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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
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Native American Indigeneity through Danza in University of California Powwows: A
Decolonized Approach

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Music

by

Jessica Margarita Gutierrez Masini

December 2018

Thesis Committee:

Dr. Liz Przybylski, Chairperson

Dr. Jonathan Ritter

Dr. Deborah Wong

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2018

The Thesis of Jessica Margarita Gutierrez Masini is approved:

Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

Acknowledgements/ agradecimientos

I acknowledge that nothing would be possible without our ancestors and the original caretakers of these lands. Specifically, I thank the Patwin, Cahuilla, Serrano, Luiseño, Tongva, and Kumeyaay peoples because my primary field research with UC Davis, UC Riverside, and UC San Diego powwows takes place on their lands. I pay my respects to all elders past, present, and future and thank them for their responsibility as culture bearers.

I thank those who have helped me navigate and succeed in higher education. Without the unconditional love from my mother Christina Masini, I would not have a place to call home. She is my biggest fan and always supports me. I also acknowledge my high school counselor, Mr. Stanley, for helping me with the application process that led me to UC Davis. I deeply miss and thank my late mentor and friend, Nathalie Esteban, for her courage, teaching, and passionate wisdom. My time at Davis truly shaped the person I am today. I am grateful for my instructors in the Music department who guided my studies including Amelia Triest, Phebe Craig, and Carol Hess. I would like to thank the two ethnomusicologists in the department at the time, Henry Spiller and Katherine In-Young Lee, who introduced me to the field. Additionally, I am extremely appreciative of the Native American Studies Department faculty, staff, and students who made me feel right at home. I send my deepest gratitude to Jessica Bissett Perea for her invaluable mentorship and encouragement to continue my education in graduate school. As an incoming professor, Jessica went above and beyond her duties including advising my

undergraduate thesis, providing research and teaching opportunities, rehearsing conference papers, writing generous letters of recognition, and welcoming me into her family. I also thank John-Carlos Perea for sharing his personal heritage as an Urban Indian and his lifelong dedication to powwow music, which has heavily informed my thesis. The Pereas are excellent role models and I am grateful to have them in my corner.

At UC Riverside, I extend my gratitude to the Music department faculty and staff for their dedicated teaching and service. I recognize my thesis committee members, Liz Przybylski, Jonathan Ritter, and Deborah Wong for guiding me through this process, offering critical feedback on my drafts, and supporting my deeply personal and academic journey. I recognize my chairperson Liz Przybylski for encouraging my passion in powwow spaces, fostering other collaborative projects, challenging me, and her continued patience and compassion as my mentor. Additionally, a special thanks to Grandpa Clark for checking in on me and my wellbeing, and often leaving food for graduate students like myself who struggle with food insecurity. I especially thank Benicia Mangram and Reasey Heang, who miraculously manage all administrative needs for departments under ART while understaffed. I appreciate the connections I made outside my home discipline and with other faculty at UCR who are excited about my work including Anthony Macias, Alicia Arrizón, and Maria Fernando-Castillo.

A very special thanks to my colleagues at UC Davis and UC Riverside who have contributed to my growth and confidence as a young scholar. Particularly, I thank Sarah Messbauer, Gillian Irwin, Andressa Gocalves Vidigal Rosenberg, Davin Vidigal Rosenberg, Luis Chavez, Paula Propst, Yuki Proulx, Leilani Dade, Daniel Castro Pantoja,

Andrea Decker, and my fellow cohort members. I recognize Claudine Avalos for her strength and solidarity as we were often the two women of color in many of our courses. I share my gratitude for her careful edits and her lessons in critical pedagogy. Additionally, I admire the generosity of my colleagues Hannah Adamy and Corey Blake Lascano who carefully read drafts, returned them with thoughtful commentary, and shared genuine enthusiasm for my thesis. I thank my longtime friends Adrian Cacho, William Torrez, Ray Peralta, Ayala Berger, and Nicholas Orcher for their love, laughter, and the future memories we will create.

My research would not be possible without the perseverance, assistance, and generosity of the UC Davis, UC Riverside and UCSD powwow committees. Additionally, I thank the Danza groups for sharing their practice at these powwows. I am grateful to the staff and student coordinators for welcoming me into these Native spaces and enlightening me on the complexities of university powwow productions. Particularly the students at UCSD who had not met me in person before I arrived, but still shared their personal experiences. I thank the students and community members who volunteer their time and efforts during powwow season in order to ensure their university puts on a powwow. I acknowledge my fellow committee members and the heartfelt memories we created while volunteering countless hours: including Wendy Hernandez, Celeste Joaquin, Valentin Sierra, Leo Youssef, Desiree Negrette, Kealani Beltran, LeeAna Espinoza Salas, Sara Medel, Alex “Panda” Armendariz, Itzli Arteaga, Jessica Delgado, Elise Green, Daniel Archuleta, and many more. I express my deepest appreciation to Josh Gonzales, Cuauhtémoc Peranda, Joshua Little, and William Madrigal who shared their

time, knowledge, and musical practices with me in extended interviews, casual conversation, guest lecture-demonstrations, and/or via social media.

I am thankful everywhere my academic journey has taken me, though I must recognize my ever-growing family including my Gutierrez, Masini, Short, Borroto, Slomanson, and Taylor families for their love and patience. Gracias a mis abuelos y familia en México por su hospitalidad y amor. I am forever grateful to the lands, ancestors, and all these individuals.

Thank you/Gracias.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Native American Indigeneity through Danza in University of California Powwows: A
Decolonized Approach

by

Jessica Margarita Gutierrez Masini

Master of Arts, Graduate Program in Music
University of California, Riverside, December 2018
Dr. Liz Przybylski, Chairperson

Since the mid-1970s, the Indigenous ritual dance known as Danza has had a profound impact on the self-identification and concept of space in Xicana communities, but how is this practice received in the powwow space? My project broadly explores how student-organized powwows at UC Davis, UC Riverside, and UC San Diego, are decolonizing spaces for teaching and learning about Native American identities. Drawing on Beverly Diamond's alliance studies approach (2007), which illuminates the importance of social relationships across space and time, as well as my engagement in these powwows, I trace real and imagined connections between Danza and powwow cultures. Today, powwows are intertribal social events organized by committees and coordinated with their local native communities. Powwows not only have restorative abilities to create community for those who perform, attend, and coordinate them, but they are only a small glimpse of the broader socio-political networks that take place throughout the powwow circuit. By inviting and opening the powwow space to indigeneity across borders, the University of California not only accurately reflects its own Native student body that puts on the event, but speaks to changing understandings of "Native Americanness" by people both north

and south of the United States border. Ultimately, I argue an alliance studies approach to ethnography and community-based methodologies in music research are crucial, especially in the case of Indigenous communities, who are committed to the survival and production of cultural knowledge embedded in music and dance practices.

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Introduction

I remember my first time seeing a Danza¹ group perform. After my first volunteer shift, I joined the outer circles of the powwow as an eager spectator, eating my first Indian Taco. Watching the danzantes (Danza practitioners) twirl in brightly colored regalia combined with the sounding of their drums and shells made my breath stop and body cover in goosebumps. Why did this practice speak to my heart and soul? What does it mean to first hear the blowing of the conch shell and huehuetl drum beats and feel at home? This visceral reaction must speak to something meaningful.

This something started back when I was an undergraduate at the University of California, Davis (UCD) learning about myself, the world, and my place in it. As a music major, I was immediately drawn to ethnomusicology's focus on studying music in cultural and social contexts, which in turn inspired me to develop interdisciplinary connections outside of the music. My interest in music and identity formation (and creation) started my junior year when my music survey course on Latin American musics and my Native American Studies course on music and social consciousness, each discussed two versions of the same song, "La Z/Sandunga." Puzzled and intrigued at how

¹ Danza is a music, dance, and spiritual practice that draws from Pre-Conquest rite of passage ceremonies and *Conchero* traditions in present-day Mexico. During the Civil Rights Movement this group practice sprouted throughout the Southwest United States, providing Mexican Americans/Xicanxs a positive form of resistance against assimilation and marginalization that took the form of cultural pride and the reclamation of repressed histories. Gathering in concentric circles according to expertise and seniority, younger danzantes observe inward to learn and engage in Mesoamerican cosmology, sounds, movements, and language. Following Kristina Nielsen, I use Danza "to accommodate the diversity of signifiers used to denote loosely the same practice— albeit interpreted through different historical, spiritual, and ethnic frameworks" (2017, 3). Using the term Danza includes the diverse branches that today are known as *Danza Azteca*, *Danza Azteca Chichimeca*, *Danza Mexica*, *Danza Mexica-Cuauhtémoc*, or any other designations.

this “unofficial anthem” from the Isthmus of Tehuantepec could be simultaneously Mexican, Native American, and Latin American, this fascination developed into my undergraduate thesis. This work built upon the song’s cultural and historical contexts by considering the politics of Mexican-American singer-songwriter Lila Down’s cover of the song on her album *La Sandunga* (1999), while highlighting how social relations from the past are sounded in the present. Almost four years later and now a Ph.D. student at the University of California, Riverside (UCR), questions surrounding identities and what is at stake by claiming such entities still keep me up at night.

Identity is intersectional and changing depending on context and community. Often the constant categorical questions we are repeatedly prompted to answer (such as what is your age, sex, race, etc.), and even more nuanced categories (such as your spirituality, political alliances and other interests), insidiously ingrain our identity. If my work has taught me anything is that we should move from understanding identity as these static lists of categories to dynamic, fluid entities based on relationality. We learn who we are from our parents or other familial members based on who they are and their relations. As we grow and learn about ourselves, the world around us, and the multifaceted ways we may relate to it, we create, maintain, and negotiate, names and phrases that resonate with us. For example, the labels feminist, band geek, and Native each define relations to particular people, materials, ideas, and histories. Therefore, our relations create our identities and our identities create our alliances.

Claiming and expressing myself as Native by way of Xicana² indigeneity is still new and I feel I must tread carefully. Previously, I thought the fact that I was adopted and raised in white suburbia automatically classified me as non-Native. Thankfully, Dr. Jessica Bissett-Perea's mentorship and support from her husband Dr. John-Carlos Perea taught me that indigeneity is more than an identity that you are born into and can only claim based on blood.³ I am guided by my “academic *ninos*,” a term that describes the professional, yet interconnected and personal, relationship that organically develops between students and professors, “as students discover themselves as scholars” (Garcia and Barrera 2018). This in combination with UCD’s Department of Native American Studies' hemispheric teaching philosophy of Native America led me to rethink what Native American means today.⁴

My thesis questions are three-fold. First, I seek to contribute to the growing number of applied works in ethnomusicology with my engaged and embodied approach through decolonizing methodologies. In the twenty-first century, applied ethnomusicology has not only further extended *where* scholars put their ethnomusicological knowledge, scholarship, and understanding to use, but *how* and *why*

² Read like Chicana with the X sounding like “ch.” This spelling not only unlinks from the colonizer language of English and back to Nahuatl but aligns myself with other Xicanas who bridge the space between Chicana and Native feminists. See Cherríe L. Moraga, *A Xicana Codex of Changing Consciousness: Writings, 2000–2010* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 2011). Following gender conventions, when referring to myself or feminist scholarship, I use Xicana in the singular feminine, and when referring to the non/pan-gendered form I use Xicanx— unless the text is a direct quote.

³ Here I am referring to the concept of blood quantum in the United States, an ideology that one can measure one’s Nativeness based on blood percentage. I’ve learned from mentors and interlocutors that by 2050 this strategy is meant to legally eliminate who can claim federal recognition.

⁴ The UCD department website advertises that students in Native American Studies, “may choose to study indigenous issues from a variety of (inter)disciplinary perspectives, temporal frames, and geographical dimensions. The common thread of these diverse approaches, however, is the recognition of the hemispheric unity of the indigenous people of the Americas” (<https://nas.ucdavis.edu/welcome>).

(Harrison, Mackinlay and Pettan 2010; Pettan and Titon 2015). Volunteering and participating in the powwow has given me better understanding of how ethnomusicological projects may be produced that center Native/Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies. More importantly, decolonizing projects like powwows, encourage intercultural collaboration that teaches participants to align with the community's goals and needs.

Second, in sharing my autoethnographic reflections I practice reflexivity, which accounts for my collective knowledges and lived experiences that color my understandings. Women of color scholars have experienced severe underrepresentation in academia and continually fight to be heard (Wong 2006). Inspired by my mentors who practice decolonizing theory and practice in their writing, research, and teaching, I believe the academic community needs to decolonize. It hungers for alternative ways of knowing and learning so others can contribute. As Gloria Anzaldúa and other feminist, decolonial scholars have said, the personal is political (Anzaldúa 2012; Dill and Zambrana 2017; hooks 2000; Luna 2012; Moraga and Anzaldúa 2015; Tuhiwai Smith 2012; Wong 2009). The personal is also vulnerable. My writing comes emotionally-charged because I choose not to perpetuate separation between my mind, body, and spirit. Real, *lived* experiences should not be censored.

Lastly, I argue that an alliance studies analysis of Danza at the powwow helps us understand Xicanx indigeneity, by reframing identity through relationality. Drawing on Beverly Diamond's alliance studies approach (2007), which illuminates the importance of social relationships across space and time, as well as my engagement in select

University of California system powwows, I trace real and imagined connections between Danza and powwow cultures. My embodied understanding of this phenomenon articulates but one narrative or “partial truth.” As I continually spoke with more people and spent time at powwows with Danza present, I learned that arguing that I, as a Xicana, am Native American is a messier, more nuanced, and contradictory argument than I was initially ready to take on. However, I am compelled now more than ever thanks to the support from fellow students, friends, mentors and local community members to share my story.

My thesis broadly explores how student-organized powwows at UC Davis, UC Riverside, and UC San Diego (UCSD), are decolonizing spaces for teaching and learning about Native American identities. In order to situate powwows as decolonizing spaces, I describe current understandings of decolonization as both a theory and methodology, that center Native/Indigenous knowledges. Then, I trace how powwows have historically been a way for Native peoples to maintain, create, and celebrate their cultural practices, and in doing so introduce how contemporary Danza groups similarly use music, dance, and ceremony to express their indigeneity. In my decolonized project, I address my own positionality as both a researcher and a part of the community. Following the description of my positionality and development of my Xicana consciousness, I present my engaged and embodied approach through decolonizing methodologies. My ethnographic experiences at the UCD, UCR, and UCSD powwows are summarized in three vignettes that demonstrate how I transition from first time volunteer, to committee member and coordinator, to dancer. During my fieldwork in these spaces, I wondered if an alliance

studies approach to examining Danza in the powwow could aid in understanding how Xicanx-indigeneity is constructed. While I had initially thought this project would incorporate more Danza, particularly how California powwows contribute to the growing acceptance towards intertribal practices south of the United States border, the way it interacts in the powwow space speaks to the degrees of inter-relationships between Native American peoples. My powwow alliance studies model demonstrates the layers of complexities and tensions that may arise when exploring and seeking to understand Native American identity formation. Furthermore, by examining Danza performance during powwows, I reveal how this dedicated time and space produces decolonial possibilities.

Literature Review: Powwows as Decolonizing Spaces

Today, colonialism continues.⁵ Though not as distinguishable as during the colonial era, colonialism manifests in other, more secretive and underlying ways (i.e.

⁵ In order to construct an understanding of decolonization, it is important to understand the concept of colonialism and the longstanding effects of colonization. Traditionally, the term colonialism refers to a post-1500s era, when European/Western powers controlled about ninety percent of the globe (Young 2003, 1-2, Mignolo and Gaztambide-Fernández 2014, 197) This inevitably created the West and the rest, where the former perceived inhabitants of the latter as uncivilized, inferior, and ultimately in need of governing (Said 1987, 48-49). Colonizing powers justified their actions through post-Renaissance imperialism, characterized by “the practice, theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory” (8, 123). Furthermore, the anthropological practice of classifying humans through the hierarchical construction of races was one strategy for validating Western treatment of non-Western peoples and lands (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 2000, 41). During this time, “Eurocentric cultural models privileged the imported over the indigenous: colonial languages over local languages, writing over orality, and linguistic culture over inscriptive cultures (or folk culture)” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 2000, 57). Lastly, human-centered thinking spread by Christian missions and missionaries played a crucial role, because “the belief that ‘Natives’ did not value work or have a sense of time provided ideological justification for exclusionary

heteropatriarchy, human-centered ideologies, governmental domination, and numerous essentialist paradigms). For example, feminist writer Trinh T. Minh-Ha speaks to how discourses are defined by academics, specifically anthropologists, then appropriated by popular media; “but once more they spoke. They decide who is ‘racism-free or anti-colonial,’ and they seriously think they can go on formulating criteria for us...” (Minh-Ha 1989, 59).

Now recognizing this enduring event, we can begin the theoretical, practical, and political project of decolonization (Tuck and Yang 2012). This complex and contradictory process of undoing and repairing from colonialism is messy (Sium, Desai, and Ritskies 2012, III). There is disagreement regarding decolonization because of underlying aspects often attributed to settler colonialism, a “persistent social and political formation in which newcomers/colonizers/settlers come to a place, claim it as their own, and do whatever it takes to disappear the Indigenous peoples that are there” (Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill 2013, 12). Many scholars suggest that incorporating or centering Indigenous/Native peoples and epistemologies can restructure what was erased by colonialism. (Minh-Ha 1989; Tuhiwai Smith 2012; Tuck and Yang 2012; Anzaldúa 2012; Sium, Desai, and Ritskes 2012; Sailiata 2015) While the “de-“ prefix in decolonization connotes removal, this purist notion is impossible: “Indigenous people cannot erase the last 500 years of colonialism, but select philosophies and practices from 500 years ago can shape the vision of the future we would like 500 years from now” (Sailiata 2015,

practices, which reached across such areas as education, land development and employment” (Tuhiwai Smith 2012, 57).

302). Rather than arguing that decolonization implies an extractive process where Indigenous peoples are supposed to eliminate colonial thoughts, ideas, and practices, independent legal scholar Kirisitina Sailiata suggests a more “forward-thinking project” based on current conditions, that includes other marginalized voices (2015, 301-2). However, some advocates of decolonization, such as critical race and Indigenous scholars Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2012), argue that adoption of the word metaphorically-- for other civil and human rights-based social justice projects-- perpetuate appropriation and erasure of Indigenous people. Voicing decolonization as a “multicultural approach to oppressions” (19), fails to recognize the very real effects of settler colonialism and turns it “into an empty signifier” (7), thereby creating “convenient ambiguity” (17).

Ultimately, proponents of decolonization often do not agree on ways to approach and achieve it. However, understanding indigeneity as an analytic, rather than as an identity, may give some insight. Feminist historian Maile Arvin defines indigeneity as “a historical and contemporary effect of colonial and anticolonial demands and desires that are related to certain lands or territories as well as the displacement of those lands’ inhabitants” (2015, 114). She demonstrates how historical scientific practices and representations through European lenses have continued to define indigeneity as genetic (119-120). By critically examining the relationship between the term and how it functions in discourse, she argues how indigeneity opens up “the boundaries of indigenous identity, culture, politics, and futures to new, productive possibilities” (126). In other words, thinking about indigeneity as an analytic can open dialogue between those who believe in

radical decolonization (in terms of Indigenous lands and rights) and a more metaphorical decolonizing of the mind and institutional structures.

In my decolonial praxis I follow Indigenous scholar and educator Linda Tuhiwai Smith who first published *Decolonizing Methodologies* in 1999 to address the intersections between imperialism and research. Theoretically, decolonization involves alternative ways of knowing and understanding. This begins by critiquing Western history, and acknowledging it as a modernist project that has developed closely with imperial beliefs about the Other (Tuhiwai Smith 2012, 31-32). Tuhiwai Smith argues that decolonization “does not mean and has not meant a total rejection of all theory and research or Western knowledge” (39). Rather, to decolonize one’s thinking means to recognize that colonization operates on a political, economic, and ideological level. Research methodologies of decolonization, on the other hand, involve alternative ways of doing and being. Tuhiwai Smith argues that the effects of colonization are still present in the memory of Indigenous peoples and the Western approach to research has historically offended their sense of humanity. For this reason, she suggests research practices that are more ethical and respectful, give voice to those who were unheard, and most importantly, assist in maintaining Indigenous peoples, cultures and ecosystems (Tuhiwai Smith 2012). I view student-organized powwows within the University of California system as decolonizing practices because they center Native epistemologies and ontologies.

The origins of the powwow are a contested topic in both scholarship and among Native American communities (Browner 2004, 19). According to independent scholar and musician, Paula J. Conlon in the *Oxford Handbook of Dance and Ethnicity*, “the first

powwow is generally considered to be the Ponca ‘homecoming’ celebration in 1876, held to commemorate [their] arrival at White Eagle in northwestern Oklahoma after their forced removal from the state of Nebraska” (2016, 616). In various parts of the United States from the 1830s through the 1870s, tribes were forcibly relocated to the Plains and banned from practicing cultural expressions, like music and dance, under various governmental policies. Although precursors include tribal-specific warrior practices, the powwow is intertribal because it emerged in an era when different Native peoples intermingled on reservations under duress and secretly shared their songs and dances (613-616). While most Native Americans were repressed from practicing their traditions under initiatives of assimilation, some were encouraged to sing and perform in various Wild West shows and World’s Fair exhibitions (Perea 2014, 21). According to historian Clyde Ellis in his chapter from the co-edited anthology *POWwow*, these staged performances had significant influence on the powwow in several ways, including the shaping and creation of new dance styles, the inclusion of Grand Entry, and competition (2005, 13-14). The concentrations of Native peoples onto reservations by the 1890s increased access for salvage ethnographers, like Francis Densmore and Alice Fletcher, as well as government representatives to capture their music. According to musicologist Tara Browner (Choctaw and Iroquois), these thick, descriptive ethnographies were both a “factual blessing and theoretical curse;” because while some had good intentions to capture the “vanishing Indian,” most perpetuated theories of cultural evolution that read Native peoples as “representatives of the European past” (2004, 4-6).

In the 1950s and 1960s, the United States issued the Federal Relocation Program offering incentives to Native peoples who chose to leave their reservation homes and relocate to various metropolitan cities (Perea 2014, 22). While historically this was another initiative to assimilate Natives and take their lands, ethnomusicologist and musician John-Carlos Perea (Mescalero Apache, Irish, German Chicano) explains in his introductory textbook (2014) that in reality, this program moved powwows into urban communities and aided the dissemination of songs and dances, as well as “created a zone in which non-Indian spectators could begin to interact with and learn from” (23). The 1950s and early 1960s were also the formative years of the modern contest powwow (DesJarlait 1997, 120).

Today, powwows are intertribal social gatherings, between Natives and non-Natives that celebrate Native American cultures, centered around dance, songs, food, and oral histories (Browner 2004, 1; Scales 2007, 1; Perea 2014, 18). As “the most widespread intertribal tradition in North America,” its significance to contemporary Native American peoples varies from location to location, between different generations, and year to year (Diamond and Hoefnagels 2012, 5). Danza is rarely mentioned in powwow scholarship, however, those who do cite the practice classify it as a Special, or dance category that is not part of the standard exhibition dances (Browner 2004, 63-64; Goertzen 2001, 85). Far from existing outside of the overall powwow event, inviting

Danza practitioners into the powwow spaces challenges participants' understanding of Native American indigeneity.⁶

Many scholars see powwows as important sites for the creation and negotiation of Native identity and culture. Variations today are precisely the reason there is not a single powwow experience or a singular meaning (Weibel-Orlando 1999; Browner 2004; Ellis, Lassiter, and Dunham 2005; Perea 2014). Powwows carry many different meanings amongst those who practice, study, or witness them (Perea 2014). Since powwows are an accumulation of different cultures, some elements are “non-Indian,” but ethnomusicologist Christopher Scales argues, “different powwows [are better] thought of as distinct but overlapping worlds, a view consistent with how many powwow participants envision the complexity of the powwow circuit” (2007, 6).

Powwows have been growing in popularity and diversity since moving to urban spaces. As music historian Chris Goertzen notes, the North Carolina Occaneechi-Saponis appropriated the powwow as a maneuver for getting state recognition (2001). Others push back against being perceived as intertribal or pan-Indigenous, by rejecting contest powwow practices that tend to not affirm specific tribal identity (DesJarlait 1997, 120). When powwow practice conflicted with local Ojibwe-Anishinaabe dance traditions, elders expressed concern or even disdain for how powwows were becoming increasingly commercialized, a sentiment still prevalent today with bigger, casino-sponsored powwows (126). Other, more contemporary strategies include manipulating powwow

⁶ For more on Danza tradition and how it made its way to the United States, consult chapter one in Ernesto Colín, *Indigenous Education through Dance and Ceremony: A Mexica Palimpsest* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

elements into tribal-specific ones. Janice Tulk highlights three strategies that Mi'kmaw powwow participants use to transform general "intertribal" elements into more locally meaningful Mi'kma'ki specific practices (2012, 70-88).

Not only are they public, easily accessible, and visible, but a dedicated time and space on weekends for Native peoples (and not), to support Native American survivance (Gagnon 2013). Powwows have restorative abilities for those who participate and attend (Perea 2014). Although powwows are historically linked to Native peoples' forced-relocation and repression of culture and identity, today they are positive celebrations of their music, dance, language, food, stories, and art/design, etc. Drawing from various Indigenous creative artists, ethnomusicologist Liz Przybylski (2015) describes this as Indigenous survivance or "an active process of cultural survival," --a term coined by Gerald Vizenor (2008) combining "survival" and "resistance"-- where Native peoples learned to "shift between worlds" (5). In other words, artists like First Nations electric powwow group, A Tribe Called Red, simultaneously resist Western assimilation and hold onto their Native heritages by using new music to tell *their* stories *their own ways*. Przybylski argues rather optimistically, "there is a shift happening in the construction of contemporary Indigenous identities, one that takes its root in a longstanding practice of bicultural competence, that is now moving into a sphere of recognition" (10). However, to this day Native Americans are "unexpected" interactants with modernity, and continually stereotyped as peoples in a distant past (Deloria 2004).

Colonial imaginaries across the Americas historically regimented claims to indigeneity, however I argue that we Xicanxs are Native American. The erasing of our

histories, the displacement of our lands, and silencing of our peoples has created confusion and distanced us from our indigeneity.⁷ Despite popular misconceptions of and disagreements over what constitutes Indigenous peoples in the United States, the body remembers (Belcourt 2017). It carries the beautiful and painful memories of our ancestors even if we ourselves do not remember. These memories are manifested in the way we create, move, taste, and engage with the world around us.

In recent years, Danza circles in the Los Angeles, and other broader transnational Danza communities in California, have moved away from the Catholic heritage *Conchero* practices and towards agentive initiatives and Indigenous reconnection (Ceseña 2009; Luna 2012; Nielsen 2017). Danza provides its participants access to embodied recuperations of Indigenous epistemologies by combining the spiritual reawakening of *mexicayotl* (meaning based on interpretations of pre-Conquest cultures and spirituality) with a political agenda of decolonization (Luna 2012; Colín 2014). In her recently completed dissertation on the transmission and creation of historicity, music, and dance in the Los Angeles Danza community, Kristina Nielsen (2017) shares that, “deconstructing identity formation in Danza is complicated by the intermediary space the community occupies in narratives of colonization and the nuances of what, in fact, constitutes “‘Indigeneity’ and an Indigenous identity” (6). Why individuals practice Danza and what it means those who practice it is varied and sometimes conflicting. In her

⁷ For more information see Maria Eugenia Cotera and Maria Josefina Saldaña-Portillo, “Indigenous But Not Indian? Chicana/Os and the Politics of Indigeneity,” in *The World of Indigenous North America*, ed. Robert Warrior (New York; London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2015), https://www.academia.edu/20578436/Indigenous_But_Not_Indian_Chicana_os_and_the_Politics_of_Indigeneity.

examination of Aztec dance in México and as a transnational movement across national borders, Sandra Garner highlights how the practice is a way for immigrant communities to express their identity. She argues their reception in Indigenous communities outside of México is often mixed due to “differing understandings of conquest and the vague indigenous ancestry” of both participants and victims, and that claims on shared histories of oppression and marginalization “are not always strong enough to bridge gaps between groups” (2009, 434-435).

Xicanx Nativeness is not the same Nativeness as Yaqui, Mayan, or Apache Nativeness and almost all individuals self-identify by tribal affiliation before expressing solidarity as Native American. Tracing the epistemologies of each of these Native American identities and examining closely how narratives collide and clash goes beyond the scope of this paper, but is at the heart of what makes this question of Xicanx indigeneity so complex. Where are each of those narratives of Native American identity coming from, should they be reconciled, and if so how? In my ethnographic work with the UCD, UCR, and UCSD powwows, I argue that these decolonizing spaces are productive for reconciliation or at the least coexistence between different Native American peoples.

Positionality: From Internal Conflicts to Embracing My Xicana

Consciousness

As with any decolonized ethnography, I must address my own positionality as a researcher and in relationship to my community. This is challenging because in so many ways I am part of the communities I research: first generations, broke UC-students and alumni, from underrepresented segments of society, powwow committee organizers and attendees, Natives learning their roots. I clarify my speaking position to assist readers' understanding of how I situate my research as insider/outsider ethnographer. Following the description of my positionality and development of my Xicana consciousness, I present my engaged and embodied approach through decolonizing methodologies.

In the genre-breaking anthology *This Bridge Called My Back* (2015) Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa reacted to the racism of white feminists in the U.S. by creating an inclusive collection of radical feminist pieces by women of color. Each contributor considers herself a feminist yet draws from the unique culture she grew up in, collectively creating an idea of "Third World Feminism in the U.S" (xlvi). Within this intersectional work, Moraga introduces a theory in the flesh "where the physical realities of our lives- our skin color, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longings- all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity" (Moraga and Anzaldúa 1982, 23). These radical women of color refuse easy explanations and most share strategies for negotiating the mixed heritages of their parents. Like these women, I come from an intersectional matriarchy. Two Moms. Growing up, my use of the term *parents* meant *my biological mother*, Carmen Perez and *her best friend*, Christina Masini. From the questions and

looks that always followed, I quickly learned that this arrangement was not “normal.” However, this was my upbringing and I have come to understand how these two women have shaped my worldview.

Much of my childhood was spent navigating between the worlds of my birthmother, a Mexican-born undocumented immigrant, and Christina, a second generation Italian American from Michigan. Although two strong, independent women, Carmen and Christina could not be more different.

Carmen came to the United States before I was born and met Christina and my birthfather while working at a pizza place called *Numero Uno*. Carmen loved to travel and her way of dealing with the world was to get on a bus and disappear. I have countless memories of car, bus, or train rides. When we crossed to México, Carmen would practice questions with me before we got to border patrol. “Okay Jess, the man’s going to ask where you’re from and you say Orange County. Born at St. Joseph’s Hospital, okay, can you remember that?” I would obediently nod and repeat it back to her. These are my fondest memories with her. Around middle school, I fell in love with school, soccer, and marching band and did not want to go on her trips anymore. Carmen continued going on her own. She did not have a college degree, so she had to work multiple jobs to support us, and sometimes she did not come home for days at a time. High school was the last time I saw my birth mother. At the time I did not understand. How could a mother just leave her child? Over time and with therapy, I realize it wasn’t me. My birthmother suffered from depression and gambling addiction, perhaps evidences of the historical trauma in our family, and it eventually engulfed her.

On the other hand, Christina Masini is a white, college-educated woman who has worked as a social worker for decades. The Masini family welcomed my birthmother and I into their lives, and Christina's parents were the only grandparents I knew for the longest time. When my birthmother was around, I saw Christina as an aunt; now, almost ten years later, I call her mom. Looking back, Christina assumed most of my cultural upbringing by supporting my schooling and giving me a place to call home. She sang to me as a kid, enrolled me in soccer, and cheered at my marching band competitions. Going into graduate school, I changed my name to give tribute to the woman who was truly my mother. In May 2017, Christina Masini legally adopted me through an adult adoption and I went from Jessica Margarita Gutierrez Perez to Jessica Margarita Gutierrez Masini.

I love my name because it signifies how I constantly navigate between my ethnic identities. My birthmother intermittently raised me with Mexican traditions, but with her increasing absence, I felt I gradually lost my heritage. I started to regain my Mexican identity in high school by enrolling in Spanish classes. Because of my early exposure, I relearned my heritage language quickly and now can converse with recently re-acquainted relatives in León, Guanajuato. This blurred identity fuels my interest in cultural studies, critical mixed race, and theories of intersectionality. Additionally, I have mobilized this disconnect and confusion into something positive by embracing my Xicana indigeneity.

In her chapter titled "La Güera," a Mexican term for fair-skinned woman, Cherríe Moraga discusses the idea of "passing." This refers to someone from a typically darker-

skinned racial or ethnic group, whose skin is light enough that they “pass” as white. We see this all over the world. The lighter skin you have, despite your background, you are evidently treated better than someone with darker skin would be. Sometimes I wonder how our world’s societies would function if a darker skin were desired over lighter tones. When visiting mi familia Gutierrez en León, hablé con mis abuelos. Les pregunté: ¿somos indígenas? Ellos me dijeron: No hija, somos de los españoles tenemos el apellido Vallejo.⁸ This response shocked me. After reading about Mexicans embracing their mestizo roots, I expected to hear reconfirmation from the eldest generation de mi familia Mexicana. Yet, they too internalized racism and classism by wanting to claim their whiteness. Did I subconsciously do the same thing growing up?

Cherrie Morga writes, “We feel the pull and tug of having to choose between which parts of our mother’s heritage we want to claim” (2015, 19). I could not have said this better. This was me trying to connect with the other Xicanx students who spoke Spanish, but feeling embarrassed for sounding like a gringa. This was me promising to go to college so that I do not end up like my birthmother (depressed, addicted, and always running). This was me realizing how conservative my adoptive family could be, making statements like, “they come here and live off our government assistance.” These borders confined me until Anzaldúa set me free. Gloria Anzaldúa describes it as “a constant state of mental nepantlism, an Aztec word meaning torn between ways” and in reality, this restlessness is an advantageous set of skills and strategies. “The new mestiza copes by

⁸ When visiting my Gutierrez family in León, I spoke with my grandparents. I asked, “are we indigenous?” They said, “No dear, we’re Spanish we have the last name Vallejo.”

developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity” (2012, 100-101). In this time of reflective introspection, I find myself overwhelmed by racing thoughts, contradictions, insecurities, and guilt. However, my craziness, Anzaldúa argues, is my mind and body working out the clash of cultures. This developmental phase gives us new perspective and purpose, as mediators. Using this Xicana consciousness, I continue the work of Anzaldúa and others by negotiating or breaking the binaries that keep many of us oppressed and silent. My mind, body, and spirit are still recovering from my turbulent upbringing which included border-crossing, abandonment, and emotional abuse, but it fuels my unrelenting desire to learn my roots, understand the complexities of this world, and most importantly, help others.

My Xicana feminist lens is “multidimensional,” drawing on women of color and decolonial feminist philosophers (Alvarez et al. 2013). This is a brief epistemological tracing of Xicanx peoples demonstrates how the formation of Xicanx consciousness is complicated and elaborate. Growing up, we are taught misconstrued versions in textbooks of how our noble ancestors were exterminated during Spanish conquest. That our origins are lost to time and modernization and the only images and artifacts that remain can only tell us so much. Xicanxs know this isn’t true. The memories of this encounter still live inside us. Xicanxs are survivors.

At UC Riverside, centers like the Native American Student Programming (NASP) office provide students with opportunities and resources for learning about themselves around a supportive community. By frequently visiting this space, I got to know the Director, Joshua Gonzales (Xictlaca/Mexica), who taught me some of the local history of

this campus, particularly the powwow and Native student engagement. Josh generously shared his life experience with me. I was grateful for the opportunity to bounce around ideas regarding Native American identities across the U.S./México border. In one of our conversations, he talks to me about the American Indian Movement and strategies that have been used over time to define Native peoples within the geopolitical borders of the United States. For Josh, articulating Indigenous and Xicanx identities is important for personal reasons. However, tensions and trauma still exist amongst Native peoples fighting for legally defined identities that are linked to funds allocated to U.S. recognized tribes.

Josh Gonzales: going back to Danza, it's kind of slowly becoming more incorporated into the powwows. Again, going back to that whole indigeneity, you know people claiming Indigenous. You have people maybe 10-15 years ago that were claiming more just American Indian, but now understand like the importance of including others in that self, reclaiming of self identity, especially within the what you would say Mexicano, Chicano communities because even then, like within the Chicano community, that was the whole piece of-- was kinda going back to, and learning from the past. Right? So I don't know if you understand what Chicano is?

Jessica: Um, a little bit. I know that it's kind of more from like Mexican American to like Mexica, Chicano and now it's like Xicanx. Aztlán? Has something to do with Aztlán too?

Josh Gonzales: Kind of, because that's kind of like part of it, that whole reclaiming of Aztlán and that was kind of also from like the MECHA, Mechistas, of trying to understand like who we are, what are we doing. Because you had, if you break down the word chic, xict is Nahuatl, and xictli is your umbilical cord, your ombligo and so that's how chic came, but then you have the -ano coming from the more Spanish side and so it kinda incorporates that Nahuatl and Spanish. So then that's how you got Chicano, Mexicano, Mechit too Mexica. Those are Nahuatl words. So those are all like rooted in Nahuatl but then obviously you have a lot of the complexities of what that means...And so again going back to that like, within the powwow scene and Danza, like people even kind of learning Danza, right? Even that whole aspect of like, you learning what that means and who you are as far as Danza, because there's a lot of teachings there that people don't know. And a lot of times people like 'oh Danza, just more for the show'. So you have a lot of people that are out there doing Danza for the show of it, and then there's more for the ceremony part, for like understanding it, and really knowing what it means...It's part of that like, people are relearning of who they are, where they come from, finding that cultural connection. Um, and then so there's that piece, right? Like,

'Oh yeah, I am Native' because even then like a lot of people, especially from Mexico, or people that are first generation from Mexico to the U.S. Then you have a second generation, third generation that like, 'oh I'm American'. I've had aunts and uncles, 'oh I'm American'.

Jessica: *Mhm.*

Josh Gonzales: *Yeah. It's like ehh...[we both laugh understanding this phenomenon] one of those things like, people trying to, I guess, live to survive the American Dream. I would say now, but you know what I mean like this, this disconnection. I don't know how or why we're different, from my family, like a lot of my family, like, they look at us as totally different.*

Jessica: *Oh, like within your family?*

Josh Gonzales: *Yeah because we've learned--*

Jessica: *--the generations either assimilated and then you have those who still practice--*

Josh Gonzales: *Right.*

Jessica: *--and are conscious to maintain the cultural knowledge?*

Josh Gonzales: *Right. Yeah, like I have aunts, uncles, they look at us like, oh, that's cool...Or like my uncles, going back to what I was talking about earlier, sorry, I'm jumping back and forth, but you have this whole culture of like the whole Chicano movement, right? And drawing that Aztec calendar and drawing the lady, you know, the guy holding the lady like you see those art pieces. Right? And that's related to, you know, the Chicano movement, that's related to going back to the past. But then there was no continuation of that. And remember I was saying before about even with just higher education, whether they're just stuck there, like there is no full on teaching of that culture or teaching of that, you know. And even now like you have a lot of people like, 'oh yeah, I'm actually from Michoacan', 'I'm actually Cora', you know, so people kind of diving deeper into who they are, where they actually come from. So there's even that too, because I remember back when I was a student lot of people that were coming into NASP, even to like MECHA, or even claiming Chicano identity and you have a lot of other people from like Guatemala, from El Salvador, like they are Native from their areas but they didn't know how to incorporate. 'Well I'm not Chicano or am I Chicano, or am I--', you know because then you have that generation living here in the US, that's a total different experience. It's similar but it's not. Right?*

Jessica: *Yeah.*

Xicanxs have survived multiple colonizers. Rafael Pérez-Torres states that, “Chicano mestizaje represents the trace of a historical material process, a violent racial/colonial encounter” and suggests three historical moments that mark critical points in the conceptualization of Chicano cultural and racial mestizaje (1998, 154). The first begins in 1521, with the Spanish conquest of the Aztec Empire and “subsequent

enslavement, genocide, and oppression of indigenous populations.” Then, in 1848 the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo “represents yet another moment of betrayal” and “marks the beginning of new subjects in history.” “The third event is ongoing. The current controversies over immigration, employment, and border control in the Southwest are but the latest in a series of conflicts informing Chicano mestizaje” (154-155). These three historical moments mark transformations of the same peoples in current day California from specific tribes, to New World citizens, to Mexican citizens, to Mexican Americans or Chicano citizens.

A moment that Pérez-Torres fails to mention, but is important to understanding Danza is the 1960s-70s Chicano Movement. Danza sprouted throughout the Southwest among politicized Xicanx communities as a positive form of resistance against assimilation and marginalization that took the form of cultural pride and the reclamation of repressed histories. However, to think of Danza as a rediscovery presumes that it was out of existence before then, on the contrary various forms of Danza have existed in Mexico for centuries (Caseña 2009, 81). Xicanx culture is not static, over the years this identity has become increasingly heterogeneous. One that is built upon mestizaje and an understanding that identities are dynamic entities rather than racial or ethnic markers. Mestizaje is not something easily understood in the United States because of its racist paradigms based on blood. Additionally Xicanxs, like most Native American groups, have been misunderstood and misrepresented in scholarship and popular culture and media for centuries. In California, missionization and boarding school assimilation was for all who seemed Native American, which often included Mexicans (Pieper, n.d., 9).

Separated from families, disconnected from community, and stripped of their cultures, this mixture and genocide is eradicated in current memory. Furthermore, the way education is structured and how we are taught about Mexican and Native American peoples always portrays them as Other. So how can we identify with something that is ingrained year after year as not ourselves?

Decolonizing Methodologies

Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* awoke and spoke to my Xicana soul, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies* is my research Bible. In 2014, Dr. Jessica Bissett-Perea shared Tuhiwai Smith's work in my first course with her and I have utilized it to decolonize ethnomusicology ever since.⁹ For me, an approach to decolonization includes engaged ethnomusicology focused on community-led collaborative projects, and embodied connections through compassionate listening and self-reflection.

I am naturally drawn to engaged ethnomusicology because as a teacher and researcher, I aspire to aid other students succeed in higher education, as well as connect academia to the communities we serve. Engaged ethnomusicology, connotes close involvement with communities from the ground up. In his examination of the "engaged university" and the role of ethnomusicology in the United States, Eric Martin Usner shares, "I am in higher education to make a difference," a testament to how he believes that "community service learning" and advocating for education is "part of the job

⁹ See my initial thoughts on this in my contribution to ed. Davin Rosenberg and Eugenia Siegel Conte, *SEM: Student News* 12, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2016): 12–13.

description” (2010, 76). He argues that engagement with the music nurtures understanding and compassion for being human and asks how to transform those understandings within musicking into “real world acts” (77). Similarly, ethnomusicologist Marcia Ostashewski engages her community through “praxis-based collaboration,” which involves ongoing relationships with research communities “from the inception of the research through its various stages of dissemination” (2014, 1-2). She acknowledges that tensions may arise between various community participants, however, these are productive and may result in “important insights” (4). Reminding her readers that ethnomusicology has historically generalized musical phenomena and therefore, erased voices and perspectives. This last point I want to emphasize, because investigating the intersections, understandings, and misunderstandings between Danza and powwow cultures has been extremely challenging for this reason. Whether in the powwow, classroom, at student programs, or other events, I am keenly aware of the tensions and negotiations that may arise when claiming Xicanxs as Native American.

In the journal of *Ethnomusicology*, Catherine Appert develops the idea of multi-sited ethnography to define her field site “through interpersonal relationships with different people” (2017, 451). Appert explores how primary modes of ethnographic knowing and being are nurtured outside spaces of music performance. However, this leaves some questioning: what about the music? (461).¹⁰ She builds on the work of

¹⁰ Anthony Seeger, now a senior ethnomusicologist, warns upcoming ethnomusicologists not to forget about the music in applied work, saying that “the work itself should be expected to have an impact on our understanding of music. I fear we are not doing this part well at all” (Seeger 2006, 228). Harrison explains that Seeger was trying to address the conventional privileging of cultural theory over musical sounds, however, younger generations of ethnomusicologists are balancing music and culture in new and exciting ways (Harrison 2014).

ethnomusicologist Ruth Hellier-Tinoco (2003), who examines how relationships of music making are reflected and sustained in the times and spaces where music isn't happening. Appert argues that privileging musical participation as a way of being in the field and focusing on specifically musical experiences, "we construct a field site that is temporally and spatially limited as that of 'old' fieldwork". By excluding nonmusical experiences (like the gendered complexities between friends or strangers), we risk "distorting the very realities that we seek to represent in our ethnographies" (452). This may be radical in a field that has always centered music analysis, but the field is continually changing and so should our approaches.

Although my work draws from my lived experiences at UCD, UCR, and UCSD powwows, my ethnography encompasses interviews and interactions outside of the powwow event. In fact, as a researcher and fellow student participant, the boundaries of when I am in the field and not are ambiguous. Throughout this project, I learned to navigate these roles through open mindedness and learning by listening. Much of my understanding of Danza comes from my friends and interlocutors who practice, two of which I had the chance to have extended interviews. The words of my interview participants and friends are dear to me, which is why I consciously incorporate larger interview excerpts in my analysis model. After transcribing interviews, I followed up with interviewees and shared the transcriptions in order to maintain transparency and clarify whether I understood what they meant to convey. In addition, all photographs, videos, and other research materials (volunteer data, notes, ethnography) were shared with members of the UCR and UCSD powwow committees via Google Drive.

Newer generations of applied scholars increasingly acknowledge their position in the academy, and therefore carefully consider how to ethically frame this privileged position in their fieldwork, especially in efforts with and for Indigenous communities (Martin and Mirraoopo 2003). Powwows are hard work! There is a tremendous amount of planning, budgeting, negotiating, lifting, carrying, and of course listening. Volunteering is how I entered and how I continue to participate. Since I am not a dancer, singer, or vendor in the powwow circuit, volunteering as well as recruiting volunteers is my role in the production of these spaces. Volunteering is my preferred point of access and participant observation, although I have attended other non-UC powwows as a visiting spectator.

A critical component of successful decolonizing strategies is listening. Liz Przybylski reminds ethnomusicologists that we are already equipped with a crucial tool for actively decolonizing our practice; and that is listening (2016, 14). Following Przybylski's three strategies for decolonized listening, I explore how listening *deeply*, listening *widely*, and listening *personally*, can foster more attentive projects and reflective ethnographies. What does it mean to "listen" with your whole body? How can one hear the sounds of decolonization through dancing and participation—an interconnected, multi-sensory, and transformative theory/practice that has yet to receive thorough investigation in music studies. Part of "being" in the field requires listening; not to simply investigate the significance of sonic elements, but training our ears to hear and put our ethnomusicological knowledge to good use.

By approaching ethnomusicological work with an open heart and ears, our projects are given new life and purpose. Listening *deeply*, listening *widely*, and listening *personally* affirms bodily wisdom and experience as a critical component of decolonizing methodologies, one that centers Indigenous knowledges and practice. Ethnomusicologist Deborah Wong relates ethnographer's attention to the politics of everyday experiences to their moral imperatives for the communities they work with (2009, 7-8). In other words, in listening to our communities we learn what is at stake. For example, my powwow field sites are still part of an institution (the University of California) so it suffers funding constrictions, legal restrictions, and the limitations that come from having students as the main source of labor. So far, this hasn't stopped the powwows from happening, but I listen to the worried comments of Referendums not passing, the frustrated tones when the UC makes us jump through hoops in order to get necessary permits, and the tired complaints from students who are burdened with courses, homework, jobs, home obligations, social pressures, and maybe having enough time to take care of themselves. I listen to them. I am one of them.

My University of California Powwow Field Sites

The following Table 1 shows useful demographics for the powwows I attended at UC Davis, UC Riverside, and UC San Diego since 2015.

Table 1: Demographics for My UC Powwow Field Sites¹¹

| | UCD 2015 | UCD 2016 | UCD 2018 | UCR 2017 | UCR 2018 | UCSD 2018 |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Type of Powwow | 1 Day Contest | 1 Day Contest | 1 Day Contest | 2 Day Contest | 2 Day Contest | 1 Day Community |
| Age of Powwow | 43rd Annual | 44th Annual | 46th Annual | 36th Annual | 37th Annual | 8th Annual |
| Approximate Size | 300-500 attendees, 30-40 vendors, 3 food vendors | 300-400 attendees, 30-40 vendors, 3 food vendors | 400-500 attendees, 30-40 vendors, 3 food vendors | 200-400 attendees, 40ish vendors, 4 food vendors | 500+ attendees, 50ish vendors, 4 food vendors | 200-300 attendees, 10-15 vendors, 2 food vendors (one food one drinks) |
| Land Acknowledgement | Patwin | Patwin | Patwin | Cahuilla | Cahuilla, Luiseño, Tongva, Serrano | Kumeyaay |
| Danza Group | Not listed in program | Danza Quetzalcoatl Citlalli | Listed as Aztec Dance Performance | Danza Azteka Kapuli Teuxihuitl | Danza Azteka Kapuli Teuxihuitl | Listed as Aztec Dancers |
| Location | East and West Quad, Davis CA | Quad, Davis CA | Quad, Davis CA | Baseball Complex, Riverside CA | Baseball Complex, Riverside CA | Marshall Field, La Jolla CA |
| Powwow Student Organization | Native American Studies Department and Cross Cultural Center | Native American Studies Department and Cross Cultural Center | Native American Studies Department and Cross Cultural Center | Native American Student Programs and Native American Student Association | Native American Student Programs and Native American Student Association | Native American Student Alliance |
| My Role | First powwow and volunteer | First time committee member and Volunteer Coordinator | Returning Alumnus and Volunteer | First time UCR powwow and Volunteer Coordinator | Experienced committee member and Volunteer Coordinator | First time UCSD powwow and volunteer |

¹¹ Before I considered myself a researcher in this space, I consistently attended my university powwow and volunteered in the powwow committee. UC Davis and UC Riverside are both larger contest powwows in the powwow circuit, however rain affected Davis' attendance in 2016, and Riverside had record-breaking attendance this year. UC San Diego is a younger, non-competition powwow with significantly lower attendance as it is still forming itself. Since powwow is a practice tied to the relocation of Native peoples from their lands, it is customary for committees and participants to acknowledge who's lands they rest on. Although it is often acknowledged that UCR rests on Cahuilla lands, an initiative started this year in which the university formally acknowledges and recognizes the Cahuilla, Tongva, Luiseño, and Serrano peoples as the original and current caretakers of these lands at every graduation ceremony. Although all of these

University of California, Davis

I learned about powwows in a Native American music course my junior year at UC Davis. My first time volunteering was in April 2015, I signed up via a google doc and then didn't hear anything until a few days before the powwow. Assigned to work the Children's Booth, my excitement grew into anxiousness as I realized I wouldn't be given any instructions. I stood in confusion with what to do with the supplies and eagerly staring children in the booth. Luckily, a woman looked at our materials and taught me how to make a dreamcatcher out the of pipe cleaners and string. The following year as an alumnus and staff member, I assisted implementing a better volunteer training system that included: ensuring volunteers received clear assignments and were not burnt out; teaching volunteers basic powwow etiquette; and delegating volunteers to assist other heads within the powwow committee.

The powwow committee at UC Davis fluctuates depending on students involved that year. Students are drawn to the committee for various reasons: some know about powwow and naturally want to help, some like the 2 credits they receive in Native American Studies, through what Dr. Jessica Bissett-Perea calls a powwow internship, others are student employees in the Cross Cultural Center and are required to volunteer in

powwows had Danza present, they are not always included or named in the advertised powwow program. Generally the same local Danza group is invited back to the powwow every year. The location of these powwows are also important to note, whereas UCD and UCSD is at the heart of campus with more student awareness and foot traffic for vendors, UCR is more on the outer edge of campus and may get attention from the public street.

cultural events of their choice, and others like myself join to learn and be a part of something for the Native community.

Coming back this year felt like a homecoming. It was surreal walking around my familiar campus without having any particular urgency. While I really tried to enjoy the beautiful campus environment, much of my time walking through there was spent stressed and frantically getting to whatever practice, gig, event, seminar, or class I had next. As I got closer, I didn't hear drums or powwow singing, but my college marching band rehearsing their Picnic Day show. I thought, how fortunate am I to have my two musical worlds in one place. Finally making my way to the Quad, everything was set up as it always was. Merchant vendors strategically placed for maximum capacity on the West Quad while still passing inspection from the Fire Marshall, food vendors and nonprofit organizations on the north end of the East Quad, with the powwow spectators and drums in a circle around dancers on the south end. Families in easy up tents around the arena, kids running around both in regalia and clothes referencing the latest cartoons, vendors selling handmade jewelry, tools, toys, clothes, bags, and decorative pieces for the home. On the outside, to others who do not know, this space can just appear to be a Native music and dance celebration or ceremony, but what they don't know are these moments of teaching and education. This is a time and space when and where elders, both men and women, are given the chance to share their histories and their truths. All one needs to do is come and listen.

University of California, Riverside

My first year here at UCR, I planned to silently attend Native American Student Programming (NASP) meetings and observe how the students interacted amongst each other and organized the powwow. However, after introducing myself and briefly sharing my history with the UC Davis powwow, the Co-chair at the time immediately said, “Okay so we found our Powwow Volunteer Coordinator.” Although uncomfortable with having that much responsibility as a newcomer, attending to the needs of the powwow committee quickly overshadowed any hesitation. Since this year was my second time coordinating this powwow, I was more comfortable taking initiative, especially upon hearing that NASP was recently short-staffed. For example, I answered future participant’s questions on the Facebook Event page asking, “Are you still accepting vendor applications?” or “Is parking free?” While I wondered if I was overstepping my boundaries, the Likes on my responses from the NASP Facebook account reassured me that I was alleviating some of the workload. With the growing number of volunteers I have recruited to help, UCR students in the powwow committee are even considering making next year’s powwow three days.

This year at the UCR powwow, I danced more than ever before thanks to encouragement from fellow graduate student and Danza dancer, Cuauhtémoc. During Intertribal song, a sort of warm up powwow song meant to include all different tribes before the exhibition dancing begins, Cuauhtémoc grabbed my hand, gave me a gourd rattle instrument and led me into the inner circle. Looking out at the broad range of spectators, I thought I’d be more nervous dancing, especially when passing some of the

Native elders who may think that my dress with a Tehuantepec woman pictured on it was appropriate. However, once out there and moving, I again felt the drum in ways I have never before. The soreness and achiness that ran rampant throughout my body from working 15 hours the first powwow day disappeared, but more importantly, I felt my soul dancing. As the different drum groups took turns playing an intertribal song, we had to pay close attention because some were not yet mic-ed. Though they were dramatically softer, it forced our ears to attentively hear the drum hits as we moved around the inner circle. With such intense focus, the rest of the world melted away, including any concerns or self-doubts I had about dancing in the inner circle. Naturally, almost instinctively, my feet and gourd rattle shakes synced to the Drum. I'm still developing ways of describing this ephemeral experience other than healing or cleansing, and an overwhelming sense of belonging.

Upon reflection I liken this to the freeing feeling I got when I first read Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands: The New Mestiza* (2012). As an uprooted and displaced Xicana, I find myself in a constant state of nepantlism, and this living in the margins has been further theorized in feminist scholarship to talk about a nepantla way of reading the world.¹² This transformative experience best describes what took place when dancing. Listening to the Drum, I hear my ancestors cry and bleed out through Spanish conquest, I hear them expelled to distant, unresourceful lands by governments that claim to rule them, and I hear them now advising me how to navigate and survive in a Non-Native

¹² I am inspired by each unique expression of nepantla made by contributors in *Fleshing the Spirit: Spirituality and Activism in Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous Women's Lives* (2014). In the foreword Inés Hernández-Avila defines nepantla as "this place of chaos, disjuncture, disorder, but it is also the space of possibility, creativity, heightened imagination, consciousness, and spirituality" (xv).

world. Through dancing and participation, I understand that their pains, struggles, and wisdom are now shared with me and with that comes much responsibility, but I am able and ready for this journey.

University of California, San Diego

Due to its proximity to the U.S./México border, about 30 miles, I chose UC San Diego as my third powwow site. Knowing that powwows are a tremendous amount of work and that this would only be their eighth annual one, I thought the most responsible way to access this space would be to sign up as a volunteer. Not finding any information about volunteering on their website, I called the powwow contact person, Samuel Lucero. When a young man answered the phone, I introduced myself as a graduate student at UCR who worked on powwows and identity, and was eagerly interested in volunteering if he could explain the process. Sam found my expertise in coordinating powwows exciting, but explained to me that they didn't have a volunteer sign up process. Feeling like I could really be a big help to them, I asked "Oh okay, then what time do you need me there for set up?" After agreeing to be there at 8am, we hung up.

I never sleep well the night before a big event or traveling and this night was no exception. My excitement woke me up before my 6am alarm and I eagerly packed my fieldwork gear in the car as the sun was just rising. Even with A-frame directional signs, I still managed to get lost on the expansive campus (I would later find out that less signs were put out than the committee had originally ordered). Luckily, Sam was able to direct me to the parking structure over the phone and then picked me up in a UCSD golf cart

full of waters and Gatorades cases. Getting to the powwow site, I was surprised to find the powwow circle already formed with those durable rented tents that get set up by laborers. Sam, four other volunteers, Isabella, Miranda, Melina, and Burgundy, and I introduced ourselves to each other briefly as we unloaded drinks and filled coolers. Vendors were already there setting up their booths; I recognized Eagle Rabbit (a beader) and Kathleen Sorondo (a clothing merchant) who came to UCR's powwow the weekend before. I learned from Josh Gonzales that the Southern California powwow trail is still forming itself and wondered if UCSD was big enough for a spot on that list. Some vendors and dancers shared that they heard about this powwow from a previous powwow, as Emcees often announce other events happening in the area.

As we set up tables and chairs for community feed and spectators, I grew more comfortable with these students. Although a new location and with unfamiliar people, everything else came naturally. One noticeable difference was the help hired through the school. Whereas at UCD and UCR the committee is in charge of setting up audio gear and maintaining porter potties, the UCSD committee hired the school AV crew for audio, and Sports and Recreation services for ice and facilities maintenance. Although more expensive, the powwow committee is then not burn out, and with more down time I had the opportunity to talk with student volunteers. Sam, Isabella, and Miranda are undergraduates and all local to Southern California. Melina and Burgundy were first-years in their respective graduate programs.

Shocked that Sam was President of the Native American Student Alliance as a freshman, they explained to me that a lot of people graduated last year, and the lack of

people is why they decided to have a single day powwow this year. Later, while chalking arrows from the parking structure to the arena (a practice not allowed on the UCR campus) I got to know Melina and had a fruitful conversation concerning Native American and Latin American identities. She agreed that these two identities are more nuanced than is taught to us, pointing out that the census teaches us at a young age before we really understand those labels and who we are. Like myself, she is first generation with parents from México and is navigating that identity. Later, a Cologuard point person was grabbing some of the Peet's coffee and pastries from Hospitality, and he struck up a conversation with Melina. In introducing herself to him, she shared that her mom was from Jalisco and her dad from Chihuahua. The man replied, "oh that's Apache territory!" And I witnessed the familiar polite smile as she decided not to comment. This moment is all too familiar. In sharing my Xicana heritage, I receive comments like, "oh those are just Pueblo or Apache Indians left behind," or "so you're Mexica," and I choose not to contradict them.

During Intertribal song I wanted so badly to go out and join! At the UCSD powwow, however I felt like too much of an outsider and first-time participant to partake. Maybe if the Danza dancers had arrived earlier and participated I would have felt more comfortable? I wished Cuauhtémoc was able to come with me. I tend to dance only if other students are invited or it's a social dance like a round dance, however, that doesn't stop me from dancing to the drum beats outside the dance arena. At the start of the dinner break, I heard the familiar call of the conch shell and beginning huehuetl beats by the Capulli Mexihca Aztec Dancers. I've seen this group before when I attended the

Cuyamaca College Powwow in early February. Here, the group consisted of less members, two were instrumentalists playing huehuetls (a child no more 7 or 8 years old had to stand on a stool to reach the top of the drum), and a third person would occasionally blow on a conch shell. The dancers burned copales (aromatic tree resin or incense) as they entered, blessing the arena and creating an altar with instrumentalists in the center, then the danzantes around in a circle dancing. One of their last dances was called the Friendship Dance, where they invited everyone to come out and dance. This was the opportunity I had been waiting for! Excited participants, like myself, filled in the circle between the danzantes. We stepped in place to the swung, drum beats. We went left together, then to the right, then stepped inward toward the middle. All the while very light on our feet, with little chance to stop and catch our breath. Other moves included holding hands and a follow the leader, snaking around the arena, then ending together in a tight circle around the musicians. This feeling of unity and belonging as I moved with everyone in the inner circle is what first drew me into the powwow space and I do not plan to leave anytime soon.

Understanding Powwow through Alliance Studies

Given the complex histories of these spaces, I turn to Beverley Diamond's model for alliance studies (2007).¹³ Diamond argues that Indigenous people have been actively engaged in modernity and globalization for centuries, despite the expectations that

¹³ By "these spaces" I mean the local tribal lands, to the governed nation-state of California, and the longstanding complex relations between the U.S. and Mexico.

Indigenous peoples and cultures are isolated, primitive, and unchanging. Diamond suggests that we focus on the diverse alliances that Indigenous musicians sound, as a way to demonstrate how they are active agents in their varied performances. She reminds researchers to first “regard musical practices *as* theory not as objects to which we might apply theory”; and second, that relationships are central to any ethnomusicological study, for “our alliances produce our identities” (Diamond 2007, 170- 71). This shift from identity to alliance-based politics in researching indigenous musics also remind us not to lose sight of important differences.

For the purposes of my research, Diamond’s work offers an essential framework that brings music studies into dialogue with Native American and Indigenous studies. I am interested in how her four categories— genre and technology, language and dialect, citation and collaboration, and access and ownership— make audible the productive and critical alliances between these two fields.¹⁴ Diamond writes how each of these categories are “crosscut” by “distinctiveness” and “mainstreamness” in music. The choices Indigenous musicians make (e.g., using signifiers that audibly distinguish their Indigenous heritage) have an impact on how their music is categorized as distinctive from mainstream. However, the ideology of “the mainstream” becomes problematic when Indigenous sounds become mixed with sounds that have been popularized by mass audiences (Diamond 2007, 172-173).¹⁵ On one hand, it is wonderful witnessing the shock and awe from students as I reveal that the music video they just saw mixing

¹⁴ The first pair of categories align more closely with the conventions of music studies, while the second pair align more closely with the preoccupations of Native American and Indigenous studies.

¹⁵ This notion has been further theorized as “sound quantum” ideology by Jessica Bissett-Perea, “Pamyua’s Akutaq: Traditions of Modern Inuit Modalities in Alaska,” *MUSICultures* 39, no. 1 (2012): 7–41.

electronic dub step and powwow drum singing was produced by a Native artist. On the other hand, it is incredibly exhausting having to explain over and over again that Native American peoples are not these stagnant and distant stereotypes most people imagine.

In Figure 1 below, I have incorporated each of Diamond's Alliance Studies categories as four circles in a Venn diagram. Then, I outlined the layered intersections to represent the concentric circles of a powwow.¹⁶ Colors simultaneously distinguish each of the categories, while highlighting how some categories are more temporally interconnected and sociopolitically complex than others. I elaborate on this Powwow Alliance Studies Model moving from the outside inward. First, "Genre formations and Technological mediations" represents the outmost purple circle, corresponding to spectators and vendors in the powwow. Then, "Language and Dialect choices" represents the second blue circle inward, corresponding to the dancers. Next, "Citational practices and Collaborations" represents the third green circle inward, corresponding to the singers. Lastly "Issues of Access and Ownership" represent the red center circle, corresponding to the drum, otherwise known as the heart of the powwow. As a reminder, this is all crosscut by various tensions that may arise regarding Native Americanness, examples may include diversity v. unity, contemporary v. traditional, tribal v. intertribal, and presentational v. participatory.

¹⁶ Symbolic representations of powwows are often pictured as concentric circles around a drum (Gilbert 1982, 72; Bear 1996; Weibel-Orlando 1999, 145; Perea 2014, 26).

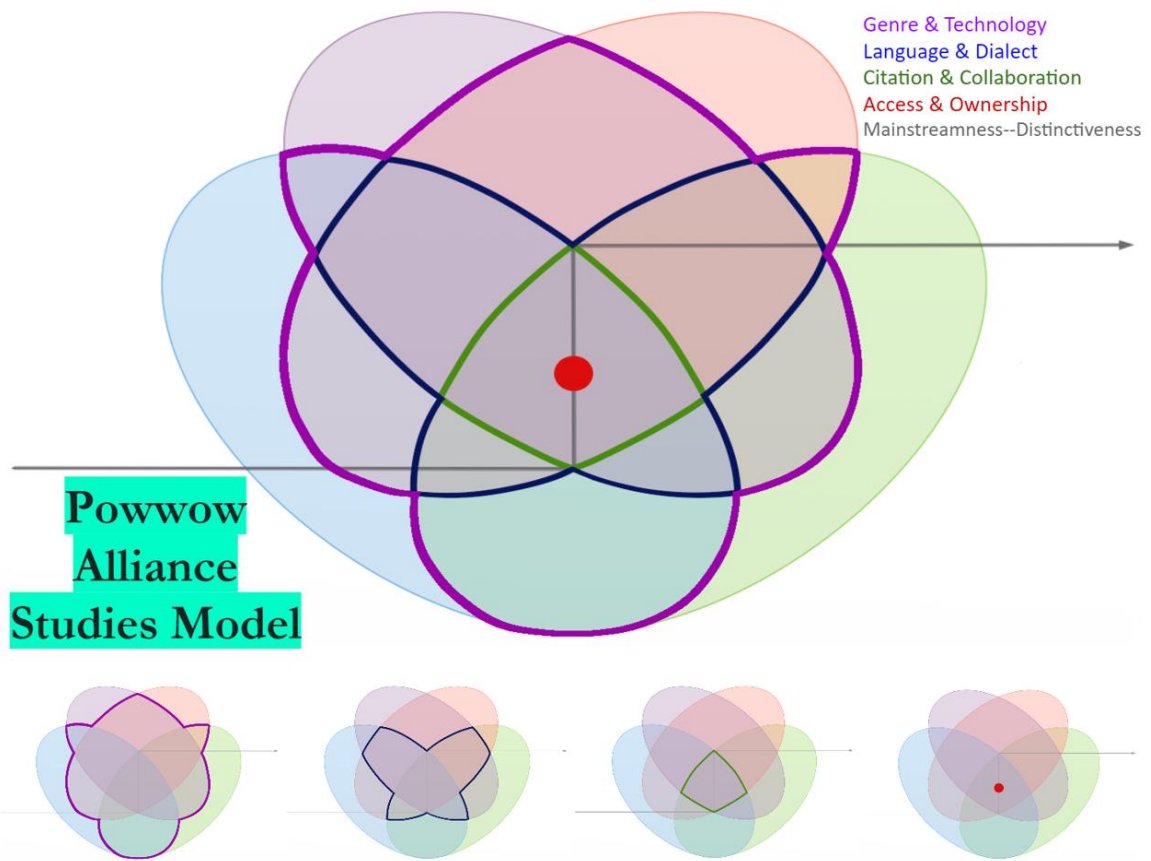


Figure 1: Powwow Alliance Studies Model illustration made by the author.

I incorporate longer passages of interviews in the four sections modeling Diamond and Hoefnagel’s edited volume (2012). In a period of increased interactions between academic communities, culture bearers, creative artists, and elders in Canada, the editors intentionally curate works that not only reflect these exchanges but highlight them as primary sources. Just as Diamond and Hoefnagels equate their conventionally scholarly written chapters to the chapters containing whole interview transcriptions, I value these exchanges with my friends and interlocuters. While my extended interviews are not from self-identified females, Cuauhtémoc identifies as a “Two-Spirit Butch Queen,” meaning they embody both the feminine and masculine gender. As I’ve

transitioned from first time attendee, to powwow committee member and coordinator, to dancer, I have gained better understandings of the complexities of how this space functions on campus, within the broader California powwow circuit, and as a space for decolonial praxis.

Genre and Technology

By classifying music into genres, it gives listeners certain expectations on what they are listening to. For example, if one were going to a classic rock concert, seeing amplified electric guitars and bass as well as some sort of drum set are to be expected. However, one would not expect to see wooden flutes at this same classic rock concert. When teaching students about powwow spaces, I share with them the expectedness of drums, singing, dancing, Indian Tacos, and the sharing of oral histories. But how do we explain Danza and Bird Singers, both contemporary practices in California powwows, yet not accounted for in the historical powwow narrative?

Regarding Native Americanness and Danza at powwows, I provide a productive dialogue with Overall Prince Dante Lauren, of the House of Lauren, International, also known as Cuauhtémoc (Mescalero/Apache/Mexica-Chichimeca).¹⁷ In sharing our interview transcription they preferred their title introduction, which shows their lifework in the ballroom/voguing scene. A pioneer in dance, Cuauhtémoc has written on decolonial possibilities within both Danza and voguing worlds and continues to break

¹⁷ “House of Lauren” refers to the International Ballroom family that Cuauhtémoc belongs to, which he defines as “Black, Latinx, and Indigenous LGBTQ+ Vogue / House Ballroom Scene”.

expectations of contemporary Native Americanness. This is just a glimpse of how much they have taught me in the past two years. I value their words not only as a self-identified “Urban Indian” from Santa Cruz and Danza practitioner, but also as a close friend and young scholar going through the trenches of academia.

Jessica: *Why do you go? What draws you to powwows?*

Cuauhtémoc: *Oh usually the men.*

Jessica: *[I laugh] So like snagging?¹⁸*

Cuauhtémoc: *Yeah snagging. I will say that when the Emcee says, ‘what was it, are you going to dance or snag?’ SNAG! Just instantly, without missing a beat...It's like I'm here to snag... No, I go because well for the boys, I also go there for the food. I like the fry bread and I go there to not buy jewelry, but I always do. Because if I ever went there with the intention to buy jewelry I'd go broke. That's why I'm so fashionable. Um, I also go there just to kind of, sometimes to participate, to dance, to gather with other people, to see people who I don't see, cuz it's a good social event. You don't have to pay attention to the dancing all the time, but it's always there. You don't have to always shop, or buy something, you don't always have to eat there, but there's always something going on and nothing is forced upon you so you can really just kind of be yourself. Like you can just be like two old queens in the corner laughing at everybody and then everybody wants to hear your stories and laugh with you. And then that's what happens. And that's a powwow, you know. I grew up at the knees of many elders, cracking jokes about people's regalia falling off, [I gasp] and how unsafe they were. [he goes into an soft elder voice] Oh No. The ancestors cried when your loin cloth came down. [goes to his normal voice] but I went like this [he squeals] Aye! Cuz man you're hung! [we both laugh uncontrollably] So they'll say ridiculous shit like that, that don't make sense. Yes it does, but doesn't. That's what I think of as a powwow. The Casa de Fruta powwow is one of the powwows that you can camp at, so it's like a four day. And you can stay there and camping or RV or just your tent and you kind of just live there at the powwow...Every powwow's different. I think it's just a nice time where you can just be Native American. There's no longer a question of, at least for me when I'm in it cuz I have been in it so long. Maybe when I was younger they questioned my Native Americanness, what that fucking means, but I find now that that's not ever questioned. I'm kind of in the community and it's accepted that I'm Native American. Um, and so now that that fucking question is gone, new possibilities are made, are available, without that kind of shade, that block because now I can dub step or like, you know, take a dab. Boom! [makes a sharp motion with his arm across his face] to a powwow beat and that's Native American.*

¹⁸ Snagging is a Native expression for finding a partner at a powwow. Traditionally, they could not marry someone from their own tribe so powwows, as a growing social and intertribal space, was ideal for courtship.

Jessica: *Mm... [I'm writing notes frantically]*

Cuauhtémoc: *And I can just do that. I can be myself and it's part of us and we all see each other as the same. So that means somebody else, some other kids seeing a big tall man doing a dab to a powwow beat, can see that, 'Oh that's Native American too'. Because when we were kind of-- I think the issue with LIFE is genocide and genocide has made it so the only images of Native Americans you see are in cartoons or movies and they're very romantic, very regalia based, very kind of limited exposure. And it's not dynamic, we're dynamic. Native Americans don't seem dynamic. They don't seem real. And even in the imagination of young Native Americans, it's hard to see that. So the powwow provides a space where we can engage with, talk to, and see each other and to remind us that not only are we living, we're thriving and we have a lot of variances! We're very dynamic. In fact, it's not just like. You don't go like this. 'I don't eat Sushi because I Native American'. Who the fuck says that?! But somehow that's often there. 'You eat Sushi?!' I'm sorry, I don't eat fry bread all day. It's like saying like a Mexican eats sushi, 'you eat sushi?' Bitch, of course! It's delicious! But like for some people, like 'I thought Mexicans just ate tacos all day'. No one would say that because it seems racist, but no one knows what the Native American diet... But they go crazy and like, 'I actually have no idea what Native Americans eat'. And I'm like, I went to McDonald's last night. What do you think we eat? We're humans living in America! That's currently occupied by colonizers and we're being resilient. Yeah I went to In 'n' Out. It's delicious. I don't like animal style. Sometimes I do....Coffee is a traditional drink at the powwow.*

Jessica: *Oh yeah, we live off of coffee.*

Cuauhtémoc: *I say that in this interview and I'll say it forever. It's a funny truth, but it is a truth. One, the coffee bean comes from this land--North America. Two, coffee and powwows kind of go together because fuck, powwows take forever. And they work on a different sense of time, and so you have to be there when the sun comes up and then you're there until wee late hours of mid night closing things down, ending things, or planning for the next day. So that requires a lot of coffee to kind of be awake and able to help. Every powwow has to have coffee and it's just part of, it becomes part of the powwow tradition.*

Jessica: *Heh, I never thought of coffee.*

Cuauhtémoc: *Yeah. It's a very traditional drink. No, it's not traditional drink at the ballet, it's not a traditional drink at say the jazz dance competition. It's not traditional drink at a punk show. These are all other kinds of cultural gatherings of people, that have music and dancing. But at the powwow, it's not that.*

From this exchange, we learn one perspective elaborating on how powwow is a social event for both Natives and Non-Natives to learn about Native American identities.

I also recognize Cuauhtémoc's decolonization of coffee. I've felt this distortion of time as a dedicated committee member myself, and in awe at my ability to set-up, run around,

socialize, dance, and have enough strength to take down at the end of the day. This year's weather was on the cooler side and when that sun went down at UCR, temperatures dropped below 60 degrees. My Volunteer station was a part of the Hospitality area, which provided coffee and snacks to Head Staff, Singers and Dancers, but often shivering vendors would come over ask about the coffee. When I had to turn them down, they'd even offer money as a donation, but I had to say no. This was not a good feeling, especially in the cold night, to deny something as simple as coffee that was just sitting there. I had to at least ask the Director if we could open it up to vendors, the worst he could say is no and then I'd be right back where I started. To my surprise, Josh sympathized with them and decided to buy more coffee containers at the store run the following morning to adjust to the larger demand. I ran back to my booth and gathered some volunteers to go out to each of the vendors and offer them coffee. When they returned, the volunteers shared how grateful the vendors were, showing how a small act like providing free coffee is powerful.

In addition to exploring expectedness/unexpectedness within the powwow genre, I highlight how technology has changed the relationship between powwow participants (dancers, vendors, and Drum) and spectators (visitors, students, volunteers). In each of the sites, protocols on photography were generally lenient, with the Emcee encouraging photos and social media sharing and specifically announcing when these things were not okay. UCD requires all volunteers to attend an etiquette course taught by Dr. Hulleah J. Tsinhnahjinnie, a professor in Native American Studies. This teaches volunteers (often first time goers) the expectations of the space including terminology, structure of the

event, and most importantly, powwow protocol. This year the NASP Director and I tried to set up an etiquette training, however, short staffed and short on time, we were unable to coordinate something. As the Volunteer Coordinator, I felt a responsibility to at the very least share a compiled protocol handout to everyone's confirmation email and made it available at Volunteer Check-In. In the end, I always remind volunteers to listen to the Master of Ceremonies, or Emcee in regards to protocol as he is the voice of the powwow.

Language and Dialect

Diving deeper into the powwow alliance studies model, I share an interview with the alumni and current Director of NASP at Riverside, Josh Gonzales (Xictlaca/Mexica). Josh practices Danza with his wife, Cinthya (also an alumni and involved in NASP), and his two young children are growing up in ceremony. Here, he shares the importance of learning one's heritage and comments on how he chooses to align himself with his Indigenous roots using language. In her model, Beverly Diamond explains that "the choice of a local language and dialect can solidify one's community position or, if the choice is to imitate a different dialect or use a language other than one's own, it can signal a desire to ally one's self with others" (2007, 178). From reflecting on my own personal identity, I know that the terms we use to make claims are extremely important.

Continuing our conversation about Danza and how it related to his family, Josh explained the terms and language he used over time. This dialogue with Josh demonstrates how our

identities are formed by the alliances we chose, whether by blood, communities, or cultural practices and expressions.¹⁹

Josh Gonzales: *So you even have those. That's why you have like Latina, we have a lot more Latino based, like a lot of people claiming Latino, but if you follow that history of that word too, it's kind of more of Latin origin. And you have a lot of people with the understanding of mestizo and mestizaje, we have that piece. Right? So people are left there and that's it. And fortunately some people have learned, some people continue. So it's kind of like this weird mix of consciousness and taking ownership of that consciousness or just saying like, you know, 'oh yeah, I have this tattoo of the Aztec Calendar'. But do you know what that means? Do you truly know the details behind that story? Do you know? [directing the question towards me] Do you understand the tonalmachiotl?*

Jessica: *No.*

Josh Gonzales: *That's the Aztec calendar, see? But even then the Aztec calendar is a book. It's not just the calendar, but you have people saying, 'Oh yeah, the Aztec calendar, the Aztec calendar' and like that's all how people know. But do you know the story? Do you know the story behind the guy carrying the woman? It was a love story. It's kind of like the Romeo Juliet story, you know what I mean?*

Jessica: *Mhm...Is that the story where like they become two mountains?*

Josh Gonzales: *Mhm, yeah. I've heard, I've actually heard there's actual names tied to that story.*

Jessica: *But that gets lost of course. Or not lost, but people, [I'm searching for how I want to say this] ...erasure..., I don't know. See I don't know if it's like an actual consciousness of like losing it or if it's like inner forces or outside forces? I guess both.*

Josh Gonzales: *Both. Because it's hard. It was hard to maintain, especially nowadays, right? People having to work multiple jobs. People, you know, other stresses, things that are going on and it's kinda like, well, what do you focus your energy on?*

Jessica: *That's true.*

Josh Gonzales: *Right? Do you have enough energy after working two jobs to go and learn Danza and go dance for an hour or two? You know what I mean? And then it kind of comes to that like, 'well I'm going to make time', right? That conscious effort of like 'I want to learn, I'm gonna sit down, I'm gonna go visit my family down, wherever I'm from' right? Or 'I'm going to go back to the reservation, I'm going to go learn those stories, I'm going to learn those songs'...I see people more embracing that Indigenous piece. And, I think that's still again slowly as, even as Native as Chicano people or as, that's why I say Xictlaca. Because Chic, going back to Chicano, laca is person. So it's a rooted person. That's how I identify Xictlaca/Mexica. And I don't give into that Spanish term. So you had a Chicano, Chicano/a, Chicana, Chicax. It's still like, you're still taking on that Spanish piece. I mean if that's how you identify that's how you identify. But for me, I identify, I*

¹⁹ This interview took place in January 2018, before attending my powwow field sites in spring and at a time when I was still learning about Chicano identity and whether or not I could claim indigeneity.

want to go back to more of the root before, and maintaining my identity, but also understanding this Native side more. That's kind of how I've grown, that's where I'm coming from. A lot of people see me and they are like, 'are you Native?' I'm like well, yeah, but you know I say I'm Xictlaca/Mexica, down south, they're like, 'oh, okay'.

At powwows, Native and both colonial languages (English and Spanish) are heard. Sometimes, when walking around vendors' tents dressed in my puebla dress or huipil, they speak to me in Spanish and it offers me a chance to practice. English at powwows is for comprehension, rather than superiority, much like how Olympic games and World Cup matches are refereed in English. If the powwow or Emcee spoke in Native languages exclusively, then it would be less accessible, even to their community. However, we are slowly learning our languages; Emcees, elders, and mentors encourage us to learn our language. I started learning Diidxáza (Isthmus Zapotec), my first year at UCR thinking I would continue my work on "La Z/Sandunga," however, as my work shifted my inkling to learn modern Nahuatl grew. Cuauhtémoc also shared that they often think in their other languages as strategies for decoding the complexities of this world, because "language is everything."

Citation and Collaboration

At UCR, Cahuillas open the space with their traditional bird songs, which I had never heard or seen before at powwows. Now this makes sense because Riverside is on Cahuilla lands, so this is simply another example of regional differences amongst powwows. Opening the powwow with them is a way of citing and acknowledging whose lands we are on. Land acknowledgement is a tradition found in many Native communities

and I practice this now every time I perform, teach, and present. Powwow is an intercultural and collaborative hands-on effort from production, to performance and practice. For example, these UC powwows are completely student run but are in collaboration with other student organizations, some university staff, and surrounding community members, as well as the invited Head Staff, who also bring their communities to the powwow. Whereas collaboration is physically evidenced, citation, as Diamond puts it, “is a distanced process, that is usually intentional and emotionally charged” (2007, 183). As mentioned before, powwows encompass a mixture of alliances that are displayed in their regalia, heard in the languages, danced, and tasted in the fry bread.

As I continually witness Danza in the powwow space I wondered, is Danza at the powwow an expression of citation or collaboration? Does this phenomenon cite Aztlán or display intercultural collaboration?

After our graduate seminar concerning contemporary issues in global Indigenous musics with Dr. Liz Przybylski, I treated my friends Will Madrigal (Cahuilla) and Joshua Little (Lakota) for helping me with my lecture on Native American musics. Somewhere in the conversations, I said something about Aztlán as homeland for Xicanx peoples. Suddenly, Will’s tone changed and I could tell he was skeptical, calling Aztlán bogus, and the people who try to claim Aztlán just as bad as settlers. Josh chuckled and nodded in agreement as he continued to sip on his drink. I admit, that stung, though it taught me a lot. I shared this conflicting experience with Will and Josh to Cuauhtémoc.

Jessica: So I guess what I'm running up against is how there's this, this call to Aztlán and this is our lands, but at the same time there is Cahuilla people that are like, 'no, you can't just like say this is Aztlán this has like always been our land.' And it's like this whole like

staking claim of like the same territory. Like I feel there's this competition, like who was here first?

Cuauhtémoc: The animals. In the decolonial pedagogy it states that all living things including the rocks as living things are our brothers and sisters. And therefore who was here first? The plants and animals and rocks. I like that one better cuz it gets rid of humans. Because humans are so annoying. They just want to show off their penises. Which I like, that's why I go to the powwow, but it's all a pissing contest.

Jessica: Yeah.

Cuauhtémoc: Do the Cahuillas ever admit that they were a part of the Aztec Empire. That Uto-Aztecan as a language formation is very close to Cahuilla and that's why I can understand them. Cahuilla and Nahuatl are very similar languages.

Jessica: I didn't know that.

Cuauhtémoc: No, they don't bring that into the conversation. When you're having a lot of these kinds of conversations a lot is omitted. You know, and that's why historians and history is important because they go, well actually you guys are actually more one thing. So one time whose land was it first? Aztlán or Cahuilla? Bitch, it was the same thing! At one time, it was the same! The Cahuillas were excellent bounty hunters for their Aztec Empire. Excellent. Because they knew how to survive crazy-ass terrain.

Jessica: How do you know about that? How do you know all that?

Cuauhtémoc: The archives. I do a lot of reading... Will will tell you this too.

Jessica: Well, Will was the one that brought up. I was like I'm trying to build this Xicana Indigenous feminist framework that kind of moves past like this staking claim thing and just kind of moving forward. Like, okay, well here we are mixed on these lands and we have different views of indigeneity but like how can we move beyond that and trying to argue that through this thinking you can move beyond. But then he said, ...it was like this whole, like, weird moment between the three of us. I was just like, okay, I'll go back in my corner and not know anything.

Cuauhtémoc: Aztlán is dumb and fake. Because let me tell you right here [reading from his thesis] 'Aztlán, the place with seven caves' ...Is this a place of seven caves?! I don't see seven caves here.

Jessica: No, but I think, [having read his work] aren't you using it metaphorically there?

Cuauhtémoc: No. I'm being very serious about it. It's the place with seven caves that's what it means. Aztlán is a spiritual place. You can carry Aztlán with you just like God. God is always with me. Whatever. Fuckit. No, this is Cahuilla land. Aztlán is a religion. Aztlán is a spiritual practice, a mythology. Aztlán doesn't really exist anywhere, therefore it can be claimed anywhere. And Aztlán is about, you know, the Mexica people. Mexica itself means people of the Sun...Anyways, that all goes into mythology, but basically Aztlán has been taken by the Chicano movement in about the late 1960s, 1970s as a way to identify all raza de Mexico and try to kind of like, through some kind of bullshit activism, that's hell a sexist and homophobic and make a claim for having, you know, Mexico. Get rid of the Guadalupe and Hidalgo, whatever referendum bullshit treaty and make California, Mexico again.

Jessica: Oh, when really we don't want to be another nation. We want to go back to sovereignty over our own lands.

Cuauhtémoc: *Maybe.*

Jessica: *Maybe? Would you rather-- I mean,*

Cuauhtémoc: *Uh, I don't know we, who you talking about we? I know plenty of people who are both Chicano and Indigenous who want other things than that. I think that a lot of Chicanos who were displaced or forced out or who had moved and had forgotten their indigeneity are using the idea of, 'well, we gotta get rid all the white people and make us Mexico and if we were in charge I would have my indigeneity back'.*

Jessica: *Mm.*

Cuauhtémoc: *And I wouldn't feel so lost. In these pinche borderlands like fucking Anzaldúa writes about. Chicano by itself means outsider within. In a word. It's that feeling of not being able to be yourself, but you're inside this circle. You're American, but you're not really American. You're Mexican, but you have no claim Mexico because you weren't born there. You weren't brought up there, so who the fuck are you? That's Chicano. Black people will use that word too it. So will Chinese and other kinds of Asian people who are immigrant, who use Chicano. Chicano is not owned by Latinos or la raza. Not even Mexicans, it is a word that means outsider within. And so even in the ballroom scene you'll see like straight people use the word Chicano. It's a complex identity. So you'll see people like Josh [Gonzales] where you know, Mexicans who founded indigeneity somewhere, I don't know in the closet, under their shoe. And they're like 'I'm Native' so they do all kinds of hella Native shit. What Will is pointing at is that he knows that that Aztlán is fake, it was a fake notion that was brought up in the 1960s and '70s to galvanize support for overthrowing the US government, which has never worked. MECHA and in its mission statement clearly says that. But both Josh [Gonzales] and MECHA and all of them are different than me. That's why I'm fun. [I laugh in agreement] I'm very unique in this area. Now in the bay area there's plenty of us Urban Indians, but here I'm a rarity in that my Aztlán, the way I write about it here [pointing to thesis], I was born with it. I grew up going to ceremony since I was fucking three, maybe older. I was born in ceremony. For me, Aztlán will never mean a political movement of reclaiming Indigenous identity by becoming Mexico or our own sovereign country. Aztlán is simply and should only be for me, a spiritual practice with the elements, using the language and the words that our ancestors have told us, and to take it and adapt to what we are experiencing now. Like any spiritual practice. And I don't think Will's talking about my version of Aztlán.*

Jessica: *No.*

Cuauhtémoc: *And I think that's a really important distinction because we can get lost in syncretism a lot.*

While Aztlán provides Xicanx peoples a homeland to cling onto, I believe it would be more productive to reframe Aztlán as a symbol of our indigeneity rather than the initiative to reclaim land as historically attempted. Cuauhtémoc's Master's thesis entitled *Mitote*, serves as a starting point for the evolution of contemporary Indigenous

dance work that respects Indigenous land and protocols of cultural production, yet is “innovative, avant-garde, and modern”. In it, they poetically defines Aztlán as:

“the sacred place to the Aztec People, the Mexica People. It is the spiritual place where we go when we die. Aztlán is protected by Huehuecoyotl [Nahuatl: Huehue =drum, music, heart, the old one and Coyotl= The Ancient Coyote]— the muse of recreation— the storyteller— the story keeper— the giver —the knowledge holder —the academic of life, time, space, our spiritual force —the keeper of Aztlán” (57).

Aztlán isn't a place in our realm, but something else, and this can only be accessed through embodied knowledge and practice. Danza is but one example. In *Black Rhythms of Peru*, Heidi Feldman uses the term "cultural memory" to describe how members of a cultural group (in her case Afro-Peruvians) remember, "with the aid of cultural expressions, elements of a collective past that they did not personally experience" (2006, 10). Since so much of history has been either destroyed, misinterpreted, and misrepresented by the processes of colonization, there is less material to authenticate or legitimize their forgotten past. Each of the memory projects she describes in her book creates a memoryscape or "an imagined space that encompasses the broad spectrum of commemorative practices" (11) that contributes to the history of Afro-Peruvian music and dance. She suggests that "all versions of history staged within the Afro-Peruvian memoryscape are true for those who experience them as such, whether or not they can be authenticated" (12). In this way, I wish to make clear that Xicanxs who practice Danza are no more authentic or authoritative than other memory projects that contribute to the memoryscape of Xicanxs, such as those in Baile Folkorico, mariachi, punk rock, or brass bands. Some were fortunate growing up in Danza, like Josh Gonzales and Cuauhtémoc,

and raised learning how to cultivate cultural traditions like language, dance, and their histories. Other Xicanxs, like myself, seek out spiritual dance practices and spaces as a way to decolonize ourselves via reconnecting to traditions and language we know we have relation to but just can't articulate. Will, Cuauhtémoc, Josh Gonzales, and Josh Little continually challenge my investigation while at the same time supporting my growth as a young Native scholar. In this thesis, it may seem like Cuauhtémoc has the last word, however these are ongoing conversations. I continually ask and listen.²⁰ Ultimately, we are all still recovering from the colonial wound.

Access and Ownership

This year while coordinating volunteers, I met Itztli, an undergraduate NASP member and local Danza dancer. While driving the golf cart to pick up powwow supplies from the NASP office, I asked her about her previous powwow experiences. Itztli told me about how she grew up going to local powwows with her family as danzantes and vendors. When she was younger, her family wasn't allowed to participate in Grand Entry, an entrance practice meant for all participating dancers. She proudly explained that her dad was a "pioneer", who believed they should come out and partake as danzantes, and in the last few years has been more accepted by powwow organizers. When danzantes started participating in powwows is unclear, however, the UCR powwow was one of the

²⁰ I frequently spend time with these individuals inside the classroom, at NASP events, and in other collaborative projects. I am open about my work and have shared drafts of this document with them for feedback.

first to have them in Grand Entry (Gonzales 2018). I've noticed it is less common to see them in the morning Grand Entry since many arrive just before their practice during the evening dinner break.

Now at the center of my powwow alliance studies model, I "explore negotiations of access to music and intellectual property issues, not just in legal terms, but also in terms of community custom and value" (Diamond 2007, 172). This is the most complex part of the model. While the powwow space is intertribal and the incorporation of Danza hints at a shift towards Native American unity, there are still protective sentiments from the American Indian Movement that fail to recognize non-U.S. Native peoples.

Navigating these contradictions has been confusing, fortunately, I am able to ask and work through these questions with my friends and interlocutors. As Cuauhtémoc shares their perspective on Danza in the powwow, we see some tensions regarding community custom and value between the two cultural worlds. Is Danza invited to perform during the dinner break as entertainment or as a gesture of sharing this time and space?

Jessica: *What are your thoughts on Danza Azteca in the powwow space?*

Cuauhtémoc: *[thinks about it for a moment] Um. The powwow is strange. It's a fake fucking event. It doesn't make a lot of sense. Native Americans put on the drags of other tribes and dance with other dancers in a competition to see who's the best. Jingle dress Dance is a medicine dance from the Ojibwe people. The Jingle dress dance is supposed to only be danced in times of need of medicine, to purify the space and the person who is ill. It was exploited and then put into the powwow and now it's a competition dance. So if you're Mescalero Apache and you're a girl or you know, two-spirit, and you're gonna wanna put on a jingle dress, you're putting on the drags of somebody of another culture, Ojibwe. And you're dancing to songs that are not in the languages that you speak. And so it's all just a bunch of fake Indians, doing fake Indian shit.*

Jessica: *Wow.*

Cuauhtémoc: *I want to say that. Let me just be clear with that one because that's how I feel. I feel like it just a bunch of fakeness that no one is openly acknowledges. I do, but what, but what does that fakeness mean?...But anyways. Um, what fakeness provides is an opportunity for exchange, for innovation, for trying things on, failing and you know,*

succeeding sometimes. The powwow provides this space where we can try things out. I think Danza Azteca is about trying to integrate Mexico and United States and Indigenous people together. Whether it's been successful or not is up to people to answer. I don't think so. Not yet. But I think that we who are Aztec Dancers will still try. And I think that's good.

Jessica: *Wow.*

Cuauhtémoc: *I think. Yeah, because people don't. There's plenty that can be said about it. People don't want the Aztec, don't think they are Native Americans. There are people that don't think Native Americans are real Native Americans. It's all a bunch of shade out there. Aztec dance is usually a spiritual ceremonial dance. The powwow isn't about that. It doesn't have that spiritual ceremonial dancing. Not really. It's all for competition, other than the Gourd dance. And, you know, it's not traditional at a powwow have those kind of like ceremonial dances. That's why a lot of Native Americans do not participate with powwow...Aztec dance is ceremonial in that, you'll even watch it, they open up the space and they have their own prayer circle inside the circle that's already been blessed. And is already part of the prayer. So Aztec dancers will go into a space and we do that, and for a long time that was seen as disrespectful. They will also have their Palabra outside of the circle, a meeting to talk how the dancing went, outside. And that's very traditional for Aztec dancers to have palabra, it's really important.*

Jessica: *What is that?*

Cuauhtémoc: *Just the word, just means a talk. Oh it's just like everybody just talks. Just a little talk, you know, how'd it go? It's the time to voice what cannot be voiced in ceremony because Danza Azteca is not talked. It's danced; it's a prayer that's danced. So when you're in ceremonia you're not talking, you're not shooting the shit. You're dancing with intent. So that Palabra provides a time for us to talk, but because it's its own circle inside of a powwow arena, or larger powwow area, it's often seen as shade or disrespect to the powwow because 'why you gotta to have like an organized personal conversation time that doesn't include anybody else?' ...Yeah, I think that it's hard to understand each other...in our ways and our practices but the powwow still invites Native Aztec Dancers, so you know, so there is a usefulness to it, but we just have to get used to each other and are different.*

Jessica: *Yeah, the powwow or UCR's group, they were saying like, 'oh, please give us a time like afterwards to have that circle'. That was the first time I've noticed that you do that. And that's unfortunate people assume disrespect because here at least UCR, like we know about what they do and so we save food. But at San Diego, like by the time they were done with their Palabra and they were a smaller group, like the food was gone and the committee didn't care.*

Cuauhtémoc: *That's often what happens. That's a good observation because that's often what happens. We're always put in the dinner hour. The Aztec Dancers are always put in the dinner hour. We're doing the entertaining.*

Jessica: *Oh. [I grimace] you think--*

Cuauhtémoc: *Oh, I shouldn't have, well I gotta be honest. Sometimes we're staged like that. And you know, that's really shady. But that's the truth. They don't see us as a necessary part of the powwow... Um, and they don't feed us and they don't pay us and*

that's always a blessing when they do...It's hard because there's different priorities and how we do things. Yeah. And often I don't get fed. I hate that. But that's part of life...uh, why do I do it? Um, I've always been doing it since I was five. That's one answer. Um, the more complex answer is I look really sexy and I'm trying to get a man, so the more I dance, the more opportunities I get to do men. That is a truth. The other one is I have to dance because dance is not material. I can't just make a dance and then give it away and then it is preserved in a museum somewhere. The answer is we dance so that there is dance. Perhaps one of the most annoying thing about Dance studies and dancing in general is that dance-- We dance for it to exist. Physics exists whether you like it or fucking not, paintings exist before, or like after the painter is dead, but a person's dancing dies with them. So you better be dancing as much as your fucking can, so that people can dance with you. Because once you're gone, so is your dance. It's important for me to dance because if I don't dance and the children don't see dancers and they can't learn from us. The elders can't see the future, or through us, and the community can't come together to celebrate dancing. It's an immense responsibility...

Jessica: What do we miss at the powwow? Like what is not seen? What does Danza not do at the powwow that normally takes place?

Cuauhtémoc: Well for one, what you don't see is layers and circles that will happen in ceremony, but you won't really see it at the powwow really. Layers of circles because of, well one just space arrangement, but two, there's a ranking order. The closer you get to the center of the circle in a Aztec ceremony is a higher ranking you have in the community. Only the leaders can be in the central circle and I'm one of the leaders of the community, so I'm put into the central circle without question...First they'll offer, they'll tell you, then they'll drag you...The reason is because the center of the circle is most powerful and that's where everybody can see and people on the outside need to learn, so ceremony is a good time to learn and the leaders of the community know what to do...It's pedagogical. It's also respectful, but there's also higher responsibility, right? You can't just be there and just be chilling because you will be told by other people in the same circles as you, or the head, the Sargento, the people keeping and maintaining the circles, go 'homie you're in the middle circle, you gotta to step up your dancing'. You just can't be on the inside circle being like, 'I'm just getting the bare minimum'. Because then they're going to get Gram over here with her seventy-nine year old ass and she's gonna out dance you. And that's what going the fuck on. You miss that. You miss larger palabras, you miss the blessing of the space, the constructing of these spaces. Uh, you'd miss the creation of altars, and what you miss is the larger amount of roots and teachers and families that are in it. They create their own ways of doing things that allow for the Danza ceremony to be complex. You also miss the ceremonial purpose. In ceremony, every ceremony is different because you're doing this as some kinda of prayer for something in the world, whether it be death or water or fire or whatever. You're doing, you're celebrating, you're praying for something...The best way we can. I also hear most Danza Azteca danzantes say it's an exhibition, it's a sharing. It's what we do. I like that idea. It's not everything, it's a snippet of what we do, just enough, nothing too intense.

Traditional, more community-based powwows, may continue exclusionary sentiments that deny access to Danza groups, however, in the last decade powwows like UCR's, have welcomed danzantes in both Grand Entry and Intertribal songs. Following Cuauhtémoc's productive dialogue, I see powwows as powerful spaces for reconciliation and coexistence between local Native American communities. They may not agree on who belongs or protocol, however, I've personally witnessed how incorporating Danza at powwows inspires students to go back and learn their roots. Ultimately, our main goal as a powwow committee is to support Native American education and survivance. Over time, regional practices become integrated and part of the local powwow traditions. I hope to see more "*danza* powwows" like the first ever in San Marcos, Texas; where danzantes compete in their own exhibition dances (Tlakatekatl 2017). In this way, they are not perceived as dinner entertainment, but recognized and rewarded like any other competitive dancer in the powwow circuit.

Conclusion and Further Research

In conclusion, my work exploring how student-organized powwows at UCD, UCR, and UCSD, are decolonizing spaces for teaching and learning about Native American identities is intriguing, extremely rewarding, yet challenging. As I am investigating myself, my own fears, various communities, ideas of Xicanx indigeneity, I also practice decolonial methodologies. I am still developing my decolonial approach, though this research has highlighted how collaborative projects with and for community may produce more attentive and engaged ethnographies. With the benefit of more

collaborators, specifically female voices, future studies could make additional interventions on issues of gender and the effects of heteropatric norms in the powwow space. Let me reiterate that this is but one narrative and that not all Xicanxs may choose to identify themselves as Native.

On social media, I see images and memes that attempt to close the educational gap that leaves Native Americans in the past and Mexicans as outsiders. Adelita Serena, a Danza dancer from the Sacramento area, informed me in a phone interview that she is famous for a meme that gets passed around on Xicanx and other Mexican Indigenous pages. This image includes her and Larry Yazzie (Misquaquee), part of the Native Pride Dancers who have a very global view of indigeneity. After seeing her group perform in powwows, he reached out to her and suggested they take photos together as a gesture of unity between the South and North. Standing in their respective regalia (she a danzante and he a fancy dancer) in the middle of a field, Yazzie's hand rests on her shoulder, and they are both placed under a phrase in black font: "When the Condor of the south flies with the Eagle of the north, a new day for the Earth will awaken! -Inca prophecy" There is no such thing as an Incan prophecy, but this meme (and all its variations) demonstrate particular imagined relations between Native peoples across geopolitical borders. As I continue this research into my dissertation, I would like to explore images like this one and listen to the reactions and responses from interlocuters in the powwow space. Additionally, as I join a local Danza group, I hope to get a better understanding of this phenomenon from a danzante perspective.

I acknowledge that an approach focused on relationality is hardly new to many contemporary ethnomusicologists who specialize in process, agency, and intersectionality; nor to theorists of diaspora who explore transnational flows and systems that rapidly circulate culture in a globalized world. However, as I have demonstrated, an alliance studies approach to examining Danza in the powwow helps us better understand Xicanx indigeneity and connections to Native Americanness. By attending to embodied Indigenous knowledge and the multiplicity/fluidity of identity and community I have demonstrated how powwows are decolonial spaces for reconciliation, healing, and coexistence between local Native American communities. Ultimately, I frame my study within the ongoing ethnomusicological project of decolonization, with a focus on developing and furthering community programs that promote Indigenous self-determination in the university.

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Interviews

I title these extended interviews as productive dialogues with my interlocuters because I interacted with them as if it were any of the other casual conversations we have shared. While some questions were prepared, I let them guide conversations in a way that produced more of a dialogue than the usual interview.

Gonzales, Joshua. 2018. A Productive Dialogue with Josh Gonzales. Interview by Jessica M. Gutierrez Masini. Riverside, CA. January 26, 2018. In person.

Omé Lauren, Prince Dante. 2018. A Productive Dialogue with Prince Dante Omé Lauren. Interview by Jessica M. Gutierrez Masini. Riverside, CA. June 4, 2018. In person.