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**BUILDING ROOTS AND WINGS: LATINA WOMEN'S DAILY  
RESISTANCE AND FREEDOM DREAMS**

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

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

PSYCHOLOGY

With emphases in FEMINIST STUDIES,  
CRITICAL RACE AND ETHNIC STUDIES

by

**Christine E. Rosales**

September 2020

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**Quentin Williams**

Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

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## ABSTRACT

### BUILDING ROOTS AND WINGS: LATINA WOMEN'S DAILY RESISTANCE AND FREEDOM DREAMS

by

CHRISTINE ELIZABETH ROSALES

This dissertation investigates ten Latina women's daily praxis of resistance against forms of oppression and how their praxis is related to their freedom dreams for social change. Using liberation psychology and decoloniality as guiding paradigms, this study bears witness to Latina women's creation of more liberatory worlds. Participants were recruited through flyers posted in and around Santa Cruz county. Participants were invited to participate in a workshop to share testimonios of their daily life experiences, challenges, hopes and dreams, as well as partake in a series of activities to learn about themselves and others (e.g., letter writing to a loved one). Following the workshops, participants were invited to participate in one-on-one interviews to elaborate on information they shared during the workshop. All participants were invited at the end of the study to participate in a member check event to learn about the preliminary results of the study, provide input, and create a collective zine to share results of the study within the community.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis in conjunction with the Listening Guide. The feedback received during the member check event also guided analysis. Results demonstrated that women's daily praxis of resistance involved healing the

wounds of different forms of racial capitalist settler colonial fragmentation between knowledge of the past, present, and future, bodies (their own, bodies of others, and bodies of land), and communities. Specifically, women in the study: (1) helped their sons to (re)connect with their cultural roots and (re)learn a connection to the earth, (2) worked on healing the relationship between themselves and their bodies through a praxis of radical self-love, which had implications for healing their relationship to the bodies of others and cultivating love for others across difference, and (3) with the help of community, they worked on healing their connections to community and to themselves through the support of chosen family, mutual aid practices, and community pedagogy. Furthermore, women's freedom dreams for social change demonstrated an understanding of the interconnectedness between personal and collective liberation. This dissertation concludes with implications, limitations of this study, and future directions for research.



To the chingonas, lloronas, and gritonas

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My heart flutters to write this- to come to a moment when I can acknowledge that I have written a dissertation to earn a PhD, and hold in this moment everything I went through to get here and everyone who helped me get here, cheered me on, and held my hand. First, however, I must acknowledge that this dissertation was written on the unceded territories of the Esselen and the Amah Mutsun Tribal Bands. Acknowledgement is not enough, but it is a first step in decolonizing efforts.

Next, I would like to acknowledge my family. To my mamá preciosa, Juanita. Thank you for always supporting my school work, offering me your consejos and motivación, and raising me by yourself (I know sometimes it was scary and challenging, but look, I turned out okay). I want to thank my “little” sister Cassie. I appreciate you always cheering me up and reminding me that I’m a “bad bitch.” I remember comforting and holding you when you were little. I never imagined you would end up comforting me and holding me many of the times that I cried in grad school. I’m also thankful to my “dissertation doula” AKA my partner Bob. I am forever grateful to have a feminist, anarchist, anti-racist, gentle, kind, and loving human to support me and my dreams. You heal me everyday.

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día para crear un mundo mejor para usted, sus hijos, y las generaciones que vienen. To the women who participated in this dissertation, this dissertation is in many ways more yours than it is mine. Thank you for trusting me with your stories and being excited about this research project. I hope I captured the beauty of your lives, your dreams, and the efforts you make to create a better world for yourselves, your children, and future generations.

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I'd like to thank my labmates and affiliates of the Community Psychology Research and Action Team (CPRAT). Hafsa Mohamed, Ibette Valle, Stephanie Tam Rosas, Angela Nguyen, David Gordon, S. Sylvane Vaccarino-Ruiz, Daniel Rodriguez-Ramirez, and Miguel Lopezzi. This is what a community looks like. CPRAT is a breathing and humanizing space for me, a space with scholar-activists who are not messing around. Thank you for all your loving support and feedback. I'll dearly miss our meetings; I already have.

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I am grateful to all the scholars and thinkers, living and passed, whose work I cited and helped me think through and develop this dissertation. In line with this, I discovered that the author of one of the most insightful texts for my dissertation, Stephanie Camp, passed away several years ago at a young age. I do not like learning about Women of Color passing away young in their academic careers. Where is the justice in that? Nevertheless, I am grateful for her masterpiece and hope I have effectively stewarded her ideas as I adapted them to a different time, with a different demographic of women, undergoing vastly different circumstances.

Thank you to the agencies that funded this dissertation: The American Association of University Women (AAUW) dissertation year fellowship, The UCSC Research Center for the Americas, the UCSC Blum Center on Poverty, Social Enterprise, and Participatory Governance, and the UCSC Psychology Department. It meant the world to me to be able to carry out this research project in a way that would allow honoring women's voices and labor for their participation.

Finally, but not least, I want to acknowledge that this dissertation was written in the middle of a currently ongoing revolutionary moment, filled with pain, grief, and yet possibility. Earlier this month (June 2020), the body of a Black trans activist Dominique "Rem'mie" Fells, 27 years old was found. On June 5th it would have been Breonna Taylor's 27th birthday, a Black woman who was murdered by police in her sleep in March. On June 12th, Rayshard Brooks, a 27 year old Black man was murdered by police in a Wendy's restaurant parking lot. I have been writing this

dissertation during my 27th year of life. During this time, where countless others have been murdered by police and systemic oppression amidst a global pandemic, I have questioned why I get to live. Why do I get to live to and beyond my 27th birthday but Dominique “Rem’mie” Fells, Breonna Taylor, and Rayshard Brooks did not? I will never let go of this question or this discomfort. I will use every possible moment of my life to dismantle anti-blackness, keep freedom dreaming, and build the world that I know is possible and that we all deserve.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

*Did you hear about the rose that grew from a crack in the concrete?  
Provin nature's laws wrong it learned how to walk without havin' feet  
Funny it seems but by keepin' its dreams  
It learned to breathe fresh air  
Long live the rose that grew from concrete  
When no one else even cared  
No one else even cared...  
The rose that grew from concrete<sup>1</sup>  
(Shakur, 2009)*

We are currently in an imagination battle (brown, 2017, 2019). That is, at this moment it is challenging to imagine our collective liberation and that another world is possible as we continue to watch mother earth plundered and set on fire for profit. Our overall existence, as well as our ability to breathe, becomes more challenging each day. To be sure, systems of domination and their consequences disproportionately affect and are felt most strongly by those at multiple intersections of oppression (e.g., colonized populations, low-income/poor, People of Color<sup>2</sup>, women). These patterns of violence and countless others<sup>3</sup> are examples of

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<sup>1</sup> The rose that grew from concrete is a useful metaphor for thinking about everyday resistance and its emergence within racial capitalist settler colonial contexts where it is challenging to exist and breathe, especially if one is marginalized.

<sup>2</sup> The choice to capitalize “Women of Color,” “Mothers of Color,” “Communities of Color” and “People of Color” is a grammatical move toward social justice and acknowledges that these are political identity formations that signify solidarity with other ethnically/racially marginalized groups (French et al., 2020; Pérez Huber & Cueva, 2012; The Santa Cruz Feminist of Color Collective, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> In the context of the university where I am writing, the high cost of tuition and living expenses is a normalized form of segregation and exclusion, contributing to anti-Blackness (less than 3% of students at UCSC are Black) xenophobia (making it hard for undocumented students to access higher education), along with decline of the physical health and well-being of students unable to keep up with the costs. Simultaneously, the UC is preoccupied with preserving its status as a “world leader in astronomy and astrophysics research” (UC Observatories, 2017) via the planned installation of the Thirty Meter Telescope on native Hawaiian land, an act that is nothing short of genocide (Wheatly, 2019) and an illustration of

metaphysical catastrophe (Maldonado-Torres, 2016), a paradigm of dehumanization, war, breathlessness, and death that can be witnessed at various layers- geopolitical, national, and intersubjective, ranging from extreme violence (e.g., war) to the daily normalized perpetual war on those deemed ‘Other’ (e.g., Black and Brown lives). These metaphysical catastrophes are perpetuated by the logics of racial capitalist settler coloniality (to be explained in depth shortly). With all this happening and more what is to be done? Or perhaps, how can we learn what *ought to be* in order to further our collective liberation (Martín-Baró, 1994)?

According to brown (2017) one of the first steps is to find new ways to exist (i.e., adapt) and imagine otherwise in order to build a world rooted in love and collective liberation. For oppressed groups, liberation requires breaking out of what Freire (1998) calls a “fatalistic determination” of our futures and engage in a politics based in desire that imagines what is possible outside of a capitalist, heteronormative, patriarchal, ableist, and white supremacist system (Kelley, 2002). Indeed, Freire (1998) argues that one of the goals of domination is to inculcate people with the idea that systems of oppression will never change, and therefore, there is no point in exerting energy for social justice efforts. Therefore, having a desire or vision in itself can be viewed as subversive, especially as it contradicts the imagination of the common sense (Martín-Baró, 1994) and logics of domination. For example, brown

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Tuck and Yang’s (2014) assertion that “the right to conquer is intimately connected to the right to know” (p. 224) In other words, the destruction of land and life is perceived worthwhile in order to know the ‘Other’ and acquire information to allow for the further destruction of land and life.



(2017) notes that it is the white supremacist imagination that depicts Black people as dangerous and codified within the zone of not-being human or not being human enough that killed Trayvon Martin, Renisha McBride, Mike Brown and others<sup>4</sup>, an imagination that is “so respected that those who kill, based on an imagined, racialized fear of Black people, are rarely held accountable” (p. 18). The imaginations that undergird white supremacy and other systems of domination function to normalize ongoing metaphysical catastrophes.

Although patterns of metaphysical catastrophes and the imaginations that create them are prevalent, they are also met with patterns of resistance and radical imaginations. Patterns of resistance are part of a long history containing a range of insurgent efforts, such as covert practices at the micro level (e.g., feigning illness to spend more time at home) to social movements to effect change at the macro level (e.g., protests, boycotts). Yet as noted by myself and scholars concerned with liberation, actions at the micro level are not always accepted or perceived by other scholars and society as legitimate forms of resistance (Rosales & Langhout, 2020; Moane, 2000). Such a perception limits our understanding of the diversity of approaches to working toward liberation, neglects to consider the contexts in which oppressed groups, such as People of Color, are fighting for change, and contributes to master narratives (Rosales & Langhout, 2020).

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<sup>4</sup> More recently, the murders of the following Black people are part of our collective consciousness: George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Rayshard Brooks, Tony McDade, Dominique “Rem’mie” Fells, Riah Milton, and Oluwatoyin Salau.

One master narrative of People of Color is that they are docile, accepting of oppression, and unwilling or unable to push back against oppressive social conditions. For example, Latinx<sup>5</sup> people have been viewed as “lazy, unreliable, irresponsible, ready for a party, and very religious” (Martín-Baró, 1994, p. 202). Within the Latinx community, Latina women in particular have been stereotyped as docile, poor women, who have an abundance of children and abuse the U.S. welfare system (Gálvez, 2011). These stereotypes and others that represent People of Color from a deficit perspective reify ideologies that such groups hold fatalistic attitudes about the possibility for social change.

What this master narrative omits is that oppressed people do have aspirations and dreams of the future for themselves and their communities. Furthermore, they work toward these aspirations through day to day calculated actions (Gálvez, 2011). Yet, people’s movements toward these dreams of change are restricted within the “tight spaces” of domination. Tight spaces are constricted spaces created by political domination, where people who are marginalized find it difficult to make any movements against the domination they are experiencing (Cruz 2014; Lugones, 2003), unless they risk punishment, physical injury, or death (Kelley, 2002; Scott, 1990). Oppressive social conditions can limit the power that marginalized social groups have to effect change, or the “network of boundaries that delimit, for all, the field of what is socially possible” (Hayward, 2000, p. 3). Thus, the greater the

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<sup>5</sup> The “x” signifies a political stance that acknowledges ethnicity and gender exist on a spectrum and are not binaries (Garcia, 2017).

political domination, the tighter the spaces to operate against oppression. These covert, under-the-radar movements in tight spaces against oppression can be understood as everyday forms of resistance, also known as the *hidden transcript* (Scott, 1990) or *infrapolitics* (Kelley, 1993). These movements, which can be done within one's own home (Camp, 2004; Kelley, 1993; Ward, 1996) or body (Cruz, 2014; Saavedra & Nymark, 2008) create "breathing spaces" (Cruz, 2016) amidst tight spaces of oppression. Given the dearth of literature of Latina women's everyday resistance, this dissertation addresses the following questions.

1.) How are the home/home community (i.e., neighborhood) and the body sites of everyday resistance as perceived by Latina women against tight spaces of oppression?

a.) How do daily activities function to reclaim space and time?

2.) How are these everyday forms of resistance connected to aspirations for the future and historical memory of the past (both individual and collective)?

In this dissertation I will describe the concept of *racial capitalist settler coloniality* that normalizes metaphysical catastrophe and limits how we move through time and space and imagine what is possible. Then, I will describe the paradigm of decoloniality and liberation psychology as the antidote to racial capitalist settler coloniality and the lens that guides the dissertation. Following, I will outline what everyday resistance is, what we know about it, and where we still have room to develop understanding. I conclude this chapter with an explanation of ways to

improve studying everyday forms of resistance as enacted by Women of Color and theoretical frameworks that I utilized.

### **Racial Capitalist Settler Coloniality**

The violence and suffering that is being witnessed and experienced in the United States as well as globally can be described as a metaphysical catastrophe, because it transforms “the meaning and relation of basic areas of thinking and being, particularly the self and the other, along with temporality and spatiality, among other key concepts in the basic infrastructure that constitutes our human world.” (Maldonado Torres, 2016, p. 11). In other words, the way we think about ourselves and others is influenced by our structures, and the potential for human relations is reduced to one of conquest, war, and colonialism. Metaphysical catastrophes are embedded within and inform racial capitalism and settler coloniality, two paradigms that are about war and wealth extraction.

Colonialism, which can be defined as “the systematic domination of one territory by another” (Moane, 2011, p. 36), can manifest in various modes (e.g., settler colonialism, external colonialism, internal colonialism) (Tuck & Yang, 2012). External colonialism describes the expropriation of native resources in order to generate profit for the colonizer (e.g., extraction of oil), and internal colonialism describes the biological and geopolitical management of people, land, and nature with the intent to keep these entities segregated, surveilled, and disinvested (e.g., through prisons, policing, schooling; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Settler colonialism, where the

colonizer has settled on the land, operates simultaneously through internal and external colonialism, and most accurately describes colonialism within the U.S. context (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Colonialism uses technologies of war and force to accomplish its goals of wealth extraction. The examples described previously (e.g., policing, prisons, expropriation of native resources) can be located under at least one of the six modes of control present under colonialism: fragmentation of communities, control of sexuality, cultural control, economic exploitation, violence, and political exclusion. (Moane, 2003; 2011)

Colonialism is not just a practice and set of technologies, but also a way of thinking, that is, coloniality. Coloniality has implications for how we study and understand our world, how we move through time and space, and our structures and culture. These are the coloniality of knowledge, coloniality of being, and the coloniality of power, respectively (Maldonado-Torres, 2016). A key element that connects each of these types of coloniality is the subject, in particular the oppressed and colonized, who are constructed as ones who cannot know/produce knowledge, cannot exist (i.e., is relegated to the zone of not-being human), and have nothing to give (including love). Coloniality also “creates the line between human and non-human, between the world where perpetual peace is considered a possibility and the world that is defined as perpetual or endless war” (Maldonado-Torres, 2016, p. 20). Thus, under coloniality, those who are codified within certain degrees of less-than-human or not human enough are relegated to an endless hell where there is

no possibility for liberation or love to build a different world. At least, this is what the logic of coloniality would have one believe.

These logics also structure racial capitalism. Indeed, capitalism is inextricably linked to colonialism, and all capitalism is racial capitalism (Melamed, 2015; Robinson, 1983). In other words, the construction of race is interwoven into our systems and structures as a mechanism to benefit the financial asset owning classes (who typically embody whiteness). Without the construction of a racialized and inferiorized Other, the profit and wealth generated from capitalism and colonialism could not be justified. Furthermore, to foment justification for the use of war, extraction, and plunder, these ideologies designate degrees of humaneness, who is more human and therefore more worthy of life, are required.

For example, the ideologies of individualism, democracy, and nationalism are all premised on economic sovereignty, or “I spend therefore I am.” Those who cannot accumulate wealth and/or are unable to spend it (i.e., the poor and dispossessed) are presumed lazy and incapable, which helps to justify social and economic inequalities (Melamed, 2015). For example, it is well known that in the United States stereotypes of laziness tend to be attributed to People of Color, especially Black people, whereas industriousness is often attributed to white people. Or as mentioned before, there is the stereotype that Latina women abuse the welfare system by having many children. The logic follows that those who are oppressed, made killable or disposable, deserved their fate, and those who are successful and wealthy worked hard and earned what

they had. Furthermore, this logic normalizes metaphysical catastrophes and functions to hide or minimize that “capital comes into the world dripping from head to toe, from every pore, with blood” (Marx, 2011, cited by Melamed, 2015, p. 82).

In addition, through the ideologies of individualism, democracy, and multiculturalism<sup>6</sup>, racial capitalism facilitates an amnesia or forgetfulness of our interconnections with one another. Specifically, racial capitalism is a technology of partition, racism, and antirelationality (Gilmore, 2002, 2012; Martín-Baró, 1994; Melamed, 2015). Respectively, these technologies control how people relate to one another (i.e. partition), creates distinctions among humans (i.e., racism), and structures relationships between people to sustain neoliberal democratic capitalism (i.e., antirelationality). To move from such “nodes of social separateness” (Melamed, 2015, p. 78) to “nodes of love and understanding” (Maldonado-Torres, 2016, p. 21), requires betraying the rationale of racial capitalist settler coloniality. One such form of love and understanding is *vincularidad* (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018), a concept developed by Andean Indigenous thinkers that refers to an awareness of our relationality and interconnectedness with all living beings on the planet. Relatedly,

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<sup>6</sup> Melamed (2015) writes that individualism and democracy differentiate individuals based on their ability to accumulate wealth and profit, where multiculturalism, “minoritizes, homogenizes, and constitutes groups as separate through single (or serial) axes of recognition (or oppression), repels accountability to ongoing settler colonialism, and uses identitarianism to obscure shifting differentials of power and unstable power relations” (Melamed, 2015, p. 79). Thus, the concept of multiculturalism stifles the possibility of solidarity by obscuring how experiences of oppression among different historically marginalized groups (e.g., Black, Indigenous, Latinx) are interconnected, and furthermore how we have a responsibility to end our complicity in one another’s oppression, as in the case of complicity in settler colonialism.

citing indigenous decolonization movements, Melamed (2015) notes the presence of the decolonial praxis called “all my relations,” which works *for* “the well-being of the widest conceivable collective (including nonhuman beings in addition to land) interconnected through nonlinear space and time” (Melamed, 2015, p. 84). In order to work *for* collective liberation and well-being, our ideas of what is possible, as well as how we can be, think, and exist in the world also needs to be re-examined.

### **Paradigm: The Decolonial *For* and Liberation *For***

#### **Decoloniality**

To challenge racial capitalist settler coloniality, the research conducted for this dissertation was analyzed and understood from the paradigm of decoloniality and liberation psychology. If coloniality is a way of thinking that shapes being, knowledge, and power and normalizes metaphysical catastrophe, then decoloniality refers to ways of thinking and being in the world that rehumanizes the world, nature, and produces “counter-discourses, counter-knowledges, counter-creative acts, and counter-practices that seek to dismantle coloniality and open up multiple other forms of being in the world” (Maldonado-Torres, 2016, p. 10). Decoloniality requires that we de-link from colonial ways of knowing (epistemic), being (political), and learning/teaching (pedagogical) in this world, as well as what our world is made up of and what is important (ontology), in order to link to liberation.

From a decolonial paradigm, moves toward decoloniality are collective projects that involve the oppressed emerging as writers, thinkers, questioners,



creators, and agents of social change (Maldonado-Torres, 2016). These actions are understood as being guided by a love and desire for social change and what Mignolo and Walsh (2018)<sup>7</sup> name as the *decolonial for*, that is, for “the creation, and cultivation of modes of life, existence, being, and thought otherwise” (p. 18). Especially relevant to this dissertation is that the *decolonial for* entails re-existence, a more nuanced understanding of resistance, that can be understood as “the redefining and re-signifying of life in conditions of dignity” (p. 3).

Further, inextricably tied to the *decolonial for* is the *decolonial how*, or praxis, the thought-action-reflections that work toward cultivating the *decolonial for*. Praxis, as theorized by Freire (1970, 1998), gives shape to efforts to create a more socially just world. Praxis is a process that can result in *de-ideologization*, the rejection of dominant ideologies that justify social injustices, and *conscientización*, a critical awareness of social and historical conditions that involves action (Martín-Baró, 1994; Montero, 2009; Freire, 1998). The main takeaway is that although it is important to imagine a decolonized future, these imaginings cannot become reality without lived experience and embodiment. Theory is doing and doing is thinking, thus, the *decolonial for* must be guided by *Theory in the Flesh* (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 2015), where embodied experience and theory cannot be separated.

### **Liberation Psychology**

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<sup>7</sup> It is interesting to note that Mignolo and Walsh (2018) reject decoloniality as a paradigm and understand it rather as “a way, option, standpoint, analytic, project, practice, and praxis” (p. 5).

The aims of decoloniality are consistent with the aims of liberation psychology. Liberation psychology is a paradigm and approach for doing research in psychology that emphasizes a praxis of commitment (Martín-Baró, 1994), also written elsewhere as faithful witnessing (Cruz, 2011; Lugones, 2003), where the researcher sees social problems with and from the perspectives of people in oppressed positions, allowing for the emergence of counter-knowledges. There are three urgent tasks for the liberation psychologist: the recovery of historical memory, de-ideologization of the common sense, and identifying the virtues of people located within limit situations.

The recovery of historical memory asserts that psychology must be historical in that it does not separate the people under study from their social contexts and historical experiences. For example, for the pioneer of liberation psychology, Ignacio Martín-Baró, it was important that the people of El Salvador understand that their experiences of war and violence were part of legacies of structural oppression, rather than normal and individualized experiences. Creating the illusion of stagnation in time, an ahistorical approach suggests that there is no before or after, making it difficult for people to learn from their experiences, recuperate the roots of their identity, and imagine alternatives to the current social order (Martín-Baró, 1994). Indeed, an ahistorical approach contributes to a sense of fatalistic determination (Freire, 1998) or fatalism (Martín-Baró, 1994), which is the sense that nothing will ever change.

The second urgent task for a liberation psychologist is to de-ideologize the common sense and discern the lies from the truth. This process entails collecting data on people's experiences and providing the data for people to analyze and verify its accuracy. This process is important for discerning if the lens through which the world is interpreted is through the eyes of the oppressor and dominant ideologies. For example, Martín-Baró used public opinion polls to discern if government claims were consistent with people's experiences. He found that contrary to government claims, women were being sexually assaulted in the countryside. These polls allowed people to see for themselves whether the common sense was valid.

And finally, the third urgent task involves identifying and exploring the virtues of people located in limit situations (Martín-Baró, 1994), or tight spaces of oppression (Cruz 2014; Lugones, 2003). Martín-Baró identified the virtues that emerged within limit situations as unquantifiable realities that help people survive oppression and care for one another, such as commitment, solidarity, hope, and courage (Martín-Baró, 1994). One of the virtues Martín-Baró highlighted was people's faith in the human capacity to change the world.

Liberation psychology, like decoloniality, has a direction. In Martín-Baró's essays, *Writings for a Liberation Psychology*, the purpose of liberation psychology is *for* the people, the poor and dispossessed people of El Salvador, and *for* psychology to move away from the dominant western perspective that embraces an individualistic view of the Other (Martín-Baró, 1994). For example, Baró critiques contemporary

capitalism's individualistic and dehumanizing perspective on the poor or unemployed and its promotion of antirrelationality via dismantling any sense of community and promoting passive consumption. Similarly, both decoloniality and liberation psychology underline the importance of praxis, embodied theory-reflection-action as a way to work towards liberation.

In summary, liberation psychology and decoloniality have implications for research approaches in psychology, especially for studying oppression as well as the resistance enacted by historically marginalized groups. Both liberation psychology and decoloniality emphasize using knowledge production to rehumanize the world by centering oppressed people's experiences and virtues, challenging dominant ideologies that fracture people from one another and their contexts, and working *for* personal and collective liberation. The following section describes the praxis of everyday resistance as a way that people in tight spaces have enacted re-existence.

### **Everyday Resistance**

Everyday resistance can be defined as "how people act in their everyday lives in ways that might undermine power" (Vinthagen & Johansson, 2012, p. 1). Resistance in this form can look like pilfering from work (Scott, 1990) or slowing down labor and production (Davis, 1971). Such actions undermine power because they push against and stretch the boundaries that are imposed by power. In both examples, the worker takes for themselves resources and time that they are expected

to devote to production, the benefits of which are usually enjoyed by people in the financial asset owning class.

Some of the key characteristics of everyday resistance are that it: (1) is an oppositional activity that is entangled with power, (2) intersects with other forms of power and subordination, (3) is designed to undermine power, (4) is not contingent on the actor having a political consciousness for their actions to count as resistance, and (5) is neither pure (i.e., can still uphold systems of oppression in other ways) nor separate from power (Vinthagen & Johansson, 2013). Although everyday resistance can inform organized political movements (Kelley, 1993), everyday resistance is about undermining power in such a way that it is more about talking back to unjust power relations and saying “no” to the logics of domination (e.g., neoliberalism, whiteness), than about attempting to directly alter structures of power. In line with this, in regards to her research with resistance by queer Latinx youth, Cruz (2016) wrote, “Resistance in these instances is not about mediating the life circumstances of queer Latino youth, nor is it about the destruction of a system of oppression. It is the small deviation from the logic of oppression, however small and imperceptible these acts may be” (Cruz, 2016, p. 293). This makes sense given the tight spaces in which everyday resistance tends to operate.

Everyday resistance can take place individually or collectively. Individual people can engage in daily acts that undermine power (e.g., poaching, pilfering, tax evasion), and groups of people can also share collectively by engaging in or

supporting everyday resistance. For example, in the Jim Crow South, Black women house workers would resist against the mistreatment they received from their employers by quitting or threatening to quit right before important social affairs were to be hosted at the house. The success of this strategy depended on the collective refusal of other Black house workers to fill in for her (Kelley, 1993). Thus, “collective” in this sense is different from collective action in that its message is not clear or visible to an outsider’s perspective. This is what is called the *hidden transcript*, which includes speech acts and a range of practices that are elaborated in private, but exclude specified others, such as members of privileged groups (Scott, 1990). Everyday resistance is often normalized in the lives of actors, and people who carry out such practices may not label their own actions as “resistance.” A meaningful contribution in studying everyday resistance is that it challenges master narratives of historically marginalized groups’ docility and passivity in the face of oppression.

Several insights are revealed through the empirical study of everyday resistance, including that these actions: (1) demonstrate people’s efforts to undermine power in ways that are most accessible in tight spaces (e.g., Rios, 2012), (2) illuminate agency, both at the individual and collective level (Cruz, 2011; Langhout, 2005) and (3) demonstrate how people imagine alternatives and possibilities for futures that are not determined by the status quo (e.g., Camp, 2004; Collins, 1998; Kelley, 2002; Ward, 1996). Additionally, everyday resistance can reveal decolonial praxis, ways of existing, understanding, and seeing the world that challenge

coloniality. Understanding the actions that people in historically marginalized positions take through an everyday resistance lens challenges what could otherwise be interpreted as self-defeating behavior (e.g., Fine et al., 2014; Solórzano & Bernal, 2001), criminal activity (Rios, 2012; Scott et al., 2014), or disturbances (e.g., Rubin, 1996; Solórzano, & Bernal, 2001).

In addition to challenging master narratives, it is important to note that the majority of these empirical works are primarily found outside the field of psychology (e.g., sociology, education) and not always described or labeled as “everyday resistance.” In other words, finding empirical research from the framework of everyday resistance is limited, especially in psychology. Additionally, Women of Color are rarely the primary focus of everyday resistance inquiry. Perhaps the most we know about the everyday resistance of Women of Color in the U.S. is from archival research focusing on Black women’s resistance in the antebellum south (e.g., Camp, 2004; Davis; 1971). For example, these works demonstrate that enslaved women resisted through sites (e.g., home, the body) and dimensions (space, time) that were most accessible, such as slowing down the production of labor (Davis, 1971) or dressing up and dancing at parties to reclaim their bodies (Camp, 2004). Yet, there are limitations to our current understanding.

### **Limitations to our Current Understanding**

There are major limitations in the current body of empirical research and approaches to studying everyday forms of resistance in the social sciences and in

social psychology. First, among the literature on resistance there is a privileging of overt and visible forms of resistance. Conceptualizing resistance is a contentious issue (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004). “Resistance” is a word that is used often across social science literature, but rarely do researchers mean the same thing when they use the word “resistance,” and there is much disagreement with regards to what counts as resistance. The most readily recognized form of resistance is overt resistance, such as marches and protests that are recognized by targets, observers, and are intentional by actors (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004). Yet, privileging overt resistance minimizes the day to day actions of oppressed groups who cannot risk being visible. Understanding the hidden forms of everyday resistance enacted among marginalized groups in *tight spaces* as legitimate resistance is a political stance, part of the praxis of commitment and faithful witnessing. This political stance is to show up for oppressed communities who cannot (without risk) shape the boundaries and conditions of their experience to enable their participation in visible, explicitly political, collective forms of resistance. Failing to take this stance may result in reifying deficit narratives of marginalized people as passive, silent, and lacking aspirations for a different future, which not accidentally aligns with the colonial gaze of marginalized groups (Moane, 2011).

Second, the study of marginalized social groups tends to be damage-centered (Tuck, 2009), an approach where a marginalized community is depicted as singularly oppressed and/or damaged. Scholars in social psychology are beginning to note the



way psychology as a field has problematically focused primarily on studying oppression (Haslam & Reicher, 2012), the ways that people conform or submit to authority (Fine et al., 2014), and the way psychology operates under a framework that marginalized groups can only at best survive oppression (Leach & Livingstone, 2015). Scholars' preoccupation with a psychology of oppression and domination can communicate to audiences that people who suffer under oppression do not resist (Haslam & Reicher, 2012). Leach and Livingstone (2015) advocate for moving toward a psychology of resistance whereby scholars emphasize understanding "the myriad ways in which the disadvantaged assert their own view of themselves and the world despite dominant pressures to accept societal messages to the contrary" (p. 616).

Third, there is a lack of theory development, especially from a decolonial and liberation psychology paradigm, to guide the study of everyday resistance. Although a psychinfo search reveals a few articles in psychology on "everyday resistance" these articles do not include any social psychological theories that predict everyday forms of resistance or explain their dialectical relationship with collective action. There is, however, a multitude of theories of collective action at the individual level that focus on personality characteristics (e.g., locus of control, political efficacy, individualist-collectivist orientation), individual decision-making (e.g., expectancy value models, theory of reasoned action), and individual participation (e.g., theory of consensus mobilization). Group level theories of collective action (e.g., relative

deprivation theory, social identity theory), appear to be more useful to social psychologists who are interested in moving away from individualistic approaches and toward an understanding of how social hierarchies and structures influence people toward actions that will benefit their social group(s) and not just themselves (i.e., collective action; Berman & Wittig, 2004; Hurtado & Gurin, 2004; Kelly & Breinlinger, 1996; Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994). Yet, these current social psychological models fall short in theorizing everyday forms of resistance.

Fourth, research on resistance tends to be masculinized or viewed as an action carried out by mostly men. We know very little about how Women of Color, particularly Latina women engage in day to day forms of resistance. Except for one recent book in psychology that explores the everyday resistance of women in India (Chaudhary et al., 2017) there is still a gap in understanding the everyday resistance of Latina women in the U.S. To date, the most extensive work on Women of Color and their engagement in everyday resistance has been focused on the previously mentioned archival research of Black women in the antebellum south (e.g., Camp 2004; Davis, 1971). Included in the dearth of understanding Women of Color resistance are repertoires of resistance, which are the “contextual and situational bound combinations of everyday resistance, and its complex and dynamic character—all in relation to power” (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016, p. 419). How Latina women resist in a given context and how they reclaim space and time remain under-examined.

Lastly, the study of everyday resistance is often researcher-centered in that the results are based on the interpretations of the researcher rather than the interpretation of the participants. Rubin (1996) argues that scholars of everyday resistance do not do enough to contextualize everyday forms of resistance, investigate possible alternative causes of the action, and explore what these actions mean for people who are enacting them. He takes note that scholars are not allowing the subjects of their study to articulate their interpretations of their own actions. Externally defined resistance (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004), in which scholars are identifying actions as resistance without the subjects or targets identifying them as such, is problematic because it ignores people's own understanding of their day to day actions. This point is serious to consider if one is to examine everyday forms of resistance and take a political stance to be in solidarity with oppressed groups.

In summation, the study of Latina women's everyday resistance remains largely under- examined and undertheorized. Most of the issues discussed, namely the neglect of everyday resistance as a legitimate form of resistance, the tendency for research to be damage-centered, the lack of theory development, the masculinization of resistance, and the tendency to invoke the sole interpretation of the researcher, illustrates a lack of solidarity and witnessing from the perspectives of participants. Approaches to improving and expanding the study of everyday resistance will be discussed in the next section.

### **Improving and Expanding the Study of Everyday Resistance**

To unearth the creative responses by Women of Color in tight spaces of oppression and improve the study of resistance there must be a continuation and expansion of the study of Women of Color in performing everyday acts of resistance, especially of Latina women since there is minimal scholarship on their resistance. Additionally, given the shortcomings of previous approaches to studying everyday resistance there must also be a shift in study approaches. This section will discuss how exploring sites and dimensions of resistance, as well as aspirations (i.e., freedom dreams), enacted by Women of Color is crucial for expanding our knowledge base. Next, this section will discuss how the study of everyday resistance can be improved through guidance by frameworks that build solidarity with Women of Color and allow for their voices, embodied experiences, and desires to be centered.

***Exploring the Sites, Dimensions, and Freedom Dreams of Women of Color Resistance***

**Sites of resistance.** In addition to prioritizing the study of everyday resistance among Women of Color, there also needs to be an examination of the particular sites and strategies of resistance. Two sites of everyday resistance, especially by women, noted in the literature are the home/home community (Camp, 2004; Ward, 1996; Kelley, 1993) and the body (Camp, 2004; Cruz, 2014). For example, the home can be a site of resistance whereby mothers teach their children resistance to dominant ideologies (e.g., anti-slavery ideology) and decorate the inside of their homes with symbols of their anti-oppression hopes and desires (e.g., amalgamation prints; Camp,

2004). Indeed, with respect to Black families, Kelley (1993) suggests that households hold the key to understanding episodes of Black working-class resistance where political ideologies are formed and reproduced. Similarly, Ward (1996) suggests that the home is the primary site of resistance where resistance strategies are learned. The body can be a site of resistance by using it for pleasure rather than labor (e.g., relaxing, dressing up in home-made dresses<sup>8</sup>, dancing, or other leisure activities; Camp; 2004) or to openly embrace one's sexuality and/or gender identity that does not fall under the hegemonic confines of heteronormativity and cisgender norms (Cruz, 2014).

**Dimensions of resistance.** As demonstrated from some of these examples, two major dimensions of everyday resistance are the reclamation of space and time (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016; Maldonado-Torres, 2016). Power under a settler colonial context seeks to control people's movement through space (e.g., where certain bodies are allowed or not allowed to exist) and time (e.g., how much time people spend working as opposed to taking care of their personal needs). Some of the noted ways in which the movement of historically marginalized bodies are displaced and/or coerced into segregated spaces are through border imperialist practices (Walia, 2013; e.g., militarized zones, gentrification), and practices that reify the color line

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<sup>8</sup> Enslaved people were primarily given clothes to work that were often crude and inconveniently designed (e.g., not warm enough for winter months), symbolizing their subjugated status. To reclaim their bodies, femininity, and time for leisure, some women created their own special clothing and accessories, which were more colorful and fashionable than their work clothes.

(Du Bois 1903, 1999; Vélez & Solórzano, 2017; e.g., predominantly white neighborhoods). These practices are created and perpetuated through neoliberal, racist, and settler colonial logics that revere those who embody whiteness, property ownership, and the flow of capital (Walia, 2013).

Borders, walls, and barriers (physical or institutional) that restrict movement in space and time are repressive, yet also productive of strategies of resistance that aim to reclaim space and time (Annamma et al., 2017; Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016). These sites of resistance can be external- such as the rival geographies (Camp, 2004) of the antebellum period where people escaped to meet with family or enjoy celebrations, and internal- as described in a study where an international student and Woman of Color carved out space in her mind to be who she wanted to be since she did not feel safe to openly express herself (Katsiaficas et al., 2011). Further, as demonstrated from the literature review on everyday resistance, the body and the home/home community are accessible sites of resistance where space and time are reclaimed. Such everyday actions can lead to movement from “tight spaces” to “breathing spaces” (Cruz, 2016) and help “circulate the air” (Maldonado-Torres, 2016) in contexts where people feel restricted and choked by oppression.

**Freedom dreaming.** Finally, it is important to examine how everyday acts of resistance are deeply connected with dreams and aspirations of the future as well as a historical memory of the past. Described as a continual process where one constantly strives for social change, visions for freedom, or *freedom dreaming* (Kelley, 2002) are

important according to critical and radical scholars (e.g., Collins, 1998; Kelley, 2002; Martín-Baró, 1994; Tuck, 2009; Watkins & Shulman, 2008). For example, without a vision there is no blueprint for what to build when working toward social change; we only know what we want to knock down (Kelley, 2002). Historical memory of the past, both individual and collective, also informs people's aspirations for social change (Martín-Baró, 1994; Tuck & Yang, 2014; Watkins & Shulman, 2008) and the pragmatic steps they take in their everyday lives.

Collins (1998) calls what she observes in communities of Color, particularly among Black mothers, a visionary pragmatism. She observed, "The Black women on my block possessed a 'visionary pragmatism' that emphasized the necessity of linking caring, theoretical vision with informed, practical struggle." (Collins, 1998, p.188). A visionary pragmatism balances everyday pragmatic steps with a vision toward freedom. Examples that she provides include Black women teaching their daughters to be independent and self-reliant in preparation for the day that opportunities become more available to them. The hope that opportunities will become more available to Black women is the vision that guides their daily actions. Similar observations have been made in psychological research exploring the ways in which Black parents socialize their young girls to maintain a healthy self-esteem through a pedagogy of resistance to stereotypes (Ward, 1996). This type of preparedness is aligned with Yosso's (2005) concept of aspirational capital within the community cultural wealth model, whereby families within communities of Color

dream of possibilities for themselves and their children regardless of whether the current structural and political conditions allow for such possibilities.

There are of course, potentially more areas to expand our understanding of how Women of Color engage in day to day resistance and how they are connected to their aspirations. Yet, in order to be able to read for everyday resistance and understand these strategies as connected to dreams and aspirations for social change, it is important to build solidarity with everyday resisters and witness with them and against the grain of oppressive power.

### **Building Solidarity with Women of Color Resisters: Theoretical Frameworks**

In order to close the gaps in the literature with understanding everyday acts of resistance by Women of Color, six theoretical frameworks inform an approach to building solidarity with participant collaborators and honoring their interpretations and experiences: re/membering (Coutin, 2016), desire-based framework (Tuck, 2009), borderlands-mestizaje feminism (Saavedra & Nymark, 2008), love-politics (Nash, 2013), and finally the ecological metaphor (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010; Moane; 2003), in conjunction with emergent strategy fractals (brown, 2017). These frameworks are aligned with the overarching paradigms of decoloniality and liberation psychology as they center ways of knowing, imagining, and being outside of the paradigm of coloniality.

### **Re/membering**



A useful framework for thinking about the dimensions of space and time involved in strategies of everyday resistance is re/membering, particularly as it challenges dis/membering (Coutin, 2016). Re/membering refers both to efforts involved in recovering memory of the past and reclaiming membership (or belonging) to a place, community, or identit(ies). This framework was developed to understand how war, immigration policies, and historical erasures attempt to dis/member, that is, have people forget their histories, and experience non-belonging (e.g., denial of citizenship). More specifically, Coutin (2016) developed this framework of dis/memberment in the context of understanding the significance and impact of the Salvadoran civil war (1980-1992) on 1.5 generation youth who migrated to the United States. In her work, Coutin describes resistance (e.g., participation in the DREAMer movement) as a very important form of re/membering as youth were not only claiming their right to belong, but also working toward building an alternative, more socially just future. In thinking about temporality and the geography of memory, Coutin writes,

re/membering entails revisiting the past in light of the present, a process in which the past is returned to (rather than repeated) in order to reincorporate a past “signal event,” namely migration, and to deepen understandings of the present in ways that will authorize more just futures. Unlike linear notions of time, then, re/membering populates the past with visitors from the present, enabling individuals to encounter shadow lives that might have been, alternative realities to which they could perhaps actually return, and futures that could yet be realized (p. 212).

I adapted this framework to think about how Latina women's everyday forms of resistance are acts of re/membering that involve the recovery of memory, community networks, and the development of freedom dreams ("the futures that could yet be realized"). Because freedom dreams are about one's hopes and desires, I also drew from a desire-based framework.

### **Desire-based Framework**

In a desire-based framework (Tuck, 2009), research is concerned with understanding the "complexity, contradiction, and the self-determination of lived lives" (p. 416). In other words, research with marginalized communities that is desire-based seeks the wisdom, hope, desires, and visions that people have in addition to the reality of their oppression. Doing so helps to restore humanity and to depathologize historically marginalized communities, as well as to illuminate how resistance is diagnostic of desire (Kelley et al., 2014) and reveal what people want and where people are seeing issues with social conditions. These desires and actions are not extraordinary or rare. Rather resistance and desire are part of the everyday lives of marginalized groups, a point argued within the framework of borderlands-mestizaje feminism.

### **Borderlands-Mestizaje Feminism**

Influenced by the work of Anzaldúa (1999), a borderlands-mestizaje feminism epistemology recognizes the importance of listening to the bodies and experiences of those who have been particularly silenced and marginalized by oppression as well as

acknowledging that resistance happens everyday in the mundane, such as day to day life at home. Saavedra and Nymark (2008) wrote that borderlands-mestizaje feminism research, “might lead us to illuminate the ways in which marginalized people are already living, struggling, and resisting multiple hegemonic forms of identity, patriarchy, and capitalist and sexual discourses” (pp. 256-257). Although these practices of daily resistance might not directly impact larger social structures, they inform the social movements that do by illuminating the dreams and desires for alternative realities (Kelley, 1993). Moreover, dreams and desires for social change are also connected to the embodied experience of affect, such as love, which provides energy for social change.

### **Love-Politics**

Love-politics is a Black feminist framework that is invested in thinking about the affective politics involved in fomenting social change (Nash, 2013). More specifically, this framework is concerned with thinking about self-love as a practice of freedom with the potential to evolve into a broader and more spiritual love that transcends the self. In short, love-politics is about cultivating the desire to envision and create social change for the collective (Nash uses the term “public sphere”) and for people with whom we do not share identities. For example, the practice of love-politics would ensure that Latinx women are invested in the liberation of women of different ethnic and racial identities, for people who are imprisoned, for indigenous peoples whose land is being polluted or plundered, etc. That is, having a broader

conception of love involves an understanding of how our struggles and well-being are interconnected and motivates a desire for collective liberation. Nash writes, “this work problematizes the boundaries between private and public, and draws intimate connections between the subjective and the social, between the emotional and the political” (p. 4).

Furthermore, there are several concepts related to the framework of love-politics, such as the concept of *spiritual activism* (Anzaldúa, 2002; Keating, 2008), which theorizes love as linking us to “everyone/everything” (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 558), the concept of *the erotic* (Lorde, 2007), which explores how love is a resource within each of us that motivates us to demand more from our social conditions, and Montgomery & bergman’s (2017) theorization of *joy* as a way of thinking-feeling and responding to oppression. These concepts together support the love-politics framework in describing how love helps us to sense our relationships and responsibility to one another. By transforming the self (e.g., transforming self-hatred into self-love), one can transform society. The following section explores how social change at the individual level (the self) can cycle upwards to foment liberation.

## **The Ecological Metaphor and Fractals**

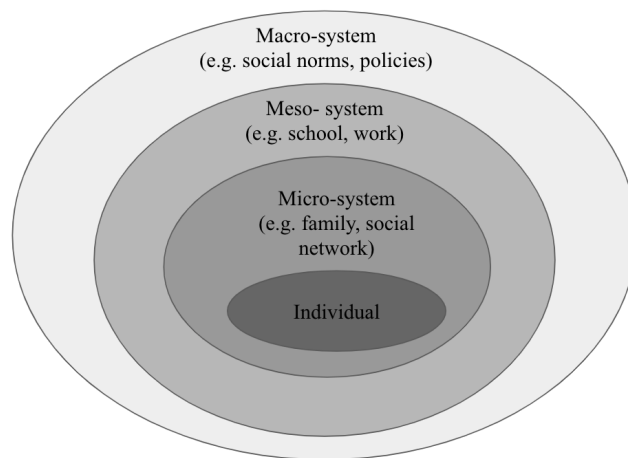
### ***The Ecological Metaphor***

To advance the decolonial *for* and the liberation *for*, it is important to understand how oppression is interconnected at multiple levels of society, and

consequently, how resistance efforts are also interconnected and can indirectly affect structural change. In both community and liberation psychology the ecological metaphor is useful for understanding ecologies of resistance and oppression at different levels and how they are interlinked (Moane, 2003; Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). This framework offers analyses at four levels/systems: the individual, the micro level (e.g., family, social networks), the meso level (e.g., school, work), and the macro-level (e.g., social norms, policies; see Figure 1). Importantly, at these different levels of ecology, it can be expected that there will be diversity of experiences between and within groups at the different levels given intersections of identity (Moane, 2003). For example, a first-generation college student will have a different experience and different set of resources than a continuing education college student.

**Figure 1**

*The Ecological Metaphor (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010)*



The ecological metaphor helps us to understand that we are always embedded in relationships to one another and to the different social systems in our society. In essence, a change in one system will have a ripple effect that has consequences for individuals and communities in other systems. More specifically, the ecological metaphor provides insight into: 1) our interdependence with one another, and that changes in one part of our ecosystem can catalyze changes in another part, 2) how resources are allocated at different levels/how people create resources when there are shortages (e.g., tapping into community networks), 3) succession, or the importance of taking into consideration historical context and plans for the future, and 4) adaptation, how we/our systems adapt to change (Kelly et al., 2000).

The ecological metaphor posits that we cannot study nor understand our world by separating people from each other, our history, contexts, nature, and spirit. Thus, using the ecological metaphor is useful *for* collective liberation and the decolonial pursuit of knowledge as it challenges Western epistemologies and technologies (i.e., racial capitalist settler coloniality), that as mentioned previously, functions to facilitate a historical amnesia regarding our relationship to one another and limits our understanding of our relationships to the extraction of capital (e.g., consumerism). Elements of our relationships to one another, such as spirit, love, and our connection to the natural world are left out. For example, the epistemology of aboriginal people emphasizes their spiritual roots and connections to the natural environment (Connors & Maidman, 2001 cited by Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). In addition, spirituality has

been suppressed and controlled by religious institutions in oppressive ways (e.g., imposing Christianity; Moane, 2003). The ecological metaphor also asserts that patterns of oppression also coexist with patterns of resistance. This is useful for understanding how resistance at the micro-level, or everyday acts of resistance can inform and affect other systems, including the structures that shape and govern our society.

### ***Fractals***

To further decenter Western epistemologies, I draw from theorizing outside of the academy that re-centers spirit, love, radical imaginings, and the emergence of these elements at the micro level. Grappling with the ways in which metaphysical catastrophes control imagination, brown (2017) asks, “how do we create and proliferate compelling visions of economies and ecologies that center humans and the natural world over the accumulation of material?” (brown, 2017, p. 18). In times of metaphysical catastrophe, what is needed is an *emergent strategy*, or a “strategy for building complex patterns and systems of change through relatively small interactions [...] the potential scale of transformation that could come from movements intentionally practicing this adaptive, relational way of being, on our own and with others” (brown, 2017, p. 2).

A key component of emergent strategy is understanding fractals, never-ending complex patterns, that similar to the ecological metaphor, has levels that move from micro to the macro level. brown (2017) notes, “when we speak of systemic change we

need to be fractal [...] we must create patterns that cycle upwards. We are microsystems” (p. 59). This conceptualization of social change as fractal is deeply rooted in the interconnections with all that exists, and our relationships. What happens at the small scale is reflected in what happens at the large scale. The presence of internalized oppression, for example, reflects conditions of domination at meso and macro levels of society (Moane, 2003), and resistance at the micro level can inform the social movements that can affect the macro level.

Furthermore, the relationships we build in our day to day lives within microsystems are crucial for adaptation and survival in a constantly changing ecologies of oppression. This adaptation is akin to the decolonial concept of *re-existence*, that emphasizes the need to re-define and re-signify the ways in which we learn to co-exist, survive, and build the worlds we long for. For example, the Black radical tradition for people of African origin and descent has meant “re-creat[ing] their lives” and “reassembl[ing] social bonds” in order to develop “life-sustaining connectedness” in societies where they have been separated from their networks and enslaved (Melamed, 2015, p. 79; Robinson, 1983). In sum, the concept of fractals within emergent strategy asks how are we acting in our day to day lives to build a different way of living and being in oppressive contexts and who are we building them with and for? How do we create life-sustaining practices and strategies? What is our embodied struggle and practice?



One of the critiques surrounding the ecological metaphor is that there is a tendency for community psychologists to focus primarily on the individual, micro, and meso system, to the neglect of the macro system where structural change is needed (Moane, 2003; Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). Through the paradigm of racial capitalist settler coloniality, it is evident that the domination of historically marginalized and colonized people depends on their psychological and intersubjective subjugation (i.e., subjugation of the self), which truncates the development of relationships built on love and understanding and naturalizes conditions of perpetual war (i.e., subjugation of broader communities). In other words, the experiences of the self are not examined in isolation from the other ecological levels. Additionally, focusing just on the macro-level can lead to changes that can be ultimately disempowering for historically marginalized groups if not informed by psychological and contextual experiences at micro and meso levels. (Gemignani & Hernández-Albújar, 2019; Segalo et al., 2015) In other words, it is important to look at the interplay of each of the ecological levels and understand individual psychological experiences without excluding a macro-level and structural analysis. If done with care and attention, the interplay of each ecological level can be analyzed without prioritizing one level to the neglect of the other.

My hope with using the concept of fractals and emergent strategy together with the ecological metaphor is that it can build our understanding and appreciation of re-existence and restoration of humanity at the micro level, in particular with a

keen eye to the role of radical imaginaries, the building of loving relationships, spirituality, and interconnectedness with all that exists. What happens within our bodies, our homes, our relationships matter, especially for historically marginalized groups that have not always had the luxury to move freely across space and time.

Drawing from these frameworks helps to study everyday forms of resistance enacted by marginalized groups by honoring what is already there (i.e., daily resistance), but has been minimized or gone unnoticed by social scientists. What these frameworks also do is help to follow a praxis of commitment and faithful witnessing. Through this praxis we can begin to witness their day to day experiences from their perspectives. The participants are acknowledged for being experts of their own lives and are invited to co-create meaning in the research process.

As a reminder, the research questions guiding this dissertation are:

- 1.) How are the home/home community (i.e., neighborhood) and the body sites of everyday resistance as perceived by Latina women against tight spaces of oppression?

- a.) How do daily activities function to reclaim space and time?

- 2.) How are these everyday forms of resistance connected to aspirations for the future and historical memory of the past (both individual and collective)?

The next chapter (chapter two), describes the methodologies and methods used to be able to read for everyday resistance and faithfully listen to women's stories. Chapter three presents the first set of results from this study. This chapter

focuses on the ways Latina women in this study taught their children (mostly sons) life sustaining pedagogies that challenge colonial ways of existing, understanding, and seeing the world. This chapter also explores how women in the study negotiated the meaning of motherhood in light of how they were raised and their decisions to biologically conceive (or not) children in the future. Chapter four describes women's radical self-love and love-politics as a praxis for challenging internalized and collective oppression. Moreover, this chapter supports love as a key political affect in building radical imaginaries and working toward collective well-being. Indeed, I argue that love-politics undergirds the resistance strategies described throughout this dissertation. Chapter five bridges chapters three and four by explaining how everyday acts of resistance that work toward liberatory and decolonial futures cannot be done without community support. This chapter describes some of the ways that community support reified women's pedagogies of resistance with their children, their radical self-love praxis, as well as their own participation in mutual aid strategies. This dissertation concludes with a summary of each of these chapters, their contributions to the literature, and directions for future research.

## Chapter 2: Method

Studying the hidden worlds of everyday forms of resistance- actions that are by nature challenging to observe or identify- requires creative methods. Indeed, Camp (2004) who examined the everyday resistance of Black women in the antebellum South through archives wrote, “how resistance is studied has changed and must continue to do so [...] assuming that few new sources will come to light, we need innovative ways to read our existing ones” (p. 2). To be able to read for daily practices of resistance and freedom dreams, this study employed multiple methods. First, all participants (n=19) were invited to participate in workshop discussions to learn from one another and share their *testimonios* (i.e., stories) of oppression, resistance, and hopes and dreams. In each workshop, participants interviewed one another, wrote a letter to a loved one about their freedom dreams, and drew maps of the spaces and places they enjoy as well as the spaces they dislike and avoid. Next, ten of the original nineteen participants were invited to a follow-up one-on-one interview to elaborate on what they shared during the workshop. In the final data collection phase of the study, all participants were invited to a member check event to listen to the preliminary results of the study, discuss and provide input on the results, and co-create a zine to be shared within the community.

To explain the rationale for these methods, this chapter begins by describing methodologies that were utilized. Next, the context of the study and recruitment strategies are discussed. Following description of the context, an in-depth explanation

of how each method was employed during data collection is provided. The chapter then continues with a description of the two analytic approaches that were utilized, thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and the Listening Guide (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan et al., 2003; Gilligan, 2015). This chapter concludes with the strategies employed to establish rigor as well as *strong objectivity* (Harding, 1995) within the study.

## **Methodology**

### **Testimonio**

As a methodology, testimonio is promising for its usefulness in uncovering silences and closely listening for stories of oppression and resistance that are often unheard. For example, one study used testimonio to identify resistance in the context of how undocumented and U.S.-born Chicana/Latina students experience and respond to microaggressions (Pérez Huber & Cueva, 2012). These students created counterspaces, or sites of resistance, where a sense of belonging and resilience to negative stereotypes about Latinas could be fomented. Importantly, in this study the participants were able to reflect on their experiences with microaggressions and counterspaces, come to a realization (i.e., conscientización) about the various forms of racism they experienced, and engage in strategies to transform oppressive spaces (Pérez Huber & Cueva, 2012). The possibilities for the use of testimonio are encouraging for a study exploring daily actions of resistance that are not visible to outsiders (e.g., more privileged groups).

Testimonio should not be defined too narrowly (Randall, 1985), but it is the commonly used term to describe a genre of story telling that “exposes brutality, disrupts silencing, and builds solidarity among women of color” (Delgado Bernal, et al., 2016, p. 1). In testimonio, people narrate their life experiences, particularly their past struggles, their present experiences, and also hopes and dreams for the future, while the interlocutor bears witness to these stories (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; The Latina Feminist Group, 2001). Testimonio draws from the understanding that the personal is political (Beverley, 2000; Randall, 1985) and that people’s narration illuminate personal and collective identities and experiences that could inform revolutionary struggles (Randall, 1985).

Recommended for use as a methodology in psychology, testimonio is a feminist strategy to represent, privilege, and understand the voice of the ‘Other’ (Brabeck, 2003). Specifically, it insists on the collective identity of the narrator, drawing connections between personal and collective experiences/memories marked by resistance, marginalization, and oppression, and challenges traditional assumptions about who can know and produce knowledge. Testimonio helps facilitate this by centering critical reflection of experiences as they are connected to political structures and systems, creating a bridge between the experience of the body and the interlocutor, and inviting the reader to enter her (i.e., the narrator’s) world and become an ally in possible coalition (Brabeck, 2003; Delgado Bernal et al. 2012). In addition to the aforementioned characteristics of testimonio, it centers the experiences

of the brown feminized body, illustrating maps of oppression and resistance (Delgado Bernal et al. 2012). Furthermore, testimonio is an ideal methodology for this study as it is concerned with the everyday resistance enacted by Latina women. This work is accomplished through dialogue and conversations between ‘us’ and ‘Others’. Within the research context, testimonio requires the researcher to be in solidarity with the participant in order to uncover subjugated knowledges and co-construct the meaning of everyday resistance (Delgado Bernal et al. 2012).

Testimonio as a methodology supports “faithful witnessing” (Cruz, 2011; Lugones, 2003) of resistance whereby the researcher learns how to read resistance by collaborating with marginalized groups and witnessing against the grain of power (dominant/deficit narratives) to observe small everyday acts of resistance. Faithful witnessing is possible through testimonio because this methodology centers subaltern voices and elicits solidarity from the reader (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). For example, in her study of how LGBTQ street youth embodied maneuvers of resistance in day to day actions, Cruz (2011) enacted faithful witnessing by understanding these actions from her participants perspectives, which involves refocusing our attention “not ‘on’ or ‘at’ subjects but ‘with’ and ‘from’ them” (Cruz, 2011, p. 549).

### ***Letter Writing as Testimonio***

Testimonio can take various forms, such as written, oral, and digital (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). For example, letter-writing as testimonio has been used to document embodied experiences of oppression and resistance among Latina mothers

and daughters (Chabram-Dernersesian & De La Torre, 2008; The Latina Feminist Group, 2001). These letters, also known as *papelitos guardados* (stored papers), enable women to find expression in writing, contemplate thoughts and feelings, convey personal/political/social realities and uncover experiences that otherwise remain silenced or untold (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; The Latina Feminist Group, 2001). In line with this, letter-writing has been described as a genre of women's and feminist narrative as well as a way for women to critically reflect on their experiences and desires as they connect them to sociopolitical realities:

Historically, letters have moved women beyond self-imposed silence about their inner lives and exposed their ambitions, desires, and frustrations [...] Letters have allowed women to fantasize about new lives and have served consciousness-raising purposes among them when they could not communicate directly with each other or escape male scrutiny (White et al., 2007; pp. 206-207).

Thus, letter writing is in line with a desire-based framework, where members of oppressed groups are given the opportunity to express their desires, write, create, and work toward social change. Indeed, letter writing allows us to speak love and dissent against the status quo through verbal resistance (DeRobertis, 2017). The letters written by different activists and scholars in De Robertis' (2017) edited book, *Radical hope: Letters of dissent in dangerous times*, illustrate both verbal dissent to domination, strategies for resistance, and how those strategies are tied to hopes and visions for a different, more socially just world.



Indeed, letter-writing can be understood as an arts-based approach that creates a “reflective space that can capture human experience and manifest identity construction and negotiation processes” (Channa, 2017, p. 358). Additionally, letter writing can allow for both reflection-in-action (i.e., behavior that reforms one’s thinking while doing an activity, such as letter writing) and reflection-on-action (i.e., recount past experiences and reflect on how that added to one’s learning, Channa, 2017). Furthermore, in addition to fostering solidarity with participants and opening opportunities for them to write, analyze, and co-create meaning, employing more than one form of testimonio (oral and written) can foment critical reflection of participants experiences of daily resistance. This study utilized testimonio in the form of verbal storytelling via interviews and written letters.

### **Pláticas**

To understand testimonios as they were being told, I drew from the methodological framework of pláticas (Fierros & Delgado, 2016). The methodology of pláticas, which is Spanish for “discussions” or “talks,” emerged from recognizing the knowledge sharing and wisdom present in daily informal conversations among Latina women. Pláticas are a decolonial and Chicana/Latina feminist approach to conducting interviews and workshops that follow four principles: (1) they draw upon Chicana/Latina feminist theory, (2) honor participants as co-constructors of knowledge, (3) acknowledge that everyday lived experiences are important for research inquiry, (4) provide a potential space for healing and (5) encourage the

researcher to be vulnerable, willing to share their own experiences and be reflexive about their power and positionality (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016).

Pláticas deeply shaped the way I structured workshops and follow-up one-on-one interviews in this study where testimonios would be shared. In the workshops, participants interviewed one another about their life experiences and were encouraged to ask follow-up questions not written on the interview protocol that they felt were important. The follow-up one-on-one interviews (after the workshops) were semi-structured to allow for the participants' testimonios to emerge in directions that felt important to them. In short, participants were invited to understand the sharing involved in each activity as a flexible conversation where people could share what they wanted, ask questions, offer advice (to myself or others), make jokes, laugh, cry etc. Additionally, in both the workshops and follow-up one-on-one interviews, participant's descriptions of daily life were considered important for the research, especially because this study is interested in resistance in the everyday.

Furthermore, reflexivity was a central practice in my interactions with all of my participants. I shared why this work mattered to me personally, what my goals were with this dissertation study, and shared some of my personal experiences as they related to some of the experiences participants shared. For example, in one of the interviews, one of my participants talked about the civil war in El Salvador and the violence she witnessed. I shared with her how her testimony and the things she witnessed were similar to what my mother experienced as a teen in El Salvador

during the civil war. For me it was important that this study produced an element of community building and healing. Women were given the opportunity to share experiences they had been unable to share in other spaces and build networks with other women in the community. Additionally, this study also used map making as a strategy for participants to tell part of their stories by articulating their navigation of space in daily life.

### **Map Making**

One of the research questions is about how Latina women resist oppression through the dimensions of space and time, therefore a map making method was employed as a strategy to read for resistance. By asking participants to create maps of the spaces they inhabit, people can narrate stories about themselves across space and time and illuminate linkages between an individual's day-to-day embodied experiences to social structures and how power is deployed and resisted through the organization of space (Annamma et al., 2017; Futch & Fine, 2014).

According to Futch and Fine's (2014) observations of the uses of maps in social science research, maps have many benefits including that they: (1) texturize interviews and written narratives by providing another source of data to seek contradictions or alignments, (2) privilege the interpretation and worldview of the respondent, (3) allow us to see how people's interpretations and meanings applied to spaces can differ between respondents and with state-issued maps (Futch & Fine, 2014; Vélez & Solórzano, 2017), (4) are catalytic for discussions in focus groups (or

workshops) and with the researcher in interviews, and (5) are an accessible way for participants to tell their stories that is no longer limited to verbal expression. Importantly, maps make the participant the expert and witness of their own lives and dreams.

Mapping is not without its ethical dilemmas and complications as it has been used as a tool for domination and surveillance. Yet, from a critical race spatial analysis (Annamma et al., 2017) maps can produce counter-cartographies that resist historical erasures and illuminate resistance and agency, as well as map imaginaries for building different worlds (e.g., Segalo et al., 2015). Additionally, they can illuminate geographies of hope (i.e., spaces of community and resistance) as well as geographies of despair (economic, political, and legal marginalization; Hidalgo, 2017). These geographies matter, especially when taking into account the context of the study.

### **Context of this Study**

For this dissertation study, I examined how everyday forms of resistance are part of the daily practices of mostly low-income Latina women who live in or near Santa Cruz County, California. An overall look at Santa Cruz County reveals that 33.5% of the population identifies as Hispanic<sup>9</sup> or Latino, 18.4% identify as foreign born, and the median income in the county is \$67,256 (U.S. Census Bureau Quick

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<sup>9</sup> The census bureau coined this term during Richard Nixon's presidency and has been strongly rejected by Latinx communities as it privileges the colonizer (Spain) and is not a term created by Latinx people to describe themselves (González & Gándara, 2005; Martínez, 1998).

Facts, 2017). Yet these broad statistics do not show how certain areas in the county experience a greater concentration of poverty and are predominantly made up of People of Color. A recent housing crisis survey of Santa Cruz County reveals that of the people they surveyed within the Beach Flats and Live Oak areas, 52% and 43% identified as Latinx, 42% and 34% identified their income as “extremely low,” and 76% and 60% identified as experiencing rent burden, respectively (Greenberg et al., 2017). Rent burden is defined by spending more than 30% of one’s household income on rent (Aratani et al., 2011). Thus, the everyday forms of resistance enacted by Latina women residing in these areas will be shaped and contextualized within the tight spaces of economic deprivation, overpriced housing, high density neighborhoods, racial/ethnic discrimination, and xenophobia<sup>10</sup>.

## **Data Collection**

### **Recruitment**

Participants were recruited by posters that were posted in predominantly Latinx neighborhoods<sup>11</sup>, Latinx-owned businesses (e.g., taquerias), Latinx festivals and events, and resource centers known to provide services to the Latinx community in Santa Cruz County, primarily in Santa Cruz and Live Oak. The flyers were created in both Spanish and English and described participation for a study entitled, “Proyecto Mujeres Fuertes y Resistentes” in Spanish or “Project Strong Latina

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<sup>10</sup> In recent years, Latinx communities in Santa Cruz have been terrorized by ICE raids (Estrada, 2019).

<sup>11</sup> One of these neighborhoods was my own.

Women” in English (see Appendix A). The flyers indicated that this study was an invitation for Latina women who cared about their community to participate in a workshop and share their hopes, dreams, and experiences with other women. The flyer provided a list of three possible dates and times for them to participate in a workshop facilitated in either English or Spanish. The flyers were also given to friends and acquaintances in the community to share with others, and shared on Facebook.

### **Participants**

A total of nineteen participants were involved in the study. Participants lived either in or near Santa Cruz County<sup>12</sup>. The average age of the participant was 35.4 years old<sup>13</sup>; the oldest participant was 76 years old and the youngest participant was 20 years old. This range in age allowed for an interesting insight into how different generations of Latina women think about oppression, what was resisted, and what kind of freedom dreams were shared. For example, for the younger women in their 20’s who were attending college (n= 4), their analysis of oppression focused heavily on their lives at the university. California's largest Latinx population is Mexican, followed by Salvadoran, and Guatemalan (Noe-Bustamante, 2019). Although participants were not asked to report their specific ethnic identities because of potential vulnerability, the majority of those who did report (n= 8), identified as Mexican, which is consistent with state demographics. I also did not ask participants

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<sup>12</sup> One participant lived as far as 37 miles away.

<sup>13</sup> Age data were missing for four participants.

to report their household income out of concern that it would make participants feel uncomfortable. From listening to participants' stories of economic challenges and visiting their homes and/or neighborhoods, I was able to discern that the majority of participants, except two<sup>14</sup>, were working class. Pseudonyms were provided to protect participants' identities.

## **Research Design**

### ***Workshops***

All nineteen participants were involved in a three hour long<sup>15</sup> workshop. These meetings were conceptualized as workshops because they provided an opportunity for participants to learn about themselves and each other through a series of activities. There were a total of four workshops conducted for this study with approximately four to seven participants in each. Three of the workshops were conducted in Spanish and one was conducted in English. At the beginning of each workshop, my research assistants and I introduced ourselves, talked about the purpose of the study, and administered informed consent. As part of the methodology of *plática*, we facilitated an opening conversation asking participants what they hoped to get from this workshop and if they had any concerns. We opened ourselves up to any questions they might have about us. For example, we were often asked what we were studying in school and what our personal goals were. In each workshop, participants

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<sup>14</sup> These two participants were middle class. One participant explicitly let me know they identified as middle class and the other was a homeowner in a middle class neighborhood.

<sup>15</sup> Dinner, snacks, breaks, and childcare were provided.

engaged in three activities: testimonio sharing via interviewing one another, map drawing, and letter writing.

**Testimonio.** For the testimonio portion of the workshop, participants were given a set of seven questions (see Appendix B1), and in pairs interviewed each other about their daily routines, hopes, challenges, and dreams for thirty minutes at a time. In hopes of creating some ease in talking about themselves, each participant was asked to bring three photos that represent something meaningful in their lives and explain their meaning. If participants forgot or elected not to bring their photos, they shared what three photos they would have brought with them. After this activity, we either debriefed as a group how the activity felt or moved on to the next activity depending on how much time was left.

**Map drawing.** The next activity was map drawing. For this activity, participants spent approximately thirty-five to forty minutes drawing a map of all the spaces and places they interface with in their daily lives. They were asked to mark spaces/places that brought them joy with a star and places that they try to avoid with an “X.” For the prompt see Appendix B2. After they finished drawing, they explained to the group or their partner what they drew, the significance of the places they marked with a star or an X, and any places they did not get the chance to draw or could not draw (e.g., heaven/spiritual realms).

**Letter writing.** For the last activity, participants were asked to write a letter to a loved one (passed, living, not-yet-born) about their hopes and dreams for social



change and what they do to work toward building this world in their daily life. A prompt was given to participants as a guide with a list of possible questions for them to consider (see Appendix B3). For example, some of the questions included, “in this imagined future, what does the landscape look like? How do we feel in our bodies?” Participants were given approximately thirty-five to forty minutes to write this letter. As part of the conclusion of the study we debriefed as a group what it felt like to write the letter, if they experienced any challenges, and if any of the activities resonated or did not resonate with them. Participants also filled out an evaluation that asked questions about their experience in the workshop and provided space for sharing comments (see Appendix C).

These three activities provided different modes of communication (verbal, writing, and art/drawing) for participants to communicate the structure and activities within their daily lives, as well as their life experiences, hopes, and dreams. All the physical materials participants created (i.e., map drawings, letters) were scanned on site and returned to participants immediately for them to keep and take with them. I reviewed all the audio from workshops, map drawings, and letters to develop follow-up questions during one-on-one interviews.

### ***Interviews***

After workshops were completed, I conducted ten one-on-one follow-up semi-structured interviews with participants who had participated in the workshops. The purpose of these interviews were to acquire greater depth on each participant’s

lived experiences and background, as well as ask follow-up questions about topics they mentioned during the workshop. As such, part of the interview protocol was standard across all participants who were interviewed (see Appendix D) and the other part of the protocol was tailored to each participant based on what they shared in the workshop. Each interviewed participant was also asked what “resistance” means to them<sup>16</sup> and if they have participated in visible forms of collective action (e.g., protests, marches).

The selection of participants for the follow-up interviews was based on participant’s availability and willingness to participate in this part of the study, as well as if they shared something in the workshops that spoke in some way to the research questions in this study. Interviews lasted approximately sixty to ninety minutes and were conducted in places where the participant was most comfortable, such as their home or a local resource center. Five interviews were conducted in Spanish and five were conducted in English per the participant’s language preference. These interviews also functioned as a partial member check as I was able to ask if some of my preliminary ideas about their daily resistance and dreams resonated with them.

**Transcription and Translation.** Audio from interviews, workshops, and the original scanned letters were transcribed and translated (if in Spanish) using Express Scribe software (NCH Software, 1993). Each research assistant was assigned an

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<sup>16</sup> This is in response to Rubin’s (1996) critique that researchers do not do enough to ask participants what “resistance” means to participants and if they understand their actions as a form of everyday resistance.

audio file to transcribe/translate. We transcribed verbatim with respect to each participant's manner of speaking (e.g., "y'know" vs. "you know"), noting pauses, emphases on words, interruptions, tone, and emotional responses (e.g., sighs, deep breaths, crying, laughter). After each research assistant finished transcribing/translating, a different research assistant was assigned to check the accuracy of the transcriptions and translations by listening to the audio while reading the transcript, or in the case of translation, comparing the original transcript side by side with the translation. I conducted a second round of checking and reviewed all the transcripts and translations for accuracy.

True to Briggs' (1986) insight on translations, without understanding a group's sociolinguistic norms, it can be challenging to create accurate translations even when one is fluent in the language. For example, we came across the phrase *se te bota el chango*, which translates directly in English to "you throw the monkey." To someone from Nayarit, Mexico, however, this common phrase translates to "losing sanity." A combination of searching the internet, asking different Spanish speaking friends and colleagues, and using context clues from the sentence helped with some of these types of phrases.

We used our lab meeting time to help each other decipher any audio that was unclear, phrases that were challenging to translate<sup>17</sup>, and discussed our impressions and insights about the women's stories. While reviewing all these data for accuracy, I

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<sup>17</sup> We also came to the conclusion that some phrases that captured a deep and meaningful beauty that would be lost in English translation should be left untranslated in Spanish.

also took notes on any initial thoughts, impressions, or insights that I acquired. To create ease for analysis, we copied and pasted participant's narrative descriptions of their map drawings in a separate document with the picture of their drawings so that the text could be analyzed both in the context of the workshops and juxtaposed with the drawing.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Preliminary Analysis**

Having conducted all the interviews and workshops as well as having listened to the audio multiple times during transcription and translation, I developed an intimate connection with these data. Additionally, my research assistants had exposure to multiple interviews, workshops, maps, and letters throughout their involvement in the process of data collection, transcription/translation, and collectively debriefing our experiences with the research. As part of the initial analytic process, research assistants and I produced analytic memos of each of the interviews they transcribed or translated, noting what stood out to them in relation to the research questions. This was part of intentionally creating an interpretive community (Gilligan et al., 2003), enhancing the quality and rigor of the analysis. Initially unclear about what qualitative analysis approach would best fit the data, we began analyzing the data using a thematic analysis.

A thematic analysis is a flexible method for “identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). We

approached this analysis mostly through inductive, data-driven coding, but also looked for possible codes that would be consistent with previous literature (e.g., forming rival geographies/counterspaces as a strategy for resistance). Thematic analysis is an iterative process that involves four phases. The first phase is to familiarize oneself with the data and observe any possible patterns or codes. Next, in the second phase, my research assistants and I collectively created a list of codes reflecting all the different types of everyday resistance and freedom dreams we identified (see Appendix E). Table 1 provides an example of initial codes for resistance:

**Table 1**

*Example of Initial Codes for Resistance In Thematic Analysis*

Code	Description	Example
Love for others	This is concerned with love being a motivating factor for people’s actions or choices, or the way people see the world.	<i>I think that’s the beauty of resistance [...] it really come down to love, some form of love that you have</i> -Florenca, Interview.
Desire/dream for a sustainable planet	A desire for the environment to be cared for, healthy, and thriving.	<i>I imagine a future [...] with forests full of diversity, life, and greenery-</i> Bianca, letter.

In the third phase of thematic analysis, research assistants and I looked across all the relevant codes to see how they related to one another to create overarching themes.

We discerned the following three themes:

1. Interrupting intergenerational trauma through love.

2. To know ourselves and understand that we are interconnected.
3. Self-determination.

It is important to note that these themes did not just “emerge” from the data but were the result of my own and my research assistants' interpretations. As noted by other qualitative researchers, “If themes ‘reside’ anywhere, they reside in our heads from our thinking about our data and creating links as we understand them” (Ely et al., 1997, pp. 205-206, cited by Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### ***Member Check Event***

Following an ethic of liberation and accountability process, we facilitated a member check event at the conclusion of the study where all the participants were invited back to hear the preliminary results of the study to assess if these themes were just in our heads or also shared amongst the participants. This process was part of phase 4 of thematic analysis, reviewing themes. Six of the nineteen participants attended this event<sup>18</sup>, held on a Saturday morning at a local resource center. My research team and I gave a presentation in both English in Spanish that covered: (1) a summary of the study, (2) what has happened since they last shared their stories (i.e., transcription/translation of audio, preliminary analysis), (3) how we understood their stories under the framework of everyday resistance, (4) the list of the different types of everyday resistance and freedom dreams we identified (i.e., codes), (5) the

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<sup>18</sup> Flyers were given to participants two months in advance of the event and research assistants sent reminder phone calls or texts (depending on participant's preferred mode of communication) the week of the event and the day before.

preliminary themes, and 6) how listening to their stories personally impacted us<sup>19</sup>. We made sure to underscore that the analysis would remain incomplete without their input to emphasize that their interpretations of their stories would be centered, rather than my own or my research assistants.

After sharing the preliminary analysis, participants were returned all of their transcripts of their data and given time to review their data with the preliminary themes in mind. Next, participants were given time to discuss what they thought with other participants. A researcher assistant sat with each group<sup>20</sup> to take notes about what participants discussed (see Appendix F). After participants discussed their thoughts, they were invited to share their input and perspectives in a large group discussion. In case participants were uncomfortable sharing their thoughts out loud or did not have the chance to share, they were also provided an evaluation at the end of the event where they could privately comment any thoughts about the preliminary results (see Appendix G). The notes taken by the research assistants during the small group discussion, the large group discussion, and evaluations all suggest that participants were content with the results and that all the themes made sense. Participants seemed to connect to all three themes, especially to the first and third theme<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> At the conclusion of the event, each research assistant, including myself, got up and one by one we expressed to the participants how we were impacted by their stories, especially from our particular positionalities. A hard copy of these reflections were provided in both English and Spanish to participants (See Appendix K).

<sup>20</sup> There were two groups in total.

<sup>21</sup> The second theme was still very underdeveloped at the time and not fully articulated.

**Zine Collaboration.** The final activity for the event was an invitation to collaborate in making a zine. Zines are historically rooted in defying long-standing publishing conventions and are known for providing space for underrepresented voices in society to share their personal lived experiences and overlooked concerns (Knobel & Lankshear, 2002; Licona, 2005). Additionally, zines also provide a space to share critiques of mainstream culture and manifest as a form of resistance to hegemony (Licona, 2005). In thinking about the ethic of liberation (Watkins & Shulman, 2008) and who gets to own the data, the invitation to participants to collaborate in a zine was a way for them to have co-ownership of the data by creating pages where they highlighted results from the study and elements of their story they wanted to share among the community using a medium that could be easily shared and distributed.

The guiding questions of this activity were, “what parts of my story do I want other Latina women to know about?” and “are there forms of resistance that I do or dreams of mine I would like to share?” Participants were encouraged to cut and paste excerpts from their transcripts, draw/color their thoughts, or share whatever they would like. For example, one participant decided to cut and paste the letter they wrote to their future child during a workshop (see Appendix H3). Once this dissertation is completed and available online, the zine pages will be collated, printed, and given to participants to keep and/or share<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> At the member check event, participants indicated how many copies of the zine they would each like. For participants who did not show up to the event, I intend to follow up with them



## **A More Thorough Analysis**

Although participants who attended the member check event seemed satisfied, I felt that the analytical process was rushed and the thematic analysis did not allow for the deeper listening that I felt would really honor these women's stories and life experiences. Thus, I sought a different analytical approach to review and analyze the data more closely and with attention to themes or voices that were perhaps not as loud in the preliminary analysis. Gayatri Spivak's (1988) frequently cited quote "can the subaltern speak?" comes to mind. Grappling with Spivak's question in the context of research, Tuck and Yang (2014) contend that researchers in the social sciences create the conditions where the subaltern cannot speak. That is, social science researchers are often too preoccupied with seeking out damage or pain narratives that portray marginalized and oppressed groups as singularly powerless and defenseless. These portrayals create the conditions for a colonial gaze of historically marginalized groups and contribute to a historical amnesia that suggests structures of oppression are natural and normal, with no beginning or end (Moane, 2011; Tuck & Yang, 2014). By asking participants to speak in a voice of resistance, rather than singularly in a voice of pain, and to name their dreams and aspirations for social change, this study contributes to challenging master narratives as well as the false idea that structures of oppression are not constantly resisted in day to day lives and imagined differently.

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personally to offer them a copy of the zine. The hard copies of zines will contain the link to this dissertation to allow for access to a digital copy.

Yet, as Lara (2005) points out, it is not enough to allow the subaltern to speak, one must also be able to listen. In the context of creating spaces for Women of Color to be listened to in addition to allowing them to speak she writes, “in order to enact liberatory change one must also develop a critical practice of listening to one's self and others” (p. 30). Additionally, the ability for the researcher to listen to the voices and stories that are being told is key to the method of testimonio (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). Delgado Bernal, Burciaga and Flores Carmona (2012) write,

listening is the precursor to telling [...] as a listener, another's *testimonio* is much like a gift- the listener unwraps the *testimonio* to reveal the heart of the matter. In doing so, the listener's responsibility is to engage the testimonialista in an effort to understand” (p. 368, italics original).

Thus, it became apparent to me that finding a way to prioritize listening would be central to the analysis of the testimonio interviews, workshops, and letters. Through trial and error in trying different analytical approaches, it became apparent<sup>23</sup> that the best strategy for analysis was the Listening Guide (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan et al., 2003; Gilligan, 2015).

### ***The Listening Guide***

The Listening Guide is a relational method of analysis that centers the voices of participants. Like a song with different melodies, rhythms, and textures, each participant's stories contain multiple voices that can flow harmoniously or dissonant with one another. The Listening Guide provides researchers multiple ways to listen

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<sup>23</sup> My research assistants and I agreed that the Listening Guide allowed us to capture deeper meaning of participant's stories than with using thematic analysis.

and hear participants to examine the complex and multiplicitous ways participants talk about themselves and others in relation to their cultural contexts. The guide also brings the researcher in relationship to the participant through active listening at each step of the process while the researcher notes their emotional response and interpretations (i.e., reflexivity). Thus, rather than provide the illusion of “giving voice” (Fine, 1992) to Women of Color, the Listening Guide surfaces the researcher’s interpretations and identifications of voices.

The Listening Guide is flexible, allowing the researcher to tailor steps to maximize the goals of the research study and offers “a pathway into relationship rather than a fixed framework for interpretation” (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 22). Emerging from a concern that women’s voices had not been accurately heard and represented in research studies, the Listening Guide offers a feminist and critical race theoretical framework to hear voices that have been marginalized (Petrovic, Lordly, Brigham, and Delaney, 2015). Additionally, the guide has been used in other studies analyzing voices and strategies for resistance (e.g., Majzler, 2016; Taylor et al., 1995) further supporting its appropriateness for the current study.

The Listening Guide involves 4 steps that allow for different ways to listen to the participant and build an analysis. The first step of the Listening Guide involves the researcher listening for the plot (e.g., what is happening and what stories are being told?) and their emotional reaction (e.g., how do you relate to the participant? What is your emotional response to their story?; see Appendix I for all questions guiding each

step). By paying attention to one's emotional reactions and positionality, one can be reflexive about how these reactions may shape interpretations of the story being told. To ensure that there would be focused attention on material relevant to the research questions, I also added guiding questions asking what stories of resistance, memories, and dreams were present.

The second step of the Listening Guide is to create "I" poems. The purpose of the "I" statements are two-fold: 1) they allow the researcher to listen for how the participant talks about themselves and 2) it allows the researcher to listen for the layers of the psyche, or the multiplicity of ways (i.e., voices) a participant can talk about their feelings, themselves, or others (Gilligan et al., 2003). With regard to the latter, "I" poems are aligned with a feminist *both/and* approach (Collins, 2000) to understand people's experiences, rather than a colonial and fragmenting *either/or* approach. For example, as will be discussed in the conclusion of this dissertation, a participant can express both a voice of desire to fight for social change and a voice of fear that social change is unlikely to happen in their lifetime. "I" poems are created by cutting and pasting segments from the interview where the participant says "I." The verb following "I" is included along with enough of the sentence to provide context to what the participant is saying. These segments are cut and paste in a separate document in the order they appeared in the interview. Below I provide an example of an "I" poem from one of the interviews I conducted with Camila where she talks about the challenges of pregnancy and becoming a mother:

I think motherhood really changes umm a person  
I was very independent  
I do feel like more compassion for women  
I feel very protective  
I think it's important to have a support system

To capture the complexity in how participants talk about themselves as well as their relationships to others I followed Petrovic, Lordly, Brigham, and Delaney's (2015) approach and created different sets of pronoun poems from the transcripts where participants talked about actions of resistance and/or their freedom dreams: first person singular (I), second person singular (you/your), first person plural (we/us/our), and third person plural (they/their/them/ours).

The third step of the Listening Guide is to listen for contrapuntal voices relevant to the research questions using the information from steps 1 and 2. Contrapuntal voices are the simultaneously occurring voices, some of which can be different but in harmony with one another, and others which are in contradiction to the other voices. The voice of a desire to fight for justice and the voice of a fear that social change is unlikely to happen is an example of two contrapuntal voices that are in contradiction to one another yet co-exist together. Once voices in a given interview or workshop were identified, I read through the text multiple times listening for each voice and underlining the passages where the voices emerged, leaving room for passages to be coded in more than one color if they illustrated more than one voice. Since my research assistants, myself, and the participants involved in this study had provided some preliminary themes through thematic analysis, I also looked for how

voices moved in passages that related to themes (e.g., the importance of love to interrupt intergenerational trauma and oppression).

The final step of the Listening Guide is a synthesis of steps 1-3. Following a trail of notes, underlinings, and summaries, I composed an analysis of what I learned from all of the listenings. Some of the questions that I used to guide this process were, “How have I come to know this?” and “What is the evidence for these interpretations?” The themes for this dissertation were refined based on my individual analysis of results from the Listening Guide. I decided that if a pattern of responses could be identified in at least three participants that it would qualify as a theme or sub-theme.

In addition to offering a feminist and critical race theoretical framework, I argue that the Listening Guide approach also follows a decolonial and liberation psychology paradigm because it assumes that the researcher and the participant’s voice(s) are inextricably in relationship to one another (Gilligan et al., 2003). That is, the researcher’s emotional response and standpoint (i.e., positionality) cannot be separated from how the participant’s stories are heard and interpreted. Rather than to assume a false distance between the researcher and the participant, the relationship between researcher and participant is highlighted and brought to the forefront. This is in line with Martín-Baró’s notion of *objectivity* (Montero & Sonn, 2009) and Harding’s (1995) notion of *strong objectivity*, which does not mean that one is impartial, but rather faithful to realities that shape experiences for both the participant

and the researcher: historical and political realities and the limitations and strengths of one's standpoint for interpreting these realities. Also the process of strong objectivity entails creating space for the participant to object to the researcher's interpretations. Central to these notions of objectivity is an ongoing process of critical reflexivity (described in greater depth shortly) on the part of the researcher, a process that is embedded in steps one and four of the Listening Guide. That is, step one facilitates reflexivity by asking the listener to note their emotion, relationship to the speaker, and positionality, and step four motivates reflexivity by asking the speaker to closely examine their interpretations and evidence for these interpretations.

**Challenges.** One challenge that arose with using the Listening Guide was that it could not be used with transcripts in Spanish exactly in the same way that it is used for English transcripts. Specifically, the use of the word "I" in Spanish is not consistent as it is in English. When creating I poems in English, one simply looks for every time the participant says "I." In Spanish, however, the word *I* could be the word *yo* or it could be embedded in any word, such as *iba*, which translates to "I went," or *siento*, which translates the phrase "I feel." For the purposes of this study, the Listening Guide was used on the transcripts translated to English, and ultimately there were no issues when using the Listening Guide in this way. Yet, it raises questions about whether the Listening Guide should be modified in the future to fit the structure of the Spanish language or other languages for that matter.

### **Analysis of Map Data**

Although participants' narrative descriptions of their maps were analyzed using the Listening Guide, I also analyzed the map drawings juxtaposed to their narrative descriptions. Drawing from a critical race spatial analysis (Annamma et al., 2017) I developed a set of interrelated questions to illuminate how space is negotiated, depicted, and how the participant sees themselves and others in those spaces (see Appendix J). After answering these questions, I reflected on my responses for each and composed an analysis of how these maps illustrate how participants utilize space and time to enact resistance, freedom, dreams, and restore individual/collective memories.

## **Rigor**

### ***Crystallization***

Triangulation is frequently used by researchers as a way to establish rigor. For example, some common forms of triangulation include data triangulation (i.e., using different sources of data), investigator triangulation (i.e., using different researchers/evaluators), theory triangulation (i.e., using multiple perspectives for interpretation), and methodological triangulation (i.e., the use of multiple methods in a study; Janesick, 2000). This dissertation study engages some of these types of triangulation through having multiple evaluators/researchers (i.e., interpretive community) and use of multiple methods (i.e., interview, workshops, maps, letters). Yet, triangulation as an approach assumes that there is a “fixed point or object that



can be triangulated” (Richardson, 2000, p. 934) and that there are only three sides from which to understand the world.

The concept of crystallization on the other hand, recognizes that our understanding of the world is more like a crystal, with “an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach. [They are] prisms that reflect externalities *and* refract within themselves” (Richardson, 2000, p. 934, emphasis original). Importantly, this approach to rigor understands that concepts like “validity” come from a post-positivist paradigm of research that assumes there is a reality out there that can be fully grasped by the researcher(s). In addition, crystallization assumes that how the world is understood depends on who is holding the crystal (i.e., the person's positionality and researcher-participant power dynamics) and that there is always more that can be known. Thus, one element of rigor to this study that speaks to crystallization is critical reflexivity, where the researcher’s positionality, values, emotional responses, and interpretations are brought to the forefront.

### ***Critical Reflexivity***

Critical reflexivity is an ongoing process throughout the research process with the goals of highlighting power dynamics that are embedded at each step of the research process and challenging hegemonic understandings of how knowledge can be acquired, what the world is made up of, and the purported emotional and political distance of the researcher to the study at hand (Strega & Brown, 2015). This process

can be facilitated by continuously asking oneself a set of questions, such as “how am I interpreting what I see?” and “am I distanced from or close to the participants and to the events as I relate to them” (Swaminathan & Mulvihill, 2017). These types of questions are already embedded in step one of the Listening Guide. Strega and Brown (2015) assert that critical reflexivity can be taken one step forward through uncomfortable reflexivity (Pillow, 2003), where aside from simply producing a confessional of one’s positionality and personal struggles, the researcher also highlights the political struggles within the research that have not been resolved. In line with Harding’s (1995) concept of strong objectivity and Richardson’s (2000) concept of crystallization, the following section highlights my critical reflexivity towards each element of the study utilized to come to the interpretations of the data.

**Positionality.** I conducted this dissertation from the position of someone who is very privileged as often is the case for people who have the opportunity to write a dissertation. I am half white, I am light skinned and white passing, I was born in the United States, my performance of my gender is very feminine, I am earning a PhD, I am straight-passing, and for the most part, I am very able-bodied. What brought me to my dissertation study is rooted in my being at the intersections of my privileged and marginalized identities (i.e., Latina, working-class, growing up in a single parent female-headed household, first-generation to go to college and graduate school, bi-sexual, generalized anxiety). I feel like I am always inhabiting multiple worlds at once and in doing so, I witness the lies of whiteness, the academy, the

decision-makers (e.g., university administrators), and dominant ideologies that justify subjugation of marginalized people. I witness all of this in contrast to the multiple realities that do not get witnessed, are ignored, or (mis)interpreted, such as the resistance, resilience, hardships, and violence experienced by different communities of Color.

Even though I witness different types of oppression and am passionate about social justice, liberation, and a praxis that sides with the perspectives and experiences of those who have been oppressed, I am not without my limitations in my perspectives and my own internalized oppression and ideologies. This means that I am constantly having to unlearn violent ideas and practices, to re-educate myself about social issues, actively listen to those who embody marginalized identities that I do not, and be actively accountable to any harm I cause as well as commit to interrupting problematic behavior, whether caused by me or someone else. This process is very non-linear and something I cannot do without a supportive community and critical friends (Swaminathan & Mulvihill, 2017).

I noticed that in coming up with the idea for this dissertation I thought a lot about my own strategies for resistance and how often I have been misunderstood and/or punished for trying to assert my dignity and survive an oppressive environment, and I thought a lot about my mother and her family for having similar experiences. I grew up spending most of my time with my mother who came to the United States as a refugee from El Salvador. As co-authors in Rosales and Rosales

(2019) we reflect on our relationship, my mother's and my own experiences of oppression and abuse, and my mother's advice to other Women of Color for healing and thriving within oppressive contexts. This publication was important for me because for wealthy people my mother has always been their "cleaning lady," to the government of El Salvador and United States, someone disposable, and to my white father, a punching bag. Yet, there is an organic intellectualism of living, re-existing (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018), and understanding the world that she taught me and helped me be where I am today. This was the core motivation of this dissertation, to highlight the ways that Latina women resist the violence of the state and narratives that they are disposable, unknowing, and passive. This motivational energy meant that I wanted Latina women who participated in this study to have co-ownership and benefit from their participation.

What remains unresolved is that at the end of this I am earning another degree, my income will increase substantially, and my name and labor are centered with this work. For the participants involved in this study, this is not the case. As much as I have tried to share ownership through the development of the zine and member check event, I disproportionately have more and will grow more power as a result of this study. The results in this study, despite the efforts (i.e., analytic memoing, interpretive community, audit trail) to crystallize and include as many viewpoints as possible, still lean toward my interpretations in ways that reflect both the limitations and strengths of my positionality.

**Analytic Memos.** A team of 7 Latinx research assistants were involved in this study. Six identified as women and one research assistant identified as trans. As part of the reflexivity for this dissertation, each research assistant wrote a statement at the conclusion of the study describing their positionality, their involvement in the study, and what they learned. A shortened version of their reflexivity statements were shared with participants during the member check (see Appendix K). Throughout the study, each research assistant produced an analytic memo of each interview they transcribed/translated. The questions guiding these analytic memos were from the first step of the Listening Guide where research assistants listened for the plot, dominant themes, and their response to the interview. These memos ranged from 1.5 to 4.5 pages double-spaced. When conducting analyses using the Listening Guide, I referred to each of these memos<sup>24</sup> to assess if there were any connections that I missed, and compared them to my own analytic memos. In these memos it was evident that research assistants and myself found listening to women's stories as both powerful and hard to listen to at times. Some of us really connected to participant's stories more than others and saw ourselves in their life experiences. We learned that an additional aspect of this dissertation was for us to have space from these stories by taking breaks. We also learned to discuss with one another our feelings and insights about the data and research process as an interpretive community.

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<sup>24</sup> There was one memo that was missing, meaning that when I conducted a Listening Guide analysis for that participant's interview I was the only listener. In addition, there was another interview where I was the only listener and this was because the participant requested that I be the only person to transcribe their interview for privacy reasons.

### *Interpretive Communities*

As mentioned previously, having an interpretive community assists in improving the quality and rigor of the study (Gilligan et al., 2003). In the preliminary analysis, research assistants were involved as much as I was in thinking about possible codes and themes. We discussed each step of the process as a team, any changes that needed to be made, and any insights that had not yet been named. For the Listening Guide analysis, three of the interviews and two of the workshop transcripts were audited by a different research assistant. That is, my research assistants and I independently conducted an analysis of an interview or workshop using the Listening Guide and we met to compare analyses and notes. My advisor, Dr. Regina Langhout, and I also independently conducted an analysis of one of the interviews, meaning a total of four interviews out of the ten interviews were co-analyzed using the Listening Guide. The remaining six interviews I analyzed by myself. Also as mentioned previously, participants were invited back for a member check event, but only six of the nineteen participants were able to attend.

In sum, while there were steps put into place to nuance our interpretations of the data and the methodology and methods were grounded in a liberation psychology and decolonial approach to science, this dissertation represents how I/we<sup>25</sup> held these women's stories, their crystals, and what I/we saw from the way I/we held them up to the light. Amidst a sea of master narratives of Latina women's passivity and fatalism,

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<sup>25</sup> "I" is me, and "we" are my research assistants and the six participants who attended the member check event.

I aimed to shine a light on the unheard, the counter-narratives and counter-knowledges that suggest otherwise. The following results sections are one story, amidst many stories that could have been reported about daily resistance, re-existence, and freedom dreams among Latina women in Santa Cruz County.

The results identified here suggest that Latina women worked in several different ways to heal the wounds of different forms of racial capitalist settler colonial fragmentation and antirelationality between knowledge of the past, present, and future, bodies (their own, bodies of others, and bodies of land), and communities. I begin with describing pedagogies of resistance at home with their children as one of the primary forms of daily resistance to fragmentations (chapter three). For example, some women wanted their children to have a strong connection to their cultural roots and to be unapologetically proud of their non-Eurocentric appearance, such as their darker skin and curly hair. Implicit in these pedagogical practices is a love-politics that involves learning to self-love and to love others across differences (e.g., ethnic/racial identities). Chapter four goes into depth on how many of these women cultivated radical self-love for themselves and a praxis of *spiritual activism* (i.e., love across differences) that can be observed in their pedagogical practices with their children, or in the case of some women, future children. Chapter five bridges chapters three and four by examining how community support assisted in women's pedagogies of resistance, development of radical self-love, and critical awareness of social issues.

### Chapter 3: Pedagogies of Resistance

An important part of data collection for this project was having participants write a letter to a loved one about their dreams for social change. They could have chosen to write a letter to someone who had passed away, someone currently alive, or someone not yet born. In the letters reflecting on their freedom dreams for a loved one, the majority of women (seven out of the ten<sup>26</sup>) decided to write their letters to children: children they already have (3 participants), children they hope to one day have (3 participants), or even children they will never have (1). For Salma, a queer woman in her late 20s, it was curious to her that she wrote to a future child noting that she strongly did not identify with the concept of “motherhood” and felt it would never be safe to have a child given how unsafe and unjust she perceived the world to be.

Yet, there was something about the letter-writing exercise that elicited what I am calling an *epistemology of motherhood* when given permission to imagine and dream of social changes. That is, writing from the positionality of a mother elicited a way of sensing and knowing the world emerging from a loving and spiritual place. Interconnected with this motherhood epistemology, a voice of pedagogy was identified amongst every participant using the Listening Guide. These voices illuminated women’s pedagogical praxis as a “mother” (i.e., current/not-yet/never) in

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<sup>26</sup> The other three participants wrote their letters to their parents, but even two of these letters named their hopes and dreams for their children or other children.



efforts toward fulfilling social justice aspirations. The results for this chapter were identified by examining excerpts of these voices<sup>27</sup> and thematically organizing them.

I identified three major themes to describe how women in this study engaged in a daily pedagogical praxis of resistance. The first is that women negotiated the lessons they obtained from their mothers growing up and made decisions about what lessons they wanted to continue or discontinue with their children. Second, women were engaged in educating children (in this study this consisted of primarily sons) to learn against oppressive ways of being in the world (e.g., machismo, learning disrespect towards those who are Othered). The third is that women worked to reconnect their children to their roots, both in terms of reconnecting them with the earth and cultural knowledge in preparation for defense against a world that will likely oppress them and/or solicit their participation in perpetuating oppression. This chapter will develop these themes in the voices of the participants.

I argue in this chapter that through their pedagogy, women challenge racial capitalist settler colonial fragmentation and antirelationality (Gilmore, 2002, 2012; Martín-Baró, 1994; Melamed, 2015) through a daily praxis of resistance that helps their sons (re)learn and (re)connect with their history and understand their interconnectedness with life that surrounds them. Furthermore, these pedagogies are life-sustaining practices as well as emergent strategies (brown, 2017) that encourage re-existence and decolonial modes of life, existence, being, and thought that do not

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<sup>27</sup> I will discuss the full range of voices further in chapter four.

reproduce oppression (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Instead of reproducing the logics of oppression, through mothering, women (re)produce the revolution (Abdullah, 2012).

This chapter begins with background on the social construction of motherhood and what it means in the U.S. context for Women of Color, especially Black and Latina mothers. Following this background, I explain how many of the women in the study were raising young boys and how the current chapter addresses a gap in the literature by examining Latinx mother-son dyads, wherein Latina mothers teach their sons liberatory ideas. Next, I present the first theme: how womens' daily pedagogical practices were influenced by their own experiences being raised by their mothers. Then, the womens' daily pedagogical practices are described in depth: their efforts to raise critically aware, ethical, feminist boys (theme 2), and their efforts to connect their children to their roots, both the roots of the land and their cultural roots (theme 3). I then explore how the epistemology of motherhood influenced some women to write letters containing their freedom dreams to children they do not yet have or never plan to have. Finally, I discuss the meaning of these pedagogies as decolonial practices of re/membering (Coutin, 2016)

### **On the Meaning of Mothering**

It is well documented that mothering by Women of Color is imagined from a dominant colonial lens as deficient and morally flawed (Abdullah, 2012; Ross, 2016; Villenas, 2006), especially when it intersects with other marginalized identities such as being homeless, working class, or an immigrant in the U.S. Further, Mothers of

Color have been blamed for a variety of social ills, such as environmental degradation, climate change, to the Wall Street mortgage crisis (Ross, 2016). For example, Black women have been disproportionately represented in the media as welfare recipients and are the primary target for welfare queen stereotypes (Abdullah, 2012; Avery & Peffley, 2003), a stereotype that purports that Black women are purposely having children to exploit welfare payments and are lazy, criminal, lying, unfit mothers who refuse to work (Bullock 2013; Bullock, et al., 2001; Carpenter, 2012; Kohler-Hausmann, 2007).

As mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation, Latina women are also perceived as having an abundance of children in order to abuse the U.S. welfare system (Gálvez, 2011) and are hypervisible in media images portraying them as “responsible for the reproductive “invasion” of the United States; [...] and [...] as parents who purportedly don’t care about their children’s schooling” (Villenas, 2006a, p. 143). These racialized portrayals serve racial capitalist justifications to eliminate social safety nets (e.g., welfare; Ross, 2016) and obstruct reproductive justice, which includes the right to not have a child, the right to have a child, and the right to parent in safe and healthy environments (Ross, 2016).

The U.S. context is one that promulgates *anti-nurturing*, which brown (2017) describes as “the ways we in a western/US context are socialized to work against respecting the emergent processes of the world and each other” (p. 47). Some examples include learning to disrespect indigenous land, learning that the natural

world is to be controlled and pillaged to support consumerism, and learning to allow our bodies to get pathologized, medicated, and adjusted through cosmetics. This is akin to learning to normalize the metaphysical catastrophe described by Maldonado-Torres (2016). The examples of anti-nurturing brown provides are essentially about a context that makes it challenging for subjugated bodies, both human and non-human, to exist without oppression. Women's pedagogies of resistance, as will be described in this chapter, challenge anti-nurturing by teaching their sons to develop a critical awareness of the world around them and inculcating them with a reverence for life. For Mothers of Color, mothering then, is a deeply political act because mothers are seeking to nurture life amidst racial capitalist and colonially produced metaphysical catastrophes.

Mothering, like gender, is a social construct (O'Reilly, 2001; Ross, 2016) shaped by ideological prescriptions of who can mother, what it means to mother, and under what circumstances. The hegemonic embodiment of motherhood is one that is performed by a woman who is white, middle class, able-bodied, married, heterosexual, and able to stay at home with the children (O'Reilly, 2001). Moving beyond defining this hegemonic script, including that a "mother" is one who can biologically reproduce and give birth, Ross (2016) defines mothering as the radical concept of "creating, nurturing, affirming, and supporting life [...] the glad gifting of one's talents, ideas, intellect, and creativity to the universe without recompense [...]"

the imperative to build bridges that allow us to relate across...barriers” (p. xv) Ross (2016) goes on to say:

it is a radical act to nurture the lives of those who are not supposed to exist. Not supposed to grow old (Oscar Grant). Not supposed to speak up (Mumia). Not supposed to survive domestic violence (Marissa Alexander). Not supposed to walk across streets (Michael Brown). Not supposed to wear hoodies (Trayvon Martin). Not supposed to ask for help (Renisha McBride). Not supposed to play loud music (Jordan Davis). Not supposed to be old (Kenneth Chamberlain). Not supposed to be inside our homes (Kathryn Johnson). Not supposed to shop for toys at Walmart (John Crawford III; p. xvii).

As mentioned in the introduction, part of the imagination battle that women face is the colonial imagination that the Brown and Black body are killable and disposable. Indeed, to mother is to work against that colonial imagination with one’s own freedom dreams and imaginings about the possibility of life, of alternative realities where breathing without oppression is possible. Perhaps this is why when asked to write letters to a loved one about their dreams of social change, the role of motherhood called to seven of the ten women, even those who do not have children or plan to never have children.

Describing womanist mothering within African American communities, Abdullah (2017) describes mothering as “forward-thinking, proactive, and visionary. It goes beyond the moment that resistance struggles are won, and is rooted in the imaginings of alternative realities” (p. 58). Similarly, Villenas (2006) describes how the *decolonial imaginary* (Pérez, 1999) can be observed among Latina mothers who redefine what it means to mother and have the capacity to dream and prepare their

daughters for lives they did not have. Looking with the Chicana/Latina feminist literature, there is a prevalence of Latina mother's daily pedagogical practices within mother-daughter dyads. Yet, my analysis shows that many women across the larger sample of 19 participants were writing letters to sons or mentioned raising younger brothers. Raising boys had implications for the daily lessons women in the study enacted.

### **Mothering Shaped by Raising Feminist Boys**

Interestingly, five of the ten women who are the focus for this dissertation mentioned raising young boys and a desire for them to grow up with a feminist orientation. Katia, Sophia, and Camila are raising boys 2-4 years of age, and Natalia and Belen are raising boys 12-15 years of age. The raising of young boys also came to my attention through Florencia and Nuria's narratives, who although are not women who have birthed children, talked about being one of the oldest siblings in their families and responsible for caring for their youngest brother as if they were their primary guardians. When describing what it was like growing up in her interview, Nuria talked about the relationship between her mother and her little brother. She said, "when she gave birth to my little brother and had to go back to work, I pretty much raised him- I had to take care of him." Florencia's parents, for different reasons, were also unable to take care of her younger brother and she became his parental guardian while he was in high school. Florencia reflected, "And so I told him like, "you can come with me." I had no idea how I was gonna take care

of him like I could barely secure housing for myself.” In this way, seven of the ten women who are featured in this dissertation were directly involved in “mothering” boys in some form or another. The remaining three participants were either now much older and had raised a woman (Catalina) or did not have any experience playing a parental guardian role for someone (Alanis and Salma).

Many women described putting their hope for future social change in their children. For example, Belen wrote in her letter to her youngest son, “I want to tell you that my wish is for you to be a righteous person. To fight so you can have a voice and treat people with respect and equality,” (letter, translated from Spanish) and Sophia wrote to her toddler son, “I would like that you treat everybody with respect if you see old man or old lady struggling try to help them out” (letter). In their follow up one-on-one interviews, women who were raising boys articulated that their desires for their sons to be “righteous” or a “respect[ful]” person were in line with feminist values. As will be articulated in the section on teaching boys to be feminist, in their pedagogical examples, this involved their children embracing vulnerability, developing social-emotional intelligence, and letting go of macho values. These pedagogical practices are seriously needed to address the crisis of boys in the United States resorting to violence to resolve issues (e.g., aggression, homicide, suicide; Foster et al., 2001) and as I also argue, to resist ongoing metaphysical catastrophes (e.g., climate change, patriarchy, colonialism).

Looking within the psychological and Chicana/Latina literature on motherhood and pedagogy it is challenging to find contemporary empirical work on mother's efforts to raise feminist sons much less Latina mothers' efforts to raise feminist sons. The majority of the literature examining women's efforts in raising feminist sons was produced in the late 90's and early 2000's (e.g., see *Feminism & Psychology* Special Feature by Rowland & Thomas, 1996). Previous literature has included some studies on African American/Black mothers raising sons (e.g., Lee & Williams, 2001; O'Reilly, 2001), and some studies mention that they had Latina women in their sample but did not examine their feminist pedagogical practices with their sons exclusively (e.g., Lee & Williams, 2001; Thomas, 2001).

Current literature emphasizes mother-daughter dyads (e.g., Delgado Bernal et al., 2006). A dearth in the literature on mother's efforts to raise feminist boys may represent both the perception of urgency for young girls to learn feminism in order to de-ideologize (Martín-Baró, 1994; Montero, 2009) dominant narratives that are detrimental to themselves and their understanding of the world as well as the widespread misperception in our society that feminism pertains only to women. In other words, patriarchy is perceived as a women's issue, rather than an issue relevant also to men (especially as primary beneficiaries of male privilege) and everyone across the gender spectrum. To date, psychologists have examined feminist consciousness among white men (Majzler, 2016), Black men (White, 2008), and Latino men (Hurtado & Sinha, 2008), but have not examined in depth how



mother-son dyads contribute to the development of a feminist consciousness and praxis for Latino boys. Thus, this dissertation contributes to the body of literature in understanding the role of motherhood in dreaming for social change and resisting oppression daily, as well as what this means for raising boys into feminist men. The fact that these women are raising sons or younger brothers along with their own experiences being raised shape women's daily pedagogical practices of resistance.

### **Mothering Shaped by Being Mothered**

This section presents the first theme in this chapter, which describes Latina women's experiences being raised by their mothers and multiplicitous lessons they obtained. These examples demonstrate how women made decisions to keep life sustaining pedagogies learned from their mother's (e.g., hard work, persistence, feminist values), while disowning others, specifically lessons that facilitated the internalization of racism and modeled emotional distance. These lessons are first described in detail and are then followed by an analysis of how women in the study navigated these lessons and the Borderlands<sup>28</sup> of mothering, which then shaped their pedagogies with their sons or young boys they were raising.

### **Learning/Unlearning Internalized Racism**

The ways that Latina women teach their children/youth cannot be separated and understood apart from their parents' and grandparents' (e.g., mother and

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<sup>28</sup> Borderlands is capitalized to denote Anzaldúa's (1992) concept of "intensely painful yet also potentially transformative spaces where opposites converge, conflict, and transform" (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 242) rather than physical regions, or borderlands (lower case "b"), such as the Texas-Mexico border.

grandmother; Villenas, 2006b) pedagogical practices. In their testimonios, women described the complex and nuanced relationships they had with their mothers, often naming painful memories they had of their mothers, but also expressing compassion for their mothers as well as admiring their mother's strength and ability to draw on community resources when they were available. For example, Catalina and Katia both open their testimonios with how unwanted they felt by their mothers because of their preference for other children in the family who had more Eurocentric features (blue eyes, light-skin, blonde hair). Katia talks about a competition in the family about who could have the whitest child and the disappointment her family experienced when she was born, "And then came my sister, my sister is also white and she came with curly hair, and light colored eyes, and well, the whole family was happy, but when I come... when I come to life, it's like ((sigh)) "oh!" surprise... "you are not the color that we wanted," and that's where my story starts, there it was like ahh... eh.. I couldn't understand it ((crying))." (interview, translated from Spanish).

Catalina had a similar experience growing up. She reflected on how she realized her mother had a preference for an orphan child who embodied white features, "my mother did not understand, she always adored the white skin and blue eyes, green eyes. So my mother... loved this boy, he was the only one out of all of us that had very white skin and green eyes. So I was born with that" (interview, translated from Spanish). By not being the "right color" according to their mothers, Catalina and Katia learned about the painfulness of colorism and racism, experiences

that they recognized they did not want to pass down to their children. Yet, Catalina also recognized her mother's feminism in her ability to navigate oppressive circumstances and the ways she took care of the family. For example, Catalina shared, "and my mother, since she didn't know how to read and write, right? But super brave, and she was a feminist that had no idea she was a feminist right?" (interview, translated from Spanish). Thus, Catalina simultaneously understood that her mother both facilitated the internalization of colorism and racism while also holding feminist ideas.

In a similar vein, Natalia's mother thought she could protect her from experiencing racism by having Natalia assimilate as much as possible to whiteness. Natalia was denied learning Spanish and her Mexican heritage growing up, but experienced racism anyway. In her letter to her mother she wrote,

I do wish you had taught me spanish when I was a baby- my life would be easier. I don't understand how you thought our lives would be easier if we were "white"? That life decision you made for me and my brother was so irresponsible. However, I forgive you, because you were a baby when you had me at 16.

Natalia expressed the hurt she felt of having been denied access to her cultural heritage and for being taught that being Mexican is something to be shameful of. Yet, she simultaneously understood that her mother's intentions were not malicious. Her mother was raising her at 16 years old and raised Natalia in a way that she believed would make her life easier. Natalia, Catalina, and Katia share in common an understanding of how their mothers had internalized racist narratives, but also nuance

their perceptions of their mothers by noting their feminism or the limitations they experienced (e.g., raising a child at a young age).

### **Learning/Unlearning Emotional Distance**

Florencia and Camila described feeling like their mothers were not there for them emotionally, physically, or both, growing up. Florencia describes her mother not expressing her love enough and not attending events that were important to Florencia: in her letter she wrote, “My family (your family) doesn’t speak of love. We didn’t really see that or feel it growing up.” And in her interview she described how her parents did not attend award assemblies, “I got like, “student of this” or like, I won this thing or that. And like, my parents never went. It’s probably because they worked or they were tired, but I always took it as, “my mom never wants to go to these things.” Florencia acknowledges that it is likely her mother was not able to attend the assemblies or express love because of being tired from working so much to provide for the family. At the same time, Florencia also admires her mother’s work ethic. In the workshop, one of the photos she brought was of her mother:

So this first one is my mom working in the grape fields. Um, and it really represents hard work, it represents her like sacrifice um, like it represents how I feel like how I’ve gotten my work ethic and so I really- I’m really proud of her, like I wish I could work half as hard as my parents do.

This example demonstrates that although her mother was emotionally distant, she simultaneously understood that her mother was working hard to provide for their family. She is proud of her mother for her hard work and attributed her mother’s

example as how she obtained her work ethic. Yet, Florencia does not want to recreate the emotional distance she felt growing up with her future child. In her letter to her future child, Florencia described that the change she wants to make is ensuring that her child feels and knows they are loved: she wrote, “I want you, most of all, to feel loved by me, your father, your siblings, and your family @ large. I want you to hear the words ‘I love you’ daily.” Florencia grew up learning emotional distance, but after reflecting on how it made her feel unloved (“we didn’t really see that [love] or feel it growing up”), she decided to unlearn and not replicate this practice.

Camila also reflected on her desires for her mother to have been more emotionally available to her:

I feel that I blamed my mother a lot, “why didn’t she have time for us? Why-” but she was a *single mom*, living here in the United States with three children. And I say, “oh my god how did she do it?” How did she do it? Because now with my one kid I see how difficult it is to be a mom. How- how tiring it is, eh how expensive it is to live, and how... it takes a woman with a lot of strength (workshop, translated from Spanish).

Camila described that her mother did not have the time for her and her siblings, but becoming a mother herself helped her develop compassion for her mother as she understands how challenging it is to balance being a provider for the family (“how expensive it is to live”) as well as emotionally available (“how tiring it is”). This example illustrates both how difficult it was for her mother to not spend time with her and her siblings and how she also admired her mother’s strength and persistence to survive economic challenges.

Camila also noted how she felt a disproportionate burden was placed on her mother because of gendered expectations. She said in her interview

My mom would tell me things, you know, that when he [Camila's father] would like come home, that he expected the house to be spotless and in heels and like all makeup and makeup, and I was like, "what the hell" (CR: yeah) like- like if you've been with the kid all day, like you really like want to clean the house, like how?

Hearing her mother's stories and witnessing the damage that machismo can cause in the family shaped her desire to teach feminism to her son, a theme which will be described in the section on teaching sons to be feminist.

In sum, for Florencia and Camila, feeling their mothers physical and emotional distance shaped their desire to be more present with their children (or future children in the case of Florencia), while also respecting and understanding the reasons why their mothers were not able to be more present during their childhoods. Chapter four goes into depth about how participants in this study, such as Camila and Florencia unlearn practices of emotional disconnection by embracing practices of self-care and self-love.

### ***Connecting To The Literature: Navigating the Borderlands of Mothering***

From these examples, it is evident that women actively worked to take from their mothers life sustaining pedagogies (e.g., hard work, feminist values, persistence in challenging moments) and left behind what did not serve them (e.g., colorism, racism, not expressing love). In her reflections of her relationship with her mother and in her study with Latina mothers in Rural North Carolina, Villenas (2006)

explains how Latina daughters must often navigate the embodied and performative pedagogies of their mothers in the *Borderlands*, a liminal, gray space between space, time, generations and meanings of “womanhood.” In this space, Latina women experience how their mothers taught them both the oppressive and rebellious aspects of their culture, such as how to mimic dominant beliefs and gender roles in order to survive while simultaneously teaching daughters not to allow themselves to become subordinated. In these Borderlands, cultural dilemmas are always in the process of being worked out and teaching and learning is constantly being reinvented in order to balance between “old” and “new” practices of mothering (e.g., “liberated” vs. traditional gender roles).

For some women this meant navigating oppressive and liberatory pedagogies. In Natalia’s narrative for example, one can hear how her mother thought having her assimilate to whiteness would protect her and ensure her survival in a context hostile toward Mexican people. At the same time, Natalia described in her interview how her mother taught her skills that empowered her. For example, Natalia shared how her mother taught her knowledge of plants and how to appreciate a plant that many mistake for nothing more than a weed:

What made me the *happiest* though was when the purslane started coming up. Just naturally. It- it’s- it’s just- it’s- it’s wild- it’s a wild weed, but it was popping up in our gardens, and I’m like ((Natalia gaps)) “oh my god, this is what *my mom* used to pick and feed us on.” [...] she would, you know, um, fix that up with eggs and- and um.. cheese and yeah, we ate different things, so I don’t know, I just feel like we had a really good chil- I had a really good childhood. [...] because the other people... in the other [garden] plots, they were throwing it [purslane]- they were, you know, picking it and throwing it,

you know, composting it, I'm like ah! ((Natalia gasps)). I go, 'that's not a weed, you can eat that.' I go, 'It is a weed, but you can eat it.' And.. and so they asked me, "well, how did your mom make it?" (Natalia, interview).

Natalia talked about how her mother assimilating her to whiteness was an emotionally difficult part of her upbringing, but when she described how her mother taught her knowledge of purslane, she described having "a really good childhood." Her mother's knowledge of this weed demonstrated her mother's resourcefulness in finding a way to feed her children ("this is what *my mom* used to pick and feed us on") and allowed her to appreciate a plant that others were picking and throwing away. As will be described in the section on teaching sons connection to (plant) roots, Natalia's knowledge of plants and her connection to them are part of the lessons she teaches her son. Furthermore, Natalia's example shows how she negotiated her mother's lessons, leaving behind one lesson (e.g., assimilation to whiteness), and keeping/passing down another.

For many of the women in this study, reflecting on their relationships with their mothers meant learning to create new meanings to raise and love their *sons* (or younger brothers) differently and ensure certain lessons. Villenas writes that these Borderlands between mothers and daughters are "those shades of gray, those spaces of possibilities to make new meanings, to be creative and self-fulfilled, and to love our own daughters differently" (p. 157). In this next section, I describe in depth how mothers enacted pedagogies to ensure 1) their sons would grow up to be critically



aware/ethical, and feminist men, and 2) that their sons will root to their cultural heritage and histories as well as to the earth.

### **Pedagogies of Resistance With Children**

#### **Teaching Decolonial Modes of Being: Feminism and Critical Awareness**

This section will demonstrate how women in this study are raising young boys with another way of thinking, being, and seeing the world that are in line with decoloniality (Maldonado-Torres, 2016). The first section begins by demonstrating how women are teaching young boys to (a) live their lives in accordance with feminist values and (b) to be critically aware of the world so as not participate in the perpetuation of violence against emergent forms of life (all living creatures, human and non-human).

#### ***Teaching Sons to be Feminist***

Across the interviews, letters, workshops, and map drawings, participants described in one form or another how they desired their future children or current children to create social change in the world by becoming a moral and ethical person<sup>29</sup>. For women who were raising sons, this intersected with a desire to teach against masculine/patriarchal conditioning of boys in society and heal a disconnection to

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<sup>29</sup> It is important to note that the desire for sons to be “moral” or “ethical” in this study is not a reaffirmation of Christian views of morality, but rather a departure from it. The rigid Christian teachings that were brought to the Americas by European imperialists sought to use morality as a way to codify who was uncivilized and immoral (i.e., native) and who was fully human (i.e., European settlers), wherein acquiring morality entailed replacing indigenous cultural practices, histories, cosmologies and belief systems with European ones (Smith, 2012). The examples of male vulnerability, critical awareness of structures, and other feminist teachings along with teaching children learning about one’s roots and history outside of a colonial narrative represent this departure.

emotion and femininity. For example, when I asked Belen why it is important to never give up, she brought up teaching her son the importance of validating feelings:

Well for me, well if things happen and you cannot achieve something also assuming but, but, always there is- there is, fighting, fighting for that, for what you want. I think that- that when you accomplish something, it's a satisfaction. So, I think the same, um that when a- you don't accomplish something you have to have a person you trust and tell them and, and if you have to cry, cry because it's a valid feeling. So, it is what I have shown to- to my son, that- that a lot of roots in our culture, from many years we bring this idea that the man should not cry. So, I am trying to cut that part out and my son at four years old, when something happens to him or he cries from a feeling for something that he cannot have, I tell him "it's okay, it's okay, I know you are sad" I validate his feeling. (Belen, interview translated from Spanish)

In this segment one can hear Belen describing how she learned to validate her own emotions in challenging moments where she is not successful at achieving a goal, and connecting her praxis of validating her own emotions by validating her son's emotions. She affirms to her four year old son, "if you have to cry, cry because it's a valid feeling." Connection to one's emotions and feelings is an embodiment that is often subjugated and viewed as weak (Smith, 2012). Belen demonstrates her recognition of a type of anti-nurturing (brown, 2017) practice where children, especially boys, are taught to repress their feelings and believe that their feelings are not valid, especially when feeling sad. She acknowledges that "a lot of roots in our culture, from many years we bring this idea that the man should not cry" and that she needs to "cut that part out" or unroot this teaching before it becomes part of his worldview. Further, dis/membering (Coutin, 2016), or disconnecting, from one's

emotions can contribute to acceptance of oppression and the normalization of metaphysical catastrophes (Memmi, 1965; Montgomery & bergman, 2017).

Florencia similarly teaches her younger brother, a teenager, to embrace vulnerability and emotion. In reflecting on how she wants to be able to create a departure from the way she was raised, she talked about wanting to show her future children love, practicing love with herself and practicing showing love to her younger brother. An important part of her pedagogy is teaching him to be okay with being vulnerable and to help out around the house more. She said:

And I've had to learn how to provide that love through my experiences being loved by other people, but it feels so much better to love than it does to criticize. And so I think that that's what I want to show him, is that you can be vulnerable, you can talk about your feelings and it be okay and still be a strong person (CR: Mhm). So when I'm really stressed out, like I'll sit him down and I don't know what's gonna happen and I need his help like cleaning, just cleaning cuz he's not used to that. (Florencia, interview)

Florencia wants to instill in her younger brother the understanding that being “vulnerable” and a “strong person” are not mutually exclusive identities or ways of being in the world. In addition she is teaching her brother to help with cleaning and domestic work, which he had not been taught before by his parents by virtue of being male. Although Florencia and Belen are not explicitly describing that they want the boys they raise and care for to grow up “feminist,” their teachings are in direct contradiction to patriarchal expectations that boys grow up to be unemotional and distant from feelings and practices that are viewed as feminine (e.g., domestic labor). By having the boys they raise (re)connect with their emotions they are inculcating

their sons with a decolonial mode of being that will allow them to be able to sense and respond to oppression (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Montgomery & bergman, 2017), rather than to normalize or accept it.

Camila, on the other hand, is very explicit in wanting her son to grow up feminist. The following is her response to a follow up question regarding what she meant in her letter when she wrote that one of her dreams is for her son to become a “hombre de bien,” [good man]:

Um... well on the general level...I would like him to be respectful toward people ... men, women, gay, straight, it doesn't matter the color, to be like sensillo like humble umm ... to be helpful, to be of service to people, to be kind, um to be honest, you know, not to take advantage of people ever like ... like harm other people that are more vulnerable. On a personal level with his family ... I- I want him to be, I guess like a feminist Latino or like you know what, someone that is into equity, because I think that machismo can and can do a lot of damage, you know, I've experienced it with my husband's family, the older brother, it's been really rough and I think it *can* cause a lot of damage to- to families. With my grandpa I see it, you know, the damage that he caused to my grandma, and now my mom, you know, and it's like almost like indirectly to me. So... for him I want him to like value women as his equal, and to um ... you know, share the workload obviously, but also see women as more than just like a.. an object. You know, to see them as a whole, like brains and heart, beauty of course but just, everything that we are. Umm yeah, I want- and not to perpetrate that ... machismo. (Camila, interview, translated from Spanglish)

Camila is explicit that for her, her son growing up to be a good man means for him to become a “feminist Latino.” For Camila her visioning of her son becoming a feminist Latino underlines a *spiritual activism* (Anzaldúa, 2002; Keating, 2008), a desire for her son to perceive himself as interconnected with people across different identities and to pursue social justice on behalf of other marginalized groups. This is evidenced

by Camila wanting her son to be respectful to- “women, gay, straight, it doesn't matter the color”- and “not to take advantage of people ever,” especially those who are more vulnerable and marginalized in society. Camila teaches her son against the objectification of women by showing him to value women holistically: “brains and heart, beauty of course but just, everything that we are.” Objectification is a patriarchal and colonial mode of thinking that creates distance (between the subject and purported ‘object’), and enables the perpetuation of violence (Maldonado-Torres, 2016; Moane, 2011).

Similar to Florencia, Camila’s envisioning of her son’s feminist praxis also involves that he “share the workload” with women. In imagining creating a more socially just future and her son’s role in it, she reflects on the past and how machismo has had a negative impact in her family, both on her husband’s side of the family and intergenerationally with the way her grandmother and mother were treated by men in the family. Camila, like Belen, is interrupting this cycle of anti-nurturing (brown, 2017) pedagogies that teach people, especially boys, that they are entitled to control the bodies of women.

As will be discussed shortly, the socialization of boys into a toxic masculinity not only has implications for women, the boys themselves, and others on the gender spectrum who are subjugated, but also for the earth and the animals who are stewarded and cared for. In addition, Camila is very clear about avoiding spaces where toxic masculinity is present, whether that is taking place inside the home or

outside. In Figure 2 where her map is depicted, the bottom right hand corner illustrates a stick figure man with a mustache crossed out along with the word “toxic” written in purple marker crossed out next to it.

**Figure 2**

*Camila’s Map Drawing From The Workshop*



Naming this image as a representation for avoiding toxic masculine places in her daily life she explained:

I don't like to go to.. is where there are *machista* men ((laughs)) ((others laugh too)). I hate *machismo*, eh, and it's like "errgh!" ((angry noise)) like- like if I have to go, I'm there, but when there- there are times when it's in the family, where there is an uncle or whatever, (someone: oh, yeah) ((some in the circle make noises in agreement)) I can't, you know, like there's different types I tolerate, but when they cross the line I say, "I can't," I tell my husband, "I'm sorry, they are family, like no- no I can't, I don't tolerate it," [...] I can't be in environments where there is oppression *for women* and for any person, uh, and.. when there are toxic environments or toxic people, I can't. I avoid them, I say, "I'm sorry, but no." (Camila, workshop, translated from Spanish).

Her description of her map narrative illustrates how Camila is willing to teach against the grain of patriarchy even when it is located in the family. She does not “tolerate” machismo, nor “toxic environments or toxic people.” Camila’s willingness to challenge patriarchy within the family is also consistent with literature highlighting the home as a key site for resistance, particularly in cultivating political ideologies that resist the status quo (Kelley, 1993), and women’s role in helping their children imagine possibilities that work against the grain of power (Camp, 2004). Creating this boundary for herself and her son is an important part of her daily pedagogical praxis of resistance that facilitates re-existence, “the redefining and re-signifying of life in conditions of dignity” (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 3). In other words, Camila is raising her son to exist in a way that does not tolerate machismo and other forms of subjugation.

### ***Teaching Sons to be Critically Aware/Ethical***

The following examples of how women in this study were engaged in daily resistance through pedagogy speaks less explicitly to teaching boys to reject patriarchy and toxic masculinity and more to teaching a general ethos of caring for others who are marginalized and building an awareness of structural oppression. For example, when I asked Sophia to tell me more about the letter she wrote to her son and her dream that the elderly are not mistreated she responded:

Well, show him manners, uh- i- it starts in the home, if you do not show him to be a good person, they will: be- they will be influenced with bad, um, bad...um, bad [CR and S say “behaviors” at the same time] behaviors, you know, if one does not show them they will never be able to- to move forward

[be successful], so I say that not tell them in a rude way, but talking to them in a respectful, manner, they will teach themselves to- to treat people- like I have a friend who is in a wheelchair and my son greets her, talks with her, no- n-sometimes children are very... um ... They don't know what to do, and I say to him, "you have to treat her well, because she is different, just because she is in a wheelchair we cannot treat her bad, we need to treat her with respect because we are- we are all normal, just because we have a different...way, because there are some who might be in a wheelchair, there are others who might be handicap, but that has nothing to do with it." [giving/not giving respect], so he needs to teach himself to- to respect everyone, it doesn't matter what ethnicity they are, or what religion they are. (Sophia, interview, translated from Spanglish)

Sophia wants to ensure that her son does not deny humanity and respect to people who are different (e.g., "it doesn't matter what ethnicity they are, or what religion they are"), especially if they are part of a marginalized group, such as her friend who has a disability and uses a wheelchair. She wants her son to acknowledge people (e.g., "my son greets her, talks with her") rather than ignore and invisibilize them. Invisibilizing or distorting representations of marginalized groups contributes to their oppression (Moane, 2011). Sophia picked up that one of the distortions of people who are different is that they are not "normal." Sophia challenges this structural and ideological pathologization of difference and its use in justifying oppressive treatment by saying "we are all normal." This is an important daily tool of resistance for Sophia as she helps her son who has autism navigate the world and also educates him to not perpetuate similar violence that he might experience. Sophia, like Camila described in the previous section, also confirms previous research (e.g., Camp, 2004) that the



home is a key site of everyday resistance when she said teaching him ethical manners “starts in the home.”

For Natalia, her pedagogy also begins in the home with teaching her son to be critically aware of what is happening around him. This comes up after asking her how it feels to be asked about her hopes and dreams for the future:

I- it's good. ((Natalia and CR laugh)) I mean to be asked about my hopes and dreams, I mean- .. at least I still have them, you know. There- I'm still positive about it eh- you know, you know there's a lot of negative things going on in this world and, you know, especially by our government, and you just gotta keep- the only way that I can- I can personally DO:.. on my- my level, is to teach my son, you know. Teach him ethical things- ways of being, um, open his eyes, I tell him, you know, you gotta be aware- that's the one word I always tell him, be AWARE you know, be- open your eyes and *see* the world, see- when we go outside, I'll- I'll ask him like, “what do you see out here?” And he'll say, “what do you mean?” I'm like, “Well, you know what I see?” ((laughs)) and he goes- “I- I see life.” I go look it, “everything is alive [son].” (CR: Mm) I go, “we're living.” I go, “the people around us are living we- we- we're happy, we- we're- we're healthy, we're okay.” Because that's the most you can even ask for. (Natalia, interview)

Natalia feels that with all the oppressive and “negative things” happening in the world she can most strongly resist oppression by teaching her son and is what she can personally do on her “level.” Her teachings at the micro level of her day to day life involve having him open his eyes, and “*see* the world” or shift his perspective to see that “everything is alive.” Montgomery and bergman (2017) note that under Empire<sup>30</sup>, “plants, animals, and other nonhuman creatures were no longer kin but objects to be dissected and consumed” (p. 86). In other words, under racial capitalist settler

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<sup>30</sup> Montgomery and bergman's (2017) word to describe the organized destruction caused by oppression.

coloniality, our “kin” become objects whose lives are made meaningless, relegating them to be easily “dissected” or terminated. They go on to write about their vision of a world that is non-oppressive, a world that acknowledges that “everything is alive and connected. Mind and body, human and nonhuman, joy and sadness, are intertwined with one another” (Montgomery & bergman, 2017, p. 87). Further, Natalia’s pedagogy of helping her son understand and revere the life that surrounds him resists the dis/memberment of Empire, or more specifically, the metaphysical catastrophes of racial capitalist settler coloniality. Additionally, for male socialized people to notice and see that everything is alive as part of an ethical practice is crucial in a society defined by death and metaphysical catastrophe (Maldonado-Torres, 2016). That is, our society cultivates death and destruction by denying the right to life or in the case of marginalized people, denying full humanity (Maldonado-Torres, 2016).

One of the ways that our society harms life is through consumerism and disposal of trash and toxic waste to areas inhabited by poor People of Color (Connell & Pearse, 2015). Like Natalia, Belen also wants her son to develop an awareness, specifically with regards to how consumerism negatively impacts life in other countries. Sharing with others in the workshop about what she wrote to her son in the letter she said:

I tell my son that I love him a lot in that letter, but the most important thing is that we need to educate them, because we know that this country produces a l-lot of consum- brings a lot of consumption. (CR: Mhm) and alerts people to buy and buy and if we go to where the dump is, and- and I don’t want this

country to fill other countries- send trash to poor countries from here, because in my country.. uh- I heard that- that they sent trash to bury there, that is not just, that our- these countries- it's true they have poverty, but they have a different environment and that no- no- I am against extreme consumerism. (Belen, workshop, translated from Spanish)

Belen alerts her son to become critically aware of “extreme consumerism” because it will have a negative impact on people and the environment in places her son might not see. This critical awareness she is inculcating is akin to Freire’s (1970, 1998) concept of *conscientización* that encourages people to “read the world” in socio-political and historical context in order to imagine a more socially just world. Moreover, In her interview she explains in depth what is mentioned here with regards to hearing that trash from other countries, like the United States, is sent to El Salvador to be buried in large pits near people’s homes. Indeed, egregious practices have taken place historically. For example, Watkins and Shulman (2008) citing Epstein (2003) report that between 1964 and 1992 the Texaco corporation dumped approximately 20 gallons of toxic waste in remote areas of the Ecuadorian Amazon, polluting over two million acres of rainforest.

Belen wants her son to learn about practices to avoid, such as consumerism, that harm impoverished people in other countries and the environment. Belen also resists the notion that a country or area being poor is ethical justification for dumping trash or sending toxic waste. This can be heard when she says “it’s true they have poverty, but they have a different environment.” In the following section in educating children about roots, Belen’s narrative of resistance becomes more clear as she

reclaims the story of El Salvador and educates her son about the natural “riches” in the country that are often ignored from dominant perspectives.

There is evidence to suggest that mothers’ desire for their sons to grow up to be moral beings who move through the world with a strong sense of ethics is present across racial groups (Lee & Williams, 2001). In an interview study with 11 African American, 10 white, and 2 Latina mothers, teaching their son’s “good citizenship” and to be moral/ethical individuals was important to all mothers, albeit prioritized differently (Lee & Williams, 2001). That is, for African American and Latina mothers, teaching their sons to be responsible and ethical people was third on their list of priorities after other teachings such as spirituality (African American mothers) and a religious connection to god (Latina mothers). At the top of their lists was teaching their sons to be compassionate/understanding with others (Latina mothers), and developing a good self-esteem (African American mothers). In contrast, white mothers emphasized teaching their sons to be moral and ethical as the first priority. This difference in priorities may signal how Mothers of Color must teach their sons to survive a racist and hostile world as the first priority while also balancing teaching them how to behave morally and not perpetuate violence. Building on Lee and Williams’ (2001) study, the results do not suggest a particular order of priority (I did not ask them to prioritize lessons) but expand on the specific ways that Latina women imagine their Latino sons being in the world in ways that do not perpetuate oppression and destruction of life, but rather foment social change.

This section illustrated how women's dreams for social change were intertwined with their pedagogical practice of making sure their sons learned moral and ethical behavior in order to enact socially just changes. This involved teaching their sons to adopt feminist practices (encouraging vulnerability, taking on domestic labor, treating women with respect), and ethical practices that involved helping their children to treat people with respect across differences (helping them be aware of oppressive practices toward marginalized groups, seeing life, as well as the consequences of disrespecting life). A big part of women's daily resistive pedagogical practices involved resisting dominant narratives. Women educated their son's to resist narratives about what it means to be male or a "strong person," about what is alive (e.g., Natalia showing her son that everything is alive), and that sending trash to poor countries is justified (e.g., Belen wanting her son to think about consumerist practices). The following section expands on women's narrative resistance as part of their daily pedagogy and praxis by showing how women helped their children to reclaim their roots, both their connection to the environment and to their cultural heritage.

### **Teaching Their Sons Connection to Roots**

This section explores the third theme of this chapter, which is how women wanted their sons to strengthen roots. Although interconnected, I present this theme in two sub-sections: connections to the roots of the earth and connection to cultural roots. These forms of daily pedagogical practices speak strongly to one of the urgent

tasks of liberation psychology, which is the recovery of historical memory in order to recuperate one's identity and imagine alternatives to the current social order (Martin-Baró, 1994). Building off themes of the previous section, women recovered historical memory by helping their children re/member (Coutin, 2016) a connection to the earth (e.g., developing a relationship to earth and protecting it) and a connection to their cultural roots (e.g., learning about Mexican history, being proud of their non-European phenotypes). Both were taught with the intention of resisting erasures in their education and supporting their children's emotional well-being in preparation for moments where they might experience discrimination or oppression. They dreamt that their children would live free of oppression while also learning to avoid perpetuating oppression.

### ***Connection to the Roots of the Earth***

Through our educational system and our racial capitalist and colonially structured society, people have less of a connection to the earth. The forced forgetting of our relationship to the earth allows for the justification of the earth's pollution, the displacement of indigenous people from their land, and other anti-nurturing atrocities. Katia noted that we are socialized into these anti-nurturing practices that force us to forget our relationship to the earth. In the workshop Katia talked about the importance of her son having roots. When I asked her in our interview to clarify what that meant she said:

Yes sometimes we forget, that is planting ourselves, knowing that- it's that it's being like in connection with your whole being, is for me rooting, right? It's

like being um... well, for example, it serves me, if I will be rooting, and I go do exercise, I put my feet with no socks in contact with the earth, it's like enjoying right now what I have and- and I believe that with the kids doesn't happen, including now it's like you take care of them and you over protect them from everything, right? It's- it's "don't step there!" or "don't play there" or "ay no, not the puddles because they are contaminated." (CR: Mm) Like we no longer give them permission for them to make their proper roots, right? It's, like it no longer, that no longer happens. And to take care of- I don't know if- or perhaps I haven't looked a lot, but I don't see a lot of programs where they involve children with nature, if you do you will pay a lot of money in like the private schools where they would show it, but outside I have not seen a program where they focus on the children to- for example, my son loves to search for earthworms, and go with his bucket and find them, it's eh- that is good for them. I get worried because we are becoming roboticized a lot, right? It's now. And what-? You will no longer even know how to survive, if one day you need it, no longer. That we need contact with nature and we need our feet very... planted. (Katia, interview, translated from Spanish)

Katia shares how she sees rooting with the earth and developing "proper roots" as being in "connection with your whole being," which is indicative of a bodymindspirit epistemology (Lara, 2014), that evokes a holistic understanding of self-care. For herself and her son to root to the earth is part of a practice of personal well-being and potentially allows for anti-capitalist understandings of life, such as "enjoying right now" what she has and being grateful for what the earth has to offer. Katia's praxis of rooting to the earth resists the "roboticization" of a racial capitalist society that socializes children to distance themselves from the earth (e.g., "don't step there!" or do not jump in the puddles because they are contaminated) or only provides such an education within privatized schooling. Additionally, by distancing and disconnecting ourselves to the earth we no longer "even know how to survive" on the earth. In our

interview, Katia and I discuss the plant knowledges (e.g., plant medicine) and hidden treasures of the earth that we have become disconnected from.

For Belen, teaching her son about the treasures of the earth in El Salvador serves to reconnect her son to the earth as well as resist racial capitalist narratives about “third world” countries that suggest they only offer poverty, which often justifies the logic and the practice of sending trash and polluting the land. In our interview I shared that my mom remembers playing in the trees a lot as a child. I asked Belen if she had similar experiences growing up. She responded:

It is something really nice because you learn to play with- with what there is (CR: Mhm) and it's that. You climb trees, look for fruit, the cashew fruit, it comes from there- you can see that it has the seed. My son loves it, and I tell him, “do you know that this- do you know what grows in El Salvador?” and when he was able to go, um he could see and says “Yes mama, yes, yes I saw it” and it's intriguing, the only fruit they has its- the- its seed on the outside, ((unclear)) it has it inside. You know why it's the seed? Usually all the fruits, you eat it and the seed is in the middle, way inside. So the cashew fruit has it on the outside. That is the seed that you take out- that here they sell a lot. And so, for the plant to be born, it's the same. You leave it in the earth and- and it comes out. (Belen, interview, translated from Spanish)

In her account of remembering her childhood, Belen talked about growing up learning to connect and play with “what is there” in the natural environment. She invoked these memories with her son and taught him about the plants that she grew up with in El Salvador, specifically the cashew fruit that produces the cashew nut<sup>31</sup>.

This knowledge is particularly important for him to learn as a child that is growing up

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<sup>31</sup> I realized in this moment my own disconnect with plant knowledges. I googled “cashew fruit” later that evening and was surprised that the cashew nuts I had been avoiding eating in my trail mix all these years came from this special plant.



in the United States and not El Salvador as he is less connected to the land there by virtue of not being physically present. Additionally, Belen's memory and connection to the environment in El Salvador serves an important politically resistive purpose in reframing the dominant deficit narratives and socially unjust practices. When we talked about secretive companies entering the country to bury trash near where she lived she continued on to say:

Yes, well yes they do enter, um, like what we talked about how, our country um, it's true it is poor, but it also has riches. [...] I am going to show you something ((gets up to get something)). I have a present from my daughter. There is a tree that produces- that produces something, and if you wanted, they used it before, this is like wood ((shows me a beautiful pair of hand made wooden earrings)) you can touch it, but this is called, in El Salvador they call it, *Morro* in México I think that they call it *Jicara*. It's like a ball like a round round ball, (CR: mhm) people part it in half and out come two, like a bowl, we call it *huacal*. then- then we can use it to eat. So, one knows that it's possible- you leave it alone for a little while and with rain fall it disappears, because it's wood. Do you know what happens with wood? It dissolves, right? It disintegrates easily. So, everything plastic is not the same, so, the companies it's what they've done. So, one believes- when they don't know- don't know that this is a treasure, this isn't- isn't going to harm the environment. This is a gift that my daughter sent me. (CR: Mmm) These little earrings and they are of this material, do you realize? (Belen, interview, translated from Spanish)

Belen educated me about a second plant, *Jicara*, which comes from the Calabash tree, and in doing so shared a powerful lesson about possibility. While companies create products from harmful plastic and toxic materials that cannot be returned to the earth without harming it, *Jicara* is one of the "riches" and "treasure[s]" that allows Belen to imagine a world without environmental degradation. This plant, which can be used to create a variety of biodegradable materials, including the delicate earrings she held in

her hands, challenges both the narrative of the impossibility of a more sustainable world and that economically impoverished countries have no “riches.” And of course, she argued that a country's economic impoverishment does not justify harming the environment and its people.

It is clear that Belen wants her son to root to the earth and the land in El Salvador specifically, in order to protect it. Figure 3 depicts one of Belen’s zine page contributions, which further solidifies the importance of plants and the pride she has for the plants in her home country of El Salvador. The image is of El Salvador’s national flower, the Flor de Izote. The drawing is captioned “Proudly... the Hizote.”

**Figure 3**

*One of Belen’s Zine Contribution Pages Depicting the Flor de Izote*



Sophia also desires for her son to participate in a praxis of protecting the earth. When I asked her to explain why she dreams of her son not throwing trash on the ground she responded:

Well, showing him since he's little that when... that- if he throws something, that he picks it up, that he throws it in the trash can, showing him to- to recycle as well like:, having like how to separate the trash (CR: mhm) and- and recently a- e- we started doing that, (CR: mmm) because sometimes where I live they just throw the trash like that, and- and- and they go to the landfill and- and pretty much everything that is happening, (CR: mhm) now that: the ice is- there where the polar bears are dying, (CR: mhm) everything is coming to an end, (CR: mhm) and I say, we need to look for another way to inculcate children, because tomorrow what will be their future? (CR: Mm) yeah. (Sophia, interview, translated from Spanglish)

Sophia is conscious of the landfills and the impact that throwing trash is having on animals, such as the polar bears that are dying from climate change. By showing her son to recycle and separate trash, Sophia is trying to secure a future not only for her son (e.g., “what will be their future?”) but also for the planet. By “inculcat[ing]” her son when he is little, she hopes that he will carry out a practice that avoids harming the earth throughout his lifetime.

In these examples, women's dreams of a sustainable planet and of protecting the earth was connected to their daily practice of educating their children to (re)connect with the earth. Katia gave her son permission to play in puddles and collect earthworms allowing him to acquire plant knowledges and a sense of holistic well-being, Belen taught her son of the “riches” of the plants in El Salvador and challenged narratives of the impossibility of sustainable futures as well as the

treatment of economically poor countries, and Sophia taught her son to recycle, thinking about the impact that pollution will have on her son's future and the future of the planet. These are spiritually activist (Anzaldúa, 2002; Keating, 2008) practices that teach their sons to care and advocate for the well-being of the planet as well as other bodies that might be subjugated under racial capitalist settler coloniality (e.g., People of Color). To (re)connect with the earth is a life sustaining pedagogy that thwarts racial capitalist settler colonial fragmentation and antirelationality. Freedom dreaming also led women to enact a pedagogical praxis of (re)connecting their sons to their cultural roots.

### ***Connection to Cultural Roots***

For some of the mothers, their daily pedagogical practice of resistance involved healing the fragmentation of knowledge about their cultural history in preparation for moments where they might experience discrimination or other forms of oppression. Camila wrote in her letter to her toddler son:

I know that at some point you might experience disappointment or the not so great things in life, like racism, prejudice, bias, maybe a broken heart [...] But I will do my very best to prepare you for these moments to build emotional resilience. I wish for you, that you will be rooted in our values que son tan bonitos, familia, comunidad, taking care of our elder, Dia de Los Muertos. Our generosity que nos distingue a nuestras familias Latinas. [...] I want you to be around other children that look like you and speak your language. I want to give you roots and wings! (Camila, letter to her son)

In explaining her dreams in her letter, she said to me in our interview:

I want him to be proud and like secure in himself, you know. And also I want him to have compassion like, our family history, I think some Latinos forget where they come from, you know, the- the famous Latinos supporters and I'm

just like ... you forget that maybe like you're not- maybe tu tienes papeles [maybe you have papers] but what about your grandma or people that came before you, (CR: Mhm) so I want him also to have that level of compassion for the- the other Latino communities immigrants, you know, cause he's in a way- he's gonna have some privilege, you know, we live in [California beach town] you know, his parents are educated, and I don't want him to see- to forget- como todo lo que tuvo que pasar a nuestra familia [everything that our family had to go through] to be where we are right now. (CR: Mhm) So that's what's important for me to give him that, yeah. (Camila, interview, translated from Spanglish)

Camila addresses the “racism, prejudice, bias” that she predicts her son will encounter in his lifetime. Thus, she wants to be able to support and “build emotional resilience” by having him become rooted in their cultural values and be proud of where he comes from. Camila also explained that she does not want her son to be one of the Latinos who “forget where they come from” and perpetuate forms of violence such as xenophobia toward undocumented Latinx people. She noted, “he’s gonna have some privilege” at the same time that she recognized that he might also experience oppression. For her son, teaching him about his cultural history and heritage gives him “roots and wings<sup>32</sup>” or the “roots” to remember his past and defend himself against structural oppression as well as the “wings” to be a change and help create a more socially just world.

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<sup>32</sup> I used Camila’s phrase as part of the title of this dissertation because I felt it captured the essence of what the women in this study were doing- reconnecting with the past or building “roots” in order to build “wings” and move toward creating a world driven by the desire for social justice.

Natalia is also healing the wound of cultural fragmentation for her son. Even though the letter she wrote in the workshop was addressed to her mother who passed away, she wrote about her daily pedagogical resistance with her son:

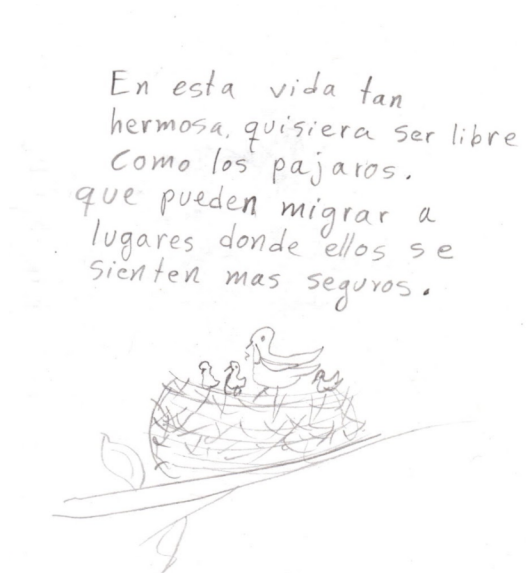
Everyday I show my son how much he is loved. I speak something in Spanish everyday. I tell him what I know about our ancestors from Arizona, from Mexico. We celebrate Dia de los Muertos and Los Posadas every year we participate in our [neighborhood] community. My son will be proud to be who he is, his Mexican-American and Puerto Rican (his dad) heritage. I have plans to take my son to Mexico every year, go to a different Mexican village without too many tourists. He will learn the authentic ways of Mexico. Be proud of himself! Be proud of his family- he will do something to change this world so others do not hate, do not put up borders. (Natalia, letter)

Like Camila, Natalia also wants to root her son in cultural traditions like Dia de Los Muertos, a day to remember and honor the dead. In contrast to how she was raised (i.e., assimilated into whiteness), she wants her son to be proud of all of his roots, his “Mexican-American and Puerto Rican heritage.” Natalia talked in her interview about the pain of being severed from knowledge of her roots and the Spanish language, especially because being raised learning Spanish would have helped her more effectively connect with her neighbors in her current neighborhood. To change this, Natalia took it upon herself to teach herself Spanish and is also speaking Spanish everyday to teach her son. A similar resistive element also emerges here; Natalia wants her son to connect to his roots as a mechanism for him to also not perpetuate violence. Just as Camila does not want her son to be xenophobic to other Latinos, Natalia does not want her son to hate and contribute to “put[ing] up borders.”

Indeed, one of the freedom dreams that was expressed was a desire for a world that allowed for people to be able to move freely between nations, to be able to unite with family whenever they wanted, and to be able to migrate to safety. This reflects how women resisted not only intellectual historical erasures and fragmentations to cultural roots, but also physical ones. Figure 4, for example, shows another one of Belen's zine contributions, which depicts a mother bird feeding her baby birds inside a nest on a tree branch with the phrase that translates to "in this life so beautiful, I would like to be free like the birds that can migrate to places where they feel most secure."

**Figure 4**

*Another of Belen's Zine Contribution Pages Depicting Her Dream for The Ease of Migration*



Furthermore, women's practices of rooting their children to their cultural roots (and to nature as discussed in the previous section) is a daily form of resistance that helps them to build a world that allows for the freedom of movement and the dismantling of *border imperialism* (Walia, 2016), the creation and maintenance of borders for racial capitalist imperatives.

Relatedly, being able to connect with family is important for being able to connect back to one's roots, back to themselves, and cultivate self-love.

For example, in her letter to her future child, Florencia wrote:

I want you to live in a world where everywhere is safe and you can freely travel to visit our big family in Mexico. [...] I want you to live in a world where you aren't afraid of how someone will treat you because of how you look. I want a world where you are proud of the curly hair your mama gave you." (Florencia, letter to her future child)

Florencia echoes some of the sentiments of other women who want their children to be able to "freely travel" across borders. Additionally, Florencia also showed that being able to connect to one's roots is important not only for pride in one's culture, but also pride in one's non-eurocentric appearance. She dreams that her future child will not be treated based on how they look and that they will be proud of the "curly hair" that she will pass down to them.

Sophia is also invested in helping her son to cultivate self-love, especially as a Person of Color and a person with a disability. When asking for clarification about what opportunities she would like to give to her son, she responded:

I provide him like that, like take him to- to different environments, he... sees like those who are homeless or he sees people who are handicap, or like to-



give him the opportunity to see, that not everything is um: perfect, (CR: mhm) because there are things that are very difficult to see, (CR: mhm) like that and- like it's not, um, it's not fair that they discriminate no- none of that and- and they want to inculcate him with- because he's brown, because he's, you know, different or because he has a disability-, giving him the opportunity to explore that he is- he is unique, that each person is different, (CR: mmm) that- that he has: the right to one day wake up and say, "you know what? I'm proud of who I am, because not a lot of kids have this:" you know? (Sophia, interview, translated from Spanglish)

Sophia ensures that her son has the opportunity to know that he is not alone in the world as a marginalized person and that not everything is perfect. She educates her son to embrace his brown skin and disability and to know that he has the right to wake up and be proud of who he is. Although Sophia is not explicitly discussing with her son his culture or heritage, she is helping him to to develop defense against a racial capitalist settler colonial society that will likely try to subjugate him because of his non-Eurocentric embodiment (Maldonado-Torres, 2016; Taylor, 2018; Tovar, 2020). As with other women, such as Florencia and Camila, Sophia fears her son will be discriminated against. Yet, she hopes her daily pedagogy will create a buffer from these experiences.

As demonstrated in the two sections on connecting to roots, both the earth and one's culture, fostering these connections is important for the recovery of historical memory that allows one to understand the self and others through a lens outside of colonialism. Because the majority of the women in this study are raising boys, their daily pedagogical practice of resistance carries a special significance for building toward their freedom dreams. It was interesting that the letter writing exercise elicited

a strong connection between dreaming about building a more socially just future and motherhood, even for women who do not have children or never will. In the following section I explore why this might be the case.

### **Why Future Child?**

Florencia is one of the women who had some experience raising children (her younger brother) but did not identify as a “mother.” When I asked her why she wrote her letter to her future child, she responded:

Um, I chose to write it to a future child because.. [...] I think when I’m thinking of a future child it’s like I- I need to be, I want to have healed myself fully by that point by the time that I have a child. And- well to an extent, I mean heal myself to the point that I can. But at this point in time I’m still developing, I’m still growing, I’m still, you know, I’m still working on loving myself. And, when I imagine like my future family like I imagine so much love in that situation in that environment. [...] And so, I guess it’s like, this is still a dream, like a goal that I have is to have a family and writing a letter to my child it’s almost like another commitment of- [...] I wanna give you this life that I co-created with somebody or a life that I adopt- that I choose to commit myself fully to that was brought in by somebody else. I just wanna give you love, and I wanna show you that loving people is okay like, life can be so much more beautifully lived if you have more love in your life. So it’s like a commitment, I’d say. (Florencia, interview)

Florencia’s letter to her future child represents an opportunity for her to commit to healing herself and fulfilling her dream of building a family with “so much love.” This love that she wants to show is not only for her child to love themselves but to also help them understand that “loving people is okay.”

However, for Salma, speaking from an epistemology of motherhood does not coincide with her plans in life. When I asked Salma if she ever planned to give the

letter she wrote to her future child, she let me know that she was not interested in becoming a mother and explained her reasoning with the following:

Mm, I have never wanted kids, it's also no like, "oh I hate kids," that is, no. Always- for me... not having kids is a political decision more than anything, to push back against the expectations on women, that by force we need to be maternal, that if we don't have that part we are incomplete, you know? For me it means many things to not have a kid. More than anything in these times, I say in reality what quality of life will my son or daughter have? [...] That is, they will be born and they will see all these walls, the contamination, all the animals extinct, so I go very like, well, to that extreme and I feel that it's not a situation in which I would want to bring someone to the world, despite how cute and "oh, how beautiful [to have a kid]" that is, no. It's not something that I would want someone to experience." (Salma, interview, translated from Spanish)

For Salma, her decision not to reproduce is out of concern that her future child will grow up in an oppressive environment ("in reality what quality of life will my son or daughter have?") in addition to resisting the idea that women must become mothers to be complete. The reason why she wrote her letter from the position of a potential mother was because the letter-writing exercise encouraged participants to imagine a world where anything was possible. She explained in the following:

The first thing that occurred to me was, "oh how crazy," and I said, "no" and I started to think about more things and I thought about who [to write to], but that idea [of a kid] kept sneaking into my mind, and I'm like "oh why?" I said, "how crazy, that is, don't pay attention to it, I don't want kids." Um so when you said that the world could be how you want it- I feel like that was what triggered me to think about that, because again, my stance is political more than anything, like the fact that everything could be possible, like it gave me an opening to give myself permission to feel like, well, that I could have kids. So that to me was super interesting. (Salma, interview, translated from Spanish).

It is interesting that Salma's decision represents the different sides of reproductive rights: the right not to reproduce, especially in an environment that would be harmful to children, and the right to reproduce in an imaginary where the world allows for reproductive justice. The freedom dreaming exercise allowed her to give herself "permission" to feel like she could have kids and it seemed to emerge as a way for her to think about the social changes she wants to nurture. It is important to note that Salma is deeply involved in her community and nurtures social change by educating youth and farmworkers and facilitating conditions for empowering women at her workplace, all without needing to become a mother. This epistemology of mothering is consistent with Ross's (2016) concept of radical mothering that includes biological mothering but also expands beyond it to include the act of "creating, nurturing, affirming, and supporting life [...] the glad gifting of one's talents, ideas, intellect, and creativity to the universe without recompense [...] the imperative to build bridges that allow us to relate across...barriers" (p. xv). Furthermore, women need not fulfill the script of biological motherhood in order to "raise the revolution" (Abdullah, 2012), build toward freedom dreams, and resist oppression through daily pedagogy.

### **Discussion**

Why does it matter for the future that these women are teaching or planning to teach their future children to be ethical, critically aware, and feminist and in the particular ways previously outlined (e.g., connecting to emotion, the earth, cultural roots)? Why it matters greatly can only be understood when considering the colonial

legacies these pedagogical practices disrupt. Under coloniality, land is one of the greatest sources of wealth in the United States (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Furthermore, the possibility of land ownership reaffirms white privilege or “whiteness as property,” wherein those who embody whiteness can own, whereas People of Color are “ownable” (Harris, 1993). Moreover, from the lens of Western reason, the land is feminized (McClintock, 1995; Moane, 2011) and viewed as something to “rape,” conquer, and dominate, upholding “male militarized possession of the earth” (McClintock, 1995, p. 4). Indeed, colonialism is a gendered and racialized system of domination and both colonialism and patriarchy reinforce each other (Moane, 2011).

Historically, it is observed that control of the land and generation of wealth for white settlers is inextricably linked to racialized control of women’s reproduction and labor. For example, during the antebellum period, children inherited the status of enslaved Black mothers who were largely made to cultivate the land. Thus, there was an imperative to force (e.g., through rape) Black female reproduction in order to (re)produce wealth and profit by increasing the number of enslaved laborers (Morgan, 2004). Of course, as described earlier in this chapter, the contemporary image of the “welfare queen” demonstrates that Black women’s reproduction is discouraged when viewed as a drain on state resources and a threat to profit for those in power.

For Latina women there are obvious contradictions in the logic that seeks to control Latina women’s reproduction. On one hand, there is a desire to exploit Latinx laborers through low-wage work, such as through farm labor in the agricultural

industry, while simultaneously condemning through disparaging language and violent xenophobic policies the presence of Latinx people in the United States (whether undocumented or not; Chavez, 1992) and the reproduction of so-called “anchor babies.” Racialized control of women and reproduction and the generation of wealth through control of land are part of stubborn legacies of colonial/imperial, white supremacist, patriarchal logics and practices. Women in this study are challenging this control of reproduction through their own resistive (re)production, wherein they are teaching their sons (or younger brothers) to thwart these legacies fomented by a *paradigm of disconnection*, cultural control, and fragmentation, which are described next.

Colonial control is made possible through the concept of distance (Smith, 2012). A concept akin to distance is *individualism*, where a person sees themselves as separate from the physical environment and community. Distance in imperial and colonial rule allows for ruling from a distance, and therefore separates individuals from the people they govern and their impact on bodies. This very impersonal distance from everything and everybody is viewed as objective, rational, and effective (Smith, 2012). Distance is a masculine and patriarchal embodiment. From a young age, boys are culturally prescribed a *paradigm of disconnection* and are taught to sever relationships with their mothers, with women, and eventually others (Dooley & Fedele, 2001). To be in relationship with people and the earth is to be weak, emotional, and irrational. Disconnection and antirelationality (Gilmore, 2002;

Melamed, 2015) is the fodder for the creation of racial difference and Othering. Legacies of colonial and imperial rule also seek to disconnect people, particularly people from historically marginalized groups, from knowledge of their history and cultural epistemologies. In this study, I observed how women resisted these distances and paradigms of disconnections by connecting their sons to their emotions, to the land, and to their cultural roots.

Two of the six colonial modes of control that impact psychological functioning are cultural control and fragmentation (Moane, 2011). Cultural control describes how dominant representations of historically marginalized groups in media, art, education, and culture reproduce narrow stereotypes and erasures of such groups. Cultural control facilitates fragmentation, or a colonial mode of control where marginalized groups are separated from one another (Moane, 2011). For example, through cultural control, women are taught to compete and distance themselves from one another. For racialized groups and colonized peoples, fragmentation occurs by “disconnecting them from their histories, their landscapes, their languages, their social relations, and their ways of thinking, feeling, and interacting with the world” (Smith, 2012, p. 29). These distortions of history and memory that serve the interests of the status quo create dis/memberment (Coutin, 2016), a way to think about fragmentation that includes not only separation of marginalized persons from their histories but also harm and dismemberment to bodies, as well as denial of citizenship. The naturalization of borders, for example, is an erasure of memory (i.e., borders are

not natural), and dis/members people through violence at the border and denying membership into the country. The antidote to dis/memberment is re/membering also known as counter-memory (Watkins & Shulman, 2008). Re/membering involves a “quest for self-knowledge, historical memory, and legal recognition” (Coutin, 2016, p. 215).

For the women in this study, instead of (re)producing a logic of disconnection and fragmentation in their daily pedagogical practices with their biological children or youth they mentor, they instead (re)produce and root children with a logic of (re)connection, re/membering, and healing colonial fragmentations. Thus, the importance of their (re)production is not solely in the ability to biologically reproduce children but also in the colonial wounds they heal for themselves and their children as well as dreams and future worlds they nurture.

### **Summary**

Although this study did not set out to investigate mothering nor raising feminist sons, these practices were identified as a daily form of resistance for many women. I argue that these women are involved in nurturing life-sustaining practices in contexts that promote metaphysical catastrophe and death for Othered bodies. To “mother” is not just about biological reproduction, but also about the futures and relationships women nurture in their daily lives to create social change. Florencia and Salma were examples of women who did not identify as mothers but were committed to nurturing a reality different from the one that currently exists.



The results discussed in this chapter counter the dominant narratives of Mothers of Color as the cause of many social ills. Rather, using their home as a site of resistance, these women are raising and nurturing the possibility of a more socially just world by resisting practices of anti-nurturing, historical erasure, and emotional distancing. Putting their hope in the next generation, Latina mothers are healing the disconnections and antirelationality characteristic of racial capitalist colonial logics and structures. Furthermore, many women learned to reject the anti-nurturing they grew up with (e.g., racism, erasure of cultural history), and embrace the life-sustaining nurturing and pedagogies of resistance they either learned from their mothers or learned to cultivate as adults. The practices of rooting and re/membering as described in this chapter are related to spiritual activism and women's personal daily practice of radical self-love, which will be examined in depth in the next chapter.

## Chapter 4: Love-Politics: A Spiritual and Visionary

### Everyday Practice of Resistance

*The first step in any revolution is self-love* - Salma, participant  
*I am practicing love with myself [...] I'm working on healing those wounds for us-*  
Florescia, participant, from letter to her future child.

One of the impacts of racial capitalist settler coloniality is to fracture our relationship to our bodies such that we are dis/membered (Coutin, 2016) from our bodies' needs and our own power. Some of the ways that dis/memberment to our bodies is perpetuated is through the inculcation of self-hatred (e.g., feeling inferior to Eurocentric bodies and behavior, Taylor, 2018; Tovar, 2020), and controlling how people move through space and time (e.g., meal times structured around the work day to maximize production; Smith, 2012). For Women of Color especially, racial capitalism has functioned to profit off of our body shame and self-hatred as can be witnessed in the selling of skin lightening creams and other products to conform to a more Eurocentric appearance (Taylor, 2018; Tovar, 2020).

Through these mechanisms of control, the financial asset owning class can justify metaphysical catastrophe to the planet and perpetual war on Othered bodies (Maldonado-Torres, 2016; Memmi, 1965; Taylor, 2018, Tovar, 2020), stifle energy that might produce social change (e.g., social movements or everyday resistance in tight spaces), and individualize experiences, detracting them from their structural roots (French et al. 2020; Maldonado-Torres, 2016; Taylor, 2018, Tovar, 2020). Moreover, because all forms of oppression have an impact on bodies (Taylor, 2018;

Tovar, 2020) the body is one of the first lines of everyday resistance, as well as a site of knowledge and power.

As described in the previous chapter, a paradigm of disconnection enforces the logic that connection and relationships to our emotions, the earth, and one another are irrational. Similarly, the body as a site of epistemology is often mistakenly dismissed and construed as not objective enough to be taken seriously as a site of theory (Cruz, 2001). In this chapter I discuss how women's efforts in rebuilding their relationship to themselves was important in their capacity to heal the wounds of racial capitalist settler coloniality and imagine social change for themselves and for others. The results in this chapter resonate with Nash's (2013) concept of *love-politics* as a practice of challenging oppression via self-love and developing a spiritual and visionary love concerned with the liberation of all living beings.

The themes of this chapter were identified by employing the Listening Guide (Gilligan, 2015) and listening to voices related to daily resistance across their letters, workshops, and interview transcripts. The most vocal voices that we<sup>33</sup> identified were: self-determination, advocate or ally (for the self/others), seeking resources, desire to create a better world for the next generation, self-love, resisting norms and expectations, and wanting to create social change. Some voices that were related but not as common were transformation/desire to transform herself, self-care, and

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<sup>33</sup> The "we" is myself and my research assistants. My research assistants were involved in identifying voices as we were doing the listening guide. To come up with the broader themes for each dissertation results chapter I analyzed the voices identified.

self-recognition. Although these voices have different names, what they ultimately have in common is that the underlying sentiment is that women's actions and thoughts were motivated by caring for themselves and for others. For example, the voice of seeking resources were moments when women spoke about actively searching for resources (e.g., therapy) that would support their well-being, and the voice of resisting norms and expectations was also motivated by a desire to advocate for their well-being and needs despite the pressures placed on them (e.g., not tolerating sexism). Similarly, the voice of desire to create a better world for the next generation and the voice of wanting to create social change were similar in that they were connected by a care or love for others. By examining I/we/they poems within each of these voices, I was able to discern patterns of radical-self love and love for others as salient and interconnected themes.

This chapter begins by providing background to contextualize how women in the study were inculcated with the belief that they are not lovable or worthy as human-beings, such as through societal messaging and family experiences. The purpose of this section is to describe how racial capitalist settler coloniality attempted to create fractures in women's relationship to their own bodies and the bodies of others. After providing background, I describe the concept of radical self-love as an act of resistance concerned simultaneously with personal and collective liberation and distinct from more mainstream conceptions of self-love, such as positive or high self-esteem. Next, I describe the two themes of how women practiced radical

self-love: (a) they engaged in practices to care and preserve their bodies despite societal messages that they must continuously self-sacrifice and (b) they reconnected to their power and beauty by unlearning societal messaging about their powerlessness and lack of worth. Finally, I show how most of the women in this study connect these practices of self-love, especially healing one's wounds caused by oppression, to desires for collective well-being, or other-loving practices that map onto the concepts of spiritual activism (Anzaldúa, 2002; Keating, 2008) and love-politics (Nash, 2013).

### **Background: Growing Up Feeling Unloved**

Although the women who participated in this study have different intersections of identity (e.g., age, nationality, class), many of them shared similar experiences of growing up feeling alone and unloved. Through listening to the women's stories, I identified three major reasons expressed by participants. The first two reasons were described in the previous chapter. First, some women remembered experiencing colorism, racism, sexism and homophobia perpetuated against them by family members during their childhoods. The previous chapter described in depth how for some participants their mothers were the people who painfully inculcated body shame around race and skin color. Second, some women described feeling lonely and unloved because they felt their family members were emotionally absent. In hindsight, some women recognized that emotional absence from their mothers was related to structural conditions, such as being a single-mom and/or having to work multiple jobs to support the family, therefore not having energy left over to express

love in ways that might have been expected. The third reason women felt unloved and lonely is related to the second, which is that some women experienced physical distance from their families in addition to emotional distance as a result of structural conditions, such as xenophobic policies that led to the deportation of close family members, immediate family members living in different households due to poverty, or other oppressive conditions where growing up, women in the study were separated from their family members (e.g., being placed in the foster care system as a child).

Understanding the colonial modes of control (Moane, 2011) lends insight into the isolation of marginalized groups from each other as a manufactured mechanism to control affect (e.g., love for self and others) and the desire to demand change. To put it plainly, if one is prevented from loving themselves and others, prevented from understanding themselves as others who are marginalized as deserving of liberation, one cannot fight for social change. Love as affective politics is understudied in its role for imagining social change and enacting resistance, both for individual and collective well-being (Nash, 2013). The following section describes the concept of radical self-love and its role in catalyzing revolutionary change.

### **Radical Self-love**

Historically marginalized people throughout history have been subject to *body terrorism* (Taylor, 2018), or body based oppression enacted on those perceived by dominant groups (e.g., wealthy, white, male) in society as deviant and not “normal.” In line with the paradigm of dehumanization and metaphysical catastrophe under

coloniality (Maldonado-Torres, 2016), body terrorism serves to distort the way we think about and relate to ourselves and others, creates profit and power for the financial asset owning class, and indoctrinates through toxic messages in the media, regulations, and laws. Taylor (2018) writes, “To varying degrees and without very much thought, many of us have accepted what we have been told about our bodies and the bodies of others based on what our government allows, sanctions, ignores, or criminalizes” (p. 46).

Recognizing the detriment body terrorism has for efforts toward social justice and social change, Taylor calls for the practice of radical self-love. Radical self-love is not about narcissism (e.g., Campbell et al., 2002), where one views themselves as better than those around them, nor is it necessarily about improving one’s self esteem or self confidence. What makes self-love “radical” is that it goes to the root of understanding how structures and systems catalyze body terrorism. Furthermore, radical self-love is about resigning from the logic of coloniality that encourages self-hatred as well as separation and distancing of others perceived as different from oneself. Importantly, radical self-love encourages the process of individual transformation as well as the transformation of structural and systemic violence enacted against Othered bodies. Moving simultaneously between the individual and collective in achieving liberation, radical self-love is a visionary project invested in the world that could be (brown, 2017; Nash, 2013). The next section illustrates how

women in this study practiced radical self-love with themselves as part of a praxis that is ultimately connected to their love for Others.

### **Practicing Radical Self-Love for Personal Liberation**

#### **Unlearning Self Sacrifice, Embracing Self Care**

Inculcated since childhood with narratives of their inferiority and lack of deservingness, women in this study worked to de-ideologize (Martín-Baró, 1994; Montero, 2009) the belief that they should not or do not deserve to take care of themselves and their bodies. Camila, a mother from México, identified this narrative as situated within Latinx culture. She said, “I think one as a Latina woman always gives, gives, gives, gives, and I have learned a lot already that you have to take care of yourself” (Camila, workshop). In our one-on-one interview she goes on to say,

I've learned ... as I was doing my healing process is that when things get really rough, you increase your self care. So when things get really rough I increase my self care like *even more*. Like, I'll go to the beach, you know, because I can't stay down. So that's one thing that I- and almost like it does something to my self esteem, it's like “I'm deserving.” You know, like “I'm deserving of this.” And so I- I think through the years I've learned like really good coping skills how to like, love yourself a lot. And like take care of yourself, so *that* keeps me strong [...] and I've gotten really good at not feeling guilty about it (Camila, interview)

Camila makes the connection that her self care and preservation of her body in challenging times is part of loving herself. She convinces herself that she is “deserving” to have moments to preserve her body and take care of herself, which competes with the feelings of guilt that she has been taught, particularly from the position of being both a Latina and a woman. Theorizing gendered and racialized



expectations of women's bodies, Camp (2004) argued that enslaved women had three bodies. The first body was a site of domination, the second body was the subjective experience of this process of domination, and the third body was a body to be reclaimed and enjoyed. The third body was a site of resistance, an oppositional engagement of the body to the spatial and temporal restrictions. For example, some enslaved women ran away to celebrations where they could dress up, dance, and relax their bodies in a context where their bodies were objectified into the sole purpose of producing labor. Although located in vastly different conditions across space and time, Latina women are pressured to use their bodies in a way "that always gives, gives, gives, gives" in order to contribute to production, whether that is in raising their families or in paid-work. To rest and preserve the body is a threat to racial capitalist settler coloniality that aims to ravenously extract labor from the body (Maldonado-Torres, 2016; Van Meter, 2017).

Furthermore, Camila said, "I can't stay down." Staying "down" or sadness understood politically is "the reduction of our capacity to affect and be affected" (Montgomery & bergman, 2017, p. 53) and reduces one's power to act on behalf of social change. Thus, her enactment of self-care and self-love resists racial capitalist settler colonial imperatives to keep her disconnected from feelings and desire that desire a life not defined by oppression. Writing as a Black feminist lesbian scholar battling cancer, Audre Lorde (1988) wrote, "caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare" (p. 131). Unfortunately,

this quote has often been taken out of context and co-opted to be used in racial capitalism through the marketing of commodities like bath bombs and body butters as self-care (Pyles, 2018). To preserve the body or the self resists the dehumanizing imposition of racial capitalist settler coloniality, where the body is to be exploited, denigrated, violated, erased, and eventually murdered (Maldonado-Torres, 2016).

Salma, a queer social worker in her late 20s from México, also discussed the importance of self care for herself and her wellbeing in her interview, especially in the context of experiencing and witnessing oppression constantly either at work or in her personal life. It was in a workshop, however, where she helped another participant, Magdalena, unlearn her guilt about receiving help for her son who has a disability and allowing time for herself. After Magdalena shared her feelings of guilt, Salma responded, “sometimes I think that uh, talking a little bit about what you just said, (M: uh-huh) we are so accustomed to give and give and give, (C: yes) that we don’t know how to receive” (Salma, in small group workshop with participants Magdalena and Catalina, translated from Spanish). Similar to Camila, Salma recognized the pressure to “give and give and give,” or to live solely in the first body (Camp, 2004) shaped by the desires of racial capitalist settler coloniality. In her interview, Salma explained her views on self care and the importance of listening to the body:

I believe that self-love is the first step in any revolution (CR: mhm). That is, if we are doing good- it all sounds *trigado* [cheesy?] ((unclear)) same, but it’s the reality, that is, from there starts everything. From there it begins and it’s listening to our own body, tending to it when there is a disturbance or

something, to make a pause and say, “let’s see, why is this happening,” right? “Let’s see, what- what- what happened five minutes ago? Later what was I thinking? What was I saying? What did I hear? You know? And to catch it okay.” Our body tells us so many things and it’s that, remembering that our ancestors, that’s- that’s how they healed, you know? With songs, with drums, with.. you know? Looking at the moon, meditating, building. That is, that is what we carry inside us, even though we are, um mestizas with other cultures, um, if you have that- it calls you that- that part of yourself, embrace it and try to use it from your privilege in life (Salma, interview, translated from Spanish).

Rather than to normalize the impact of oppression on her body, Salma listens to her body and tends to the disturbances. By cultivating a relationship to her body, Salma is able to tap into an epistemology of her body that can allow her to sense and respond to oppression. Furthermore, Salma’s connection to her body represents a way of knowing and connecting to herself (“Our body tells us so many things”) and the world, which aligns with the concept of *serpentine conocimiento* (Lara, 2014). Serpentine conocimiento underscores wisdom “about and from the earthly and human-animal body” (Lara, 2014, p. 116). Lara writes,

To love the body and trust the senses as sources of conocimiento can be a tremendous endeavor in a dichotomous culture and stratified society that mistrusts the body, deems it inferior to the mind and/or spirit, and negatively racializes, genderizes, sexualizes, and classes it by associating it with people of color, foreigners, women, queers, and the impoverished (Lara, 2014, p. 116)

As Lara (2014) notes, connection to the body is often deemed by society as an inferior way of knowing, especially as it pertains to bodies that are gendered, racialized, sexualized, and deemed Other. The concept of serpentine conocimiento is

also akin to borderlands-mestizaje epistemology (Saavedra & Nymark, 2008), which privileges listening to the body, especially bodies that have been silenced by oppression. The body as *conocimiento*, or a way of knowing, is linked to critical consciousness (Anzaldúa, 2002), a way of becoming aware of oppression. Additionally, as Salma's enactment of self-care and listening to her body is connected to remembering her roots (a related theme discussed in chapter three), specifically remembering how her ancestors healed from and resisted oppression ("remembering that our ancestors, that's- that's how they healed, you know? [...] Looking at the moon, meditating, building").

These two examples illustrate that for women to enact self-care, from the perspective of radical self-love, is to allow themselves space to heal, sense, and respond to oppression in a way that could foment socially just changes. When Salma said, "self-love is the first step in any revolution" she spoke to a power that is often denied to Othered bodies, including the bodies of Latina women. The following section explores how women made efforts to reclaim their power and their beauty.

### **Reclaiming One's Power and Beauty**

For some participants, the work of radical self-love meant unlearning narratives that suggested they were powerless and inferior. These unlearning efforts are important for personal and collective social change because "once we doubt our power, we stop using it" (Lorde, 1988, p. 128). Katia, a mother from México reflects on the oppression she experienced within the Catholic church and the false narrative

that she has no power or value in the eyes of the church. When I asked a follow up question about the role of spirituality she briefly mentioned in the workshop, she responded with the following:

That marked me a lot, because I see it differently now, and it's like god is not outside of you. (CR: Mhm)... ((crying)) And that's what they taught us, that he [god] is outside of you, it's not that, what they want to make you believe... ((sniffles)) what is another part of oppression of the big ones, those that run the world, it's not- ... they want us asleep, ((small laugh)) they want us to be zombies, and they are almost successful ((small laugh)) they want us like that because... it's convenient for them, they generate power and they generate wealth. The church is a part of the.. because that is the church as well, it's within- with the big businesses, the church is also to oppress us and- and close our eyes and- and make us believe that- that we don't- don't- don't have power nor value (Katia, interview, translated from Spanish).

Katia identifies the Social Lie (Martín-Baró, 1994) of the church and its effort to deny Katia her power in efforts to “close [her] eyes,” keep her “asleep,” and a “zombie.” In de-ideologizing the teachings of the Catholic church, Katia reclaims knowledge of her power and her value as a human. Interestingly, she connects the power of the church and its perpetuation of false narratives to capitalism (i.e., “they generate power and they generate wealth”). Also, the notion of “god is outside of you” contains echoes of settler colonialism and the use of Christianity against colonized populations to justify control and domination (Memmi, 1965; Smith, 2012; Tovar, 2020). Under racial capitalist settler coloniality, marginalized groups can only be backwards, immoral, wretched, and ugly, all ideas that aim to preserve its structures and normalize metaphysical catastrophe (Maldonado-Torres, 2016; Memmi, 1965; Tovar, 2020).

The notion of “ugliness” is a powerful weapon of subjugation (Taylor, 2018; Tovar, 2020). As mentioned previously, racial capitalist settler coloniality has massively profited from the shame of women, especially Women of Color in what can be identified as the *Body-Shame Profit Complex* (Taylor, 2018). Through molding oneself into a more beautiful (i.e., more Eurocentric) body, it is believed from a dominant narrative that one can become more valuable and worthy. Further, when women reclaim their power, beauty, and worth outside of racial capitalist settler colonial standards they push against the grain of a profitable industry and centuries-old legacies of racial and economic subjugation. Belen, a mother of three from El Salvador embodied an example of this resistant practice. When Belen was asked to bring three meaningful photos at the workshop, one of the photos that she imagined bringing was of herself.

I think that the third photograph would be perhaps, myself... the third photograph would be myself because, sometimes we need to recognize that we are important, that... that we have value, that we need to love ourselves. Look at ourselves in the mirror and ((exhales))... and see our face, and: each day say- cheer ourselves on, say, “we are beautiful,” “we are intelligent.” I think that.. sometimes we forget to recognize, um.. and give thanks to our body, our feet that carry us, our hands that caress.. and:- and that’s good for us, and remember that our voice has power, with us saying what we want.. remembering that the voice has power (Belen, workshop, translated from Spanish).

As a working class Woman of Color, it is powerful that Belen states “we need to love ourselves” because she is encouraging herself and other women to “look in the mirror” and see themselves outside of the colonial gaze. Rather than her beauty being

defined by how much it assimilates or conforms to Eurocentric standards, Belen attributes beauty and worth to her body for what it can do. Her radical self-love is punctuated by giving gratitude to her body, for “our feet that carry us, our hands that caress.” Belen’s reflection invokes a process of re/membering her connection to her body and the power her voice carries (i.e., “sometimes we forget to recognize”). A key piece of body terrorism is that it depends on amnesia (Taylor, 2018), in the ways that women, especially Women of Color have been socialized to despise themselves and forget their voice and power. Thus, the task of recovery of historical memory in liberation psychology (Martín-Baró, 1994) is not only about recovering events in history, but our relationships to ourselves and our bodies before they were shaped by racial capitalist settler coloniality and before the construction of their deviance.

For Nuria, this de-ideologizing process meant reclaiming her power and beauty as a queer identified person. Reflecting on her experiences growing up with homophobic messaging, she said, “I feel like in my community, er in our culture, it’s more like, you’re either straight or full lesbian, there’s no in-between, and if you are bisexual then you’re just like, a slut pretty much” (Nuria, interview) Nuria was policed around her sexuality and how she wore her hair and clothing. In the following I poem created as part of the Listening Guide analysis of her interview, you can hear her refusal to accept dominant narratives and the shame that comes with it:

I’m no longer afraid to...like be open about my sexuality  
I’m gonna tell them  
I have a short haircut,  
I’m- that I have really short hair

I would just ignore the question  
I'm kinda like "Nah." I-I'm ready- if to be- if  
I get asked that question  
I'm ready to like say,  
I actually am pansexual  
I know my position and I am who I am  
I know like, what kind of character I am

In Nuria's voice you hear her assurance in knowing who she is "I know my position" and "I know [...] what kind of character I am." This embodied knowing resists the dominant narratives that would purport to "know" Nuria from a deficit and colonial lens and categorize her as a "slut" or immorally backwards. Not only is Nuria's epistemology decolonial in the sense that it challenges colonial epistemologies of queer bodies, her embodiment of that identity (e.g., "I have really short hair") is also a form of resistance. Similar to how Camp (2004) described bond women as dressing up to go to parties or creating clothing and accessories to live their third body, more contemporary research has identified dress as a form of resistance among queer Latinx youth (Cruz, 2016), and body modifications (e.g., tattoos, piercings) as a ways to resist beauty norms and standards of femininity (Johansson & Vinthagen 2016; Pitts-Taylor, 2003). Finally, Nuria reclaims her power when she says "I'm no longer afraid to [...] be open about my sexuality." Rather than to allow herself to live in fear of what society will think, Nuria embraces her power and beauty as a queer woman.

These three examples show how three Latina women at different intersections of identity (e.g., queer, working class, Mother of Color, Catholic) practiced radical self-love by resigning from the logic of coloniality that promotes self-hatred and



distancing from oneself and others. For example, if Nuria maintained self-hatred for being queer, it might be unlikely that she would advocate for queer liberation. Similarly, if Katia abided by the definitions of worthiness prescribed by the Catholic church and if Belen had deficit ideas about what makes a body beautiful, then the subjugation of marginalized bodies might be normalized from their perspectives. Importantly, under racial capitalist settler coloniality the body becomes an apology, something to express shame for and to shame others for, particularly when they do not conform to the status quo (Taylor, 2018). For this reason, radical self-love is not only about personal liberation, but also collective liberation. Radical self-love as an everyday practice of resistance interrupts complicity and the demand for shame. The following section demonstrates how radical self-love was connected to love for others, or Other loving practices via healing the wounds of oppression.

### **Interconnected Love-Politics**

Radical self-love is part of the decolonial attitude (Maldonado-Torres, 2016), a decolonial performance of the self where the *damnés* (i.e., proletariat) transitions from “isolated self-hating subjects to decolonizing agents and bridges who serve as connectors between themselves and many others” (Maldonado-Torres, p. 24). This bridge between self and others resonates with the concept of spiritual activism (Anzaldúa, 2002; Keating, 2008), whereby one “shifts” by focusing simultaneously on oneself, “inner acts,” and directing energy toward “public acts.” This practice is spiritual because it imagines relationality and interconnectedness with all that exists

(Anzaldúa, 2002; Keating, 2008; Lara & Facio, 2014; Nash, 2013). Given its rich description and relevance the role love for social change, Anzaldúa (2002) is quoted at length here:

With awe and wonder you look around, recognizing the preciousness of the earth, the sanctity of every human being on the planet, the ultimate unity and interdependence of all beings- *somos todos un pais*. Love swells in your chest and shoots out of your heart chakra, linking you to everyone/everything.... You share a category of identity wider than any social position or racial label. This *conocimiento* motivates you to work actively to see that no harm comes to people, animals, ocean-to take up spiritual activism and the work of healing (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 558).

Anzaldúa writes about love “linking you to everyone/everything” as a way to understand the interconnections between ourselves and others. Importantly, this link and connection is not contingent upon sharing the same identities or embodiments with others, “you share a category of identity wider than any social position or racial label.” This is not a color-evasive (Connor et al., 2016) form of thinking, but rather it speaks to how our well-being is connected to the well-being of the collective (like fractals), and radical self-love as a pathway to desiring radical collective liberation.

Indeed, through the Black feminist concept of *love-politics*, Nash (2013) describes how radical self-love transcends the self into what she calls the *public sphere* an expansive term to include many forms of life, even those that perhaps do not yet have identities or recognized in institutions and organizations. Broadening society’s notions of love beyond the self, the confines of coupledness and the nuclear family, love-politics “problematizes the boundaries between private and public, and

draws intimate connections between the subjective and the social, between the emotional and the political” (Nash, 2013, p. 4). How the emotional is connected to the political is at the heart of affective politics, or how affects, such as love, produce political movements. These connections are captured when Salma said, “the first step in any revolution is self-love.” Furthermore, in this study, one of the ways that radical self-love was clearly linked to a broader love-politics and spiritual activism was through women’s efforts to heal their emotional and psychological wounds caused by oppression.

### **Healing Wounds of Oppression/Interrupting Cycles of Oppression**

Among participants, there was a recognition that early traumas, if not given healing attention, could be passed down intergenerationally and repeat patterns of internalized oppression that stifle resistance and social change efforts. This is consistent with research that has found evidence for historical trauma transmitted intergenerationally in indigenous Lakota communities and epigenetic work demonstrating PTSD and depressive disorders being transmitted among descendants of Holocaust survivors (French et al., 2020). Catalina, a woman in her 70s from Argentina reflected on the anti-indigenous racism she experienced within her family and the recognition that she needed to unlearn that narrative as part of her healing process and for the purpose of not passing down wounds as well as what she called “false information.”

The oppression gets passed down right? If you are- they treat you bad in school, you treat the next person poorly, you keep passing down, right? Poor

treatment to the next person. Well my siblings would mistreat me. (Catalina, interview, translated from Spanish)

Because the home is one of the sites where internalized oppression can be perpetuated (and resisted as the previous chapter demonstrated through pedagogies of resistance), at the forefront of some women's minds were how their practice of radical self-love would benefit future generations, starting with their children. Florencia, described in the previous chapter, recognized the wounds that she wants to heal in preparation of being able to offer her future child a world where they do not have to carry the wound.

Dear Future Child,

The world I wish for you is very different than the world we currently live in. I wish a world for you that doesn't have violent divides ~~within~~ across continents, countries, states, cities, communities, families. [...] Currently, I am doing my best to support this future for you. I am practicing love with myself - I am learning what it means to love myself so when your dad comes along, I can love him and let myself be loved by him. This has required me to go to therapy, group therapy, and AL-ANON to get past the unhealthy qualities I built when your uncle got addicted to drugs. My life changed pretty drastically then so I'm working on healing those wounds for us. I am also practicing love in my family. My family (your family) doesn't speak of love. We didn't really see that or feel it growing up. (Florencia, letter to future child).

For Florencia, her wounds are related to structural oppression in her life where living in poverty created the conditions for drug abuse within her family. She is "working on healing those wounds for us," or healing the "unhealthy qualities" she learned in coping with her family situation that she does not want to pass down or teach. Importantly, her practice of healing and loving herself is not just an investment in herself and her future child. Florencia outlines some of her freedom dreams, which

would have benefits at different ecological levels beyond the self/individual level (e.g., “a world that doesn’t have violent divides [...] across continents, countries, states, cities, communities, families”). Here, a more explicit connection is made between radical self-love and a love-politics that supports collective liberation when she juxtaposed her collective freedom dreams with her self-love work (“currently, I am doing my best to support this future for you. I am practicing love with myself”). Towards the end of her interview, she explained how love-politics, including radical self-love and love for the public sphere is at the heart of resistance:

And I think it’s helped me to develop you know the confidence, and you know, that self-love and knowledge to be able to say I don’t agree, I don’t believe in this- this isn’t helping my goals like- and the goals can be interdependent they don’t have to be about yourself, it can be for your community, I think that’s the beauty of resistance. It can look so different, and it can be... very self-motivated, it can be very community oriented, It can look SO different, but ultimately it’s- you know it helps people, it’s about like love, I think it really comes down to love, some form of love that you have. Either an idea, a belief, people, a community, *humanity* like, it really is about love. (CR: yes) Cuz I don’t think very many things can trump love (Florencia, interview).

For Florencia, resistance in the pursuit of liberation “really comes down to love, some form of love that you have,” which speaks to the affective politics (Nash, 2013) involved in being motivated to pursue social change. Furthermore, this excerpt also illuminates how for Florencia, self-love involves reclaiming her power and advocating for herself, which is related to the sub themes previously explored (“that self-love and knowledge to be able to say I don’t agree, I don’t believe in this- this isn’t helping my goals”).

Similar to how Florencia is working on “healing the wounds” for her and her future child through self-love, Katia is working them on them right now for her and her son. She had an important realization about how her fears and insecurities were being passed on to her son:

I noticed that when I yelled and the boy started stuttering after his mother yelled at him, “there is something here” I said. (Y: Mhm) And I started to work, work on *my* problem, because it is MY problem, that is my early wound. I worked on it, and you know what? My son’s stuttering went away, and why? Because he doesn’t need- I don’t need to pass on to him *my*- my fear, MY insecurity, whatever, I don’t need to pass it on (Y: Yes) to my son. (Y: Mhm) And you know what? I don’t need that- that they transfer him because of a speech problem, and you are left like “wow,” ((giggles)) it’s us as parents who are giving them those insecurities (Y: Mhm) to them (Katia, workshop with research assistant Yelitza, translated from Spanish).

Katia noticed that her young son started having speech problems when she would yell at him, and recognized that her yelling was rooted in an early wound (“it is MY problem, that is my early wound”). Katia then reflected that when she stopped yelling at her son her son’s stuttering disappeared. She noted, “it’s us as parents who are giving them those insecurities.” For people of marginalized groups to feel anxious and insecure is part of the design of racial capitalist settler coloniality (Moane, 2011). Reflecting on the work of Frantz Fanon, Moane (2011) writes that in regards to the colonized, “symptoms regarded as psychopathological- obsessions, inhibitions, anxieties, withdrawal- are clearly internal manifestations of social conditions” (Moane, 2011, p. 76). Furthermore, fear, anxiety, and insecurity are affects that are related to the concept of sadness (Montgomery & bergman, 2017) described

previously, which is an affect that can thwart efforts for social change, or the desire to resist and demand more from current social conditions.

Sometimes, however, oppression is perpetuated under the guise of 'love' or coming from a loving place when in reality it is not (Nash, 2013). For example, Alanis, a woman in her late 20s of Mexican descent, talked about how the early wounds that she needed to heal were related to wanting to be loved but being abused instead:

For me love is an act of affection, um, for me love is an act of protection, you know what I mean, it's- it's all those things and um, so I was searching for it for a really long time um, I was brought up, being taught that love is, hitting, calling out a name, getting into abusive relationships, like my- all my sisters including myself, we've all been in abusive relationships, whether the man emotionally abused us, whether the man physically a- I saw A LOT of physical abuse from men. (Alanis, interview)

Alanis grew up with a distorted understanding of love ("I was brought up, being taught that love is, hitting, calling out a name, getting into abusive relationships") that she later came to understand as unhealthy. That 3 in 10 women are subjected to intimate partner violence (National Domestic Violence Hotline, n.d.) is indicative of systemic oppression enacted on women's bodies. The previous chapter discussed how colonialism and patriarchy reinforce each other (Moane, 2011) and are mechanisms to control and dominate women as well as bodies perceived as feminine (e.g., bodies of land). For Alanis, part of her healing process has involved unlearning distorted understandings of love and also learning to love herself. In the workshop she said:

"Right now I am in a moment in my life where I am trying to love myself without a man [...] by working on ourselves as individual people, the love that

we want we have to make - we gotta be the product of love that we want in our lives” (Alanis, workshop, translated from Spanish).

Alanis identifies that by working on herself, she can create conditions for more love in her life. The ‘transformation of self’ is implicit in the process of radical self-love and its relation to love-politics (Nash, 2013). Additionally, her desire to be “the product of love” is evident in her dreams for social change and the role she sees for her future child. Reflecting on her letter to her future child she said:

I wanna- my future children- like I just- I wanna love ‘em in a way that I wasn’t loved, in a way that children should be loved, and in a way that, you know, where that when they grow up they can be a change, (CR: Yeah) whether it’s a big one, or a small one you know. (Alanis, interview)

Alanis intends to interrupt a cycle of oppression and abuse by loving her child in a way that she was not loved growing up. Moreover, she envisions that by interrupting this cycle and raising her child with love they can “be a change,” or not perpetuate the abuse and oppression she experienced growing up.

This section highlights how radical self-love via attention to healing wounds caused by oppression is interlinked with collective well-being. By cultivating radical self-love and going to the root of their traumas and experiences of body terrorism, women in this study were able to begin interrupting the cycles of oppression that expect marginalized groups to perpetuate body terrorism on one another. Taylor (2018) writes compellingly:

The bodies you share space with are afraid you are judging them with the same venom they have watched you use to judge yourself. Remember that body shame is as contagious as radical self-love. Making peace with your



body is your mighty act of revolution. It is your contribution to a changed planet where we might all live unapologetically in the bodies we have. (p. 24)

Oppression is internalized into the body as a “venom” that one is then expected to displace onto others. Taylor (2018) insists that self-hatred is intertwined with the body-based oppression we see imposed across various marginalized social groups. To self-love and transform the self and one’s wounds then, has the potential to become a “mighty act of revolution” in a racial capitalist context that thrives on the suppression of affect (love) particularly among marginalized groups and establishes body based hierarchies.

### **Discussion**

An important element of liberation psychology is understanding how psychological patterns, in particular, internalized oppression can function to stifle resistance and action against oppression (Moane, 2003). Quoting Martin-Baró (1994), Moane (2003) makes the connection that liberation “involves breaking the chains of personal oppression as much as the chains of social oppression” (Martin-Baró, 1994, p. 27). Yet, the role of love, especially radical self-love, in “breaking the chains of personal oppression” has been undertheorized in psychological literature as well as in other disciplines. For example, only one other study has identified self-love as a practice of everyday resistance. In Casado Pérez’s (2019) study on the everyday resistance practices of minoritized (e.g., People of Color, queer, disabled) pre-tenured faculty in the academy, self-love was one of the ways that faculty in his study

survived the stressors, microaggressions, and demands of the tenure track. These self-love practices emerged in the form of acknowledging their boundaries (e.g., not sacrificing the personal for the professional), treating themselves with kindness, protecting their well-being, acknowledging their worthiness, and being proud of their accomplishments, small and large. Casado Perez's study, however, did not make explicit connections about how self-love is connected to a broader love-politics or movements for liberation.

It is important to note that the cultivation of critical consciousness involves the mobilization of emotion, not just cognition (Montero, 2009). Radical self-love and love-politics are affects that likely have an important role in developing critical consciousness. Indeed, Kelley (2002) writes "Freedom and love may be the most revolutionary ideas available to us, and yet as intellectuals we have failed miserably to grapple with their political and analytical importance" (p. 12). From what we know, racial capitalist settler coloniality manufactures the suppression of affect (Montgomery & bergman, 2017) that could inspire change. For those who occupy marginalized positionalities in society, the suppression of affect involves accepting the colonizer's view of the colonized (e.g., as inferior, lazy, wretched). For those who occupy more privileged positionalities, the suppression of affect gives way to being desensitized to the pain and suffering of the colonized, who are viewed as inhuman. In line with this Memmi (1965) writes,

A colonized driving a car is a sight to which the colonizer refuses to become accustomed; he denies him all normality. An accident, even a serious one,

overtaking the colonized almost makes him laugh. A machine-gun burst into a crowd of colonized causes him merely to shrug his shoulders. Even a native mother weeping over the death of her son or a native woman weeping for her husband reminds him only vaguely of the grief of a mother or a wife. Those desperate cries, those unfamiliar gestures, would be enough to freeze his compassion even if it were aroused (pp. 86-87)

What Memmi has described is the inability to feel, the anesthetization to the pain and suffering of Others. Furthermore, although Memmi has dichotomously described the colonizer and the colonized, through an intersectional lens (Crenshaw, 1990) that acknowledges people can simultaneously embody privileged and oppressed identities, the project of love for the self and others is incredibly relevant. What is key about the role of love is that it provides energy for social change.

One of the most relevant concepts to understand love providing energy for social change are the *Uses of the Erotic* (Lorde, 2007). According to Lorde (2007) the erotic is “the personification of love in all its aspects” (p. 55), an embodied resource for affect, an epistemology, and a source of power that is often suppressed by male models of power. Lorde writes:

For once we begin to feel deeply all the aspects of our lives, we begin to demand from ourselves and from our life-pursuits that they feel in accordance with that joy which we know ourselves to be capable of. Our erotic knowledge empowers us, becomes a lens through which we scrutinize all aspects of our existence, forcing us to evaluate those aspects honestly in terms of their relative meaning within our lives. And this is a grave responsibility, projected from within each of us, not to settle for the convenient, the shoddy, the conventionally expected, nor the merely safe (p. 57).

The participants in this study repeatedly spoke about feeling and listening to their bodies, which speaks to their embodied theory-reflection-action, or praxis that

‘theorizes from the flesh’ (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 2015). As mentioned previously, racial capitalist settler coloniality forces a dis/memberment from our bodies and a distrust of all that is perceived female, weak, and inferior. The concepts of serpentine *conocimiento* and borderlands-mestizaje feminism speak to ways that people resist this dis/memberment and re/member their bodies, or reconnect to the knowledge their bodies and emotions provide. Salma, for example, talked explicitly about the importance of listening to her body as a way to sense and respond to oppression. Further, by responding to the body, people can begin to demand more by not settling to current conditions and reclaiming their power. Nuria refused to settle for living in fear and accepting society’s perception of her as a “slut” because of her sexuality. Similarly, Belen refused to accept society’s beauty standards based on physical appearance and instead reclaim the power that her body and voice have to demand social change.

By accessing love as an affect, a way of feeling and sensing the world, radical self-love is interconnected with spiritual activism (Anzaldúa, 2002; Keating, 2008) and a broader love-politics (Nash, 2013), which supports how (loving) relationships at the micro level can cycle toward relationships at the macro level. Florencia, for example, understood that if she wanted to create a world without “violent divides” that is less oppressive for everyone, she needed to start with herself and healing her wounds so that she would not pass them on to her future child. Similarly, Alanis felt that if she wanted her future child to be an agent of social change in the world, then

she needed to address her internalized oppression. In these ways, Latina women were resisting oppression by not only re/membering themselves, but also re/membering each other. This decolonial everyday praxis of resistance challenges racial capitalist settler colonial antirelationality (Gilmore, 2002, 2012; Martín-Baró, 1994; Melamed, 2015) and builds with and toward *vincularidad* (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018), an awareness of our relation and interdependence with all living beings on the planet. Moreover, a key element of love-politics is that it is deeply visionary and utopian (Nash, 2013). In other words, love as an affect allows people to feel and sense the necessary changes that need to be made to create a more socially just world. This ‘sensing’ of injustice and desire for collective well-being supported women’s pedagogies of resistance described in the previous chapter.

### **Summary**

More often than not, when women were writing letters to their loved ones (currently living, passed away, not-yet-born) about the world the kind of world they hope and envision their loved one living (or having lived), their desires were always interconnected with some desire for the collective well-being, or a world where the public sphere would benefit. Whereas the previous chapter explored how women were working to create a more liberatory world through their pedagogies of resistance in the home, this chapter identified how radical self-love and listening to the body could help to break the psychological and affective patterns that act as barriers to personal and collective liberation (Moane, 2003).

Furthermore, by taking the time to self-care, listen to their bodies, reclaim their power and beauty, and heal wounds caused by oppression, Latina women in this study were resisting the ways that racial capitalist settler coloniality attempts to dis/member women from their bodies and their ability to sense and respond to oppression. Taking the space and time to listen and care for their bodies also resists racial capitalist settler colonial organizations of space and time. Love-politics, an understanding and practice that our liberation is interconnected, undergirds the motivation to teach against a disconnection to the planet and one another (as discussed in the previous chapter), and foments communities of resistance, the topic for the following chapter.

## Chapter 5: Re/membering Community Roots

### Figure 5

*A Watercolor Illustration I Made to Visualize Giles' (2017) Poem*



*And so the tallest trees in the world, redwoods can grow to over 350 feet above the earth, yet on average their roots only travel 10 feet into it. In isolation it should be physically impossible for them to stand. However, these enormous trees do not grow in isolation, their roots each only a single inch thick wraps around the roots of its neighbor, a stubborn foundation of brown fingers clasped in an underground stand and grow.*

William Nu'utupu Giles Spoken Word Poem "Prescribed Fire" (All Def Poetry, 2017)

Before this chapter, I have not explained how everyday acts of resistance are intertwined with community support. In her analysis of everyday acts of resistance of enslaved women in the antebellum South, Camp (2004) suggests that the dichotomy and distinction between individual and collective acts of resistance is futile given that

individual actions are inextricably connected to community interests and efforts. I agree with her analysis and observe the individual/collective distinction to be futile given the entanglements of resistance efforts. Like Giles' (2017) description of redwood trees inability to stand without entangling their roots into community networks, I have visualized that the women in this study practice everyday resistance by entangling their roots in community. The ecological metaphor (Moane, 2003; Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010) reminds us that we are always embedded in relationships to one another and to the different social systems in our society. This relates to the touchstone of emergent strategy, which is that "relationships are everything" (p. 28) in the struggle for social justice and social change (brown, 2017), particularly relationships that betray the logic of racial capitalist settler coloniality, individualism, paradigms of disconnection and distance, and dis/memberment.

For example, chapter three discussed how women practiced and taught their children (mostly sons) to build and strengthen relationships with their roots (the earth and cultural heritage). Chapter four discussed how women rebuilt relationships with themselves by unlearning dominant narratives (i.e., practicing self-love), and also named other-loving desires, that is, desires to pursue social justice for other marginalized groups. This chapter hones in on how women's community networks supported their self-loving/other-loving resistance strategies and helped women develop a critical awareness of social injustices and their own cultural history.



As part of thematic analysis, my research assistants and I originally identified the role of community networks and relationships as an important element of everyday resistance. Using the Listening Guide analysis, I listened for these moments of community in relationship to resistance and identified three ways that these relationships assisted in everyday resistance and support of freedom dreams: 1) women developed non-nuclear family kinship ties, 2) they participated in mutual aid strategies, and 3) they received critical education from friends and community members. Furthermore, the map drawings produced in workshops were instrumental in this analysis as the vast majority of participants discussed/drew their support networks and the relationships with people that helped them to navigate their social worlds and oppressive conditions. Several of the maps will be presented in this chapter.

This chapter will elucidate how Latina women re/membered (Coutin, 2016) their connections to community, or in other words, contributed to or benefitted from community relationships that informed and assisted their everyday practices of resistance against oppression. The first section explores the theme of kin-making, or how women's everyday resistance, including practices of self-love, were facilitated by developing non-nuclear family relationships. The second section describes the creation of resistive community spaces and mutual aid strategies that women participated in, some of which were explicitly motivated by the perception of community members as kin to care for. The final section describes how community

members were instrumental in providing Latina women with a critical awareness of social issues and that some of these lessons appear to be echoed in the pedagogies of resistance women enacted with their children as described in chapter three. The chapter concludes with an analysis of how everyday resistance is a practice of freedom and challenges the colonial fragmentations of communities across space and time.

### **Kin Making: Chosen Family and Friendships**

A useful model to understand daily resistance within communities is Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth model. This model draws from Critical Race Theory as a way to shift the research lens away from deficit perception of Communities of Color and observe "the array of knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression" (p. 77). Here I utilize Yosso's *familial capital* to theoretically support the resistance practices of kin-making identified in this study. As one of the various forms of capital, familial capital highlights a "commitment to community well being and expands the concept of family to include a more broad understanding of kinship" (p. 79). Through this commitment to community and kinship ties (familial and non-familial), lessons and education are acquired that raise consciousness about social issues and the isolation of feeling alone in experiencing social injustice is challenged.

Furthermore, women's role in utilizing familial capital and reproducing a commons has been theorized and identified as an important resistance practice that unravels the social divisions imposed by racial capitalism (Federici, 2011). The home is one of the key sites of reproduction that racial capitalism depends on to extract unpaid domestic labor in service of wealth accumulation through supporting the paid labor force. One example is the expectation that women stay at home to produce domestic labor so that their husbands can go to work or raise children who will one day partake in the paid labor force. The exception to this of course, are women on welfare who despite reproducing domestic labor are perceived socially and politically as a drain on resources.

Women have historically and contemporarily created networks to create a new mode of production, one that reappropriates the wealth they have acquired for community well-being and severs connections to modes of production for capitalist exploitation. For example, Federici (2011) describes tontines, women-made and self-managed banking systems in parts of Africa, ollas communes, or communal pots of food in Chile and Peru, and even the internet as a space for social cooperation and resource-sharing. The process of kin-making, a new mode of production, enhances our "quality of relations, a principle of cooperation and of responsibility to each other and to the earth, the forests, the seas, the animals" (Federici, 2011). Building bridges to one another, we can critically examine how we are complicit in the suffering of our kin, move away from dependence on consumerism, and build a different world not

based on perpetual war on those who are subjugated (Anzaldúa, 2002; Federici, 2011, Maldonado-Torres, 2016; Montgomery & bergman, 2017).

In line with this, Montgomery and bergman (2017) argue that “through friendship or kinship we undo ourselves and become new, in potentially radical and dangerous ways. In this sense, friendship is at the root of freedom” (p. 92). Nuria recalls in her testimonio of childhood experiences: “I remember growing up I had a really close group of friends in elementary school and middle school ‘cause I felt like my chosen family, like actually enjoyed my presence more than my like blood family I guess?” (Nuria, interview). For Nuria, her friends were her chosen family whom facilitated the strengthening of her relationship to her queer identity and self-love:

I just gotta kinda accept the fact that, it’s never going to be that openness in the family, even if she says, “yes, I accept you. Even though you’re gay, I will accept you. Even though you have these crazy ideas of piercings and tattoos and... you’re such like the black sheep of the family, I’m gonna accept you. But just not in front of your dad.” (CR: Mmm) And it’s always been like that, (CR: Mmm) so- and I *never* feel like I have to hide anything from my chosen family. Like, I can be the realest like person with my family- my chosen family (CR: Yeah) and they’ll never tell me, “Oh, don’t- don’t do that. Or hide that,” kinda thing. (Nuria, interview)

As described in the previous chapter, under racial capitalism settler coloniality, marginalized groups are supposed to be “self-hating” subjects, a symptom of metaphysical catastrophe that others in order to maintain social control (Maldonado-Torres, 2016). Nuria’s embrace of identity and self-love, then, becomes “dangerous” when understood in the context of racial capitalist colonial imperatives that seek to control how bodies can exist, especially those that are female and queer

(Camp, 2004; Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016; Taylor, 2018). Nuria's chosen family is able to provide validation to the embodiment of her queer identity in a way that her mother and blood-related family could not. Further, they allowed her to be true to herself, "I can be the realest," without fear of being judged for being gay, dressing how she wants, or her "crazy idea of piercings and tattoos." She acknowledges that the affirmation she needs for her identities will unlikely be found in her blood-related family ("it's never going to be that openness in the family"). This is related to Nuria's freedom dreams written in her letter to her future child where she imagines a world that does not "pathologize people who are a little different than us for loving different" and where they "will not be judged for wearing, doing, performing whatever sexuality, sex, gender you choose and feel happiest living in/with." Her chosen family helps her to challenge the pathologization of queer bodies and dream of a world where queer identities can be freely embodied through strengthening her relationship to her queer identity with pride and self-love.

Nuria's map drawing provides insight into who her chosen family is and the importance of these relationships to her. Figure 6 illustrates Nuria's map drawing where among the many places and spaces she encounters, she drew one of her closest friends (drawn in blue marker on the lower right side of the page), who she identified as queer and a Person of Color and marked them with a star.

**Figure 6**

*Nuria's Map Drawing From The Workshop*



In her interview she explained the symbolism behind the image further:

Most of my friends are queer- and I didn't choose that like it just so happened that they were mostly queer. Um, and they're obviously very accepting and very loving and caring and they reassure me and validate me a lot. And I think that's really powerful, and we're all a group of *queer* P.O.C. like that is such a strong power within our friend group. [...] And when I need to hear it, I feel safe enough to ask them like, "can you- can you validate me real quick? ((light giggle)) Can like- affirmations-?" We do affir- weekly affirmations and like, things like that, and just I feel like my friend groups just very healthy, um, and they definitely have made me- and even my friends back home that have been knowing about like my identity forever, they also are super supportive and like, they- they just help me y'know, when I feel like I'm cracking they just help me- put me back together a little bit.

Nuria described her chosen family as being at the intersections of queer and "P.O.C.," which align with her intersections of identity. Further, she identified the importance of this space, or the "strong power" as they have built relationships with one another as members of marginalized communities and have provided validation to one another. When she is "cracking" and suffocated by homophobic and racial oppression,

Nuria's friends validate and affirm her identity, as well as her right to exist and thrive as a queer body. Further, similar to how Nuria identified her queer friends of Color as a space where she can be affirmed in her queer identity, Cruz (2016) also identified *breathing spaces* where queer Latinx youth can resist oppression through their unapologetic embodiment of their queer identity and engage liberatory possibilities. Nuria's chosen family allows her to breathe amidst the toxic air of racism and homophobia. Furthermore, her friends helped facilitate a space to heal the wounds of rejection and cultivate self-love.

Non-familial kin were also crucial to Alanis's healing from oppression and cultivation of self-love. Alanis grew up feeling isolated and unloved as she was faced with many structural barriers, particularly being separated from family members via deportation, the passing of immediate family members, and being in the foster care system. Alanis also struggled with drug addiction. To break apart families and Communities of Color as well as structurally create conditions for marginalized communities to become dependent on drugs is a racial capitalist settler colonial project.

For example, with regards to the latter, it is no coincidence that there is an epidemic of alcoholism in native communities in the United States (Frank et al., 2000) and that drugs and alcohol are flooded into working-class and poor communities (Moore & Diez Roux, 2006). The War on Drugs that started in 1971 under President Ronald Reagan is perhaps the most telling. Namely, the war was

declared years before the crack cocaine epidemic in Black and Brown inner cities was sensationalized in the media (a media campaign sponsored by President Reagan), and the CIA was caught for having a role in essentially supplying the cocaine that made its way to Black and Brown communities. This war paved the way for the New Jim Crow, the mass incarceration of People of Color, in an effort to protect the racial capitalist and settler colonial status quo (Alexander, 2012).

Against the backdrop of the New Jim Crow, Alanis was able to transition into recovery through the assistance of a recovery program and home that provided her a second family. Discussing her home, she said:

Um living here it's like I've nev- this is the longest place I've stayed at. I've been here for almost three years coming up in July, and um this- this space right here is like, it's- it's teaching me about friendship, like actual friendships, building bonds with women, that it's like, it's real like, (CR: Mmm) they don't want the drugs that are in my pocket or they don't, you know what I mean, they're not trying to use me, they're actually here because, you know, we're all shooting for the same goal in life and, you know, this is just- this is home, it's home. I'll be here for a couple more years but for now this is home like, I've never felt as comfortable as I am living here, you know, and all these women here are amazing (CR: Yeah) like, you know we're- we're honest with each other, we're um, pfft.. we're like fucking sisters. like we love and we hate each other, you know, like we live like basically on top of each other sometimes, (CR: Mhm) it's a community, it's a community, it's my community, you know, and um, I've never had that. (Alanis, interview)

When Alanis talked about being able to build “actual friendships” she described relationships that are not flimsy but rather committed to one another’s well-being, and dare I say, in solidarity with one another. The women she lives with are also in recovery and are like “sisters” to one another. Moreover, she identifies them as a



community, a network of meaningful relationships, that she has never had before. It is important to include that as an adult she has been able to connect with her blood relatives and rely on them for support in addition to her sisters in the recovery home. As Alanis reconnects with women “shooting for the same goal” she resists and heals the isolation imposed by racial capitalist settler coloniality (Gilmore, 2002, 2012; Melamed, 2015) as well as moves away from dependence on drugs to cope with challenging life circumstances.

A sense of family amidst community was also observed with Sophia. When Sophia responded to the flyer for the study she wondered if her care for her aunt qualified for one of the eligibility criteria of being interested in community care. It was not until we did our interview that I realized her “aunt” was a non-familial neighbor in the community that she deeply cared for. In her description of her map drawing (see Figure 7 for map drawing of “casa de mi tia”) and the places she feels good in, she described her relationship with her aunt:

And later my aunt’s house.. uh, she lives like two blocks from there. Um, I like to go a lot with my aunt, she’s always giving me advice always- she’s there for me and- and later when I had my son I didn’t know how to bathe him and she taught me, (CR: Mmm).. and yeah. And- she’s like if she was my second mom, so I really love her a lot. (Sophia, map narrative, translated from Spanish).

In her interview, she went on to explain the importance of her aunt and visiting her home:

Mm: well I feel.. like if it was my house, like I could just walk and I feel like, like alive, like: more... I feel comfortable, I don’t feel like anyone is going to judge me or anything, (CR: mhm) I feel like- I feel like... excited, because I

have family, even though it's not my blood blood blood it's like if- well, like if she were my family. (CR: Oh so she's not your aunt by blood?) She's not my aunt, (CR: Oo:) eh.. but I consider her like if she was my aunt by blood (CR: Ooo: now I understand well) and that's why we have a strong... bond. (Sophia, interview, translated from Spanglish)

Sophia lives in a low-income predominantly Latinx community and is raising a toddler son. When Sophia's biological mother passed away, her aunt provided Sophia with the support she needed to raise her child (e.g., "when I had my son I didn't know how to bathe him and she taught me"). This relates to the community provided education described in one of the sub-themes of this chapter in the sense that her aunt is providing Sophia with information and knowledge to raise her son. It is clear that Sophia's aunt is an important resource for her ("she's always giving me advice always- she's there for me").

Thus far, these examples have demonstrated how familial capital (Yosso, 2005) was utilized by some participants to combat isolation and obtain support in challenging and oppressive circumstances. The influence of community or non-familial kin illustrated another mechanism that helped women, especially Nuria and Alanis, cultivate self-love as described in the previous chapter. The following sub-theme describes how building meaningful (i.e., solidarity-based) relationships with community members also strengthened other-loving practices (discussed in the previous chapter as spiritual activism) in the form of mutual aid.

### **Mutual aid**

That communities-- marginalized and oppressed communities-- might form spaces and networks for the sharing of resources and mutual aid are not new (Camp; 2004; Federici, 2011; Montgomery & bergman, 2017; Spade, 2020; Van Meter, 2017; Yosso, 2005). In light of the strong efforts of racial capitalist settler colonial structures to separate communities and foster distance (except under the conditions that relationships aid in the accumulation of wealth), Communities of Color have historically taken up the task to preserve the collective and reassemble social bonds. For example, in African American and Black communities the reassemblage of community is part of the Black radical tradition (Melamed, 2015; Robinson, 1983).

Strongly intersecting with familial capital, Yosso (2005) categorizes mutual aid as a form of *social capital* within the model of community cultural wealth possessed by Communities of Color. This form of capital stands in contradiction to social darwinist models that suggest that competition defines human behavior (Kropotkin, 1993; Van Meter, 2017). Moreover, in times of disaster and catastrophe most people rise to the occasion to provide support to one another rather than remain in a state of panic and self-interest (Montgomery & bergman, 2017; Solnit, 2010). Mutual aid as an everyday form of resistance historically has existed outside the surveillance of authorities in tight spaces (Van Meter, 2017). This is necessary considering that racial capitalist settler coloniality depends on the structuring and control of bodies and relationships within time and space (Camp, 2004; Melamed, 2015; Smith, 2012; Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016).

When people build meaningful relationships with one another and move their bodies outside of the logic of racial capitalism, they resist and threaten the status quo. For example, in the antebellum period enslaved Black women assisted others in running away from the plantation for reasons such as visiting family members in other plantations or enjoying their bodies outside of the confinement of their bondage (Camp, 2004). Camp (2004) adapts Said's (1993) term *rival geography*<sup>34</sup> to describe resistance to colonial occupation and uses it to describe the ways that enslaved Black women resisted the spatial and temporal restrictions of the plantation by creating opportunities for movement (e.g., running away) as well as spaces for rest, recreation, and creative expression. I also adapt the term to describe how Latina women created alternative spaces of resistance to provide mutual aid, help others navigate tight spaces of oppression, and enjoy being in their bodies through rest and recreation, also much like Cruz's (2016) concept of breathing spaces. This practice also speaks to the self-care described in chapter four and the preservation of the body, except this section expands into community care and the preservation of the collective body.

I identified a rival geography in Sophia's map in the form of a game night where women in the neighborhood came together to play *loteria*, what might be described as the Latinx version of bingo, but with images of items and people on the cards (e.g., *la sirena*, the mermaid) rather than just numbers. Figure 7 illustrates

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<sup>34</sup> I acknowledge that other concepts might be related here such as hooks' (1984; 1990) concept of *marginal spaces*, Bhabha's (1994) concept of *third spaces* (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016), and counterspaces (Case & Hunter, 2012).

Sophia's map drawing with the words "loteria" written on the left side of the page.

When I asked why the loteria space was marked with a star, Sophia responded:

Well, I like the loteria group because we are a- a lot of women, um, we get together to play, to share, each person brings food, we talk, we have fun for a bit, (CR: mhm) *nos desahogamos* [un-suffocate ourselves], (CR: yes) it's like if it was our second family. (Sophia, interview, translated from Spanglish).

**Figure 7**

*Sophia's Map Drawing From the Workshop*



The loteria game provided a space for recreation and relaxation, which can be read as a space for embodied resistance to spatial and temporal control of the bodies of working class Women of Color. Furthermore, in this passage, Sophia invokes the usage of familial capital by describing this group of women as a “second family” as well as a breathing space, “nos desahogamos” a phrase that translates to “we

undrown/unsuffocate ourselves.” Her description of this space and the people in it as a second family intersected not only with familial capital but social capital and mutual aid when she went on to say:

So they all get together, (CR: mhm) and there they con se- and it’s a group where if you have something like a- like a person that is getting sick or something, they help you, (CR: mm) they look for a way to help one another. (CR: Mm can you give me an example of that?) Like the day that a man got cancer, they made him a *kermés* [party], a *kermés* is being like a people, where you do a gather up and each person makes food and we do fundraising and- and we give him the money at the end of the night, (CR: mmm) yeah so that’s how we help them. (CR: Oh wow: that is very good) Yeah. (CR: Um and how- and how do you all do the fundraising?) Well each person is responsible for- for making their food, (CR: mhm) and- and we put how much the plates are going to cost, and- and we make like flyers or- or we walk to- to each household, we go talking, we say, “do you know that this is happening and- and we should help this person,” (CR: Mmm:) and that’s how we do it. [...] we try to help them, as much as one can, because sometimes one does not work or they are let go from work or whatever, one looks, c- to help them (CR: mhm) like:... sometimes someone dies and we do like a memorial day (CR: mm) and we say, “Oo I will bring the sodas, someone wi- will be in charge of making the food” or- or “let’s go to- to sing and someone will do the- the rosary,” (CR: mm) and we put ourselves to- we take responsibility. (Sophia, interview, translated from Spanglish)

Two elements of this rival geography stand out. First, Sophia emphasizes how this group helps one another and provides resources that are structurally denied to marginalized communities. They fundraise to provide members of the group financial support when someone is sick or laid off from work, compensating for what our social systems have failed to provide: affordable health care, living wages, and adequate social safety nets. This practice of social capital also includes emotional support, celebrating one another on birthdays and grieving with one another by

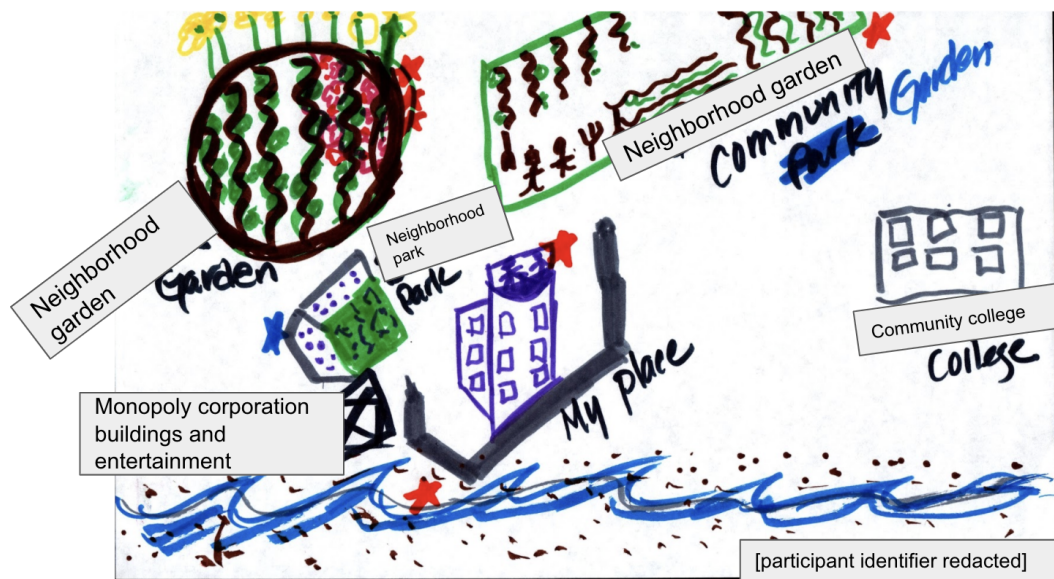
organizing memorials (“sometimes someone dies and we do like a memorial day”). Second, mutual aid within the group is grounded in responsibility (i.e., “each person is responsible” and “we take responsibility”), or rather, response-ability, the ability to be attuned to and respond to injustice in order to disrupt oppressive patterns (Montgomery & bergman, 2017). Members of this loteria group are able to respond to the needs and oppression experienced by members of the group. Perceiving each other as kin, members of the group take it upon themselves to care for one another and organize care (e.g., dividing up who will make food, alerting neighbors to a fundraising event). This is also a form of spiritual activism (Anzaldúa, 2002) as they are caring for and advocating on behalf of others to whom they are not directly related. On the surface level, the loteria group is just a group of working class Latina women gathered to play a game. Going deeper, this group is a rival geography, a site of resistance through the reassemblage of social bonds and mutual aid.

Sites for rival geography and mutual aid can also exist in cyberspace (Federici, 2011; Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016). As forms of everyday resistance are situational and context bound, the usage of the internet as a digital commons for resource sharing and social cooperation has emerged in light of technological advancements of our time (Chin & Mittelman, 1997; Federici, 2011; Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016). The use of the internet to provide mutual aid to neighbors and members of her community emerged in Natalia’s description of her map drawing (Figure 8):

Okay well what I drew is...like a- it's kind of like a- this park right here is [name of neighborhood park]. That's where I live, that's where I connect, that's where, I'm very much apart of the community there and I get involved in.. probably everything that happens and, um, I really like- I set up a little, um, Facebook page for us and, you know, I post things but ah- and I do it in English and Spanish and um- so, this is where I am very at home at and feel at peace. (Natalia, workshop).

**Figure 8**

*Natalia's Map Drawing From the Workshop*



Although the Facebook page is not physically drawn on her map, the activity helped her talk about it as a space she created on behalf of her community. When asked about the purpose of the Facebook page she elaborated:

Usually like when I don't see postings up, I'll take pictures and I'll post it on [garden's] website. Just to get the word out because, it's really hard to get anyone involved, and- and seeing things. [...] at the end of December, there's a group that comes here every year and they're from some church, um, [name of church]- or something like that. But, every year they come here and they give the kids presents, from [residential area in California]. Well this year hardly any kids showed up. And they- they- you know, they feed 'em and- and



give 'em all these- and I said- when I was here, when my son was.. at um, Salvation Army, at that time. And I said, "I didn't even know you guys were gonna come. I didn't- I mean I know you guys come every year but I didn't know WHEN." And then he said, "Well we gave the flyers out to: somebody to-. here to- to put up and let everybody know." And I said, "I- I didn't see anything." I go, "If I had seen it, I would have made sure my son would have came." (CR: Mhm) You know? So, she took down my email address and everything, so *I'm* trying to connect in different ways like that. Like okay, if you give the information to me, I'll make sure it gets out. (CR: Mhm) You know, whether it be on [Park website], um, website or making the actual posters and just hanging them up or printing them or whatever, and hanging them up so everybody KNOWS. But nobody knew. (CR: wow) Nobody knew. (Natalia, interview)

Natalia, a working class mother raising a preadolescent son in a low-income neighborhood noted the lack of information shared with her community. That is, community members are not always properly informed about opportunities, such as the Salvation Army's toy give-away during the holidays. Natalia expressed disappointment in the way information that would greatly benefit low-income communities is dispersed, (i.e., "If I had seen it, I would have made sure my son would have came" and "But nobody knew. Nobody knew"). In the interest of her son and the well-being of her community, Natalia takes it upon herself to create a Facebook page in both English and Spanish to ensure that her community is informed of opportunities and are connected to the information through the internet in addition to other modes (putting information on other related community websites, printing and hanging up posters in the neighborhood). The internet as a digital commons (Federici, 2011) is a mechanism through which Natalia enacts mutual aid and social capital (Yosso, 2005).

For some women, mutual aid cannot be completely restricted to a particular site or time. For example, Belen, a working class mother raising sons, volunteers to help teachers and children at her son's preschool in order to help the children and future generations at the school succeed. She bestows social capital to people located in the present *and* to unknown individuals in an unspecified time and space in the future. She described her efforts when I informed her that someone considered her a leader in the community and asked her in what ways she viewed herself as a leader:

I stay at school to help preschool teachers. And I do it not only for my son but for all the kids because the teachers not only have to teach, but the teacher that arrives as an assistant has to prepare- sorry- the activities that the kids will do in a small circle they teach kids how to develop to go to school and when the teacher has that time, she is also not stressed thinking, "oh I need to have a snack ready or go to the kitchen and wash plates and put them in the dishwasher, wash the towels they use." So, I feel that if I go and help in- in my son's classroom, the kids are going to have a better quality and his teacher is going to be less stressed. (CR: It's better for everyone) Mhmm, it's better for everyone. So, that- that is my purpose for- for participating. So and like I tell them, "I don't do it for my son, I do it for the generations that come." (Belen, interview, translated from Spanish)

Belen understands the interconnections between the teacher's well-being, the children's well-being, and her son's, "the kids are going to have a better quality and his teacher is going to be less stressed." By helping at her son's preschool, she aims to support the quality of education that the children receive. Belen makes it clear that while she is thinking of her son's education, her actions are not entirely motivated by self-interest when she explained "I don't do it for my son, I do it for the generations that come." Her advocacy and care for the collective of children other than her son

maps onto a practice of spiritual activism (Anzaldúa, 2002; Keating, 2008) in that she is simultaneously concerned about personal and collective concerns and transformations. Further, she provided an example of supporting future generations of children in a way that her own son would never directly experience when advocating that other preschool children receive age appropriate education:

So, I told the teacher that- I said- I said, “we need to have kids of age three, um, in one classroom and those that are now four- four and a half like mine, um, separated,” I say “because it won’t be the same, the kids each month go through different developmental stages, so there was a great difference.” [...] I said, “that- that- that it was important that they were separated, how will a kid who is three do the same things as one that’s almost five?” So there is a difference. And so, um, well I don’t know but the lady opened the classroom even though it’s like sixteen kids, but we did have it and that is what I like. My son didn’t- didn’t get to experience that but it’s the satis- the satisfaction of oth- of other parents whose kids did get to experience it. (CR: Mmm) That-for- that for me is REALLY important. [...] make the change even though I knew that, that my son, if I would’ve had a different mindset I would’ve said, “well, now my son, there’s only two years left here but I don’t want to- I want a change.” And it doesn’t matter that it’s not for me, I want it to be for the rest of the kids.

From a “mindset” or paradigm of individualism and disconnection, Belen could have easily chosen not to advocate for changes in the school knowing her son would never benefit from those changes. Yet, Belen asserted, “it doesn’t matter that it’s not for me, I want it to be for the rest of the kids.” Belen resists a perspective of individualism and separation from others, a facet or racial capitalist settler coloniality. Additionally, embedded in her actions are her freedom dreams that future generations benefit from an improved quality of education. This praxis of creating social change for the well-being of the collective and for people located apart from us in space and time

that one might never meet is also part of the Black radical tradition (Robinson, 1983).

Gilmore (2014) explains:

The work of those who forged that tradition has always been to figure out a way to make freedom meaningful for somebody they didn't know and might never see. This work does not just take place between two people who are family, as in "This is my child, this is my relative, and therefore I'm going to take care of them," or even between friends. They're *strangers*, actually. Some people just live this way. It's a way of being in the world. One need not be of African descent- although all humans are- and be of a tradition in which the principle of freedom is the greatest motivation, and the survival of the collective is the purpose of life." (Gilmore, 2014, emphasis original, p. 232)

The concept of the Black radical tradition nuances what is meant by "kin-making," described in the previous section in that it is about building meaningful relationships with people and life forms (e.g., plants, animals) we encounter, but also meaningful relationships with people and life forms we may never encounter but we are nevertheless interconnected. Through wanting to create improved conditions for someone who she is not directly related to or has befriended (i.e., strangers), Belen's actions embody a "principle of freedom" that is motivated by the "survival of the collective" described by Gilmore. Furthermore, Belen demonstrates how non-Black People of Color can steward the Black radical tradition from their particular positions.

The previous two sections provided insight into how community support and involvement helped Latina women cultivate self-loving and other-loving (i.e., spiritual activism) desires and practices discussed in chapter four. For example, Nuria's self-love as a queer identified Person of Color was supported by the affirmation of her chosen family and Belen's love for others observed in her desire to

see future generations of children have a quality education is demonstrated in her practice of advocacy at her son's preschool. The next section speaks more directly to how community relationships supported women's awareness of social issues, which in turn became apart of their pedagogies of resistance.

### **Education: Spaces for Critical Consciousness Raising**

This final sub-theme elucidates how Latina women's roots, relationships, and connections to one another are a daily practice of resistance that can foster spaces for the sharing of education and critical consciousness raising. Whereas the previous section focused on the forms of mutual aid women in the study participated in to care for others, this section focuses on how women *received* collective support in ways that furthered their critical awareness of structural oppression. Furthermore, this section highlights some of the lessons women learned from community members that reinforced their own pedagogies of resistance at home with their sons. Before providing examples, it is important to clarify that everyday resistance does not require a particular consciousness or formal education (Vinthagen & Johansson, 2012). Sometimes critical consciousness is cultivated through participation in resistive action (e.g., Guishard, 2009; Guishard et al., 2005), which challenges a linear understanding of consciousness and resistance. Additionally this section challenges elitist notions of critical awareness, namely that critical awareness is not something that can only be cultivated in the ivory tower or institutions of higher education.

The first example of this is Salma who expressed how she came to an awareness of social injustices, including the language to describe structural issues, and found it frustrating that this awareness did not come from her college training in psychology:

I started informing myself on these topics was- only until I moved over here. That is, it is extremely recent, I'm talking about four years ago [...] And little by little I realized that "wow" that is, I symbolize uh- uh, yes, that is, uh Latina people perhaps, but Latina people who are basically white-passing, and I did not know before, [...] I didn't have the language to say, "racism," "colonization," or those types of terms, I didn't maneuver them. And for me that is such a hot topic because I graduated from the university and then came here and I didn't have those terms, even though I had graduated. It made me think, what quality of professionals do we have, you know, in our communities perhaps? I said, "because in my entire career that I did research on- on you name it, on paternity, on that and the other, and never in my life did I use the word "privilege" in my classes until I came here." (Salma, interview, translated from Spanish)

Salma holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from Mexico and recently immigrated to the United States. She expressed that her knowledge of racism, colonization, and even her privilege as a white-passing Latina is recently acquired and not the result of her education at a four-year college. Her frustration is captured when she says, "what quality of professionals do we have, you know, in our communities perhaps?" considering that psychologists might enter underserved communities without an awareness of structural issues as she explained throughout her interview. Salma is one of the few participants who does not have children, nor ever plans to, but is involved in her work as a community educator. One of the implications of her work as an educator is being aware of her own privilege. She explained:

That is to recognize that it is a privilege where I stand and I have to do something with that, not just with the, “oh well it was easy, or I didn’t struggle much and that’s it, oh well, that’s how it worked out for me” that is no- for me it’s a big *responsibility* to have privileges especially in this country where there’s so much discrimination towards the Latino community. (Salma, interview, emphasis added, translated from Spanish).

Salma invokes the importance of the need to respond to the collective, especially groups that are more marginalized (“there’s so much discrimination towards the Latino community”) by noting her privilege as a white-passing Latina a “big responsibility” (i.e., response-ability; Montgomery & bergman, 2017). Here, Salma also provides a nuanced analysis of everyday resistance in helping us to understand how the intersections<sup>35</sup> of identity shape action. Salma is both Latina and white-passing, simultaneously marginalized and privileged. Although some of her everyday resistance entails cultivating self-love as a Latina woman in a body-terrorist society (as described in the previous chapter), part of her everyday resistance also entails recognizing her privilege and using it to interrupt cycles of oppression. After expressing the failure of her college institution, Salma clarified who in non-academic spaces has helped her build critical awareness of structural issues and her own privilege:

Right now I have the huge privilege of having friends here who... are super proud of their indigenous roots as Latinas, and I believe they are like my best teachers, that is they have- they have educated me- and it’s not their responsibilities, and I try to tell them, “You don’t have to-” um, but they do have like a- I don’t know, in a dialogue it would be me with all the trouble I am capable of learning and to do something with that, not just like, “oh well now I understand,” without doing something. So primarily I am indebted to

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<sup>35</sup> Johansson and Vinthagen (2016) make a call for more intersectional analyses of everyday resistance concerning the actors’ identities given the dearth in the literature.

my friends who I have known in this course and a- well authors like Reyna Grande, like bell hooks, uh Gloria Anzaldúa who have given me so many words and a language in like na- naming these types of situations, which before I swear to you, were never covered. (Salma, interview, translated from Spanish)

Salma pointed to her Latina friends as her best teachers, other women who appear to have cultivated self-love and their pride in “indigenous roots.” Although they have been her best educators, she let me know that it is not her friends’ “responsibilities” to educate her as a more privileged Latina.

An understanding of response-ability is then complicated here when considering who is expected to respond to whom and whom is expected to expend additional labor. In other words, one cannot and should not expect that more oppressed groups continue to *respond* and support the needs of more privileged and dominant groups as it has violently been the case historically (e.g., People of Color disproportionately in the role of servitude to white people). She also names prominent Women of Color authors as her teachers, Reyna Grande, bell hooks, and interestingly Gloria Anzaldúa who wrote about what it means to be in the *Borderlands* (1999) of multiple identities. Further, Salma reiterated that she needs to do something with her privileged identity, to be response-able and “do something with that” rather than just acknowledge it, and that the education she is receiving from other Women of Color was “never covered” in her higher education schooling.

For other women, the critical awareness cultivated from informal and non-academic spaces can shape the lessons they share with their children. Natalia’s



working class predominantly Latinx community, has provided her with a critical awareness, particularly with regards to her connection to her cultural roots, that might have reified and supported her pedagogies of resistance with her son as explored in chapter three, particularly because it can be observed how the community lessons she obtained (e.g., pride in cultural roots) are echoed in her lessons with her son. In the previous section, I discussed how her map drawing elicited a description of how she supports her community. In this section, I share how her map drawing also elicited a rich description of the education she receives from her neighbors:

Um, my neighbors are teaching me a lot about my background uh- my culture and it's amazing [...] um... oh, I should have put stars here next to [neighborhood park] right here. Um, about two years ago, I um- I volunteered with the artist [name of artist] she's a muralist. And she went to the [neighborhood] because...there's a lot of racist things going on there and, the [neighborhood] had a really beautiful mural of the Mexican history and culture with Aztec figures, and the city came in and white washed it all. They painted over it, and it was so horrible and, even that- when I saw that my heart sank, it's just like, they tried to erase something that meant something to my community, something that meant something to the people here. And, so there was a big, you know, uproar about it. So, the city decided they were going to hire a muralist and have her come in. She- me and her connected really quick. [...] She taught me her and [name of other artist] there's so- he's the artist that created the [estrada?] he taught me so much about mural design and mural art and, how to do ravein he- they taught me everything. So I felt comfortable enough to go out and do murals now. But I was with him for about a year and half painting this mural. And the community was involved and everybody was involved and painting and that was like one of the best things. I like to go out there and just look at that mural and just you know, which parts I did and y'know what [name of someone she knows] did and what I learned and it was such an awesome detail. Um I like to go out there and look at it. (Natalia, workshop)

Recall that Natalia was raised to distance herself from her Mexican culture and the Spanish language with hopes that it would protect her from racism. This is a wound she is now healing in herself and by teaching her son to learn about and be proud of his heritage. During the workshop she described the role of her community in helping her reconnect with her roots and strengthen pride in her heritage (“my neighbors are teaching me a lot about my background uh- my culture”).

The example she provides about the city’s erasure of the mural brings some key ideas to the forefront. First, she lives in a community that has a strong sense of Latinx pride. This is punctuated by the strong presence of the community in repainting a cultural mural that had been white washed (“the community was involved and everybody was involved”). Thus, she had access to community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) and forms of capital (e.g., social, familial, resistant) to support her role in this action. Second, the repainting of the mural was a form of community resistance to historical erasure, reclaiming and preserving a mural that told the story of Mexican history (e.g., Aztec figures). Through this action, Natalia and her community participated in the recovery of historical memory (Martín-Baró, 1994). Third, through this community experience, Natalia learned a few important lessons. Natalia acquired a critical awareness of the ignorance of institutions towards historically marginalized groups (“the city came in and white washed it all”), her community’s refusal to let erasure happen, the “uproar,” and additionally, she learned more about her heritage as well as mural painting skills.

The community education Natalia received extended beyond knowledge about her cultural history. In one example, Natalia described how her community helped her build relationships to the land (the more literal connection to roots) through gardening:

I'm learning how to grow different things, um, there's a guy here his name is [local gardener], he's a really good... community member. [...] Anyways, I worked here about six years in this garden, he started teaching me about *his* gardening methods and how to plant and how to take- do the soil and you know make it where it's going to- y'know make the vegetables better. (Natalia, workshop)

Natalia started out a novice gardener but through her community she was able to learn gardening skills to help her garden succeed. Furthermore, the lessons that Natalia acquired through the support of her community in terms of building connection and roots to culture and land were observed in the education she provided at home with her son (as explored in chapter three).

Finally, for some women, connections to community helped to de-ideologize (Martín-Baró, 1994) dominant narratives and challenge false information. Catalina, a middle-class woman in her 70s from Venezuela volunteers as a community educator and works with both children and their families. In her letter, she talked about her daily resistance involving educating mothers and children and that her dreams are that children build relationships with the earth:

I am in contact, almost everyday with mothers and children. The mothers are praying for their children to be sure of themselves and are willing to receive love and respect. Those kids are going to grow up with respect and care for mother earth. They are going to take care of her and make it more liveable. (Catalina, letter, translated from Spanish)

Although her role in educating youth was not discussed in the previous chapter on pedagogies of resistance, the impact of her pedagogy of resistance is evident in her mentees (two other participants in this study) who echoed the lesson of “respect and care for mother earth” in raising their children. Thus, for some of the women in this study she herself was a source of community cultural wealth in supporting their daily practices of resistance. Furthermore, even though Catalina did have access to higher education, her own critical awareness did not entirely come from formalized institutions of education but from other community connections. In our interview she recalled a moment from her childhood where she realized that she was kept ignorant about her body amongst other things such as structural injustice. She recalled a moment when the local priest explained to her the changes in her body she would experience as an adolescent that she was not yet aware of:

Father Armando told me, “Has your mother explained to you what is going to happen to you body?” ((in a whispering voice)) What's gonna happen to my body? I said “No.” [...] he stayed there and told me, “did your mom never explain- do you know what menstruation is?” I said, “What's that?” Then he explained to me, what menstruation is, and how a- a- a kid starts to form in the womb. (Catalina, interview, translated from Spanish)

Catalina was not taught in her home or school about menstruation. Insufficient information about reproductive health can foster the social control of women’s bodies (Shaw & Lee, 2012). She realized that this was systematic because her friends were also kept ignorant about puberty and reproduction. This becomes evident when she

described a reunion she had with her friends where they reflected on the lack of information they had growing up:

We started reminiscing on our childhood, and these friends, right? [names of six friends] that whole group, said, “it’s a mystery to know where babies come from, right?” And all of the FALSE- the information- so comical- that they had and we talked about it, and- and they shared with me, they said, “when I was little-” they would say- “Well I knew the babies were there but where did they come out of?” So then [one of the friends] said that moms had to throw up their babies ((laughs)) [...] And the other- the other one said that her dad was like a vet, right? They would bring the puppies, they would bring him- and she said, “NO they come out from your ass.” That’s how she told us. ((laughing)) that’s the information she had, that it came out from the ass, right? But for- ((cracking up)) So when I started hanging out with these friends we had ((unclear)) we got together and we had a sleepover, right? To reconstruct our story of poverty, being working class, humble, and of- Father Armando who I was the only one who was fortunate enough to have him as a friend. (Catalina, interview, translated from Spanish)

The passage demonstrates the misinformation, or rather the “false” information she and her friends were given about where children come from. De-ideologization is important for challenging “social lies” or hegemony (Martín-Baró, 1994). With the truth withheld, her and her friends were led to be confused about how babies are born. Are babies vomited into birth or do they come out the ass? She reiterated that she was grateful to Father Armando for being someone who was willing to challenge the ignorance imposed on her, “I was the only one who was fortunate enough to have him as a friend.” When I asked Catalina if she felt that the ignorance forced upon her was rooted in sexism she responded:

OF COURSE! Of course! Sexism is ignorance. He- he- I would say EVERYTHING, capitalism, capitalism has the control of economic power, and of all education, and all the services *relevant* to the working class- because of this ignorance- it doesn't get to them. Right? Capitalism, which is

the social system which has teachers with a poverty salary, the teachers earned- in those years the teachers would earn VERY LITTLE! Very little. Your teacher gets married with another- with another- with a teacher right? The salary is minimal. Education isn't respected, because education- meanwhile the people are ignorant, the dominant class can continue to dominate. And that was the goal, to keep people ignorant. Yeah. And I realized that, I realized that. (Catalina, interview, translated from Spanish)

Catalina made the connection that the lack of information she had about her own body is structurally fostered by sexism and also tied to capitalism, which is designed to subjugate the working class. This subjugation via suppression of knowledge also intersects with her positionality as a Woman of Color. In other words, the subjugation she identified is connected to class, gender, and *race*, especially since all capitalism is racial capitalism (Melamed, 2015; Robinson, 1983). She asserted that, “meanwhile the people are ignorant, the dominant class can continue to dominate.” This issue is reified by weak educational systems where teachers are underpaid and the quality of education is threatened. Racial capitalist settler coloniality functions to separate and fragment people about knowledge of themselves, their own body, structural issues, and one another (Melamed, 2015; Moane, 2011; Smith, 2012).

As demonstrated also with Salma, the woman who earned her psychology bachelor's degree in México, the institutions that we hope will provide us with accurate information and critical awareness of issues often fail, or perhaps more accurately work by design to fail subjugated groups. To fill in these gaps, friends and community members step in. Crucially, the lessons and awareness acquired from community members become a part of their own praxis and pedagogies of resistance,

either with their own children as the previous chapter discussed or with the youth and families they mentor. The community influence of love politics (Nash, 2013) are also observable here. In the examples provided for Natalia and Salma, the lessons they received came from Latinx community members who had cultivated self-love and were proud of their roots; the “super proud” Latinas with indigenous roots in Salma’s example and the community that did not let their mural get erased with a community “uproar.”

### **Discussion**

This chapter explored the ways that Latina women resisted the racial capitalist settler colonial organization of space and time, in particular social divisions and fragmentation (Moane, 2011) and found their way back to one another. As a practice of everyday forms of resistance, participants worked to re/member members of their community, that is, reassemble social bonds with one another, in order to re/member their relationship to themselves (e.g., self-love), their cultural roots, the land, and others they might not know (e.g., spiritual activism and the Black radical tradition). Thus, this chapter provides support for the collective resources involved in everyday forms of resistance described in chapters three and four, which challenges a false dichotomy between individual and collective efforts in engaging everyday forms of resistance. Furthermore, re/membering these relationships (to self, others, and roots) strengthens our collective response-ability (Montgomery & bergman, 2017) to each

other, our ethical commitments, and our ability de-link ourselves from desires that are involved in the production of death (e.g., consumerism).

Collective response-ability and re/membering was observed in ways that participants cultivated relationships with non-familial kin who supported one another in challenging and oppressive conditions, through mutual aid strategies where people found themselves participating in rival geographies that provided community resources (e.g., Sophia), through platforms created for sharing information within a predominantly low-income Latinx community (i.e., Natalia), through advocacy roles at a preschool (e.g., Belen), and through connection with community members who cultivated critical awareness of one's cultural roots and structural issues. These actions have implications for (re)conceptualization of the meaning of freedom.

Against our society's conceptualization of freedom as an individualistic endeavor observable in our society's obsession over protection of property rights and in the architecture of homes designed for nuclear families (to name a few examples), freedom and liberation are understood as endeavors that must be collective (Davis, 2012; Kelley, 2012; Montgomery & bergman, 2017). The freedom that we are socialized into is one that envisions an autonomous individual that is unrestricted to act as they please, untethered from the needs and desires of the larger collective. Yet, such notions of freedom restrict one's movement in the world; people are subjected to constantly live in fear (e.g., distrust of others) and social divides and injustices are reinscribed (e.g., consumption of goods that harm the planet; Montgomery &



bergman, 2017; Watkins & Shulman, 2008). Furthermore, Montgomery and bergman (2017) write:

If relationships are what compose the world and our lives, then the “free individual” of modern, Western capitalism (an implicitly straight, white, able-bodied, cis-gendered, property owning man) is a sad and lonely vision: a strange fiction invented by a violent and fearful society, walled in by morality and self-interest. This is an uprooted being who sees his rootlessness- his very incapacity to make and sustain transformative connections- as a feat of excellence (p. 82).

This “strange fiction” of individualistic freedom perpetuates a logic where racial capitalist settler colonial endeavors are understood as a “feat of excellence” and obfuscates efforts to imagine and work toward a society that transforms oppressive cycles. The identification of this freedom as an implicitly male and patriarchal ideology further illuminates why women’s efforts to educate their children against patriarchal ideologies and practices in chapter three are crucial to creating a world in line with collective visions of freedom. Citing the Invisible Committee (2009), Montgomery and bergman (2017) go on to write, “I am free because I have ties, because I am linked to a reality greater than me” (p. 85). Collective notions of freedom are at the heart of the spiritual activism and love-politics discussed in chapter four wherein, “love swells in your chest and shoots out your heart chakra, linking you to everyone/everything” (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 558). Thus, the everyday practices of resistance described in the previous chapters are also everyday practices of freedom, understood as a departure from individualistic “rootlessness” and the denial of our interconnectedness to one another.

Dis/memberment<sup>36</sup> from our roots to one another, human and non human, results in flimsy relationships where we fail to respond to injustices in the world. Indeed, freedom entails the “ethical expansion of what we’re capable of- what we’re able to feel and do together” (Montgomery & berman, 2017, p. 91), where “ethics” reflects our willingness to nurture and defend relationships. It is impossible to fight for one another if we are anesthetized and emotionally distanced, unable to feel grief and rage at injustice. The ethics of freedom require response-ability (Montgomery & bergman, 2017). Further, resistance is not a reaction, but rather a response (Lugones, 2003) to sensing our web of relations under racial capitalist colonial assault. This dissertation has worked to illustrate what Latina women are capable of- what they can feel, do together, and respond to even within tight spaces of oppression. Everyday practices of resistance in tight spaces then, can be everyday practices of freedom.

To fail to re/member our connections to one another perpetuates patterns where “the production of our life inevitably becomes a production of death for others” (Federici, 2011, para. 16). The failure to recognize and act on behalf of our interconnectedness is a “state of irresponsibility” (Federici, 2011) that we need to overcome. The “production of death” embedded in our neoliberal policies, institutions of social control (e.g., policing, the military), and our relationship (or lack thereof) to consumerism fostered by globalization and its impact on people, flora, fauna in distant places are aspects of the normalized metaphysical catastrophe

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<sup>36</sup> In Coutin’s (2016) use of the term.

(Maldonado-Torres, 2016), wherein a perpetual war is waged against beings deemed subhuman or unworthy of existence.

Moreover, this state of *irresponsible individualism* (Collins, 2006) is socially rewarded by confusingly being enforced as the hegemonic understanding of responsibility, that is, the “responsible” subject under racial capitalist settler coloniality pledges allegiance to consumerism, investment, and economic responsibility (e.g., paying off debts; Montgomery & bergman, 2017). The desire to fulfill this type of responsibility, to live a life of luxury and affluence even at the expense of environmental degradation and human suffering, is strong. As chapter three discussed with regards to Mothers of Color, society punishes those perceived as fiscally irresponsible, such as instituting the restrictive and single-mother-too-many-children-having-shaming 1996 welfare *Personal Responsibility* and Work Opportunity Act. Thus, there exists dual pressures, one to elude punishment and the other to enjoy perceived rewards. Furthermore, identifying desires and dreams for social change that de-link from these irresponsible and individualistic desires are crucial in fomenting communities of resistance (Watkins & Shulman, 2008).

Through re/membering, freedom dreams are shaped and informed (Coutin, 2016), and our desire for collective well-being and social justice extends beyond those one personally knows. For example, Belen demonstrated the practice of the Black radical tradition (Gilmore, 2014; Robinson, 1983) when advocating for social

changes at her son's preschool that she nor her son would personally benefit from. Her investment in the well-being of "future generations" demonstrates her commitment to strangers. In an increasingly globalized world and through structures of racial capitalist settler coloniality, we are hindered from caring for and imagining liberation for the strangers 'over there' that we are spatially/temporally distanced from. Further, for a person to freedom dream in a context of purported immutability and to act on behalf of those one is physically distanced from, highlights the ways everyday forms of resistance challenges colonial notions of the dimensions of time and space. Specifically, time and space are not limited to the physical present (Coutin, 2016), through re/membering the past and (re)imagining the future, Latina women travel across space, time, and geographical stretches to create more socially just futures. This insight also responds to the call for more research on how everyday resistance practices might utilize the dimensions of space and time (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016).

Moreover, part of non-familial kin-making also involves working for the well-being of those we do not know or will never meet. Juxtaposing examples of the usage of familial capital with the Black radical tradition clarifies what kin-making and re/membering can look like in pursuit of liberation. To perceive one another as kin across space and time speaks to a way of being that acknowledges our interconnectedness with those at the local level and those at the global level. This way of being is a facet of emergent strategy (brown, 2017), the building of

meaningful relationships and freedom dreams in our home contexts that interlink with relationships and dreams at more macro and global levels, as well as spiritual activism (Anzaldúa, 2002), an understanding that we are always linked across difference and to something greater than ourselves.

### **Summary**

Whereas chapter three discussed resistance within one's personal home via the education they provided to their children and chapter four focused on everyday resistance in relation to one's personal body, this chapter emphasized everyday resistance in relation to the larger home community and the collective body. This chapter began with Giles' (2017) metaphor of the redwood trees and the "stubborn foundation of brown fingers clasped" to provide a visual for how we might imagine everyday resistance as supported through community rootedness. Relatedly, this chapter utilized the concept of community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) to explain how Communities of Color have accumulated wealth in the form of resources (i.e., capital) to support one another in the face of racial capitalist settler coloniality, which in addition to social division, manifested as failures of educational systems to provide critical awareness, and failures of social structures to provide affordable health care, living wages, as well as opportunities for people to heal from oppression.

Familial and social capital were primarily drawn from to theoretically understand the forms of non-familial kinship making, mutual aid, and critical awareness that participants experienced and shared in community. Furthermore, this

chapter argued that these forms of connections embody the essence of freedom, that we are free because we have ties. Through rebuilding our relationships and understanding of our interconnectedness to one another, the logics of racial capitalist settler coloniality are betrayed. Instead of death and metaphysical catastrophe, life is nurtured.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

This study analyzed the everyday forms of resistance of ten Latina women living in or near Santa Cruz county. Moreover, this study examined how women's everyday forms of resistance were connected to pedagogy in the home, their bodies, and their communities, along with memories of the past and freedom dreams. To metaphorically connect aspects of resistance and dreams, this dissertation began with Tupac Shakur's (2009) poem of the rose that grew from the crack in concrete: that by keeping its dreams it learned to breathe fresh air when no one else even cared. This image relates strongly to the core essence of everyday resistance against racial capitalist settler colonial violence. The rose, or the daily practices of resistance, represent liberatory forms of life, an-other way of being and breathing in the world that are here but often go unnoticed or underappreciated. The dreams that sustain this rose, freedom dreams, help it learn to breathe amidst metaphysical catastrophe's conditions of breathlessness (e.g., concrete).

The crack represents a disruption, a crack in racial capitalist settler coloniality that speaks to a decolonial otherwise. In their framework, Montgomery and bergman (2017) describe resistance (including everyday forms) as a "fierce commitment to emergent forms of life in the cracks of Empire, and the values, responsibilities, and questions that sustain them" (Montgomery & bergman, 2017, pp. 32-33). The cracks are reminders that the future is not determined; we can and do observe departures from the logics of racial capitalist settler coloniality in everyday life. The question is:

Do change makers pay attention to the rose, the forms of life, that grow from the crack? The freedom dreams and practices of resistance that work to catalyze change? The purpose of this dissertation was to pay attention to the everyday forms of resistance and the freedom dreams of Latina women, because “what we pay attention to grows” (brown, 2017, p. 19).

Observing emergence from the cracks of Empire has implications for our understanding of how actions of resistance at the individual level relate to resistance at other levels. Furthermore, Montgomery and bergman’s (2017) description of “emergent forms of life” relates to the concept of emergent strategy (brown, 2017). In other words, small interactions connect to larger complex patterns, or more expansive “levels of analysis” if applied to the ecological metaphor (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). These small interactions remind us that everyday forms of resistance that undermine metaphysical catastrophe are interconnected with larger social movements and also that everyday resistance is grounded in relationships.

The poetic image of the rose growing from the crack goes hand in hand with the image of fractals of emergent strategy (brown, 2017), the interconnected roots of the redwood trees in Giles’ (2017) spoken word poem, and the wings that one of my participants, Camila, mentioned wanting to give her son by fomenting a strong connection to his cultural and self-loving roots. These relationships to the self and to each other and the building of them (i.e., emergent strategy) are not new, they have always existed in some shape or form but we are severed from them via racial



capitalist settler coloniality. Thus, I argued that part of emergent strategy is to take up the task of liberation psychology's goal for the revival of historical memory and collective liberation, which in this dissertation has been examined through the lens of re/membering (Coutin, 2016).

I conclude this study by summarizing major results, how women built roots-connections to the past, themselves, and their communities, in service of wings-dreams for liberatory change, within the cracks of racial capitalist settler colonial Empire. I offer implications from this study and conclude with limitations and suggestions for future directions.

### **Enacting Pedagogies of Resistance in the Home**

This study contributes to understanding how Latina mothers are challenging racial capitalist settler colonial antirelationality by inculcating their children (or younger siblings) with life sustaining pedagogies that help them see the interconnectedness of all living beings. Specifically, women in the study were raising young boys to become feminist, critically aware of oppression, and to (re)connect with their cultural roots and the earth. These strategies support a decolonial re-existence (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018), whereby boys learn to think, exist, and see the world in a way that interrupts racial capitalist settler coloniality, metaphysical catastrophe, and instead allow for the emergent forms of life to thrive.

Chapter three theorized an *epistemology of motherhood* that helped women access their freedom dreams for current or future children. Notably, not all the women

in the study who imagined a liberatory world for their children currently had children or planned to have any children. For example, some women were enacting their pedagogies of resistance with their younger brothers, and for one woman, accessing an epistemology of motherhood helped her imagine what she wanted for future generations, even though she never intends to have children. This study supports the notion that one does not need to become a biological mother in order to “raise the revolution” (Abdullah, 2012).

Importantly, because the majority of the women in this study were exclusively raising boys or younger brothers, this study addresses a gap in our understanding of Latinx mother-son dyads and their role in raising feminist sons. Currently, the majority of research focuses on Latinx mother-daughter dyads or feminist consciousness among adult men. This study develops insight into directions for studying the particular strategies that might aid in the development of a feminist consciousness in young Latinx boys. Furthermore, this chapter illuminates one of the ways the home is a site of everyday resistance, where pedagogies for living and creating another world are shared.

### **Embodying Self-Loving and Other-loving Politics**

This study identified practices of radical self-love as an everyday practice of resistance and its interconnections with desiring social changes based on a love for others. These results were related to the concepts of spiritual activism (Anzaldúa, 2002; Keating, 2008) and love-politics (Nash, 2013). Love in chapter four is

understood as an ability to feel, sense, and respond to oppression on behalf of oneself and on behalf of others. These results contribute to an understanding of the role of affect, particularly an understudied concept such as radical self-love, in motivating desire for social change and how “breaking the chains of personal oppression” is interconnected with breaking the “chains of social oppression” (Martin-Baró, 1994; Moane, 2003).

For participants in this study, radical self-love involved being able to listen to their body and the information it provides, such as noticing their bodies needs for rest and care, reclaiming their power and beauty by resisting colonial understandings of worthiness and beauty, and healing wounds caused by oppression so that they would not be passed down intergenerationally, disallowing fear and hatred to carry into future generations. This chapter highlighted the body as a site of resistance challenging the colonial impositions of space and time to reconnect with themselves (embodied knowledge and their power) and reconnect with others (perceiving the liberation of others as worth fighting for). A key takeaway is that radical self-love involves a transformation of the self that allows one to also imagine the transformation of society and the well-being of others across space, time, and positionalities (i.e., Anzaldúa’s (2002) understanding that we build a socially just world even for bodies that are different from our own).

### **Re/membering Community Roots**

Chapter five illuminates how the everyday resistance strategies described in the previous chapters are intertwined with community support. This chapter underscores how the distinction between the individual and the collective in studying everyday resistance is futile. Specifically this chapter illuminated how women's pedagogies of resistance with their children were reified by critical lessons they obtained in informal spaces with community members, and demonstrated how a praxis of radical self-love was facilitated by the support of non-familial kin (i.e., chosen family). Further, women in this study also participated in mutual aid practices that assisted in providing resources to members of the community that are structurally denied (e.g., fundraising money to help pay for health care bills). By re/membering or reconnecting with members of the community, women in the study were supported in their daily resistance strategies and were able to participate in *breathing spaces* (Cruz, 2016) that helped them thrive amidst the toxicity of oppression (like the rose from concrete that learned to breathe fresh air).

One of the most important contributions of this chapter is that it generates a radical conceptualization of the meaning of freedom. Freedom is understood as our interconnectedness and rootedness to one another as well as participation in efforts that support collective liberation (Davis, 2012; Kelley, 2012; Montgomery & bergman, 2017). Furthermore, because women were being response-able (Montgomery & bergman, 2017), that is sensing and responding to oppression in their community, as well as advocating for social change for future generations and for

people across space and time (i.e the Black radical tradition), women's everyday practices of resistance could be understood as everyday practices of freedom. Moreover, their building of meaningful relationships outside the confines of the nuclear family and racial capitalist wealth extraction (e.g., buyer/seller relationships) demonstrates an embodiment of decolonial worlds, another way of knowing, existing, and seeing the world (Federici, 2011; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). In these ways, by re/membering themselves, their histories, their own bodies, the earth and one another, women in the study resisted the racial capitalist settler colonial imposition to make them dis/member, disconnect, and forget. Of course, despite these results, no study is without its limitations.

### **Limitations**

One of the limitations of the study related to the political geography of Santa Cruz County. It may be that because the county is predominantly liberal and democratic that there was more access to spaces and community that could help participants become more critically aware of social issues and work towards undermining oppressive power. Relatedly, four of the participants in this study knew each other and provided similar responses about their freedom dreams and daily practices of resistance. For example, these four women shared similar freedom dreams for a sustainable planet and identified consumerism as a practice that harms the planet. Yet, there were some women who did not know these four participants that

shared similar freedom dreams and desires for connection to the earth, albeit described in different ways.

Participants knowing each other can be both a limitation and a strength. That some participants did not know each other provides support for the presence of a pattern of similar resistance strategies and freedom dreams beyond one group or organization with shared perspectives. At the same time, participants who participated in workshops with people they knew seemed more comfortable with sharing and were more willing to talk at length. Future researchers might consider building a partnership with a group or organization where there is familiarity among members. This approach would not only influence the content and quality of the data but also the ethics in question. That is, ideally there would be no research carried out without meaningful relationships to the community (Strega & Brown, 2015).

The next limitation is also related to the question of ethics. Rather than a set of principles to be applied in every context, ethics is an issue of power that requires one to be responsive to relationships (Montgomery & bergman, 2017). One of the ethical issues and by default power issues, is that everyday resistance is often meant to remain unknown and hidden by those in positions of privilege that might be complicit in perpetuating oppressive power (Van Meter, 2017). Much of the key literature on everyday resistance is archival, reviewing historical examples of strategies from marginalized people who are no longer alive. In revealing results of contemporary

Latina women engaging in daily resistance, the question of ethics is unresolved and something with which I must continue to grapple.

Despite this struggle, there are two grounding forces in moving forward with this research. The first is witnessing some participants' explicit excitement and gratitude for research that highlights Latina women's desires, dreams, and resistance, rather than pain and stereotypic notions of deficit. During the member check, one participant expressed openly that they were grateful that this research validated their work at home as political and important for social change. This can be observed in the member check notes (Appendix F) where one research assistant noted that a participant "like[d] how it was included that resistance doesn't have to be going to marches (because some individuals may be undocumented, might feel uncomfortable or not safe going)."

Second, to some degree, any strategies to thwart the forms of resistance and dreams described in this study would be part of the same ongoing legacy and goals of racial capitalist settler coloniality. Women are learning to love themselves because they have been taught to hate themselves, children are being taught to connect with their roots because they are taught a colonial curriculum at school, and communities reach out to and support one another because so many political, legal, and historical events and structures have aimed to dis/member. Still, the ethical tension of studying and identifying everyday resistance must continue to be grappled with and interrogated further.

## **Implications and Future Directions**

### **Methodological Implications**

A premise of this dissertation study is that resistance is diagnostic of desire (Kelley et al., 2014). To read for resistance, this study employed a method that assumed the reverse, that desires and dreams can also be diagnostic of resistance. Asking participants about their dreams for social change and then asking what they do to work toward these dreams were helpful in identifying and validating their daily efforts as acts of resistance. For example, when some women described dreaming that their children or future generations would create a world that would not reproduce violence and oppression, their strategies to support these dreams were identified in their daily practices of self-love or in their pedagogies with children. Both self-love and pedagogies of resistance could have been missed if participants were first approached with the question, “how do you resist?” especially given limited understandings perpetuated in the mainstream of what protest and resistance can look like.

Additionally, the use of multiple methods to solicit freedom dreams and resistance allowed for aesthetic insight, a way for *both* participants and investigators to sense and feel. As chapter four discussed in depth, affective politics, especially the affective politics of love, are key in being able to sense and respond to oppression. The methods used in this study not only allowed for participants to express



themselves verbally and artistically, but also created an opportunity for participants to access the emotional and the loving in describing their dreams for social change.

The use of letters, for example, have been theorized as allowing people to “speak love” against oppression (DeRobertis, 2017). The letters were for many participants the most direct description of their freedom dreams and resistance. They were also for me and my research assistants the most emotional data to read and analyze. That listening to women’s testimonios or reading their letters to a loved one elicited emotion and a sense of connection between researcher and participant goes against traditional understandings of objectivity within research. On the contrary, being able to sense and feel participants' healing wounds, loving desires for their children and others, and resistant efforts helped me to understand their realities more clearly and make a stronger commitment to making sure I shared their stories as accurately as possible.

### **Substantive Implications**

This study has implications for psychological models on radical hope (Mosley et al., 2020) and radical healing (French et al., 2020) that draw from liberation psychology and decolonial frameworks. According to Mosley et al. (2020), a person who has radical hope believes in the possibility of social change and healing for collective well-being. They proposed a framework for radical hope that includes four pathways: understanding one’s social groups’ history of oppression and resistance, the embrace of ancestral pride, the ability to envision collective possibilities, and

creating meaning and purpose in one's own life (individually oriented toward the future). I would argue that from the examples provided, this dissertation supports all four pathways of radical hope proposed within the framework.

Further, radical hope is one of five identified anchors of the psychological framework for radical healing. According to French et al. (2020) radical healing involves a balanced dialectic where one resists oppression and imagines the possibility of freedom. That is, visions are paired with action to achieve those visions. The results in this dissertation are examples of Latina women maneuvering this dialectic via a daily praxis of resistance that is accompanied with visions of freedom. Thus, this study supports the radical healing model and provides concrete examples of how Latina women balance this dialectic.

Previous research has called for an expansion into understanding how everyday resistance might occupy different dimensions and sites (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016). This study provides insight into how the body and the home are sites of resistance, as well as how community connection, re/membering, and freedom dreaming play into resistance via space and time. In terms of sites, the home and the body are already a well known site of resistance, especially for women who are structurally more likely to experience oppression at these sites. These results provide an added contribution through the framework of love-politics (Nash, 2013) and spiritual activism (Anzaldúa, 2002; Keating, 2008). That is, although research has identified ways in which marginalized people have reclaimed their bodies, such as

resisting fat shaming (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016) or finding ways to rest (Camp, 2004), this study contributes to understanding the role of self-love, loving one's body and undoing internalized oppression, in relation to loving other bodies across identities, even identities different from one's own (i.e., spiritual activism).

Whereas previous research has identified the usage of time and space in practices such as slowing down the production of labor (Davis, 1971), or reclaiming time at work for non-work related activities (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016; Van Meter, 2017), this study contributes to an alternative understanding of the usage of space and time in everyday resistance through the practices of dreaming and re/membering. That is, everyday resistance can be a time traveling exercise enacted to recover the past (e.g., one's history and cultural roots) and create futures that depart from the plans imagined through racial capitalist settler coloniality. As an epistemology and a line of vision (Fine, 2014) everyday resistance challenges fatalistic determinations of the future (Freire, 2002).

Additionally, re/membering in Coutin's (2016) usage of the term is not only about recovering memory, but also recovering our connections and relationships to places and people. If racial capitalism seeks to produce social separateness across space and time (Melamed, 2015), then rebuilding relationships to the earth and to beings, even those we might never meet, thwarts the imposition that we emotionally distance from each other enough to be complicit in our own and each other's destruction. The Black radical tradition (Gilmore, 2014; Robinson, 1983) clarifies

that everyday resistance, or resistance more broadly, is about making freedom meaningful for people who we may be separated from through different lifetimes (i.e., future generations). This appears to be, at least partially, an emotional commitment based in love as discussed in chapter three.

### **Future Directions**

The aspect of emotion or affect relates to the final implication and subsequent recommendation for future research. This study examined everyday resistance from a desire-based framework (Tuck, 2009) to forefront Latina women's hopes, desires, and aspirations in addition to their reality of their oppression. Chapter three explored the desire that mothers had for their sons to be emotionally connected to the earth and challenge a paradigm of emotional distance and disconnection. Chapter four explored the role of love as affective politics in motivating a desire for personal and collective change. And finally Chapter 5 discussed collective freedom as "what we're able to feel and do together" (Montgomery & berman, 2017, p. 91).

Yet, our desires and imaginings are suffused by racial capitalist settler coloniality in a way that can cultivate cynicism, pessimism, and fatalistic beliefs about the future, as well as make racial capitalist settler colonial relations desirable (e.g., the desire to accumulate wealth at the expense of others; Freire, 2002; Montgomery & bergman, 2017). Although, creating the space and permission for

people to freedom dream is an important first step, it does not in itself guarantee liberatory imaginings or a complete buy-in for the possibility of change<sup>37</sup>.

For example, in a PAR project involving fourteen adult Palestinian and Israel peace activists, re-imagining palestinian return was fraught with deep internalization of the colonial gaze under the affective background of despair, cynicism, and defeat (Segalo, Manoff, & Fine, 2015). In other words, even when given the opportunity to dream and envision another world, there is necessary work to unlearn the inculcated desires of racial capitalist settler coloniality. This is part of the imagination battle (brown, 2017, 2019), and the call to decolonize the imagination (French et al., 2020). How do we ensure that we do not re-create the very visions of our oppressors in building a new world? How do we cultivate loving affect for the public sphere and a greater desire for our connection to one another as well as the well-being of the planet over our desire for consumerism or ownership of property? A closer examination at the underlying affective politics (Nash, 2013) that shape our desires and imaginings can also help to support psychological models theorizing the mediation of an affective route between utopian thinking and collective action (Badaan, Jost, Fernando & Kashima, 2020). Furthermore, future research might build on this study to explore the compelling question asked in the spirit of activist Toni Cade Bambara, which is how

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<sup>37</sup> This is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is worth mentioning that two participants wrote down their freedom dreams and also expressed that it is unlikely that the changes they dreamed of would ever become a reality, at least in their lifetimes. Despite this pessimism, however, these participants were still invested in fomenting conditions for the well-being of others. For example, one participant focused on what she felt she could control, which was raising her son to become feminist and to treat others with dignity and respect.

can we make the revolution irresistible (brown 2017; 2019)? How do we cultivate joy in our social movements and make resistance pleasurable<sup>38</sup>?

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<sup>38</sup> The following scholars have theorized joy as an important political affect: brown (2017, 2019), French et al. (2020), Montgomery and bergman (2017), and Tovar (2020).

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The flyer features a yellow background with a subtle pattern of concentric circles. At the top, two red roses with green leaves are positioned on either side of the title. The title 'Project Strong Latina Women' is centered in a bold, black, serif font. Below the title, the text is centered and reads: 'Participants invited to participate in a study to share stories of Latina women's strength, resilience, and resistance.' This is followed by a paragraph: 'If you are a Latina woman who cares about her community this invitation is for you. To participate you only have to be at least 18 years old and be excited to build community by sharing some of your life experiences, hopes, and dreams for the future.' The next line states: 'The participation is in a group format for discussion and sharing.' A line in green text says: 'You will be paid \$ 50.00 for participation and childcare will be provided.' This is followed by: 'Come and discover how strong and resilient you are.' Below this, the text reads: 'Possible dates for participation in the study: Saturday- October 6th at 5:00pm (English group) Wednesday- October 17th at 5:00pm (Spanish group) Friday- November 9th at 5:00pm (Spanish group)'. The contact information follows: 'To sign up or for more information, please contact Christine Rosales, graduate student at UC Santa Cruz at 424-625-1464 or email at [chelrosa@ucsc.edu](mailto:chelrosa@ucsc.edu)'. A central illustration shows a woman's face with her eyes closed, surrounded by various flowers including blue irises, purple lilies, and white calla lilies. At the bottom, the text reads: 'Eligibility: Self-identified Latina women (age 18+), who care about their community and are excited to share their stories and experiences. Purpose: The study will hopefully allow us to understand how Latina women's daily activities reflect their hopes and dreams for the future. If you choose to participate you will: Engage in small group conversations where you will be asked to share your stories, experiences, dreams, and write a letter to a loved one. Location: Local community center (Nueva Vista Community Resources at Beach Flats Community Center or Live Oak Community Resource Center) Duration: 3 hours Study Title: Exploring the Hidden Worlds of Resistance Enacted by Latina Women IRB # HS3177'.

**Project**  
**Strong Latina Women**

Participants invited to participate in a study to share stories of Latina women's strength, resilience, and resistance.

If you are a Latina woman who cares about her community this invitation is for you. To participate you only have to be at least 18 years old and be excited to build community by sharing some of your life experiences, hopes, and dreams for the future.

The participation is in a group format for discussion and sharing.

You will be paid \$ 50.00 for participation and childcare will be provided.

Come and discover how strong and resilient you are.

**Possible dates for participation in the study:**  
Saturday- October 6th at 5:00pm (English group)  
Wednesday- October 17th at 5:00pm (Spanish group)  
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To sign up or for more information, please contact Christine Rosales, graduate student at UC Santa Cruz  
at 424-625-1464 or email at [chelrosa@ucsc.edu](mailto:chelrosa@ucsc.edu)

**Eligibility:** Self-identified Latina women (age 18+), who care about their community and are excited to share their stories and experiences.  
**Purpose:** The study will hopefully allow us to understand how Latina women's daily activities reflect their hopes and dreams for the future.  
**If you choose to participate you will:** Engage in small group conversations where you will be asked to share your stories, experiences, dreams, and write a letter to a loved one.  
**Location:** Local community center (Nueva Vista Community Resources at Beach Flats Community Center or Live Oak Community Resource Center)  
**Duration:** 3 hours

Study Title: Exploring the Hidden Worlds of Resistance Enacted by Latina Women IRB # HS3177

<sup>39</sup> Spanish version of the flyer available upon request.

## Appendix B: Workshop Questions and Prompts<sup>40</sup>

### B1: Interview Questions

Find a partner. Decide who will ask questions and who will respond. After 30 minutes, switch- the person who answered questions will now ask the other person these 7 questions.

- (1) Describe these three photos, why are they meaningful to you?
- (2) Tell me about your day? What do you typically do from morning until night?
- (3) What are your favorite moments of your day? Why?
- (4) What are your least favorite/challenging moments of your day? Why?
- (5) What do you do to make the more challenging parts of your day better?
- (6) What are some of the things you hope/dream for most for the future for your family or community?
- (7) How do you work toward those hopes/dreams in your day to day life?

### B2: Map Drawing Prompt

Please draw pictures of places in your daily life using the following questions as A guide:

1. Draw all the spaces and places that you encounter in your day to day life (for example, your house, neighborhood, work, etc.).
2. Draw the places/spaces you feel happiest in. Mark them on your map with a star ★ . Why do you feel happiest in these places/spaces?
3. Draw the place/spaces you try to avoid. Mark them on your map with an X. Why do you try to avoid these places/spaces?

Were there any spaces or places that you wanted to draw but were unable to draw? When you are finished, describe to your partner what you drew in response to the three questions.

### B3: Letter Prompt

In this project I am trying to understand how people's day to day activities and actions are connected to their dreams for their children and/communities.

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<sup>40</sup> Spanish version of workshop questions and prompts are available upon request.

Find a place where you are comfortable and will not be disturbed. Take a moment to imagine the social changes you would like to see in the future. For example, in this imagined future, what does the landscape look like? What does it smell/taste like? What do we eat? How do we pass the time? How do we feel in our bodies? What opportunities are available to children, adults, and the elderly? What would you want to no longer have to worry about?

After reflecting on this imagined future, take some time to write a letter to someone you care deeply about who is either currently alive, passed, or not yet born. Your letter can include anything you want and be as long as you want, but please take time to also include responses to the following questions in your letter to your loved one.

- What is the type of world you wish for your loved one to live or have lived in? Please describe in detail.
- What do you do each day to support this future for your loved one? Please describe in detail.

When you are finished, please contact me and I will come by to make a copy. You can choose to keep the letter for yourself or give it to your loved one.

## Appendix C: Workshop Questionnaire<sup>41</sup>

1. What were your expectations for the day?
2. What was most useful about today?
3. What needs improvement?
4. Did you feel like you were able to participate in today's activities? (yes/no)
5. Do you feel like you learned from others participating in the activities? (yes/no)

Any other comments:

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<sup>41</sup> Spanish version of workshop questionnaire available upon request.



## Appendix D: Interview Protocol<sup>42</sup>

### Pre-Interview Script

Thank you for taking the time for a second interview with me for my research study focused on Latina women's dreams for social change and daily activities. This study will help to honor what Latina women do each day for themselves, their families, and their communities.

As mentioned in the consent form, this interview will be recorded. This will help me listen and focus on your story without having to take any notes and will also allow me to revisit some of the things that you said. All your information will be kept confidential and only myself and my research assistants will see this. Any information about your story will not be published without your permission. If at any point you want to share something with me that you do not want recorded, I can turn off the recorder.

This interview will take approximately an hour and a half and your participation in this study is voluntary. You may stop participating in the interview or decide not to answer any question at any time. You will be compensated \$30 dollars for your time today, even if we do not complete the interview or if you decide to stop the interview.

Do you have any questions I may answer before we begin?

[once question(s) are addressed: let the participant know to please hold one moment and I will begin recording]

*Reflections on writing the letter. Important for determining the impact of the activity.*

1. How did it feel to write the letter?
2. Do you plan or have you already given the letter to the person whom you addressed it to? Why or why not?

*Collaborative analysis of the letter*

1. In your letter, you talk about the dreams that you have for X can you tell me more about that?
2. Why are these dreams important to you?
3. Is there any connection between these dreams for your loved one and the dreams you have for yourself and the communities you live in? Please describe in detail.

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<sup>42</sup> Spanish version of interview protocol available upon request.

4. Is there anything in your past or anything historically that informs these visions?
5. What gives you hope that these dreams can become a reality?
6. What do you do each day to make these dreams a reality?
7. What are some of the obstacles to these dreams?
8. Why do you think these obstacles are there?
9. When you think about the day to day activities that you do to make your dreams a reality, do you think of them as resistance? Why or why not?
  - a. **If “yes”:**
    - i. How do you understand “resistance?”
    - ii. Why do you engage in resistance in these ways?
    - iii. Have you ever engaged in collective forms of resistance? Why or why not?
    - iv. Would you say that other women who are in a similar situation as you also engage in similar everyday forms of resistance? Why or why not?
  - b. **If “no”:**
    - i. How do you understand “resistance?”
    - ii. If you could name these actions, what name would you give them if not “resistance?”
    - iii. Would you say that other women who are in a similar situation as you also engage in similar actions? Why or why not?
10. Have you ever engaged in collective forms of resistance, like a march, protest, strike, or boycott? Why or why not?

*Collaborative analysis of workshop*

1. Here are some of the preliminary results from the workshop. What do you think of how I am understanding your experiences? Do you agree/disagree with them? Am I missing something you expected to hear from me?
2. We have reached the end of the interview. Are there any final thoughts you would like to share?

Post-Interview Script

Thank you again for taking time out of your day to interview with me. If you have any questions after today, please do not hesitate to contact me via e-mail or phone. Once your interview has been transcribed and verified I will e-mail it to you to ensure accuracy. I will reach out to you for our last meeting, which will be a

follow-up and an opportunity to share with you our results and reflect on your experience in this study.

Thank you again for your participation and interest in this research. Have a great rest of your day!

Appendix E: Resistance and Freedom Dreaming Codes For Thematic Analysis

Resistance Codes

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Self determination</li> <li>+ Self-care</li> <li>+ Seeking joy/pleasure</li> <li>+ Self-love</li> <li>+ Pushing back against dominant narratives</li> <li>+ Awareness/seeking awareness of systemic oppression</li> <li>+ Creating Joy for others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Care for the planet</li> <li>+ Loving others</li> <li>+ Pride in one's roots</li> <li>+ Keeping memories alive</li> <li>+ Minimizing use of harmful products/services</li> <li>+ Speaking up/out</li> <li>+ The hustle</li> <li>+ Forging space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Fugitive space</li> <li>+ Care for community</li> <li>+ Connecting with the earth</li> <li>+ Strengthening interpersonal relationships</li> <li>+ Teaching passing/down knowledge</li> <li>+ Community connection</li> </ul>
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Freedom Dream Codes

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ More resources</li> <li>+ Sustainable planet</li> <li>+ Will self-love</li> <li>+ Respect for othered bodies</li> <li>+ Know about roots</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ People will benefit someday</li> <li>+ Will have self-determination</li> <li>+ Live freely in their bodies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Connection to nature</li> <li>+ End of violence</li> <li>+ Longevity &amp; health</li> <li>+ Will live ethically</li> <li>+ Open borders</li> </ul>
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## Appendix F: Research Assistant Notes During Member Check<sup>43</sup>

### Forms of Resistance and Sueños/Dreams

- No questions, they said everything makes sense.

### Discussion (in pairs)

- Talked about “la cadena” de trauma
  - Wholeness
  - Por ser inmigrante
- They related to #1 a lot, interrumpir trauma por el amor
- One of the participants talked about how they connected to the example that going to university is difficult on top of being a Latinx woman
  - She is from Mexico, her school is in Mexico, she doesn’t have a titulo yet but feels there’s a huge responsibility on her to get a career, feels pressure because her parents came to the US so she would have a better future, so she feels her only option is to succeed because of what they’ve given up.
- One of the participants wants her son to know about her story, the story of her parents, their history.
- They feel they are connected through resistance.
- Felt an obvious connection to #3, you can’t be a victim about your circumstances, like going to college, it is a struggle but you have to have self-determination.
  - Society is unjust, but everything we do- all of our struggles, everything we plant will eventually grow into something beautiful- cosechar.
  - Life is unjust, but it’s good to have dreams in order to keep moving forward “para que estés bien contigo misma”
- Being from Mexico and going to another state feels like a huge culture shock
  - But she enjoys finding spaces that allow her to feel connected, especially to nature (she connected to that theme).
- It’s all worth it in the end, all of these struggles and everything we do to resist is worth it.
- It’s heavy “todo está pesado”

### Discussion (big group)

- Related a lot, connected to earth through gardening
  - Brings communities together, especially when spaces are threatened to be taken away.

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<sup>43</sup> Notes curated by Research Assistants Michelle Macias and Alejandra Rubio

- Could relate to quite a few themes, resonated with her even though she doesn't speak Spanish.
- All 3 themes made sense
  - If they know each other and their experiences, they could help heal “sanar” each other's story, by connecting with others.
  - Don't be a victim, continue fighting “luchando.”
- As a mom, she wants her kids to speak up, to learn how to say “no” because of xyz
  - If she is healthy, she can pass that onto others.
- Reclaim space in Santa Cruz which is predominantly white, and we are the minority.
  - We have to work twice as hard, that is unjust- estamos sembrando y eso lo vamos a cosechar.
  - This land used to belong to Latin America, our ancestors, this was our space that was colonized- we have to recognize this.
  - She connected this to reclaiming space to “el fin de violencia, y fronteras.”
- Like how it was included that resistance doesn't have to be going to marches (because some individuals may be undocumented, might feel uncomfortable or not safe going) so many women resist in different ways as it was mentioned through everyday resistance.

#### Discussion of zines

##### 1) ¿Que incluiste en sus páginas?

- Only have the title so far
  - No que nos identifica
  - La comida
  - Los productos, se van a poner mas carros, los productos Mexicanos.
- The letter I wrote for my future kids
  - I wish I had that when I was little
  - That's what I included in my zine
- Family is golden
  - Cut out some of the things she said [from her interview transcript], learn spanish, what it means to her
  - “Hello we continue to grow”
- Mujeres resistiendo en el otro lado

Appendix G: Member Check Questionnaire<sup>44</sup>

- 1.) What did you enjoy most about today?
- 2.) Is there anything that could have been better?
- 3.) Is there anything that you wanted to share about the results of the study that you did not get the chance to share?
- 4.) Would you like to receive a copy of the zine?  
 Yes- I would like to receive  1 copy  2 copies  4 copies  6 copies

Please provide address that you would like copies mailed to:

\_\_\_\_\_

No thank you, I do not want a copy of the zine.

- 5.) Would you like to receive a copy of your transcripts (e.g., interview, focus group, letter)?

Yes- I would like to receive a copy of my transcripts

Please provide address that you would like your copy mailed to:

\_\_\_\_\_

No thank you, I do not want a copy of my transcripts.

Any other comments?

---

<sup>44</sup> Spanish version of member check questionnaire available upon request.

Appendix H: Sample Zine Pages

Honoring our roots & ancestors



para mi la madre tierra es para mi lo que- para muchas personas es dios.



en el espacio de donde estoy, agradecer siempre

• Be •  
• GRATEFUL •



quien estuvo antes, quien estuvo antes de mi.



una responsabilidad grande tener privilegios sobre todo en este país

donde hay tanta discriminación

tomar un té bien caliente,

- Canela
- Manzanilla
- Valeriana
- Eucalipto
- Azahares
- Limón

H1: Created by Salma

Translation: For me mother earth is- what for many people is god. In the place where I am at, always be grateful. Who was here before, who was here before me. A big responsibility having privileges especially in this country where there is so much discrimination. Drink a very hot tea (cinnamon, chamomile, valerian, eucalyptus, 7 blossoms, lemon).



# SET BOUNDARIES

Aprende a decir Nei, no se hace

## ASK FOR HELP

Dile a tus amix que  
te ayuden a buscar  
apoyo. SIN PENA.

el amor propio es el primer paso para cualquier revolución

## BE WITH COMMUNITY

Con tus amix  
Eventos de tu  
comunidad /  
culturales  
¡Echar el chisme  
saludable  
entre campas!

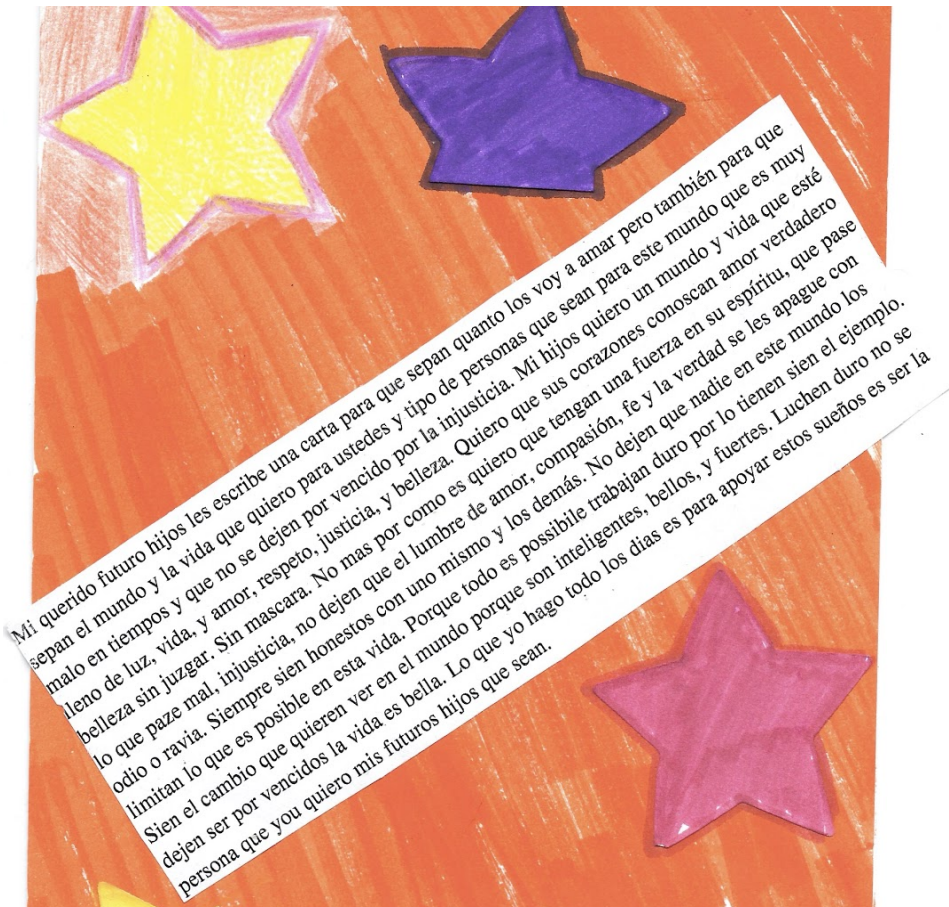
## Connect with CULTURAL and SPIRITUAL practice

Medita, usa sábila,  
cristales  
(Asegurate  
que sean  
cultivados  
por indígenas)  
y comunidades  
de color

H2: Created by Salma

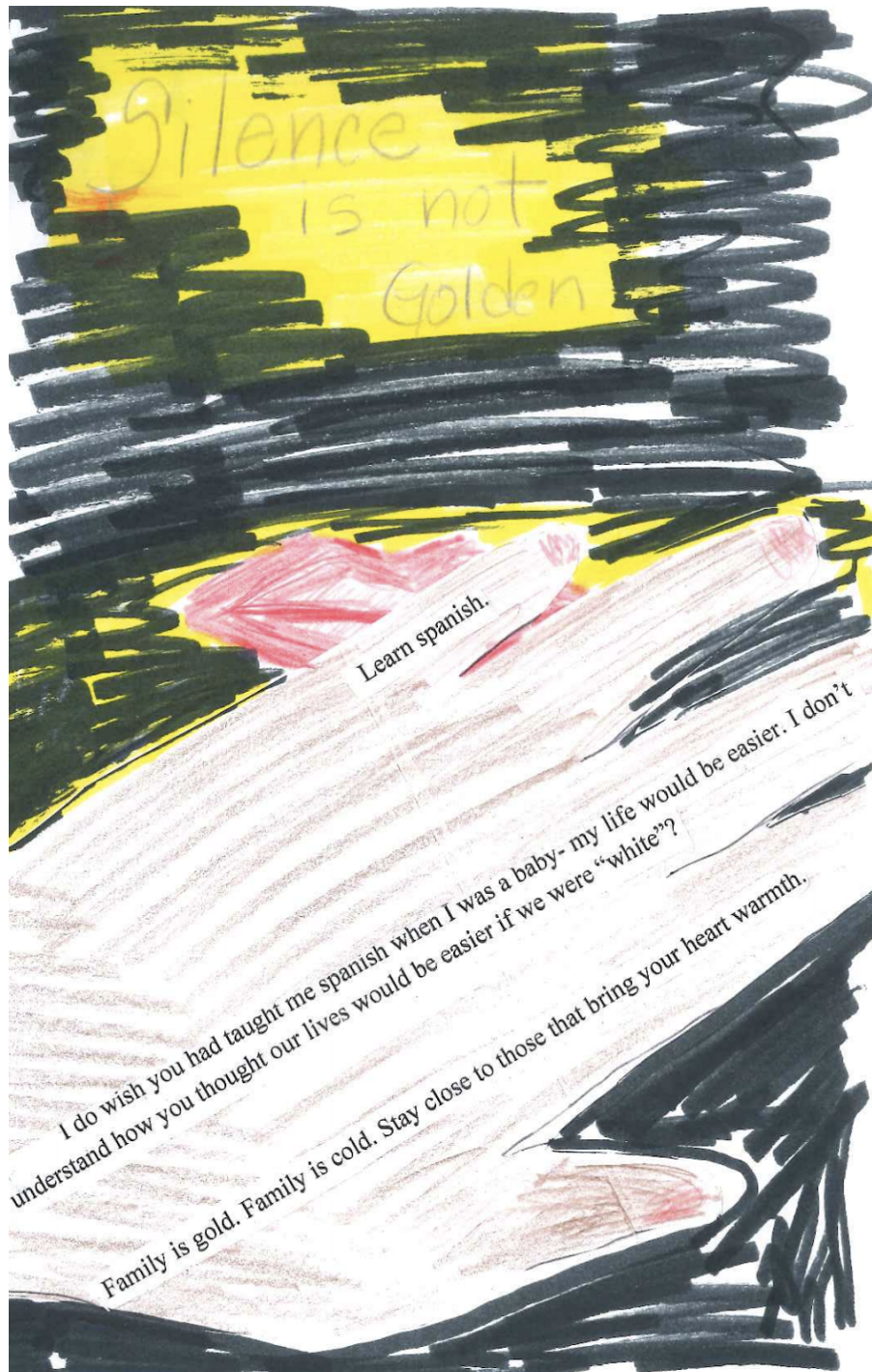
Translation of sentence diagonally across the page:

Self-love is the first step in any revolution



H3: Created by Alanis

Translation: My dearest future kids, I write you this letter so that you know how much I will love you but also so that you know the world and life that I want for you and the type of people that are part of this world that is very bad at times and to not let injustice make you give up. My children, I want a world and life that is full of light, life, love, respect, justice, and beauty. I want your hearts to know true love and beauty without judging. Without a mask. I want you to have a strength in your spirit, if anything bad happens or any injustice, do not let the fire of love, compassion, faith, and the truth dim with hate or rage. Always be honest with yourself and with others. Don't let anybody in this world limit what is possible in this world because everything is possible if you work hard because you have an example. Be the change you want to see in the world because you are intelligent, beautiful, and strong. Fight hard, don't give up because the world is beautiful. What I do everyday to support these dreams is to be the person that I want my future kids to be.

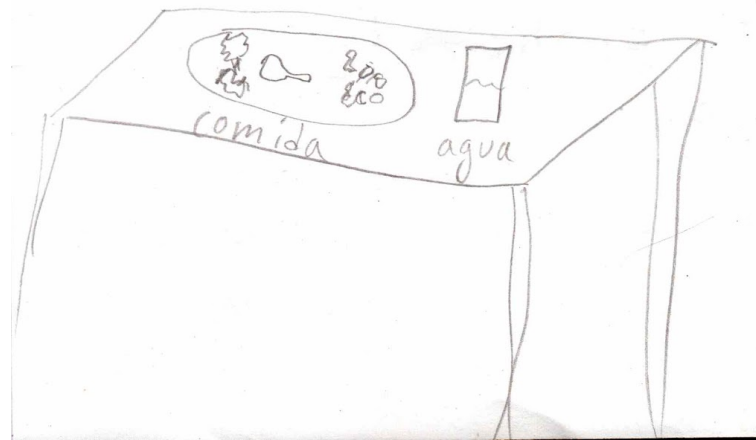


H4: Created by Natalia

NO olvidar nuestras  
raíces.

La familia que amamos  
y que nos dan fuerzas  
Cada día en nuestras vidas.  
Cuidar y amar nuestro  
propio cuerpo.

Porque sin darnos cuenta  
siempre cuidamos a los  
que nos rodean,  
como nuestros familiares  
mas cercanos.



H5: Created by Belen

Translation: To not forget our roots. The family that we love and who give us the strength everyday in our lives. Care and love for our own body, because without realizing we are always taking care of those who surround us, like our closest family members.

Yo me estoy preparando para  
sanar mis emociones para estar  
saludable y sana emocionalmente  
para mis 4 hijos darles la  
fuerza que se que ellos tienen  
pero algunas veces quieren ocultar

H6: Created by Andrea<sup>45</sup>

Translation: I am preparing myself to heal my emotions so I can be healthy and emotionally heal my four children, give them the strength so they can be independent, but there are times when they want to hide.

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<sup>45</sup> Andrea was not one of the 10 participants featured in this study, but she attended a workshop and the member check event.

## Appendix I: Listening Guide Questions

### Memo 1: Listening for The Plot

1. What is happening and what stories are being told?
2. What is the landscape or the multiple contexts, in which these stories are embedded, political (nation or world)?
  - a. Personal:
  - b. local/neighborhood:
  - c. Larger Social Context
3. Who is speaking and under what concrete circumstances?
4. The Plot: What is happening and what story is being told? What are the stories of structural oppression? (e.g., ICE raids, police violence, etc)
5. What are the stories of resistance each participant tells?
6. Pay attention to the voice of the collective- how do participant's communities inform their practices of resistance or help them to be resistant?
7. Any examples of collective resistance?
8. How do participants define resistance?
9. What are the stories of Memory each participant tells?
10. What are the stories of Freedom Dreaming each participant tells? And how this is informed by past experiences?
11. Is there anything being repeated?
12. Dominant Themes
13. Any contradictions? Contradictions (tip: pay attention to when participant uses the word "but" to help look for contradictions) & listen for things that are multiplicitous (e.g., i love my body but I hate certain aspects of it body)
14. What is absent?

### Emotional Response:

1. What is my social location and how does it relate to the participant's social location (e.g., race, class, gender, other experiences)?
2. Nature of the relationship with the speaker?
3. Emotional Response?

### Memo 2: I poems

1. Read Through I Poems and think about what are the different "voices" you hear?

2. Identify, specify & sort the different strands of the interview that may be related to the research question (resistance, freedom dreaming, memories)
  - a. example:
    - pink**= voice of advocacy- desire for social change
    - Orange**= voice of community
    - Yellow**= voice of re/membering
    - Green**= voice of self-care
    - Blue**= voice of seeing oppression/injustice
    - Purple**= voice of educating self/others

### Memo 3: Listening for Contrapuntal Voices

1. Read through the entire I poems to look at each color. What do you notice when you read all the voice of desiring love (pink)? Everytime you read and focus solely on the voice of wanting to forge her own path (green)?
2. Does one voice move with the I poems more than the others?
  - a. Example: Voice of advocacy/desire for social change (**pink**) and voice of seeing injustice (**blue**)
3. What are the relations among the contrapuntal voices? Do they take turns? Do they oppose one another? How do they move in and out of relation with one another?

### Memo 4: Composing An Analysis

1. What I learned about the research question through this process?
  - a. Research Questions
    - 1.) How are the home/home community (i.e., neighborhood) and the body sites of everyday resistance as perceived by Latina women against tight spaces of oppression?
    - 2.) How do daily activities function to reclaim space and time?
      - Home:
      - Body:
      - Space:
      - Time:
  2. How are these everyday forms of resistance connected to aspirations for the future and historical memory of the past (both individual and collective)?
    - Memory:
    - Freedom dreams:
3. How did I come to know this?
4. Evidence for these interpretations?

## Appendix J: Map Analysis Questions

1. What are the characteristics of spaces marked with an X?
  - a. What types of images are drawn?/Who or what is drawn in that space?
  - b. How does the participant see themselves in that space?
  - c. How does the participant see others in that space?
2. What are the characteristics of spaces that are marked with a Star?
  - a. What types of images are drawn?/Who or what is drawn in that space?
  - b. How does the participant see themselves in that space?
  - c. How does the participant see others in that space?
3. What are spaces multiplicitous?
  - a. What types of images are drawn?/Who or what is drawn in that space?
4. What are some of the artistic choices the participant makes, and how does this speak to each of these elements (spaces marked with an X, star, multiplicitous?)
5. What is the overall feeling emitted from this drawing?
6. Final analysis:
  - a. How might these questions illuminate the research questions with regards to space and time?
  - b. Resistance?
  - c. Freedom dreams?
  - d. Memory?



## Appendix K: Research Assistants' Abbreviated Reflexivity Statements<sup>46</sup>

### Michelle Macias

My name is Michelle Macias (she/her/hers). I am a student at UCSC and a research assistant for Proyecto Mujeres Fuertes y Resistentes. I am the daughter of two Latinx parents, a sister to two older siblings, and a friend to many. This project made me realize that even though we may feel alone in our individual stories, when we look at the community we see that we are in fact not alone. We have similar struggles and challenges, but through it all, we find ways to come out strong and resilient. Belen and Regina made me feel so welcomed and at ease, even when I wasn't even the person sharing my story. I have learned that through community building we can achieve empowerment and change.

### Alejandra Rubio

I identify as a Latina Woman. I am the daughter of an immigrant mother and that influences a lot of the work I do. I am an artist, I paint, draw, and make prints surrounding what I think, feel, and have experienced. I am also a psychology major and that helps me in connecting with people through creating events and joining spaces like this lab! I worked really closely with the 4th workshop and Camila's interview which taught me a lot about self-care and self-love, and how you can't really do anything until you take care of yourself. It's not always easy but something that stuck with me from that interview is that when you are the most stressed and feel like you don't have time to take care of yourself, that is when you need to the most.

### Carina Gavino

Hello, my name is Carina Gavino, some of the identities I hold as an individual is that I am Latina, queer, and a womxn. I am also the daughter of immigrant parents, I am an older sister to two younger siblings, I am a younger sister, and I am a friend to those near me. I love the art of photography and cinematic films and enjoy spending time with my closest friends either by dancing, painting, watching films, or just sitting and talking with them. This project has had a great impact in my academics, but more on my personal life. Hearing many of your stories has given me the tools to reflect within my own life and my personal relationships. I am blessed to have been given the opportunity to hear and read some of your stories as it has shaped my perspective on life and how I choose to live my life now as a 21 year old. It is a blessing to be able to have read your stories at this time of so much uncertainty for me as an individual, many of your stories have been sources of wisdom for me. I felt so much love, care, and empowerment within your stories and I truly believe with this project I have learned so much from you all. Thank you.

### Celaena Padilla

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<sup>46</sup> Spanish version of research assistant reflexivity statements available upon request.

My name is Celaena Padilla. My pronouns are she/her/hers. I am an intensive psychology major and an education minor at UC Santa Cruz and a research assistant for Project Strong Latina Women. The workshop that I was able to participate in helped me understand the ways that the Latinx community are able to express their strengths and use their own power to resist and fight against systematic oppression. In the case of Natalia's and Florencia's workshop that I was able to facilitate, I saw these amazing, brave women tell their stories with an immense amount of courage and vulnerability. I learned from these women that there is a power of vulnerability when telling our own stories and how sharing something about our personal lives can remind others that we, as a community, are never alone.

Quinn Valdez

My name is Quinn Valdez. I am a mixed queer trans person. I enjoy collaging, writing poetry, and reading tarot cards for myself or my friends. I am dedicated to my chosen family and making the world better for them. This project has allowed me to see the power in my own story through other people's stories. I spent a lot of time listening to Nuria's story and it was powerful to see someone with such similar experiences as mine grow and heal with the help of their chosen family. It has given me hope for myself and for all the other queer folks out there like us.

Yelitza Sanchez

My name is Yelitza Sánchez and you can address me as Yelitza / Yeli / Ella. This project has given me the opportunity to not only listen to the different stories of strong women but I have also had an awareness of how Latina women are. You have inspired me to realize that work is not necessarily participating in protests but in joining in community groups and caring for oneself.