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Feminista Reflections of a COVID Food Project: Disrupting Pedagogical Norms, Theorizing from Homespace, and Healing Collectively

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Abstract

In this article, we reflect on a COVID food project completed during a Chicanx studies graduate seminar. Via our reflections on the project, we explore how feminista ethnic studies pedagogies allow us to conjure and commune with our elders and our homespaces. We argue that feminista ethnic studies pedagogies, in higher education and in K-12 settings, allow us to draw from our homespace and the bodymindspirit to create living archives of familial knowledge and healing. Sharing examples from the food project, we highlight pedagogical disruptions and collective healing that were grounded in the project.

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> "The revolution begins at home." Moraga and Anzaldúa (1981)

Dolores: I've been teaching for over 30 years, most of that time specifically in ethnic studies, and one priority for me in all those years has been allowing students to make connections between their bodymindspirit (Lara, 2002) and what is happening in their lives—both the struggles and the joys. I've done this in elementary, undergraduate, and graduate classrooms. In the spring of 2021, in the midst of the global pandemic that disproportionately impacted communities of color and specifically the student body at Cal State Los Angeles, I knew it was essential to engage graduate students in a meaningful project that allowed for the conditions of the pandemic, our familial knowledge, our bodymindspirit (Lara 2002), and collective healing. Dr. Juily Phun[23] had developed a project she called *Food in the Time of COVID*, and she graciously shared it with me and allowed me to modify it to work with students in my Chicanx/Latinx studies graduate seminar. In focusing

[23] Dr. Juily Phun is an assistant professor in the Department of Asian and Asian American Studies at California State University, Los Angeles. As part of the Food in the Time of COVID project, she created a digital archive based on the work of students who have engaged in the project.

on how food can bring us together, the project documented home knowledge systems that are rarely honored as legitimate. As you both know, the purpose was to document our relationship to this knowledge system by interviewing a family member[24], recording a recipe, creating a digital/photo food diary, and theorizing about the knowledge, relationships, and food that nourish and sustain us. The assignment was grounded in feminista[25] ethnic studies pedagogies and was meant to invite new possibilities for how we understand the construction and deployment of knowledge. The two of you and your classmates reflected and theorized in ways I didn't completely anticipate. You moved into spaces of vulnerability, grief, healing, and the contradictory pedagogies of your home all in the context of an assignment on food. Can you both share a bit about those spaces?

Yessica: Yes, the food project placed me in an uncomfortable, but necessary space of intimacy and vulnerability. This uncomfortable space became a journey of self-reflection that allowed me to confront the open wounds left behind by heteronormativity. In this journey, I found myself wrestling with what I believed to be right or wrong. I constantly had an internal dialogue that felt like a debate between the person my family wanted me to be and the person I had become. This internal disagreement was visible in my writing as the words shied away from the truth. When you paired Cynthia and me up to read each other's papers, I felt validation I didn't realize I needed. Before you introduced the assignment to us, I received a spiritual calling to write about my family's history with cooking when I received one of the last cookbooks my great aunt Alicia wrote. I wanted to specifically focus on writing about my aunt Alicia because, as an adult, I had the opportunity to reflect on her impact on my life as one of the first queer representations I witnessed.

Nonetheless, I didn't realize that this project would be an invitation to vulnerability and healing that my bodymindspirit had been seeking. Cynthia, after reading your paper about your process with grief, I felt inspired by your openness. I felt encouraged to also look deeper within myself and understand the pain that I have been carrying. I realize now that part of my journey was to detangle the family knowledge I inherited from the harmful values that have targeted me as a queer person. As you mentioned, Profe Dolores, this project invited new possibilities. It taught me to value the contradictions of familial space and familial pedagogies while simultaneously centering joy and healing.

Cynthia: I entered our graduate program at an interesting point in my life, having just overcome COVID and beginning the last trimester of my first pregnancy. This brought on a lot of sentimientos[26], memories. and reflections. Throughout the semester, I sought any opportunity to bridge my academic work with the stories of the mujeres of my family especially those of mi abuela, Soco. I eagerly yearned for her presence during this time in my life. When Profe Dolores introduced

[24] Family was defined very broadly to include blood and chosen, oneself, or a larger extension of oneself. And while most students interviewed an elder, we also defined elder broadly and kept in mind that it is not always about age or relation.

[25] We use the term "feminista" to include Chicana and Latina influences that include the scholarship of US Latinas of different backgrounds, such as US Mexicanas who do not identify as Chicana and US Central Americans. We use it interchangeably with "Chicana/Latina feminist."

[26] Following Gloria Anzaldúa's (1987) example, we purposefully choose not to translate Spanish phrases as a way to honor translanguaging/bilingualism and to ask non-bilingual readers to move out of their comfort zone and willfully engage in world-traveling (Lugones, 1987).

the COVID food project, I knew it was my opportunity to include her in this space of higher education.

I was scared to be vulnerable, and I was frightened to ask and answer those questions that involved intimacy with oneself. At times me preguntaba, "Do I really want to share so much?" Part of me wanted to pull back, restrain myself, but my bodymindspirit told me it was necessary and important work to be done. It was sharing our projects with one another that validated what I was doing. Yessica, you were going through a similar process as I because we both sought answers to questions, we could no longer ask the mujeres in our families due to them passing. By revisiting our family recipes, this opened the door to the messiness of the pedagogies of our homes, but also the (re)envisioning of the homes we want to build for ourselves and the generations to come. I was further validated as I met with you, Profe Dolores. Not only did you reassure me that what I was doing was of value, but you also expressed how coming to terms with the messiness is part of our healing journeys. Ultimately, I decided to cook and write for me, mi abuela Soco, and to heal from the pain her absence has left me.

We began this article with reflections that emerged from our pláticas[27] about a food project assignment in an ethnic studies graduate seminar that we were all three a part of. Dolores was teaching the course and Cynthia and Yessica were both first year graduate students in the course. The course was a Chicanx/Latinx studies teaching seminar that examined learning in K-12, higher education, and community settings with a focus on feminista ethnic studies pedagogies that are grounded in spirituality, the body, experiential knowledge, queer identities, and borderland sensibilities. We explored the ways in which Chicana/Latina feminist thought redefines everyday experiences of teaching, learning and how it has made significant theoretical contributions to educational studies, feminist studies, and Chicanx/Latinx studies. The project itself is somewhat unique to a university setting (though not to ethnic studies) in that it allows for a disruption of the apartheid of knowledge (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002) present in academia by (re)centering familia knowledge and the epistemological shifts shaped by women/queer scholars of color. Too often the academy forces us to teach and conduct research as if the body and spirit does not exist, as if there is no meeting place between the mind, body, and spirit. "If the academy, in its very mission, denies the body, except as the object of theoretical disembodied discourse… then what is the radically thinking 'othered' body (the queer, the colored, the female) doing there" (Moraga, 2000, p. 175). It is imperative, especially during COVID, that we bring our bodies, spirits, and homespaces[28] into the classroom, into our learning, and into the ways we theorize. The food project did just that. It allowed for the queering of academic knowledge so that it is informed by knowledge

[27] Pláticas are a type of informal conversations that "have a long trajectory in the lives of Chicana/Latina feminists and other Women of Color feminist circles that have engaged dialogue and community building as central to organizing and activist efforts. Though pláticas are a familiar cultural practice within Latina/o/x families, our understandings of pláticas are guided by Chicana/Latina feminist frameworks that add a feminist sensibility to how We engage with pláticas" pedagogically and methodologically. (Morales, Flores, Gaxiola Serrano, & Delgado Bernal, 2023, p. 2).

[28] hooks (1990) theorizes homeplace as a space of resistance from the "brutal reality of racial apartheid, of dominance" and where "Black women resisted by making homes where all black people could strive to be subjects, not objects, where we could be affirmed in our minds and hearts" (p. 384). We use homespace in a similar way, acknowledging the warmth and healing, as well as the contradictions and domination of patriarchy and hetersexism that sometimes exists in our homes.

that comes from our homes and communities, allowing us to theorize from our homespace while also developing a living archive of familial knowledge and healing.

Via our reflections on this food project, we explore how feminista ethnic studies pedagogies allow us to conjure and commune with our elders and our homespaces. We argue that feminista ethnic studies pedagogies, in higher education and in K-12 settings, allow us to draw from our homespace and the bodymindspirit to create living archives of familial knowledge and healing. We illustrate how we as mujeres in academia disrupt and transform normative ways of teaching and learning, while at times also (re)imagining some of the pedagogies of our own homes. In order to do this, we first provide a brief overview of the pedagogical and theoretical frameworks that were part of the graduate seminar and that we brought to the project. We then share an example from both Cynthia and Yessica's food projects, highlighting the pedagogical disruptions and collective healing that were grounded in their work. We end with reflections on grief and healing.

Our Pedagogical and Theoretical Perspectives

The graduate seminar we all participated in, titled *Raced, Gendered, and Queer Pedagogies*, introduced students to an array of decolonizing pedagogies such as ethnic studies pedagogies, feminista pedagogies, and jotería pedagogies. Each of these pedagogical perspectives are distinct, yet there are points of intersection both theoretically and in praxis. Zavala (2018) reminds us that a decolonizing pedagogy will "draw connections between the colonial past and the present, between our lives and the social, historical, and geopolitical forces that encircle them, with self and social transformation as broader goals" (p. 59). Ethnic studies pedagogies are a decolonizing pedagogy and according to Tintiangco-Cubales and colleagues (2014), ethnic studies pedagogies also encompass at least three major concerns: access, relevance, and community (ARC). They describe the ARC of ethnic studies as having access to a quality education for students of color where they receive a rigorous education that is directly connected to the marginalized experiences of students of color. And importantly, ethnic studies pedagogies serve as a bridge from formal educational spaces to homespace, community involvement, advocacy, organizing, and activism. Curammeng (2022) adds that self-determination, knowledge of self and community, comparative learning histories, leadership, critical consciousness, community organizing, and self-love are among some of the unique experiential knowledge attributed to ethnic studies pedagogies. We draw from these scholars to conceptualize ethnic studies pedagogies in P-20 and community settings.

Because ethnic studies pedagogies are not always feminist in nature, we pair ethnic studies pedagogies with feminista pedagogies, especially those grounded in the work of Gloria Anzaldúa. Anzaldúa modeled how theory, practice, spirituality, and embodied knowledge combine to offer a specific feminista epistemological perspective. From this perspective, Chicana/Latina scholars have conceptualized various feminista pedagogies—pedagogies that emanate from brown bodies, from the insights of living in the borderlands, from queer identities, and from tensions produced by the intersection of multiple subjectivities. Some of these pedagogical interventions include sentipensante pedagogy (Rendón, 2009), pedagogies of nepantla (Prieto & Villenas, 2012), pedagogies of survival (Trinidad Galván, 2015), a pedagogy of sisterhood (Burciaga & Tavares, 2006), muxerista pedagogy (Tijerina Revilla, 2004), spiritual pedagogy (Figueroa, 2014), jotería pedagogy (Alvarez, 2014), rasquache pedagogy (Morales, Mendoza, & Delgado Bernal, 2016), and border transformative pedagogy (Elenes, 2011). All of these disrupt pedagogical norms, include

embodied ways of teaching and learning, and call for both healing and transformation.

Here, we very briefly introduce the reader to four specific theoretical tools that were essential to the feminista ethnic studies pedagogies employed within our classroom and to how we engaged in our food projects: el mundo zurdo, jotería/queer embodiment, putting Coyolxauqui together, and pedagogies of the home.

El Mundo Zurdo: Anzaldua's left-handed world (Keating, 2009) is a visionary world where the odd, different, misfit, and queer bodies exist; it is a place for people who don't belong. It can be seen as a marginalized space, but in reality, it is a transformative space informed by these bodies which leads to alternative insights, embodied knowledge, and healing. The idea of el mundo zurdo shaped our temporary classroom community of misfit, queer, and different students as well as the food project that took us to familiar homespaces. It allowed us to be vulnerable with each other and ourselves as we brought our full authentic selves, contradictions, and all, to our collective classroom space. That classroom space of el mundo zurdo allowed us to bridge what has traditionally been understood as academic knowledge with our food and familial knowledge. In doing so, our food project became a living archive of resistance, transformation, and healing.

Jotería/Queer Embodiment: The embodiment of jotería is centered on a queer episteme that interrupts the confines of (hetero)normativity and is "rooted in fun, laughter and radical, Muxerista queer love," and it "[rejects] homophobia, transphobia, monosexism, heteronormativity, cissexism, racism, patriarchy, xenophobia, gender discrimination, classism, colonization, citizenism, ableism, and all other forms of subordination and dehumanization" (Revilla & Santillana, 2014, p. 173). Alvarez (2014) argues that jotería is about existing at the intersection of the borderlands, and as Anzaldua contends, it is a place of agency and survival. Through engaging in this space within ourselves, our (family) stories are rewritten and challenge society's hierarchical, supremacist ideologies while also using love, dreams, desires, and trauma as internal knowledge.

Putting Coyolxauqui Together: The dismembered Mesoamerican moon goddess, Coyolxauqui, invites us to reimagine ourselves as scholar-warriors who work on valuing and healing ourselves to engage in intellectual work and spiritual activism[29]. This idea values love, compassion, and joy as part of a healing process that allows us to piece our fragmented selves together. Anzaldúa's reclamation of Coyolxauhqui, not only offers a reunification of the bodymindspirit, but it is an invitation to reimagine ourselves as whole, as knowledge producers, and as "scholar warriors who think differently, recognize alternative forms of knowledge, and engage in spiritual activism with our body, spirit, and text" (Calderón et.al., 2012, p. 525). In some ways, our work with the food project is the "creative work of putting all the pieces together in a new form…" in order to heal from past wounds of heterosexism, patriarchy, and racism as well as from the attempts to separate and dismember our homespace knowledge from academic knowledge (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 546).

Pedagogies of the Home: Over two decades ago, Delgado Bernal (2001) theorized pedagogies of the home to explain the experiences of Chicana first-generation college students. In that work, she focused on the assets rather than the deficits the students brought with them into institutions of

[29] Spiritual activism is the seventh space of Anzaludua's path of conocimiento (2002). It is "a way of life and a call to action. Spiritual activism is spirituality for social change, spirituality that recognizes the many differences among us yet insists on our commonalities and uses these commonalities as catalysts for transformation" (Keating, 2006, p.11).

higher education. In doing so, she didn't address the contradictions or the harmful pedagogies that can take place in our home, such as those attached to patriarchy, heterosexism, or anti-Blackness. In more recent work with Nichole Garcia (Garcia and Delgado Bernal 2021) where they delve deeper into some of the messiness, she reflects:

> When I conceptualized pedagogies of the home, in many ways I was responding to the deficit ways Chicana/o students and other students of color have been talked about in schools, society, and the academic literature. In doing so, I failed to show the contradictions and discomfort of pedagogies of our home and that sometimes home can be unsafe and dangerous (p.3).

The food project allowed us to unveil and sit with some of the contradictions and discomforts of the pedagogies of our homes while (re)imagining the pedagogies we want to embrace and the Mundo Zurdo we want to create.

Our Food Project as Archives of Familial Knowledge and Healing

We provide an example from Cynthia and Yessica's food project to explore how feminista ethnic studies pedagogies allowed us to commune and consult with the archives of our ancestral and cultural homesplaces, particularly the kitchen space. Their examples demonstrate how the food project allowed for the queering of academic knowledge by bringing in food, culture, elders, and ancestors, and simultaneously allowed for the queering of home knowledge by questioning the pedagogies of our home which are not static, but always being remade with the ideas, and theories we bring from academia. Perhaps most importantly, they also highlight healing as an outcome of each of their projects.

Cynthia: The Call Home: Cooking & Theorizing for Nosotras

Throughout my academic journey I have identified with the fallen, dismembered goddess Coyolxauhqui. Her brokenness, one caused by outside forces has been a representation of the various instances where I have been pulled apart by the academy only to be left to try and put the pieces of myself together again. As a first-generation scholar, I have felt that only part of me has been allowed into academia while my lived experiences, family, and community have been shunned away, as if they and I are undeserving of this privileged space. For many years, I struggled to understand the academic language and to find my place in the ivory tower. Through this journey towards making my bodymindspirit whole again, I came to understand that these theories are rooted in the saberes, enseñansas y conocimientos of the women in my family. The food project then became a perfect opportunity to demonstrate how these pedagogies of the home are our first introduction to these academic theories, but with a more accessible language, one that speaks to us from el corazón, cuerpo, y alma.

My Abuela Socorro's home served as my first school, and so as I was trying to choose a recipe to cook during tiempos del COVID, I was called to return to it and her. At first, I was apprehensive because I knew that I would be picking at the wound that her passing has left on my bodymindspirit. Even after all these years, it has not closed, and I do not think it ever will. This calling was a spiritual one, as if she and I were ready to meet momentarily cooking esas tortillas de harina con mantequilla that she fed me throughout my childhood. Although I understood this process would be difficult and I would have to be vulnerable, it simply felt right. All of me told me that it would be a way to

honor the mujer who was my first teacher and has inspired me to pursue higher education not only for myself but for todas nosotras.

Her home in Rosarito started as a small shack, one purchased against the wishes of her father. My great grandfather, Florentino, threatened to kill her with a machete when he discovered that she had purchased a terreno. I grew up hearing this story of defiance y fuerza. Fue haci que de ella aprendí del feminismo antes de reconocer esa palabra. As a muchacha, she was vocal about how she deserved just as much, if not more, than the men in her family. By becoming the first landowner of her siblings, she defied the gender norms that during the 1960s were being forced upon her. With this story she would tell us, sus nietas, how although she was fearful of these threats, what was more important to her was taking the risk of doing anything possible for a better future for her and her children. Nos inculco que era importante amarnos a nosotras mismas como mujeres. She knew that by loving ourselves in every way possible we would always strive for more (however each of us defined more). And so, her home became the foundation for the feminist studies that would guide me through my work in higher education. I embodied these theories and embraced these knowledges born from the margins (hooks, 1992).

As I began to gather the ingredients in my kitchen table for the tortillas de harina, I (re)entered my own grandmother's kitchen space. I was brought back to seeing her cook, no measurements, or exact recipes, but rather an embracement of our bodies speaking to us. The hands know how much manteca must be used when the maza is ready and when the tortilla has been cooked perfectly. She would say, "Todo es tantearle, ver con los ojos y sentir con las manos que mas se ocupa." Because she made an emphasis on the importance of each of us having the ability to cook in on our way without having to replicate her own cooking, I developed my own sazón, "the ability a cook has to create flavorful food using the senses as the guiding principles" (Abarca, 2006 p.210), one that continued to center her feminist teachings. The embracing of our sazón translated into the embracing of our own identities and journeys.

My abuela's kitchen served as the space where the women in my family learned to heal individually and collectively out of the need to desahogarnos about the gender norms that limit our identities and independence. Not only is feminism in my family rooted here, but it also served as the space where we could (re)imagine our liberatory futures. By creating this third space, el mundo zurdo, juntas we dove into a world centering queerness and ambiguity. In this mundo, the women in my family are the osiconas, contestonas, cabronas, feministas, chingonas that are not accepted (nor seek to be accepted) in the heteronormative, cisgendered, white[30], middle-upper class world. As brown, fat, queer, working class, single mother mujeres my ancestras have turned the kitchen from a space of dominance to one of resistance and reclaiming of themselves and their children. It is here where the possibilities of what we can be are endless, when those ideas from our imaginations are vocalized, and put out into the universe to become realities. Y es haci que poco a poco, paso a paso me construyo a mi misma de nuevo gracias a nosotras. It is in this mundo zurdo where we find the strength within us to build ourselves again. Gloria Anzaldúa (2002) writes that our "ailing

[30] We follow other women of color (Aida Hurtado, 1998; Barbera Smith, 1983) and capitalize Black and Brown following that it refers not just to a pigment of skin color, but to a heritage and history of Black and Brown communities being discriminated against and experiencing systemic and institutional oppression. White is left in lowercase letters because it refers not to one ethnic group or to specified ethnic groups, but to many, and it does not refer to a collective experience of marginalization.

body is no longer a hindrance but an asset, witnessing pain, speaking to us, demanding touch" (p. 10). She tells us, "Es tu cuerpo que busca conocimiento, along with dreams your body's the royal road to consciousness" (p. 10). This spiritual calling from my Abuela Soco's kitchen and my own was a way to continue bridging the various parts of me. La hija, la nieta, la madre, la esposa, la estudiante, la colega, la amiga. Although it took some time to realize that my brokenness by the academy took over me for a purpose, understanding that the cracks of my shattering will always be visible (just like Coyolxauqui) but do not hinder me from being complete allows me to survive and continue living by being my authentic self. I choose myself; I choose my identities; I choose my truth and so the process continues.

After years of avoiding cooking my Abuela's most famous dishes, I pushed myself to do so because I recognized the worthiness of my bodymindspirit in taking on this family tradition. When I unfolded my handwritten papelito guardado (The Latina Feminist Group, 2001) with the vague measurements, directions, and consejos of how to make her tortillas de harina, I was hesitant to prepare them for myself because I did not feel like I would be doing my Abuela justice. Eventually, I came to the realization that cooking is not about doing justice to someone or something. Cooking, just as other pedagogies of the home, is about combining the teachings of our elders and ancestors and mixing them with our own knowledge. It is this process of taking poquito de aquí y poquito de allá that allows for a space in which we can continue creating, thinking, and taking action without limitations. Ultimately, I conquered my fear of making the famous tortillas de harina, and by the end of the process I did not seek to replicate the taste of my Abuela's tortillas, but rather I looked forward to tasting the sabor de las tortillas that came from me, my hands, and my love for this food item.

Yessica: Queerness Embodied Through Generations

For many years, my queer identity was silenced externally and internally due to compulsory heterosexuality, the idea that heterosexuality is mandatory (Tijerina Revilla, 2020). Growing up, I did not have the language to understand my queer identity. As an adult, I veiled references to my personal life due to the negative internalized perspective of being queer. Therefore, hetero patriarchy dismembered my relationship with my mom and myself the same way Huitzilopochtli dismembered Coyolxauhqui (Anzaldúa et al., 2013). Nonetheless, by navigating the "messy" and having vulnerable *pláticas* (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016), my mom and I are learning to build a bridge toward healing our relationship, ourselves, and our family. Simultaneously, as we navigate "the messy," my mom and I continue to create "pedagogies of the home" by providing strategies of resistance that will help in everyday life, specifically around the relationship towards queerness (Cruz, 2001; Delgado Bernal, 2010). Nonetheless, our healing did not begin with us. Our bodies have carried "the colonial scarring of imperfect healing" for generations (Calderón et al., 2012, p. 521). Our "messy" relationship with queerness has been a blueprint "…in the bodies of our mothers and grandmothers" (Cruz, 2001, p. 658); therefore, for my food project, I found it critical to acknowledge the practices of the women before me, including my mom and my great tía, Lichita.

Moreover, I brought my own embodiment of jotería to the food project by discussing my family's lived experience and rejecting the omissions of queerness (Alvarez, 2014). By situating my research in a jotería praxis, I facilitated the plática in a nonhierarchical, vulnerable space that invited the questioning and learning of all subjects (Alvarez, 2014). Nonetheless, before starting this research,

I had not reflected on how my mom's connection to queerness has been in motion since the inception of previous generations. Queerness had always found its way to be present in my family.

I have blurred memories of my childhood with my tía Lichita, most specifically because my family and I left Mexico when I was three years old. However, her presence in my life was very impactful. I was a nine-year tomboy[31] when I saw my tía Lichita again after leaving Mexico. I recall the respect her presence demanded as she walked into the room. She was one of the matriarchs in our family and was responsible for the existence of a new generation. I always looked up to my tía Lichita; however, I couldn't put into words what she represented to me as a child. My tía Lichita never married or had kids. Instead, she focused on her career and co-parented with my grandma by raising my mom and her siblings. Like the cartoon, Alex, in Karleen Pendleton Jiménez's, *The Making of a Queer Latina Cartoon* (2014), I lacked the linguistic understanding of queerness, but I understood that my gender expression as a tomboy made me different. At that age, I equated different with being like my tía Lichita. I didn't understand what heterosexuality or queerness meant. Still, I knew that I, unlike the girls in my neighborhood, did not have a crush on boys from school, nor did I fantasize about having an elaborate wedding. The knowledge in my body understood that my tía Lichita was different and that I could be different too. After witnessing how my family loved and respected her, I thought they would also embrace the difference in me.

I decided to interview my mom and learn more about my tía Lichita through *pláticas* with her. When I explained my project and why I wanted to interview her, she was excited. My mom takes a lot of pride in her tamales. She is also very grateful for being able to sell her tamales, specifically during hard times. The first plática took place in my dining room, with my pup running around demanding my mom's attention. Throughout the interview, my mom was open to answering any questions. She made it clear how her tamales had helped her pay for bills and in times of *necesidad para ayudarse a uno*. When I asked her if she ever wanted to learn to cook something else to sell, she mentioned that potentially hot chocolate, but she had *mucha fe en [sus] tamales*. It wasn't until later, as we were eating together that I asked about my tía Lichita. However, she mentioned that she did not know much about my tía Lichita and that it would be better to ask her older sister, my tía Paz.

To include my tía Paz, the second plática was at my mom's house; I faced mixed emotions going to her home. I love the familiar smell of Suavitel when I enter my mom's home and seeing the joy she projects when I visit her. However, sometimes as I walk inside that building, I recall painful memories, like the first time my mom confronted me about my queerness and threatened to send me to Mexico because that kind of lifestyle was not acceptable in her home. I was sixteen years old when I stood in shame in front of her as she viewed me with sincere disgust. Therefore, walking into my mom's home is sometimes messy, full of contradictions, very personal, and at times harrowing (Calderón et al., 2012).

As my mom and tía shared memories about their childhood, I noticed my mom's behavior mimicked a younger sibling. My mom's body mirrored openness and playfulness around my tía, but discomfort and uneasiness around the alluding of queerness. It seemed different from her behavior in my home, where she appeared relaxed and open about my queerness. Her body language shift was specifically noticeable when I asked my tía Paz why my tía Lichita never married or had children.

[31] In *The Making of a Queer Latina Cartoon* (2014) Karleen Pendleton uses tomboy to represent a gender nonconforming child that challenges the gender binary. I use tomboy as a subjective interpretation of a boyish girl.

My tía Paz mentioned that my tía Lichita had a boyfriend who was murdered. Afterwards, my tía Lichita was so heartbroken that she did not want to date or marry again. I then asked her if my tía Lichita had difficulty choosing to live single, specifically in Mexico in the 1950s. I also asked my tía Paz if people talked about my tía Lichita for choosing to stay single. At that point, my tía Paz showed discomfort, raising her eyebrow and gesturing that what I was about to suggest was not welcome. My mom turned her back on our *plática* and decided to focus on the packing of the tamales. She looked like she was still listening, but her body seemed to disengage. The room transformed from a place of laughter and beautiful memories to a place of discomfort and rigidity. My body felt a similar tingling sensation as I stepped into the painful memory of my mom's initial rejection of my sexual identity (Calderón et al., 2012). I felt as if I had disrespected the memory of my tía Lichita for making the plática too queer (Cruz, 2001). I began to wonder if it was wrong of me to make any insinuation that my aunt was queer in her lifestyle or sexual identity. I decided to wrap up the plática and focus on helping them organize the tamales for their clients.

Later that night, I sat with my partner as she ate the tamales my mom and tía Paz had made for her. I told her how I felt conflicted being back home and how I might have crossed a boundary by discussing how my aunt embodied a queer representation. As my partner and I were having this *plática*, I realized that I was engaging in queerphobia by feeling shame around thinking that my tía Lichita represented queerness. I felt the guilt inextricably tied to my internalized belief that queerness was inferior, an insult, abnormal. I practiced compulsory heterosexuality by centering heterosexuality as the standard and only possible identity for my tía Lichita (Tijerina Revilla, 2020). As Dr. Anita Tijerina Revilla states, "queer people also feel compulsively pulled to a hetero identity when they have internalized a negative perspective about being queer" (Tijerina Revilla, 2020, 4:44). I reflected on my queerphobia as I sat in the middle of contradiction, my partner eating the tamales that my tía and mom made especially for her. I also reflected on how different my mom's kind gesture to make my partner's favorite type of tamales contrasted with the way she confronted me about my queerness when I was sixteen years old. It felt confusing to witness how the same person who hurt me for being queer, was now showing love and acceptance through welcoming my partner.

Thus, it is in the kitchen, my mom and I enact a Mundo Zurdo as we imagine and create queer future that invites our vulnerable and authentic *pláticas* about our pain, shame, and joy. Although some *pláticas* are difficult because of our painful memories, I intentionally try to invite my mom's curiosity and move away from the counter stance (Cruz, 2001). I am aware that heteropatriarchy-imposed homophobia on my mom, which affects and informs her relationship to queerness. I understand this first-hand as I explore my relationship with queerness and unlearn my homophobia. I also understand that it was through my tía Lichita's choice of a queer life—one that disrupted the heteronormative nucleus (Bernstein & Reimann, 2001; Maldonado Dominguez, 2020)—that I learned about how the women in my family have transgressed gendered expectations and disrupted the heteronormative expectations by being single parents and becoming the primary providers of their household. They have challenged the idea of a heteronormative nuclear family, consisting of a married cis-heterosexual man and a cis-heterosexual woman, who follow gender expectations of the man being the primary provider and the woman a housewife (Bernstein & Reimann, 2001; Maldonado Dominguez, 2020). By this definition, my family has always been queer because we do not ascribe or fit into the idea of a heteronormative nuclear family.

The pedagogies of my home have always been messy, some grounded in queerness, others in homophobia. As a queer person that lives in the gray areas of life, I learned to hold the pedagogies of my home that are contradicting and messy. As I am untangling the pedagogical inheritance, I received from generations prior, I am unlearning my own homophobia, envisioning and creating pedagogies of the home that affirm and care for queer people like me.

Final Reflections on Healing Collectively

> I believe that by changing ourselves we change the world, that traveling El Mundo Zurdo path is the path of a two-way movement – going deep into the self and expanding out into the world, a simultaneous recreation of the self and a reconstruction of society. (Anzaldúa, 1981, p.208)

Feminista ethnic studies pedagogies facilitate learning and growth that allow us to go deep into the self and expand out into the world. One might argue that they offer a Mundo Zurdo path to transform self, academia, family, and society; that path is a collective one. The food project of our ethnic studies graduate class allowed all of us as learners to go deep into the self and expand beyond in ways that allowed for healing collectively. Both Cynthia and Yessica share how putting Coyolxauhqui back together translated to bridging academia with their homespaces in order to heal and transform both. Healing is not something that is often talked about in academia, especially prior to COVID. But with COVID, there was so much grief that there was almost a domino effect that led back to previous grief. Perhaps the cumulative grief from COVID and other traumas provided a space for healing because of the tenderness it left us with. There is an overwhelming pain in loss and trauma, and by expressing our feelings through writing, grief became our companion, inevitably guiding us to heal. Yessica's relationship to grief is in letting go of the idea of a perfect family and recognizing the harm that heteropatriarchy has enacted on her family while acknowledging that queer people like herself deserve to thrive in loving families without the violence of homophobia. For Cynthia, grief came at a time when new life and academic accomplishments were being celebrated. The yearning for her Abuela Soco led her to understand that although our ancestors may be physically gone, they continue to guide us and be with us spiritually. For both, sharing their stories allowed for a collective healing.

We have found that one of the outcomes of ethnic studies generally, and more specifically feminista ethnic studies pedagogies is that they offer us important insights into how we can reclaim the messiness of homespaces. That is, they simultaneously ground us in the wisdom and beauty of our homes, while also pushing us to envision and recreate homespaces free from harmful practices. The healing that comes from these pedagogies often happens organically, is not forced, and sometimes not fully planned. Even as ethnic studies educators, we sometimes do not fully anticipate the outcomes–the deep learning, the open vulnerability, the power of ancestors, and the need to heal collectively.

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