serve as the head radiologist for the Ocotlán Community Hospital. They are also an activist and co-founder of Ocotlán Diverso, Radio Diversa (co-host), and Jotería Transfronteriza Rural.

Michael Angel Vázquez, PhD

Mt. San Antonio College

michaelarvazquez@gmail.com

Michael Angel Vázquez, PhD, is a Mexican American Professor of Ethnic Studies at Mt. San Antonio College in Los Angeles County, CA. Prior to this position, he earned his PhD in Education with a secondary in Latinx Studies from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, where he also served as an adjunct lecturer. His research primarily centers on the experiences of students of color when they learn about marginalized communities that differ from their own. Given the timing of his field research, most participants discussed the importance of learning about and standing in solidarity with on-campus movements for Palestinian liberation.