Understanding My Intersectionality, Decoloniality, and Delinking: An (Auto)Ethnography Analyzing Stories of an Immigrant Girl from the Road, Across Borders and Across Seas

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Communication Studies

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Abstract

This project analyzes different stories in the author's life through a handful of communication theories. The objective of the project is to better understand how values and cultures have helped the author delink and better comprehend her intersectionality. It examines life as a first generation immigrant, music as rhetoric, and delinking through life’s circumstances and creativity.

Keywords: Delinking, Intersectionality, Decoloniality, Autoethnography
DEDICATION

For Antonia Rodriguez de Ortiz for giving me the color of my skin in the summer; instilling a love of knowledge, books, and culture in us; and most importantly giving me my Abuelo my favorite accomplice, reading and research partner. And For Galia Antonia, for being the driving force in everything I do. I love being your mom Galia.

Para Antonia Rodriguez de Ortiz por dejarnos el bronceado de la piel en el verano; plantar el amor al conocimiento, la lectura y la cultura en nosotros; y más importante por darme a mi abuelo el mejor cómplice, compañero de lectura e investigación.

Y para Galia Antonia, por ser mi motor día a día. Me encanta ser tu mamá Galia.
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CHAPTER 1: THEORIES AND METHODS

Galia

One of my favorite things in the world is watching my daughter sleep. Observing my whirlwind child come to peace at the end of the day is extraordinary, even more so because unlike most children, at just two years old, Galia goes to sleep with a book. She chooses a book out of the four we read nightly and then hugs it or sets it by her side. I look at her proudly and think, “Oh yeah she is mine...”. Not to be narcissistic, but she really is extraordinary, detailed oriented and focused when need be, fearless at almost every moment. Galia has been painting since before she could walk, prefers rock music or salsa over children’s music, and can sit through four stories night and still sometimes ask for a fifth. And of course, she does some more age-appropriate things, sings her ABCs, can count to ten, knows her colors, but those things I can’t take credit for because she brings them home from school. I decided when she was a few months old, that I would leave the teaching to the teachers, and instead be her mom and give her the best of me, and my love for the culture that’s where my research for her begins.

When it comes to Galia, I am not always sure how much is nature and how much is the nurturer. The first times I saw her paint, I wondered if and when she had watched me do it. When I hear the easiness with which she translates, I laugh because I hardly emphasize one language over the other. Being an immigrant, I constantly have people telling me to teach her Spanish or English. Actually, I constantly have women giving me advice on how to fix her hair, teach her the right language, to keep her clean, and stay out of the cold. I smile at most of it because, in my eyes, life is messy, her hair won’t always be perfect, she needs to get used to the Nevada weather, and the language thing, we are still figuring out. I can’t even keep my languages straight. She is a second-generation
immigrant. She is a child being brought up in between cultures with everything that it entails, two languages, a couple of cultures, some grief, a lot of hope, and hard work. I want her to find the in-between where she feels comfortable on her own, but more than anything I want her to be brave enough to be true to herself, whoever that may be. As I watch her sleep, I often wonder, how much do I need to give her? how much she does she already carry? What tools does she need to grow up in a country where the rhetoric against immigrants and people of color is continuously growing? Galia could pass as a white child, her hair is a shade lighter than mine and her skin is as fair as my mother’s family; there are somethings I need her to know, like empathy. I want her to know how to create alliances with others, but most importantly understand (as she lives her life) that we each have a story, in fact, many stories.

Author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie presents on the dangers of a single story narrative. Adichie says, that in knowing one side of the story, showing people as one thing and only one thing, we rob them of their humanity and take away their power. Though Adichie speaks of her experience as a Nigerian woman and not as an American, every time I hear her TedTalk I cry, because what she says is relatable to any person of color or immigrant who sees their story recreated by someone else. If what Adichie expresses is right and that stories matter, and I believe they do, then these counter-narratives of people of color and immigrants are important to know because they can be used to empower and change things at large. That is, my stories matter and what can be done with them, goes beyond myself or even my daughter.

With that said, the intent of my project is to analyze different stories in my life through a handful of theories to then understand how my values and cultures have taken part in different aspects of my delinking and intersectionality, to then bring to where I
am. I will be studying and telling stories of my life as an immigrant. Specifically, my love of music and art, and also those times that I have had to pull myself apart, delink to further understand who I’ve become, who I am becoming, where I’ve been and where I am going. My goal is to arrive at places that I can pass down to Galia to give her stories that are worth learning, for nothing more than their power as vernacular discourse, which will make her stronger.

**Theories**

**Coloniality, Decoloniality, Delinking**

The theories that thread my project together are coloniality, decoloniality, delinking, and intersectionality. However, to support these theories and the importance of my story I will also be using vernacular discourse to conceptualize the importance of a good story and lyrics, but also how these can create change. The project starts by studying my intersectionality through my coming and going on Highway 395. Then I describe the importance of music in my life, and the way in which lyrics lead to my decoloniality. Finally, I explore my own delinking through art, and situations which made me evolve. I will draw from concepts related to coloniality and intersectionality to understand my roots and where my story begins; decoloniality to describe the things that changed me beyond the books, and delinking to describe the legacies I want to leave my daughter. As I understand it, coloniality is the past I carry, while decoloniality and delinking are what I strive for every day and what I will be leaving my daughter.

**Colonialism**

My interests in postcolonialism and colonialism started almost a decade ago, as I moved through my political science classes and then applied those lenses into literature
and my life; I began to understand my surroundings based on the oppressions explained to me in class. Coloniality per Anibal Quijano (1992) was the political dominion of a society, which resulted in the dominion of their culture and the creation of knowledge. The colonies unable to create their own culture and knowledge became dependent on Western societies:

*Esa dominacion se conoce como colonialismo. En su aspecto politico, sobre todo formal y explicito, la dominacion colonial ha sido derrotada en la amplia mayoria de los casos. America fue el primer escenario de esa derrota.*

*Posteriormente, desde la II Guerra Mundial, Africa y Asia. Asi, el colonialismo, en el sentido de un sistema de dominacion politica formal de unas sociedades sobre otras, parece pues asunto del pasado. El sucesor, el imperialismo, es una asociacion de intereses sociales entre los grupos dominantes (clases sociales y/o "etnias") de paises desigualmente colocados en una articulacion de poder, mas que una imposicion desde el exterior.* (Quijano, 1992, p. 11)

Though in most parts of the world colonial control is gone, the legacies of it remain in imperialism and the ways in which knowledge is still reproduced and filtered from the West to different the parts of the world. For me, colonialiality, post-coloniality, even de-colonialiality, have always hurt. They remind me of my own family history and provoke a nostalgia for stories I will never know. I have never been able to read the texts or look at the history of it as being ok. The idea of culture or a person being repressed by another physically makes me sick. I am not sure if that is the artist, the rebel, or something I carry in my veins and spirit, but my first encounters coloniality and postcoloniality broke my heart, they became bitter lenses through which to understand life.
Decoloniality

In his first writings about decoloniality, Quijano (1992) explains that the purpose of decolonizing is to bring freedom from the intercultural relations based on coloniality and allow them to choose from the relationships that nation-state to the cultures that they want to be part of. He says that more than anything it is the freedom to choose, exchange and critic, cultures and society, to at last be liberated from organized powers, inequality, exploitation, and dominion:

La liberacion de las relaciones interculturales de la prision de la colonialidad, entranatambien la libertad de todas las gentes, de optar individual o colectivamente en tales relaciones; una libertad de opcion entre las diversas orientaciones culturales. Y, sobretodo, la libertad para producir, criticar y cambiar e intercambiar cultura y sociedad. Es parte, en fin, del proceso de liberacion social del poder organizado como desigualdad, como discriminacion, como explotacion, como dominacion. (p. 20)

Quijano is relevant for this project because he paints a full picture of what was, to what needs to happen. He invites the reader to feel coloniality, and to reflect on what nations can build despite their colonial past. He suggests that societies should not tie their knowledge to either the Europe or the American continent, but instead create cultures based on their best beliefs as nations and people. In a sense, what we believe will be the best for our children and combining all experiences towards a better future.

Here, it is also very important to mention Gloria Anzaldúa’s (2012) Borderlands and her contribution not only to decoloniality and ethnography. Anzaldúa’s work which falls between identity and de-colonialism elaborates on being a person in between identities and borders, where we begin as a people and how we shift between cultures.
Anzaldúa understands the border more than most scholars. She describes the borderlands as:

A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. Los *atravesados* live here: the squint-eye the perverse the queer the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the half dead; in short, those who crossover, pass over, or go through the confines of the normal. (p. 25)

Being a person of the border with everything that entails from the changes of climate to the language, I will be using Anzaldúa to explain my background and eccentricities growing up. As a person of the borderlands, I had to learn to navigate between cultures, but also question who I truly am, where my beliefs stem from and where I want to take them. How much of yourself do you want to sacrifice, which of your grandparents can you do without? These are questions, I have had to wrestle and Galia will be presented with one day.

**Delinking**

Building on Quijano’s ideas around decoloniality, Walter Mignolo (2007) explains the various ways in which European totality and culture continues to be deeply rooted within every society that the West at some point colonized. For Mignolo, colonialism is essential to the modernity that Europe also imposed on its colonies. In “Delinking the Rhetoric of Modernity, and the Grammar of De-Coloniality,” Mignolo draws connections between modernity, race, and liberation. He argues that modernity understood as modern trends or vogue ideas, would not happen without the West’s reliance on its colonies or today’s “third world” countries.
Mignolo (2007) also borrows concepts from Quijano to describes the difference between decoloniality and colonialism to post-colonial scholars, using the examples of Gandhi and Gloria Anzaldúa. Mignolo believes in the importance of delinking and decoloniality as agencies to a greater good and in order to legitimately integrate all people without imposing a specific ethnic vision, more specifically, western european ideology. However, decoloniality is not enough to help nations prosper and find their own identity. We should be working towards a vision of which empowers and gives agency to those nations that were once oppressed. In order to achieve this vision, we must participate in the process of delinking. Delinking is a project of denaturalizing concepts in naturalized fields without western philosophy, it’s ongoing and changes with space and borders. Mignolo explains,

A delinking that leads to de-colonial epistemic shift and brings to the foreground other epistemologies, other principles of knowledge and understanding and, consequently, other economy, other politics, other ethics... De-linking then shall be understood as a de-colonial epistemic shift leading to other-universality, that is, to pluri-versality as a universal project. (p. 10)

As Mignolo builds on Quijano’s rhetoric, he also criticizes Gloria Anzaldúa because of the importance that she put into creating a new identity for Latinos using the same ideas created by the West. For Mignolo, decoloniality and denunciation are not sufficient to create better societies. In the practice of decolonization, we have to accept that history is written by the west and learn to operate within each location. In summary, these projects need to be based on spaces, borders, and be ongoing.

Mignolo’s (2007) descriptions of delinking in English, have influenced scholars in the United States who then take continue to build upon his concepts to explain
movements and identity. A great example of these projects is Wanzer-Serrano's (2015) book, *The New York Young Lords and the Struggle for Liberation*. In his book, Wanzer-Serrano examines The New York Young Lords’ (TNYYL) movement and argues that the association and their work were delinking in nature. Wanzer-Serrano describes TNYYL as they involved themselves with the community and took control of the barrio’s wellbeing to become an agency of delinking and decoloniality. He describes, how TNYYL could not just go out and claim they wanted to help, but instead had to win the New Yoricans trust and move in the direction that they wanted to go. The author believes this was a delinking movement, because it allowed the TNYYL to listen to the people and do things in the way in which they wanted them done, instead of imposing their Western ideology upon them.

In the end, the Young Lords did not maintain a threshold, but it was the ways in which they did things was important for decoloniality. The Young Lords were able to listen to their community, while at the same time challenging the hegemonic powers of the city. This is a concept that can be applied to many places based on their locality. Specifically, decoloniality as a tool to listen to the people, to create consciousness and knowledge from within, and then counter the dominant powers. Wanzer-Serrano (2015) describes his aspiration for his project as follows:

In this book I make the case that the New York Young Lord’s enactment of the differential consciousness pushes the boundaries of decolonial theory. Through critical performances of border thinking, epistemic disobedience and delinking, the Young Lords crafted a decolonial praxis that resisted ideological oversimplification… (p. 7)
Wanzer-Serrano (2015) concludes his book by discussing Latin America, the growth of the Latinx community in the U.S., and the importance of our communities to academia. He articulates on the amount of work that still needs to be done, but recognizes the importance of democracy from a less “myopic” perspective. The key to Latin America’s prosperity lies in truly understanding its colonial past and being able to reconstruct its identity despite it. In knowing how to prosper through decoloniality, delinking, and intersectionality, it will be able to create new ideas and in turn create societies which are not governed solely on Western ideology. Wanzer-Serrano concludes his book by saying, “So long as the liberal tradition maintains a stranglehold over democracy, we are doomed to myopic proceduralism” (p. 176). This means, that as long as we continue to understand government and democracy from a Western lens, whether they are Communist or Democratic, societies will continue to fail.

Another scholar that elaborates on Mignolo’s concepts is Iris Deana Ruiz (2018). In “La Indigena: Risky Identity Politics and Decolonial Agency as Consciousness,” Ruiz uses delinking as a process in her autoethnography work. Ruiz’ describes her transitions through academia and how she arrives at a positionality known as “la indigena.” Ruiz’ describes delinking and what it means to her. She describes decoloniality as a global movement saying: “Decoloniality, then, is a global economic, intellectual, and spiritual event. For various colonized peoples across the globe, decoloniality then works towards the ultimate goal of delinking from economic coloniality” (p. 226). For Ruiz, decoloniality was essential to re-inscribing her identity. She takes the position of la indigena, not out of authenticity, but in order to re-write her subject identity from a foundation. La indigena becomes imperative to her understanding and identity:
“Engaging an *indigena*, decolonial position is a type of decolonial action; it is one of the most deepest and liberating form of agency because decoloniality is a type of alchemy that transforms ancient elements into a new language and, thus, a new way of being the world, otherwise known as occupying the alternative subject position.” (p. 227)

These understandings of decoloniality and delinking give me the ability to understand how I have been socially constructed. Delinking, understood in broader terms like Mignolo’s gives agency to whole societies, like it helped explain movements like the New York Young Lords. Delinking understood through projects like *La Indigena* (Ruiz, 2018) empowers subject positions and identity; and allows for an understanding of ourselves and the will to create something from within. Delinking is important to my project because it points to that which I am searching for within myself, but also that agency which I want to leave my daughter.

**Intersectionality**

Shifting from decoloniality and identity to the subject identity, the next theory I use is intersectionality. In her book *Introducing Intersectionality*, Mary Romero (2018) gives a description of intersectionality as it constitutes for those who are oppressed across race, gender, and social economic background. She explains,

Consider an analogy to traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions. Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. In an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them.

Similarly, if a Black woman, is harmed because she is in all the intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination. (p. 40)
This definition of intersectionality is simple, but it paints a clear idea of how the topic of intersectionality can be approached, before thinking about the alliances that can and should be formed. Adding to this definition, in Standing in the intersection of feminist voices, feminist practices in communication studies, Karma R. Chavez and Cindy L. Griffin (2012) compile a series of definitions and analogies given by scholars who study intersectionality, and who describe their identities and definition of the term differently, yet understand the interlocking of their identities to one another regardless of their metaphors. Chavez and Griffin (2012) posit that,

“Theorizing transracial belonging emphasizes the intersections between feminist allies, evidences the dynamic nature of oppression and privilege, and through transracial belonging, white, straight, middle-class, feminists can develop subjectivity that does and must account for interlocking oppressions and privilege.” (p.11)

Chavez and Griffin explain how intersectionality from different perspectives is important in order for white women to understand, where other women stand and to be able to relate and create alliances with women of color and those from different economic backgrounds.

Intersectionality and alliance is an idea that Aimee Carrillo Rowe (2008) also writes about in her book Power Lines On the Subject of Feminist Alliances. Carrillo Rowe’s book focuses on intersectionality and the importance of communication between women in academia. In this ethnography, Carrillo Rowe examines the politics at stake in our belonging, by describing the way in which our identity shifts as we move to and from places. As a somewhat privileged woman and a scholar, she soulfully describes her belonging in one place, while loving another. To Carrillo Rowe power lines are
important for creating alliances as we shift from one place to the next. She illustrates how each of the spaces we dwell in, is important to our belonging. Carrillo Rowe says, “The politics of relation are spatially and temporally bound: where we place our bodies and how we spend time, the mundane and the mundane and the significant events that give texture to our lives all give rise to our belonging” (p. 10). The point, as we move from one place of belonging to the next, is not to correct each other or become comfortable, but to forge alliances and learn from one another. In doing this we create bridges and help each other heal. Carrillo Rowe’s (2008) work is crucial to explain the way in which my identity shifts as a scholar and a woman of color. Additionally her ideas, the descriptions about loving one place while being at another and never really belonging, are helpful in explaining my own experience.

**Vernacular Discourse**

Ono and Sloop (1995), explain that vernacular discourse “is speech that resonates within local communities” (p. 20). They say that it is forms of expressions that are not entirely available and includes not only texts but culture: music, architecture, dance, art, etc. They are forms of discourse within local communities and are not easily accessible to those outside of them. However, it is important to understand them because, through them, we understand how we can help those who are marginalized and help them grow. The authors claim that, “a critique of vernacular discourse strives to understand how a community is constructed and how that constructed community functions” (Ono & Sloop, 1995, p. 26). In studying the culture and rhetoric of a marginalized society we can help them create agency.

This understanding of vernacular discourse is important because it helps build the argument of why the stories are important, and why the songs that were chosen
throughout the second chapter help create an identity. Ono and Sloop (1995) also explain that vernacular discourse is not always counter-culture. They point out that,

Vernacular discourse can combine elements of popular culture in such a way as to create a unique form that implicitly and often explicitly challenges mainstream discourse, while at the same time affirming and creating the community and culture that produce vernacular discourse. (p. 24)

This means vernacular discourse is not entirely separate from the hegemonic culture, but builds from it and can be a reaction to it, though not always a counter-reaction. Vernacular discourse is important to understand because through it we can understand each other and create alliances and change based on what we know.

Methods

My project is an (auto)ethnography of not only my life as it relates to the cultures and ideas which have shaped it. I will be analyzing not only myself in relation to the music, literature, and intercultural experiences I have grown up with and a continue to wrestle with. What I hope to present with my project is a vignette of stories that explain from my understanding of coloniality to the constant battle between decoloniality, delinking, and the ways in which culture, literature, music, and art that help shape who I am. I say help in present tense because coloniality and decoloniality are constant, ever present, and always shifting.

As a critical scholar I choose (auto)ethnography, because it is a method that allows me to study not only my identity, but the constructions formed from my cultures and spaces. As Gutierrez-Perez (2014) states in his constellation of “Navigating with the Stars: Critical Qualitative Methodological Constellations for Critical Intercultural Communication”: 
As a mestizo living perpetually in a liminal space in-between many borderland spaces, (auto)ethnography is a method capable of investigating my embodied neither-here-nor-there, both/and culture to research the often contrasting and complex experiences of mestizaje. (Willink et al, 2014, p. 303)

Coming from a background in Literature and Political Science, ethnography is something I would have never considered, but Communication Studies is different; delinking, decolonization, and intercultural communication are like matters of my own flesh, urgent to my existence and wellbeing. My stories are just as important as anyone else’s, and I have a responsibility to tell them. An (auto)ethnography is a way of reclaiming power, from the inherited racism and sexism in my culture; it is important not only for the agency it can give others, but for the agency it gives me: “When the researcher is the human instrument, the history and politics of the researcher’s body become a critical point of entry to understand intersectionality, context, and social justice” (Willink et al, 2014, p. 304). I also believe, that if so many other scholars choose to study stories like mine, then why wouldn’t I take control of my narrative?

Similarly to Haneen Ghabra (2015), in “Disrupting Privileged and Oppressed Spaces: Reflecting Ethically on my Arabness through Feminist Autoethnography,” my project will move through stories in order to further illustrate my thesis and understanding; the stories will hold depictions of coloniality and delinking in my life. Though I have the story of many immigrants, I also had the privilege to grow up within spaces where thought and creativity were invaluable. These places that made me different and took me to my darkest moments, also give me the opportunity to be vulnerable. Although it can be nerve-wracking at times, vulnerability is essential not only to study our dark places, but also to emerge into the light. The best moments of creativity arrive
when we embrace our vulnerabilities. In sense, all expressions of art and writing are born from vulnerability. As for narrative and (auto)ethnography I agree with what Ghabra (2015) says,

> When I tell my story it is a reflection of my pain and of the truth of my reality. Autoethnography allows this connection to occur and speak back to the system. It allows for a critical cultural disruption that could in turn be a site of resistance, reflexivity, representation, and voice. As I perform my words out onto this paper, I am revealing to you, the wounds, the pain and the privilege that I have been carrying on my shoulders for years. (p. 3)

What I would add onto Ghabra’s words, is that in working with such vulnerability one can only hope that the public receives things with that same reflection with which they are created. I cannot help but be anxious at the way in which my project will be received. As an artist, I have learned that social anxiety is a trait that comes along with “attention to detail.” Anxiety is often the reason why there are “do not touch signs” and gallery rooms closed off to the public.

It is important to mention that like Anzaldúa (2012) my work is written in both English and Spanish. I have always believed that things are better understood in the language in which is written; translations always lose something. However, in this case more than my original feelings about translations, is the belief that in a project which aims to resist and reflect on dominant structures it is important that the hegemony of English is also not given an agency of power. “The hegemony of English refers to the situation that English is so dominant that inequality and discrimination take place in discrimination”(p. 3) explains Tsuda (2010) in his study “Speaking Against the Hegemony of English.” It is a project in which he helps identify the ways in which the
English language helps colonize and control individuals and nations. I am a child of the borderland, my intersectionalities and my languages provide agency and are important to use.

My project ties together my understanding of intersectionality, decoloniality, and delinking through stories about my life as an immigrant, my love for music and my understanding of coloniality and delinking are part of the legacy I want to leave my daughter. I explore my intersection through stories on Highway 395 focusing on anecdotes that have to do with my mom. Then I will explain my love for music and understanding of decoloniality, using my dad’s own love for music as a backdrop. I conclude with the notions my grandfather, instilled on us as children of the border as a way of delinking. The sections are in English and Spanish, they are not always in chronological order as my expressed identities within them are in dialogue with each other and take my storytelling to different stories. I aim to tell a story, to understand where I have been and where I am going.

**Chapters/Sections**

**Chapter 2: Stories from I-395**

This section describes my understanding of intersectionality, as an immigrant coming and going on Highway 395. It is a drive through memory lane, which starts in the Sierra Nevada and ends on the freeways in LA. I describe my time on the road, my arrival to the US as an undocumented child, my mom’s family, and the many reasons we have taken to the road in the last two decades. I use stories and different intersectional authors to explain my feelings, who I have become, and where the road has taken me.

**Chapter 3: Decolonial Lyrics**
This section is a little different from the other two, though it explains my love of music through my father and tells a couple stories, its emphasis is on interpreting lyrics which describe my identity and my understanding of decoloniality. Here I stray from decoloniality intersectionality, and delinking theories, and instead use the idea of vernacular discourse, to illustrate the importance of Latin America and Mexico in my life, through music and how they have always been part of me and my studies.

Chapter 4: Delinking through Knowledge, Art, and Love

Using a gallery as a metaphor, the intent of this chapter is to show ways in which delinking has occurred throughout my life. Through autoethnography, I explain my coloniality, intersectionality, and border identity; then go on to explain the ways in which art and knowledge helped my process of delinking. It is a vignette of stories, that go further into my experiences as an immigrant, a student, an artist, and a mom. At the introduction of each section I use one of my paintings and explain how I relate it to the project, research and life.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The conclusion is not an end to all the stories, but rather a review of what I have found in both my writings and life. It briefly discuss the importance of alternative narratives, my love of Latin America, Family, my daughter, and the road. Here I draw from intersectionality and vernacular discourse to focus on the importance of different narratives and their contribution, to a greater good.
CHAPTER 2: STORIES FROM I-395

Introduction

Driving through the Sierra Nevada in an earlier morning, there are places where the sun meets the earth. The light reflects majestically on the many lakes and reaches the first houses through the valley towns. Towns which themselves seem to be at a standstill with large ranching areas, followed by two-building town centers with architecture that must have been admirable for its time, but was left hidden between the Sierra Nevada and the Death Valley Desert afterward. It is commendable that these town halls in the middle of nowhere continue to stand, regardless of the time and their solitude. Once in the desert, these structures become like ghost towns: areas where traveler wants to hurry through in case anything morbid comes out from those old gas stations or diners that barely stand.

I-395 is the “Highway of Our Lives.” I dubbed it that for everyone in my family that has spent a significant amount of time on it. Doing the math, I have spent over 1000 hours on this highway, but I am not the only one. When I drive through it, I can call most of my mom’s sisters or my brothers and say something specific like, “I am at the gas station, at the edge of Lone Pine, the wooden one,” and they’ll know what I am talking about. The 395 is the “Highway of Our Lives,” the route back to my mom’s parents, her sisters in California, and to Mexicali. The best way to get home for any major life events, and also to think things through and contemplate just about anything. To me, this road feels like home. It’s the passage between Mexicali and Reno; it holds memories of my life in the in-between spaces, and the many destinations this road took us to over time. The points on a map are always the same, however the stories have morphed and changed over time. These are the places where my story in the U.S. began to take memory.
Theory

Borderlands
This is my home
This thin edge of
   Barbwire
But the skin of the earth is seamless
The sea cannot be fenced,
el mar does not stop at borders.
To show the white man what he thought of his
   Arrogance,
   Yemaya blew that wire fence down
   This land was Mexican once,
   was Indian always
   and is.
   And will be again.
(Anzaldúa, 2007, p.25)

Though the first edition of Borderlands La Frontera was published a couple of years before Kimberlee Crenshaw (1989) coined the term intersectionality, within this poem there’s a description of what it’s like to live between places and cultures, to feel the ideologies push and merge with each other, as if they were waves crashing and pulling. Though my project is about a road, this clash of cultures is what my identit(y/ías) can be like: clashing, pulling, creating, too many things at the same time.

In 1989 Kimberlee Crenshaw published her paper *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color*, in it she used
the term intersectionality to explain the many junctions of power and oppression that come into play in the lives of women of color. Before there were projects that had focused on how women of color, poor, and immigrants were affected by the discrepancies of power, but her project showed how these associated with each other. In Mapping the Margins Crenshaw presented the concept of the intersectionality of sex, gender, and race, all working together.

Romero (2018) explains that by taking into consideration class and gender, without race differences it could be assumed that all oppressions are equal to each other. In reality, each part of an identity can be a different mean of oppressive experience. Intersectionality can also be understood as a system that helps analyze oppression from different perspectives,

As an activist project, intersectionality provides analytical tools for framing social justice in such a way as to expose how social exclusion or privilege occurs differently in various social positions, and it does this by focusing on the interaction of multiple systems of oppression. It is important to emphasize though the concept is not just about poverty and those of lower socioeconomic status. Intersectionality also helps us understand, privilege, riches, and access to higher education. (Romero, 2018, p.1)

In understanding intersectionality as a tool to understand different forms of oppression, it can be used to create change and solidarity amongst groups and people.

In the introduction to their collective work Standing in the Intersection of Feminist Voices, Feminist Practices in Communication Studies Karma R. Chavez and Cindy L. Griffin (2012) explore how intersectionality is defined by different scholars and can help us understand things from different perspectives and intersections. They create a
conversation amongst scholars across disciplines, to create a broader picture of what the
metaphors and meanings of intersectionality look like. The authors review both African
American and Latino scholars’ work to explain intersectionality from different stances
and people. Maria Lugones, a scholar cited by Chavez and Griffin, describes
intersectionality through curdling and separation. To Lugones curdling is a metaphor for
intersectionality which can be seen as impure and resistant

When something curdles, rather than completely separating, the parts actually
“coalesce toward” one another. The parts are interlocked intermeshed rather than
distinct. On the other hand, splitting or separating something “impure” into its
“pure” elements, is an act of power, colonial logic. (Chavez & Griffin, 2012, p. 8)

Lugones describes mestizaje as being ambiguous and unable to isolate parts of one's life
from the others: “Mestizaje defies control through simultaneously asserting the impure,
curdled multiple states and rejecting fragmentation into pure parts” (Lugones, 1994,
p.28). Mestizaje involves breaking with the idea that one cannot be two things, by
“resisting notions of purity,” and “breaching and abandoning dichotomies” to understand
that mestizaje interlocks and multiplies, rather than causes fragmentation. To Chavez and
Griffin, fragmentation comes from colonial notions and was leftover to continue
separating the oppressed:

When the split-separation paradigm reigns within oppressed communities, it tries
to purify the oppressed group and erase or negate those who would pollute the
purity. Other individuals who are thick are aware of their otherness in the group.

(p. 9)

When applied to Latino life and culture, the split-separation paradigm displays how ideas
of nation and systemic beliefs make those who are different from the group fall outside of
the group for their opposing views. It makes the in-group stronger, but it also makes their colonialism stronger: their nationalist sentiments affirm coloniality. Those who do not belong to the group fall out, while those who can fit into the group continue building their identity and that of the group’s (Lugones, 1994). Another scholar who writes about this notion of the group and the ways in which we belong is Aimee Carrillo Rowe. For Carrillo Rowe (2008) who we are, the communities we belong to, and the relationships we build are all sites of power from which we can move to and from. To Carrillo Rowe our identity and intersectionalities shift as we move across places and through relationships with people:

The meaning of self is never individual, but a shifting set of relations that we move in and out of, often without reflection. I aim to render palpable the political conditions and effects of our belonging to gesture toward deep reflection about the selves we are creating as a function of where we place our bodies, and with whom we build our affective ties. I call this place politics of relation. It moves theories of relating the subject to a relational notion of the subject. (pp. 25-26)

Carrillo Rowe uses power lines and cables to describe our relationship to one another. Through power lines, we learn to understand each other and create relationships; we forge alliances or empower each other. She says,

Power lines are those heavy cables carrying vital bits of data that gain relevance as they connect people across time and space. These lines of contact have become vital not only to how we live, work, and love, but also to relations of domination and resistance in the (post) modern world. (p. 1)

She describes different kinds of power lines, “webs of steel underground, thin dark ones on brown tall poles.” The many different kinds of power lines are analogous to the many
different relations that we come across and the ways in which we can create change through them. In Carrillo Rowe (2008) like in Romero (2018), it is understood that “An intersectional approach was the key to understanding how inequality, privilege, and oppression work” (Romero, 2018, p. 2). For Carrillo Rowe (2008) one must also understand how change can be created through our different belongings. How do we change by understanding who we are, or by creating alliances to promote change? How do we give those who come from oppressed groups the opportunity to grow, to move within academia but also our communities? Romero (2018) explains that, “One way to unravel systems of domination is to recognize an unequal distribution of opportunities combined with everyone still being held to the same standard” (p. 34). We need to understand that there is a tremendous problem in expecting everyone to do the same. In thinking about difference, I question how my own story reflects the politics of my belonging and how have my coming to and from shaped who I am and what I want to do with life.

Methods

As if it was a drive through that highway of my life, in this chapter, I explore my intersectionalities through stories of my coming and going on I-395. These stories depict the different intersections I have lived over the years: the immigrant child, the undocumented teen, the child of a low-income family, the oldest daughter, and even the driven young woman I would later become. I look back compassionately at the girl that believed she could do anything, including driving back and forth on that highway by herself without giving a second thought to the dangers that it could hold.

This chapter is a drive from the Sierra Nevada to the San Bernardino Valley in which I tell stories from different points of the highway, reflecting on how my experience
as an immigrant coming to and from Mexicali on this highway shaped who I became later on. Included within each story are facts, statistics, and theory written by different scholars on intersectionality and oppression. These stories drive in and out of different moments, from my arrival, my family interactions, my undoing, and my becoming. The project begins in chronological order but then begins to jump around and create critical junctures within, at places explaining more than one moment in time. Carrillo Rowe (2008) says,

When theory and experience connect the collisions create sparks to light a path that casts new shadows. These reflections warm the spaces within theory: theory is a creation of the body of experience and of belonging. (p. 14)

My thought is that these stories are my intersectionalities and in understanding them, more than creating theory, I can create change.

**The Sierra Nevada and Coming to Reno**

*Figure 1: 395*

“Vienes despierta Anita?” [Are you awake?] My tio asks me as the sun comes up in the Sierra. All I can see are pine trees. In the back seat of my tio’s Thunderbird are my brother, my Abuelito, and I, surrounded by things that did not fit in the trunk of the car,
mostly candies, and snacks for the road. My brother is sleeping on pillows and blankets set up on the floor of the backseat, my mom is sleeping in the passenger seat. A couple of days earlier my mom had handed each of us a duffel bag and told us that we could put whatever we wanted in it, but that was all we could bring on the move. Everything we now owned was in three duffel bags in the trunk. It was our first time driving into Reno, and I can still smell the dew and trees.

Regardless of the time that has passed and accomplishments that I have achieved, that nine-year-old Anita still hurts thinking back to those first days. I did not want to move, I was not excited. I did not want to leave my school and friends of six years. I didn’t want to leave my house. Reno was not a place where I wanted to live: I had visited twice and it was nothing like home. In fact, a week before I had been in Mexico City where my cousin Gaby and I had spent the whole summer going to museums and theaters. Reno was a ranch, it had cows and pastures. At the McDonald’s in Calexico, to convince me to get in the car, my parents had to promise that it would only be a year. My dad had also promised that he would join within a month. He did, but I still don’t remember a lot about those first weeks in Reno.

Romero (2018) explains that part of the intersectionality that comes with being poor and an immigrant is the amount people that you live with. She says, “Poor and working-class Latinos, and many immigrants, live in households with extended family members, particularly multi-generational, which is an important strategy for taking care of children and the elderly” (p. 22). She explains that,

Like indigenous populations, many Latinos do not share the economic practices of individualism- families are central to surviving poverty and creating opportunity Non-nuclear, extended, and pseudo-kin family arrangements are important in
pooling resources to sponsor relatives, contributing household expenses, and wealth accumulation. (p. 145)

We lived in a room in my aunt’s house for almost a year. That year, my aunt and uncle took in four of her siblings with their families. All in all, there were five families in a four-bedroom house. Basically there were over twenty people in single family home. Everyone worked for the collective good. The women took turns making meals and all of us went to the laundromat when we needed to. It was a house where the kitchen never closed and the games never ended. I can smile when I think back to it, but most of it still feels overwhelming.

My mom went to work and my brother and I learned to do things on our own, or with the help of our now extended family. Later on, when we had an apartment, we learned to cook for ourselves and help out with chores; but at this house, we learned the basics of taking care of ourselves and staying out of the way. Romero (2018) says, “These parents make hard choices to secure a good education for their children, and they expect their children to be more responsible and more discipline than wealthier parents” (p. 22). As soon as we arrived in Reno my mom started working two jobs. The least I could do was learn to do my own hair and stay out of the way. Knowing that my parents were working and sacrificing so much, inspired a different sense of responsibility in me. Their sacrifice made me feel like I had to sacrifice being a child for helping them as new immigrants.

School only made things worse: the projector was too bright, the smell and orange color of the cafeteria nauseating, and the kids and workload were nothing like what I was used to. During recess I would sit against a wall riddled with anxiety, and later I would hide in the library. I started doing this when I was home too, finding the quiet places on
the side of the house or inside closets. As the mornings became colder and darker I would wake up crying. We had to go to the ESL school, because neither of us spoke English, and so we were up before everyone else waiting for the bus at the corner. Being a child immigrant is not easy. You are broken into pieces without knowing and you are expected to be grateful.

It was the full immigrant experience: my parents divorced; my brother and I moved over 30 times before I was 18; my dad started drinking. We learned to survive, to move through different spaces and time. It would be years before I could look at the trees and appreciate them for their colors and cusps, not the changes they brought to my life that morning.

The Pink Denny’s in Bishop and My Brothers

![Figure 2: 395](image)

There is a Denny’s on the left side of the street as you start driving into the town of Bishop. Bishop is the largest of four towns as the Sierra Nevada ends, depending on the speed and traffic sometimes it takes four hours and other times three or three and a half. It is a town with less than 4,000 residents, but that has kept alive because of outdoor
enthusiasts and is almost always busy with drivers or seasonal tourists who are either there to hike or for the snow. The town has a combination of local and corporate business, which seems to be perfect in ratio, and is kept to look within a rustic standard for tourist appeal. When we were kids there was a Kmart, but to safeguard the economy larger corporations like Walmart were not allowed in.

The Denny’s is pink, and has been pink for about a decade now. It matches the hotel that goes around it and the buildings next to it, but it has also been other earth colors: green, brown and some weird orange shades. It is the place where my mom and stepdad always stop to rest. Since it’s the midpoint between Reno and the L.A. area, it’s a good place to eat breakfast and keep going. The sitting area is shaped like an L. It has two entrances, one on the perpendicular corner and one top to enter through the back. These years my parents come in through the back and quietly find a booth, but it wasn’t always like that. I think when my mom and stepdad go in there, they can see all of us and the layers of time itself. I know I do: I see my mom with her little boys and us, in a situation which seems like they were unpacking sardines from their 1997 Land Cruiser. Sometimes there were four children in the car, other times five because of my stepbrother.

We spent most holidays with my dad, so we didn’t travel as much with them, but in less than three years after our arrival, I had gone from having one brother to four. My brothers are my favorite thing of all about coming to the U.S. and the transitions that followed. Up until I was 13 years old, I had one brother and he was my best friend, but then when my mom married, I almost instantly had three more; it was yours, mine, and ours. One of them has never lived with us, but the two youngest still have me wrapped around their fingers. At the most turbulent time in my life, they were calm. Like Romero...
(2018) describes, low-income family children have to take more responsibility, you have more expected of you. I took on the role of older sister; yet another role I never imagined I would play. I read with them, fed them, changed diapers. I chose them.

Even when I left home I came back to see them. It wasn’t always perfect, it was hard to see my mom take care of someone else other than us. For a couple of years it seems like she was busy with her new life, but then I began getting busy with mine. Aimee Carrillo Rowe (2008) says,

How we insert ourselves in community produces a range of options not only for what kind of experience become possible (experience) but also how we come to understand those experiences (consciousness), and how we seek to transform, resist, challenge, and resist the conditions which produce it (agency). The politics of relation, then, entails understanding agency, experiences, and consciousness as collective and interrelated moments within a circuit. (p. 11)

When the boys came into our lives many people reminded me I only had one “real” brother; but my Dad did the opposite. He took us aside and made us promise to be fair and loving siblings, so we were. To me, choosing to love these boys as they came into my life was the first instance of me understanding what love could do and creating life-long alliances instead of more division. At that time, they were an antidote for the wounds that didn’t seem to heal; now they are my friends and cheerleaders.

Driving down by that Denny’s I will always see the boys, all of us sitting in a corner. I see our lives drastically changing as they entered: my mom scrambling to the restroom to change diapers and clean toddlers; then older as they began ordering their own food; and as teens in their own worlds, black hoodies, with their headphones on. My oldest little brother is the first person I call when something happens. He was my best
friend through high school, and later on. These boys gave me the opportunity to be the older sister. I left home right after high school, but the boys still know to message if they need anything and more than likely I’ll figure it out.

**Lone Pine to Hillcrest and All Those Thoughts**

![Map of the 395 route](image)

*Figure 3: 395*

Continuing on the 395 you pass Bishop, Big Pine, Lone Pine, and Independence, and as you drive through them the scenery changes almost as drastically as our lives did over the years; the temperatures and fauna transition from the Sierra Nevada’s cool air to the Death Valley suffocating desert heat. As you drive the radio and phone signals start dropping. The mind begins to wander. It is a good area to contemplate things or put on an old CD. When I drive it, it feels like I am both writing and reading stories. I think up new stories of the present and future, while reading the past stories that are layered like palimpsests onto the road. I think of the countless hours we have spent on this road, the many reasons we drove: for holidays, illness, health.
Depending on the time of the day, I see my mom or dad driving through here, with really loud music, intently focused on the drive ahead. I see us through the years, driving to see my abuelitos (my mom’s parents). As my Abuelito’s Alzheimer worsened, for almost five years, every time that something happened at the retirement home, my mom drove to see him. She would drive 12 hours to El Centro California just to see him for a couple of hours. Many of those times she drove down believing she was saying goodbye to her father. The distance exacerbated every piece of information that came through the phone. The same was true for my Abuelita, except she was never in a retirement home. She traveled back and forth between my aunt’s home in San Bernardino and her home in Mexicali. Over the years more than once we were told she would not make it. Yet, every time she saw her children and grandchildren arrive to see her, she miraculously recuperated as if they brought life itself back to her.

My mom is number 14 of 15 children. She is the youngest of nine sisters and six brothers, most of which immigrated to the U.S. in the ’70s and whose families continue to drive back and forth between these roads. It was because of them that my mom came to the US as a teen. Originally from a mining town in Mexico, my grandfather wanted more for his family. He wanted them to leave before the mines consumed their lives, and so they took advantage of the programs offered and headed over. The first of his children left around the time my mom was born. In pairs as young as 16 and 13, they took the buses they could afford to the Mexican-US border city of Mexicali. Not being able to afford a seat, the children stood for the two days of the trip. In her book, Romero (2018) references the Bracero program as being the beginning of exploitation and labor. The program ended in 1963, right around that time that my Mom’s family immigrated from their small town in Mexico to the border and then to the US. The older siblings helped
their parents make a living by coming over to the US. At first, they provided for their younger brothers and sisters and helped build the house in Mexicali. However, they met their spouses, had children, and never left.

Romero (2018) describes Mexican American immigrants’ progress as being stalled by the system. The system fooled them into thinking they were making progress, but it just used them for cheap labor. She says, “This process of importing- or looking the other way as employers imported cheap Mexican labor, followed by round-ups and mass deportation continues today. Mexican immigrants, like many other Latino immigrants, were unable to reap the benefits of the economic boom of the 1990s” (p. 145). This is true. It seems almost impossible to break through poverty traps or map out different stories. Sitting at the table listening to family’s stories over time I’ve learned that all my tios, ever wanted was to be able to make a living and support their families.

Aimee Carrillo Rowe (2008) speaks of belonging and our condition based on who we surround ourselves by and the places we move to and from. She describes places and belonging as being sites of power, places were we can take and change things:

The command is to “be” “longing” not to be still or “be quiet,” but to be longing… whom we love the communities that we live in, whom we expend our emotional energies building ties with- these connections are all functions of power. (p. 26)

I think because there are so many of them, in many instances, my mom’s relationships with her siblings have served as vehicles of power. The power to move and bring many families across the border. However, the most important power was to revitalize my Abuelita time and again, just by being around the ones she loved; by seeing them come together through this road.
There are a plethora of things that come to mind when I think about all of my family. Most of my mom’s extended family has now been here for three generations. I am a first generation immigrant, not Chicano enough, or broken into the culture. It’s a difference augmented when you pay attention to my mannerism and appearance. I am a little darker and shorter than most of them, always proud of my indigenous roots. My mom’s family is lighter skin and always looks as though they stepped out of a beauty salon, straight hair and fake eyelashes. Many of them go to mass on Sunday and have picture-perfect families. In a way, it would seem as though their beliefs are deeply rooted in colonial notions. They are, but it’s more than that. In the generations spent here and on the border, taking in US culture, they have taken to emulating the culture and people here. They keep just enough of their Mexican to say they are “Mexican,” but not enough so that they are confused with them. If they are not asked, they are all white passing. Carrillo Rowe (2008) says,

This kind of forgetting is more active, even strategic. It is the kind of forgetting that comes from knowing more about what you are trying to become than who you are leaving behind. It’s power is that it comes with a wage that compels to devalue what’s lost because you believe that you need to belong to a certain kind of future -- the wages of whiteness economic, cultural, and psychological well-being. (p. .xi)

I could never pass or pretend to be white, it is not within my artsy rebellious system. It feels like betraying myself and even those I love (Carrillo Rowe, 2008). And yet, I am no one to judge, for I am not sure who my daughter will be as she grows up. We might not all be passing, but we are all just passing by.
As my aunts and uncles get older, I wonder how often and for how long they will be able to make the trips to see each other. Without my grandparents, how many more years will they continue to go to Mexicali? My parents go to Mexicali because all of their doctors and dentists are there, but even now it doesn’t seem feasible to keep making the drive. Knowing them, I imagine that at some point they will begin to fly in, but I am still not convinced that it is the best choice. It made sense when we were younger, and there were five of us and our parents were starting out, but to still do it makes me wonder what the future holds for my parents as far as healthcare. The anti-immigrant, anti-Latino, and anti-Mexican-American rhetoric makes it seem like we come here and completely depend on the system, but that is far from true:

Clearly, marriage, labor, immigration and welfare laws helped to construct social systems and beliefs that privileged white affluent heterosexual parents who were US citizens. The same beliefs then become stereotypes used to justify discrimination. Welfare policies benefited white families much more than families of color or immigrant families. (Romero, 2018, p. 35)

To be honest, the only physicians I have really seen in Reno are ophthalmologists. The first time I went to a physician in the US I was 17 years old. It may sound like parental negligence, but I never used the doctors in the US until my parents were processing my citizenship. There was a physical exam required for those documents and for the first time in six or seven years my mom and I went to a doctor in the US. To us, not having doctors in town was never a problem. Our physicians were a call away and if we really needed them my parents drove us down. More than once, they took the boys to Mexicali for simple procedures or once they even drove for an appendix operation. Even as an
adult, I’ve had insurance, but I had Lasik surgery and braces done in Mexicali. I have only been to a dentist in the U.S. once.

The first ultrasounds for my pregnancy were done in Mexicali. When I found out I was pregnant it was the first time in a decade that I was in between jobs. There was a four-month wait list at the pregnancy center in Reno, and so I drove down to Mexicali. I had the official tests done over there and then came back to use the U.S. system of Medicaid and insurance. I applied for Medicaid, but then also got a job that week with great insurance—except by law, I couldn’t drop the Medicaid. I was stuck navigating the U.S. medical system laws and regulations; needless to say, the US healthcare system was not a good experience. It was hard to get appointments, the waiting room could take hours, and the physicians were different every time. At this point, I do not know if I have faith in the U.S. healthcare system, and I wonder what will follow for me and my family. My family made this system of coming and going from Reno to Mexicali work for us, but through my pregnancy I really understood the plight of a low-income family. Romero (2018) says that seemingly neutral policies have completely different consequences for different people: “An intersectional lens is crucial in analyzing state-market-family relations” (p. 35). Given my experience with healthcare, I cannot agree more. I would rather continue coming and going to Mexicali than to try and figure out a very broken system and how it works with my intersectionalities.
After the hills, halfway through the desert, at the edge of the San Bernardino Valley is the city of Adelanto. As a teen, I used to make fun of the name, “Adelanto,” which means forward or progress, in a place where there was nothing but cacti that looked like Dr. Seuss illustrations, a Burger King, and a Pilot gas station. Now there are more businesses. For a long time, Adelanto was the last stop before the L.A. area. This stop was where my parents would detour and drop me off with family, continuing on their trip to Mexicali without me. Even though, my parents were both residents for a few years my undocumented status prevented me from exiting the US.

Coming here from Mexicali, the first time, I had a visa and a permit, but then the permit expired and going back meant risking not being allowed to return. When the passport expired and I was in the United States and no longer had legal documents to authorize my stay. There was no going back, not even near the border. So instead of going straight on the freeways to the desert cities towards Mexicali, my parents take me to my aunts’ in San Bernardino, where I would wait for a few days or a week while they visited our family. Romero (2018) recounts that,

Many early immigration laws, integrated a class bias, “Give me your tired, your poor.” US immigration law has consistently practiced the opposite of open borders.
to the poor. More accurately, the US established statues and laws barring the entry of “paupers” that dated back to the beginning of the nation-state (Johnson 2004). The terminology most frequently used against the poor is the exclusion of persons who are likely to become public charges. “Public charges” replaced the classification of paupers as a basis for classifying a person as a public charge intersected with race and gender (Johnson 2004). (p. 125)

My parents and brother leaving was not often and it was not for long periods, but I remember it felt eternal. The waiting eternally had to do with the shame of being the outsider. I was old enough to understand both the legality of the situation and my own isolation. I would never admit it then, but the fact that I was outside of the law really weighed on me. It was a shameful secret I had to carry around everywhere I went. For years I had to listen to any anti-immigrant rhetoric and think, “me too.” I didn’t belong here, I didn’t have the same rights as everyone, but I could no longer be taken home.

Those stays with my mom’s sister painted a vivid image of my identity at that time. I love my mom’s sisters and their families, but I did not speak enough English enough to participate. I had one person my age an hour away, but most of the time was spent alone on my VTech computer or reading. It was a time when I could intensely feel everything that was wrong with me, from being an immigrant to just coming from a different background than my mom’s family: intermeshing, interlocking, curdling oppressions and ideology that separated me from both my immediate and extended family. In a sense, this experience is best described by Lugones as being aware of otherness, “When the split-separation paradigm reigns within oppressed communities, it tries to purify the oppressed group and erase or negate those who would pollute the purity. Other individuals who are thick are aware of their otherness in the group” (quoted
in Chavez & Griffin, 2012, p. 9). Through legality and culture I became a separate entity ideologically and physically from my family.

I always understood I had to be the grown-up, so I did not complain, or reproached. I do remember fighting back tears and having to step out to speak to my parents when they would call from across the border. I was somewhere I didn’t understand or fit in. There were moments all I wanted was to go home to Mexicali, but again, by then I had learned to say that things were okay. I learned to be my parents’ support instead of a child. My job was to be supportive no matter what. We kept my mom’s secrets and defended her as she got divorced and remarried. We also helped my dad pick furniture, learn to cook, and continue his life. Both my mom’s and my dad’s family have an idea of femininity that is very much based on middle-class white values, and so everyone asked me to be devout and giving to our homes (Romero, 2018). All of the time alone, all of the time having to be older and stronger, made me just that: alone, older, stronger.

Still, with everything that happened, I am so grateful that my story took place then and not today. Today, in 2019 Mexicans are the face of anti-immigration sentiment everywhere, even when they are not the minority that has grown the most. Mexicans are policed not for citizenship status, but for their physical identity, ethnicity, class, age, and race: “Between 2010 and 2012, the federal government deported over 200,000 parents with children born in the US. The government deported more people in 2010 than between 1981 and 1990” (Romero, 2018, p. 130). These are statistics that not only break my heart as a child immigrant, but that make me realize just how lucky I was to have immigrated to the US when I did, and not any later.
Where the Freeways Meet that Girl I Became

Figure 5: 395

As the 395 feeds into the freeways in the city of San Bernardino, where drivers must find their route quickly. I have been doing the trip by myself since my early 20s and I still miss the freeway exit to the 215 all the time. Most of the time I laugh it off and take the next exit, but I have ended up in San Diego a couple of times. Other than my patience, I am not a good city driver and I do not pretend to be. I have gotten myself into adventures driving to and from alone.

Where the 395 ends and drivers take the freeway bridge towards the desert cities, I experienced one of my most memorable adventures. My dad moved back to Mexicali when I was 23. He lost his job after more than a decade. He does not have a formal education in the US or good grasp on the language, therefore it became impossible for
him to find a job with a high paying salary again. In recent years, because of my dad’s skin color, age, and accent we have seen the growth of discrimination first hand. Romero (2018) says, “The public responds to anti-immigrant laws by discriminating to people of color, particularly Latinos, Asians, and Arabs, as well as ethnically identified persons speaking with an accent or having the ability to speak more than one language, regardless of their actual citizenship status” (p. 133). This is a concept that has become very real to us in the last decade. Our dad has shown us through experiences just how visceral discrimination has become. He is often racially profiled, questioned for the color of his skin, or required to have an extra ID when dealing with government agencies. He left to Mexicali for a few years, because he could not find work and I started doing the trip by myself more often.

It was in one of those trips that I had my most comical adventure. I was leaving to Italy for work and I did not want to leave without seeing my dad and grandparents. I also needed to leave my dog. I began the drive to Mexicali with just Hurles and I. By now, I had made the trip to Mexicali countless times by myself, except this time it was spur of the moment and I didn’t prepare. After seven or eight hours, as I got on the highway that leads to the desert cities at the very top, where the winds were blowing the worst, my car went to the side of the road and a back tire blew out. I was stranded on an LA freeway bridge with my dog, in my tiny silver Hyundai Accent, in the middle of the night, without a way to move out of there. The next step was to figure out how to change the tire. I stepped out of the car, with my conquer-all attitude. By this point there was something in me that thought “I can do anything,” or in Anzaldúa’s (2012) words:

There’s a rebel in me- the Shadow Beast. It is a part of me that refuses to take orders from outside authorities. It refuses to take orders from my conscious will, it
threatens the sovereignty of my rulership. It is that part of me that hates constraints of any kind, even those self imposed. At the least hint of limitation by my time or space by others, it kicks out with both feet. Bolts. (p. 38)

I really believed I could anything--except change a tire. I stepped out of the car, and was almost knocked over by the wind. I went back into the car and sat there terrified, with the winds rocking my car side to side. If you have ever been in Hyundai Accent, you know they feel like those plastic toy cars at the 99 cent store, that might just pull apart. This was a classic Annie story after leaving home, the kind of thing my intrepidness and wanting to belong would get me into. This was my adventure right before Italy. The constant searching, coming and going, a form of becoming that was different from everyone else.

The truest of things is that though at that time I understood how each thing made me who I am, how I belonged to so many places at once, I didn’t understand the power in it. What I would be able to do with it. Carrillo Rowe (2008) describes intersectionalities like power lines saying, “they are channels that may be deployed for resistive and transformative purposes. Power lines like belonging, are generative: they offer the potential for an array of progressive renovations; they generate community and purpose, they are the meaning for our becoming (p. 178). I am just starting to understand, the concept of powerlines and just how transformative it can be. These stories are part of showcasing my intersectionalities: the power as to who I became and will become.
Figure 6: 395
CHAPTER 3: DECOLONIAL LYRICS

Introduction

“Let it be, Paul 12:6?” people will often ask when they look at my arm. “Is it a Bible verse?” “No,” I say, “It’s the Beatles: Paul McCartney, 12th Album, track 6. Paul wrote chapters of the Bible, but there are no Gospels named after him,” and smile sarcastically. In our home there was no church; for my dad music is a religious system. In fact he played music so loudly it could be heard from outside the apartments we lived in. We could often hear his music as we parked our cars, and walked up to the door. As I have worked on understanding coloniality and decoloniality, I have come to understand that music--that moral compass in my father’s household--also played a central role in introducing me to these notions early on in life. In this chapter, I want to explore how music helped me understand the experiences of coloniality and decoloniality.

Understanding lyrics as rhetoric can help us understand emotions, movements in society, social and political responses to music, and the way in which we want to engage to create change (Cloud & Feyh, 2015). Lyrics are a form of vernacular discourse which can create community, give hope, or as we say in Spanish “dar animo.”

Music as a Type of Decolonial Vernacular

In thinking about music as way of understanding decoloniality, the first and most obvious function of music is of how music served as a colonizing tool, or why else would Yankee Doodle have come to town riding on a pony? And, why are the rest of us singing about it almost two hundred and fifty years later? What is it about music that not only commits history to memory, but sets its listener free and is a decolonial and delinked
response? In this section I draw from the ideas of decolonial scholars Quijano (1992) and Maldonado Torres (2011), as well as rhetorical scholars Greene (1998) and Ono and Sloop (1995), to understand how music and lyrics can be understood as decolonial vernacular, but also as technologies of power being able to create identities and empower people.

In “Colonialidad y modernidad/racionalidad”, Anibal Quijano (1992) describes coloniality as the dominion of a society politically speaking to such an extent that it takes over their culture and production of knowledge. Maldonado Torres (2011) adds that coloniality results from historical patterns. Wanzer-Serrano (2015) describes coloniality as expressing, “patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations” (p. 5). It is from these patterns that a colonial legacy can be seen. However, in addition to these patterns there is also a counter response in the production of knowledge that seeks to decenter this legacy and is what I’ve come to understand as a decolonial response. According to Maldonado Torres (2011), decoloniality is a response that has existed for as long as coloniality has existed. It sprouts across continents, and in different ways, because they are responses to the different wounds inflicted by coloniality and they appear at particular times and separate spaces.
While Quijano (1992) and Maldonado Torres (2011) point to the importance of decoloniality being a movement from the lens of the oppressed, Ono and Sloop (1995) materialize this idea in the vernacular discourse. In their article “The Critique of Vernacular Discourse,” Ono and Sloop (1995), describe vernacular discourse as being culturally specific to a marginalized community:

From one perspective, vernacular discourse is a speech that resonates within local communities. This discourse is neither accessible in its entirety, nor is it discoverable, except through texts. However, vernacular discourse is also culture: music, art, dance, and architecture of local communities. In addition to being discourse operating within local communities rather than speeches preserved in history textbooks, vernacular discourse is unique to specific communities. (p. 20)

This definition of vernacular discourse is important because it helps emphasize the importance of studying music to understand marginalized groups and their path to prosperity. Ono and Sloop (1995) believe in the importance of vernacular discourse to telling the story of the oppressed and creating cultural impact, but also in learning to critique discourse while understanding its cultural context. Moreover, understanding that in critiquing vernacular discourse we must consider Audre Lorde’s thought that “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house” (p. 22). Ono and Sloop point out that a vernacular critique is essential because it draws on the notion that thinking about
music as vernacular rhetoric is decolonial in nature. This last concept is worth noticing, because here not only are the authors pointing out the importance of vernacular critique, but opening the door to the idea that the critique of music and vernacular rhetoric is decolonial in nature.

Ono and Sloop (1995) emphasize that “the critique of vernacular discourse must be conducted with the idea in mind that without an examination of rhetoric of those struggling to survive, no significant social statements can be made about political, social, and cultural liberation” (p. 40). What I would add to this is that it is important to not just look at the process itself, but at lyrics and the ways in which this can be decolonial or delinking.

While Ono and Sloop (1995) present the idea of decoloniality through the critique of vernacular discourse, understanding decoloniality as a process of responses that have existed alongside coloniality legitimizes Ono and Sloop’s explanation of the vernacular discourse. Since according to Ono and Sloop vernacular discourse is the rhetoric of the oppressed and decolonial responses have always existed, then, it is fair to say that within music one can find responses to coloniality that began as far back as the original colonies themselves. When we consider why music is part of this decolonial response, we can witness how the production of music is not only decolonial in itself, but it also holds different meanings in both the time and place it was created in. How music is interpreted and/or reinterpreted is also important to the critique of vernacular discourse.
Ono and Sloop (1995) say that it’s important to critique vernacular discourse to help the progress of communities and people. To build on this idea and to understand how rhetoric can create power, in “Another Materialist Rhetoric,” Ronald Walter Greene (1998) argues for a rhetorical materialism that looks beyond the ruling class as the producers of rhetoric and representations of it, to an understanding of rhetoric as different human technologies, which function to create a network of power seeking to promote the welfare of a population. Greene critiques the different forms of rhetorical materialism and concludes that they all depend on an elite class creating the initial discourses. Greene then introduces his alternative to materialist rhetoric using Foucault’s human technologies to defend a form of practical reasoning in which rhetoric serves as tools of power not only to the governing authorities, but to the populations they represent. Rhetoric is then not just an ongoing conversation of power, but different apparatuses for it.

Foucault’s four types of human technologies include: production, sign systems, power (conduct and domination), and self. Of these four Greene (1998) explains rhetoric to be used as sign systems not to interpret, but to invent and make new knowledge possible as a response system. The rhetorical canon has the means to invent knowledges, situation, and audiences, creating a “publicity effect,” to which governments can respond or create judgement of. Greene (1998) says,

In this way rhetoric is not epiphenomenal to governing apparatus but absolutely crucial to its organization since the ability to make visible a population in order
that it might calibrate its own behavior depends on how rhetoric contributes to the panopticism as a technology of power. (p. 31)

That is, rhetoric is not a merely a secondary effect to governing entities, but can be used as a powerful response to them, which makes the people seen; this is why vernacular discourse and the study of it becomes imperative. Vernacular discourse is a response to power, it transcends in that it creates identity and publicity; but Ono and Sloop (1995) would say that in working to understand and critique it becomes a stronger element to that network of power which then includes governing entities, scholars, oppressed communities, and their vernacular discourse.

**Methods**

As stated before for this part of the project I wanted to study the ways in which music has affected my life and pushed me to understand who I am and create change. But I wanted to do it with the understanding that music truly is rhetoric itself, and that as a vernacular discourse it has the power to change ideas, move people, and advance societies, but also builds on itself and grows with society; these are ideals I was taught as a child, but also that manifest within the lyrics that I carry with me and that I will be looking at throughout the rest of this chapter.

My objective is to study not only how music helps as vernacular discourse, but also how the movements build on each other and are present throughout Latin America. Boyd’s (1991) project on African American discourse, explains that there is more to the vernacular than criticizing the hegemony; it is about creating commonalities and union
marginalized. To Boyd vernacular discourse is cultural syncretic and pastiche, that is culturally affirming and simultaneously borrowing from each other and from the hegemonic culture.

In understanding music as vernacular discourse and giving it said importance, then one can move towards analyzing it from the perspective that it was written in and the hegemony it is responding to or imitating. To truly break down vernacular discourse, one has to understand everything that surrounds it, not only who it gives voice to but its context to the mainstream culture and the ones outside of it. Taking this a precautionary note, as I advance this chapter, the object will be to examine the lyrics that helped me not only understand my coloniality, but move forward in times of need, understand decoloniality in order to later delink.

I will first write about my story with music and the importance of the song to me, but then go into the descriptions of songs that take a different meaning in my life. I will tell you about the songs my dad used to play for us as children, then the ones that made me understand Latin America and my identity, and last my love for Mexico. I’m presenting the songs in that order because they each represent a different part of my identity, but also the love and respect I have for music, my Latin American heritage y mi Mexico.

I will explain how the songs came to me by focusing on their historical and cultural context. Then I will show how they can be interpreted as decolonial and
delinking. Therefore, not only will I be looking at the ways in which the lyrics themselves are decolonial in nature or decolonial responses to historical contexts, but also the ways in which they have moved me to decoloniality or delinking. I will be using stories both from my childhood and as an adult to build on the songs, my attachment to them, their meaning, and their significance to me.

**The Music I Love**

When people ask me what I can remember of my childhood I often say, “lyrics.” In my next chapter, I speak of how I was legally blind, but for this it’s sufficient to say that not being able to see, what is still palpable are the things that were repeated often and the way things made me feel. Music goes into both categories. I don’t remember a lot from my childhood, but there are lyrics and music arrangements that I have just carried with me consciously and unconsciously. Sometimes, I can imagine my dad strumming his guitar and I will smile; other times I surprise myself because I will remember the lyrics to a song but not where I’ve learned it. Songs play an important part of my life, not only for the memories attached to them, but for the ways in which they have influenced who I am, and helped me understand (all) things better.

In our household music was life. We were never particularly religious, but we learned lyrics as if they were prayers. Something happened good or bad and we could hear, Sting, Jethro Tull, Pink Floyd, Santana, The Beatles, playing for all of the neighbors
to hear, while my dad followed with his guitar standing in front of the TV; no music
sheets or notes of any kind, just his ear and memory. Our dad started playing the guitar
when he was eight years old, it is his means of expression through trials and celebration.
His 52-year-old guitar, we often joke, is his oldest love and most loyal companion. He
played it through his teenage years, in college, as a bohemian courting my mom, at their
wedding, in moving to Reno, his divorce, and at the birth of his grandchildren. Hence the
tattoo “Let it be” on my arm, where I can see it, was a good reminder of letting things go,
my dad, and our faith in music if not anything else.

*Te quiero*

For this first section I chose to analyze a song called, *Te Quiero* (Benedetti, 1974). Originally a poem by Mario Benedetti, *Te Quiero* was a song my dad’s collegiate
group use to sing around the time that I was born, and that encapsulates a romantic ballad
with a political connotation. The importance of songs like, *Te Quiero* to my upbringing,
my love of music, and decoloniality, is that they represented a style of the music that my
dad surrounded me by. These were the songs that would shape my political understanding
and beliefs in society.

The earliest memories of my dad and his guitar are not of English songs being
followed in our small apartments, but of multiple guitars waking us up alongside my
dad’s while my *Nino* (Godfather) sang, or of going with him to gatherings where we
would see them perform. This is where my love of music began, with Serrat, Rafael,
Pablo Milanes, Violeta Parra, Mercedes Sosa and every Spanish ballad of the 1970’s and 1980’s. To my young mind, these songs seemed to be about universal love, but in reality they held very political implications.

Of those songs, one that I heard very often was *Te quiero* (Benedetti, 1974) it was a song that won my dad’s collegiate strings group a national competition, and that became famous in the region as played by them. It was not an easy song and at some point it was requested so often, that the group stopped playing it. However, the song resurfaced around the time I was 16 and so when my *Nino*, would look at me asking what they should play in those years, I would always say, *Te quiero.*

*Te quiero* was originally a poem published by the Uruguayan Mario Benedetti in 1974 during his exile. The poem was given music by the Argentinian Juan Pablo Favero in 1977, and covered by different artists throughout Latin American. It became famous by a polemic artist named Nacha Guevara who like Benedetti would also be in exile throughout the 1970’s and touring the continent. It is a poem that at first hearing it, sounds like a love ballad. The lyrics can be heard as simple assertions of love to someone for who they are, but also illustrate the transformation of who the artist becomes when she/he is with this person. The song starts by saying, “Si te quiero es porque sos, mi amor, mi complice y todo, y en la calle codo a codo, somos mucho mas que dos,” introducing the idea that “this lover” means everything to the artist, she/he is their accomplice, their everything, and on the streets side by side they become a lot more. It
seems as though the song will be narrating the love that a couple shows while walking down the street. As it develops each stanza describes the way that the artists views, his/her lovers body parts, at home and outside of their home. The descriptions build up from what the body parts represent to their routine, to how they work for social justice. “Tus manos son mi caricia, mis acordes cotidianos, te quiero porque tus manos, trabajan por la justicia.” Your hands are my caress, the chords to my everyday, I love you because your hands work towards justice. In just describing the hands Benedetti is describing how they inspire him, help him write songs, but also work towards social justice.

He continues to on a these descriptions of this lover saying, “Tus ojos son el conjuro, rumbo a la mala jornada, te quiero por tu mirada, que mira y siembra futuro,” your eyes are a conjure to face the hard days with, I love you because of your gaze that looks to the future. With a little imagination this line can be taken outside of the context of a couple’s love, to be read as love of a people or nation who are looking to the future, as were the people of Latin America as this song was being written.

Then Benedetti, builds up his past analogies by saying, “Tu boca que es tuya y mia, tu boca no se equivoca, te quiero porque tu boca sabe gritar rebeldia,” Your lips that are yours and mine, they are not mistaken, I love you because your lips call for rebellion. And here one can be certain, that Benedetti is not talking of a single person, but
of his people and Latin American nations who called for action. He is not speaking of a lover’s lips or mouth, but of their voice as a people.

These words which seem simple in nature, as a teenager reminded me of my childhood, of my dad and his guitar. However, the song was an anthem to my dad, my brother, and I, to the queer home created between the three of us and the very particular ideals my dad was raising us with. We were a team and even when we failed to fit into the standards of society, or there were comments about two kids living with their father, nothing could come between us. In thinking about the song and decoloniality I relate it to our little nucleus. The lyrics remind me of our unusual home, a reconfiguration of patriarchal norms, where my father cooked, cleaned, and played music right alongside with us.

In reality, the song meant so much more than that, it was a poem created by a communist exile, and sang by a woman who was also an exile to a military regime. Guevara and Benedetti, were artists who were not only polemic for their time, but that wrote and presented explicitly to protest the governments and political right wing theaters of the area. The song closes saying, “y por tu rostro sincero y tu paso vagabundo y tu llanto por el mundo porque sos pueblo te quiero... te quiero en mi paraiso, es decir que en mi pais, la gente viva feliz, aunque no tenga permiso” and for your honest face, and your vagabond step, and your cry to the world, because you are the people, I love you… I imagine you in my paradise, that is that in my nation, our people be happy even when it’s
not allowed. Taking the lyrics and understanding that Argentina and Uruguay were both under military dictatorships gives room to interpret the patriotism deeply within them: the love of country and of hope for their people. The song represents all those people who were trying to break from colonial, neocolonial, democratic notions, to find their own beliefs, even if erroneous. Their beliefs in love and of their people surpassed the political ideology being imposed by both democratic and communist states on Latin American countries.

Mario Benedetti and Guevara were not alone, all across Latin America artists were bonding and writing to create ideological movements and not just music. They sang, “Para el pueblo lo que es del pueblo” (Piero, 1974), to the people that which belongs to the people; they sang for justice; and to give animo to the students that were persecuted all across the continent, “Que vivan los estudiantes!” (Parra 1974). Their style was known as “La Nueva Trova,” the new ballad. They were folkloric songs meant to “dar animo,” give hope. They didn’t always ask for action, but lamented the wars and the treatment of the people to the point that they would gain international attention. La Trova was founded on the renaissance troubadours that traveled and told poetry with music. It arrived in Cuba around 1850 and was used as of a form of storytelling and political advocacy which combined Indigenous and African beats. It was a form of music that stayed in the Caribbean for about a century before it made it to Mexico and the rest of the
American continent, where it would be used in the political movements, but also take a bohemian, romantic essence, given the popular rhythm of the era.

In the struggle for power, Latin American countries were pawns being used by both the Soviet Union and the U.S. who placed dictators, paid for military coups, and whole civil wars. The songs of its artists depended on where their country stood politically and whether they needed to give hope or ask the people to rise. Some spoke of coloniality indirectly and others of revolution as they saw their governments and institutions beat down on their people. Because of their lyrics, many of these artists were in exile and ended up in Cuba aligning their beliefs of love and equality with the Communist Revolution.

These songs were forms of rhetoric and vernacular discourse to create advocacy or publicity. Greene (1998) describes rhetoric as being an instrument for the people, and these were artists who used their music and writing as such. Their rhetoric had a publicity-effect to the extent that the governments of various Latin American countries responded by persecuting many songwriters, troubadours, and authors including Benedetti and Guevara; This could also be understood as part of a panopticism of power, because the governments were vigilant of their moves, followed, and responded according to how they wanted to control their people. Many of the right-wing dictatorships were involved in the killing of the artists of this generation; while many of the Communist Regimes used them accepted them within their governments.
Nevertheless, these were artists of the people and believed in the importance of their stories and life work, even if it meant giving up their livelihoods. They understood the importance of music as true vernacular discourse, but also as a tool. To me, Te Quiero will always remind me of my dad and my Nino, it is a song that I dedicate to my daughter and those that are closest to me. In truth, I also understand it to be about Latin America its people, a generation of music, and everything the continent continues to fight for.

**America**

Building on the same ideals of unity and the people, my next two songs though different in genre and far in age, speak of Latin America more directly, as if they were syncretic and pastiche to each other the way and the tendencies of the 1970s (Ono & Sloop, 1995). These songs much like the vernacular discourse that African American ones that Boyd studies, constitute communities, construct social relations, and help to protest a dominant culture, in this case, a larger western hegemony. If the music is analyzed correctly it can help construct and give a different voice to the people, which is at the end is our goal, to help those give voice to those marginalized (Ono & Sloop, 1995, p. 22). In the same way, each of the songs that I’ve chosen to analyze constitutes a different story or time in my life, they share similar messages. They are aimed at uniting and giving hope. I would go as far as to say, that “dar animo” and unity are the themes within all of Latin American decolonial vernacular discourse, even when the songs do not seem comparable there is a thread within them that makes them similar.
As the civil wars paused at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, there was a flourish of songs about Latin America as a whole. They were anthems that rose from all over the continent and from different genres, about the strength of its people, and the importance of unity. The context of these songs depended on where the songs were written from and by whom. The lyrics could be interpreted as messages of jubilee despite decades of civil war conflicts; or as messages of unity as the U.S. shifted through immigration policies and rhetoric.

In the U.S. throughout the 1980s Republican Presidents had moved to create immigration policies which were deemed as innovating and meant as steps towards better immigration system. Presidents Carter and Reagan had passed laws which gave asylum to Central Americans, created stricter codes for working undocumented residents, but also intended to create a pathway to citizenship for those who had been here working; while president Bush Sr. built on these laws, giving amnesty to million between 1992-1995.

There was also a counter movement in California, an anti-immigrant proposal was presented in legislation, it was called 187 (Ono & Sloop, 2002). Living in a border city to California, I remember the controversy of the proposal, because it was something many people could be affected by if passed. It was a piece of legislation that would allow California to create its own undocumented immigration regulations, in order to control the use of public services, used by residents who were undocumented.
Coincidently it was during these changes in policy and rhetoric (thanks to George HW Bush), that my family immigrated to Reno the fall of 1994--and that my dad played Norteno and regional music for the first and only time in his life. Out of place in his new country and away from his family and friends, my dad began to play the guitar to please my mom’s family and their new groups of friends, all of whom were young immigrants like themselves, but without my dad’s cultural background. At the gathering, they didn’t request Pablo Milanes or Rafael, but instead asked for Los Cadetos de Linares, Los Tigres del Norte, Vicente Fernandez, or Marco Antonio Solis. This is when my very Mexican side was woken; actually, this was when I understood what it was like to be an outsider and to be pushed into an identity. Ono and Sloop (1995) explain that the thing about rhetoric for better or worse is that it creates identities, and gives you places to belong to. As an immigrant, standing outside of the system a song can gain cultural value. It becomes vernacular discourse because it is outside of the norm or society’s focus be it because of the language or the culture.

And so of these vernacular discourses and of Spanish language musical groups that told stories, one that we heard all of the time at my aunt’s house was Los Tigres del Norte (LTDN). LTDN is a regional group that actually had roots in Mexicali, but that became internationally famous by singing about the immigrant and Latin American experience. They have songs about crossing the U.S. border, about children growing up with a different culture than their parents, and about the immigrant experience overall.
Aside from their songs, the group is also known for being politically involved, participating in immigration rallies, playing for the troops over seas, and boycotting spaces that are anti-immigrant. One song that I value is called *America (Los Tigres del Norte, 1987)*.

In *America* LTDN describe all of America as one people and the American continent as being the most beautiful mosaic in the world. The song can be heard as an ode to that American identity that is not part of the Western hegemony. It is a fusion of norteno, cumbia, and rock, which begins by honoring Ritchi Valens and using his rock and roll rhythm to accompany their opening lyrics. Ritchi Valens was a Mexican American artist who had a short career but is said to have been the pioneer of Chicano Rock n’ Roll in 1959, even before Santana. His music was already decolonial, because of the merge of cultures and the representation of Chicano identity, but the lyrics given by LTDN give it an even stronger decolonial message.

LTDN start of by describing the color of their skin and their language: "*Del color de la tierra yo he nacido, por herencia mi idioma es castellano,*" I was born of the color of the earth, my language is Spanish by inheritance, they challenge the English hegemony. Then they continue building an argument as to why we are all American, "*Los del norte dicen que soy Latino, no me quieren decir Americano...Si el que nace en Europa es Europeo, y el que nace en el África, Africano, yo he nacido en América y no veo porque yo no he de ser Americano*” the north wants to call me Latino, they don’t want to call me American...if someone who lives in Europe is European; and someone
born in Africa is African; I was born in America and can’t see, why I wouldn’t be American (Los Tigres del Norte, 1986). I am not the biggest norteño fan, it is almost never what I put on when I get in my car but these lyrics describe exactly how I feel about being an American. I am not an American because I hold US citizenship, I am an American because I was born on a continent which is a mosaic of people. And this notion becomes even truer as LTDN name the American tribes from the far north to the deep south:

Soy el Gaucho al galope por las Pampas, I am the Gaucho galloping through the Pampas,
Soy Charrua, Soy Jíbaro, Utumano, I am a Charrua, I am Jíbaro, Utumano,
Soy Chapín, Esquimal, príncipe I am Chapín, I am an Eskimo, Mayan prince,
Soy Guajiro, soy Charro Mexicano, a Guajiro, I am a Mexican Charro

Within these lines LTDN mention a number of tribes and people, from Argentina to Alaska. LTDN visualize the indigenous faces of the American continents and the way in which they belong together, a concept that is impossible for some to grasp even now, but that to others gives identity and hope. The kind of hope that a young immigrant family could’ve been searching for in the mid-1990s, but also the kind of hope I needed.
With those lyrics, I believed that I was part of something greater than a nation-state and I still do. I live in a nation, with its own set of politics that, those entail, but my identity and culture are greater than a border. How can anyone tell me if I belong to here or there, when more than a quarter of me is indigenous? Why would I take the concept of the border seriously, when I know that just a couple of generations ago my great grandmother a Native American was being chased South. I’ve grown up to understand that I am more American than most, and it has nothing to do with my IDs and dual citizenship, but with an understanding of who I truly am.

**Latinoamerica**

A song with a similar message to *America* by LTDN is *Latinoamerica* a song by Puerto Rico’s Calle 13. There is almost a twenty year difference between *America* and *Latinoamerica*, but their message is so similar that the LTDN and Rene the lead singer of Calle 13 have presented the songs and merged them, more than once. They recorded the song as one; the two groups playing their lyrics off each other to represent the unity of Latin America in a hybrid of a Norteno with a rap. As vernacular discourse one could say that the songs are both culturally syncretic and pastiche in the way that they built on one another. Syncretic, because they are not necessarily counter culture, they ask for unity. It’s pastiche because of the way that Ono and Sloop (1995) describe how vernacular discourse “forms a pastiche of popular culture from elements that have been torn out of context for the explicit purpose of constituting new effects” (p. 23). Latin American
artists borrowed the US concepts of “America” as a melting pot and the land of opportunity, to create an identity for the whole continent, which they have continued to built on for decades.

The notion that Latin America is just America and that we are all American, is very much a part of vernacular discourse and can be considered a pastiche as it is a response to the American identity that rhetoric created in the US in the 60s and 70s. Furthermore, it represents an ideology built upon groups like LTDN in the 1980s and 1990s. In the beginning of the last decade as freedom of speech increased in Latin America and the international political climate changed, there were a number of songs that, began to speak of liberation from the West. They are songs that serve two-fold purposes because they give agency to people who were marginalized, but also go against Western notions of identity, American exceptionalism, European cultural superiority, neo-colonialism, and borders. They are songs that denaturalize concepts the way Mignolo (1991) explains delinking to be. Latinoamerica, is a collaborations by Puerto Rico’s Calle 13 with three powerful women singers from Latin America. The song Lationamerica, blends hip-hop, folklore, Afro-Caribbean music and reggaeton a genre bled genre completely different from any I had heard before. I listen to Rene and Calle 13’s collaboration with Afro-Colombian singer Toto la Momposina, Afro-Peruvian singer Susana Baca, and Brazilian singer Maria Rita, for their anti-imperialist voice and rebellious nature.
Latinoamerica begins by saying,

“Soy, soy lo que dejaron
Soy toda la sobra de lo que se robaron
Un pueblo escondido en la cima
Mi piel es de cuero, por eso aguanta cualquier clima
Soy una fábrica de humo
Mano de obra campesina para tu consumo…”

“\textit{I am, I am what they left.}
\textit{I am the leftovers of what they stole;}
\textit{A town hidden at the top,}
\textit{My skin is of leather and for this it stands}
\textit{all weather,}
\textit{I am a factory filled with smoke,}
\textit{the labor of the farmer for all that you consume.” (Calle 13, 2010)}

Calle 13 describes Latin America and its people as an exploited and resilient to point out the effects, residue of its coloniality, neo-coloniality and constant invasions in the continent. Calle 13 then describes the people of Latin America as one, beacons of strength, resistance, and hope. In their lyrics, they reference great figures who have come out of Latin America, from the literary to the popular futbol.

Everything about this song, from the lyrics to the video is decolonial in nature. Instead of presenting us with overly sexualized women or flashy places, Calle 13 begins the video in a remote Peruvian village, then moves through places and faces of everyday Latin Americans. The faces are meant to show the life within the continent, they show every age, and go from the industrial areas to the most remote places. It is as though, they
are giving a face to each of the marginalized people he is talking about, all the while describing them as one.

Because of the collaborations, there are various South American languages: beginning with the Peruvian Quechua, Guarani, Spanish, and Portuguese from his collaboration with Maria Rita. He is representing different identities not only in his lyrics and images but in his linguistic and non-verbal communication, which give voice to more than one people, and breaks with both the hegemony of English, Spanish, Portuguese as colonial languages.

The video also uses graphics and cartoon-like images which are not common video music techniques, but which he uses to symbolize life in Latin America. On a brick wall, there is an image of a mother and her infant, being spray painted throughout the video. There is also a factory in the back and money also being painted on the wall. The mural symbolizes a mother and a child surviving through capitalism and greed, even more, Latin American people surviving. Towards the end of the video there is a tree of life, with the silhouette of a woman, that deposits her heart on the ground and then gives rise to a boy who is not a cartoon and is jumping into a body of water. It is as though, Calle 13 is trying to say, it may not always seem like the strives in Latin America are real, but life continues it is worth fighting for.
Mexico Eres Todo

I have talked amply about my love for music and my love for Latin America, but there is one thing I have not covered, my own love of country, my love for Mexico. The last song I will discuss is about being Mexican and it is significant not only for its lyrics, but also for its timing both in my life and the life of its artist. I come from a very Nationalist family, my love for country was instilled long before I could recognize it. At this point it is as though, Mexican folklore, art, food, and even colors are just within me. It is an identity is so much within me, that as I write my essay, I listen to Vicente Fernandez, and sing to every one of his songs, wondering if I need a shot of tequila for inspiration.

For Mexico, love of country and unity are ideologies pushed forward for years by the institutions themselves as a way to unite people. Within Mexico there are 68 official languages around 350 dialects. In order for nature and cultures to survive there always needs to be more unity and less racism. I understand this as a work in progress, though I know there are many injustices still done to the people, what makes me most proud about my culture, is that we have been able to blend many cultures and races into one and I can see it in the color of my skin. With that said, there are innumerable songs written about the people and the land, the way it makes you feel, but there is one in particular that was on the radio when my daughter was born. The song is called “Mexico Es Todo” and it
was released by Mexican queer divo in 2016, Juan Gabriel right before he passed away which was coincidently two weeks before my daughter was born.

El Divo known for his love of country and grandiose presentations, had a tour named “Mexico lo es todo” and released a song and video mostly composed of adjectives that described his love for Mexico through magnificent scenes of people and places that make the land and people seem almost magical. Juan Gabriel’s imagery is splendid from the beginning, depicting stunning cloud formations flowing over a striking ancient temple. The colors are deep and vibrant. Then the drums begin, and images flash of beautiful fields, cities, and people--past and present--displaying the colorful depths of different cultures, and how they come together as one in and through those differences.

The music video is a pastiche of the Latin American decolonial vernacular discourse, saying “we are one,” depicting beautiful places and faces, like other modern videos. Except that, unlike Calle 13’s this song is just about Mexico, and the faces and places are almost magically edited, making them look mystical, like figures that transcend time and space. The song and video which collaborate to give Juan Gabriel’s message use mostly adjectives with images to build on them. The video begins with a Mayan pyramid and indigenous rites, while by repeating the words, “You are me” to a series of wind instruments and for a few seconds, only shows faces of different people in Mexico. It is a beginning which could remind us of Calle 13’s video, but here the faces are softer. Then it continues by saying, “El mundo sabe que este México es unico que es mágico y
fantástico” (Juan Gabriel, 2015), The world knows that Mexico is one of a kind, it is magical and fantastic and to each word he adds an image of a place in Mexico that seems impossibly beautiful and otherworldly. He then uses over 60 adjectives to describe the nation without many other words in his verses: prophetic, secular, ecological and classical, beautiful, gorgeous, ancient, both patriarch and a matriarch. Each of the adjectives is coupled with a corresponding perfect image: “prophetic” to an indigenous shaman, “ecological” to seeds in a hand about to be planted, “gorgeous/beautiful” to oceans and mountains, “ancient” to Mayan ruins. Juan Gabriel’s main discursive message is that “you are me” however at a metaphorical level this phrase associates “Mexico” as being part of “me.” In “tu eres yo,” “tu” is an allusion to Mexico as a place where freedom and equality are a possibility for everyone, but also to Mexico being his inspiration. A concept that is easy for me to relate to, because why else does a person go into study their people and culture, if not for a deep-seated belief in them and their ability to transcend all. He was using his rhetoric to give the masses a voice and remind them of who they were, through a vernacular discourse and images, that unites and works to convince them of their worth, at a time when Mexico and its culture are truly under attack and bid on. That is, at the time the video was made, Mexican identity was being attacked by Donald Trump; but in reality, there are deeper concerns, having to do with the countries that invest in Mexico and the cultures that are being pushed out for the West. It’s not by coincidence that in the video Juan Gabriel makes a point of mentioning both
how Mexico has been used by the U.S. and how it is alluring to China, as both are investors to its economy and culture. Nevertheless, by the end of the video one becomes proud not of the land, but of the people regardless of its clear colonial roots.

As Juan Gabriel hails Mexico, through images, he closes by claiming “Long Live Mexico, Mexico is great and Mexico is divine” as it ends, and on the video there is an image of a woman standing by a cascade, while an eagle soars, truly making Mexico seem divine. It’s impossible to see the video without acknowledging Mexico’s colonial roots and the difference of its people, but also that Juan Gabriel was sending a message of love and admiration to all of it.

It is a video that is decolonial and vernacular not only in its message and images, but in who it was created by, and in the unity he was trying to achieve with it. Juan Gabriel could be considered an epitome of both decoloniality and vernacular discourse. He was as true to himself as he was to the love of his people and country, writing songs with grand messages, but in simple lyrics and musicality for his people and of the people. Beyond vernacular discourse and the legitimacy that he provided Mexico throughout his career, Greene (1991) would add that in producing a video with the imagery of “Mexico es todo,” Juan Gabriel was gifting his people one last empowering, rhetorical apparatus. The video is a technology of signs and publicity for people to see a representation of the magic the artist saw in Mexico and perhaps work towards it.

Conclusion
In writing this chapter, I wanted to find the ways in which music has influenced me, but also has led me and continues to help me understand decoloniality and coloniality. I wanted to follow the way in which my love for music has grown, based on the notions that were first taught by my dad, but also understand decoloniality through song and the way the artist presented them. Tying the songs to my story, vernacular theory, and decoloniality proved to be the hardest task in my whole project.

Taking my stories out, through these songs we can see reflections of coloniality, decoloniality, and intersectionality, but more than anything a Latin America that could no longer be made silent, not by outside people nor outside governments. The lyrics going along with what Boyd (1991) theorized speak of identity and unity; Latin America is many people in one, we are different accents, and many voices, but the same story. I think that Boyd would say that this could be an example of vernacular discourse being pastiche building on itself, not only as it’s created across cultures and time, but in the ways in which people are attracted to it, because I can be attracted to this first idea, but this one is even better, this one builds on the first.

There is something even deeper that must be understood, the music of Latin America celebrates in the moments and unity of the present because the future is always uncertain. And all of this is important to understand because according to Ono and Sloop (1995) in truly critiquing vernacular discourse we help those communities that need to move towards political, social, and cultural liberation. That is, in examining its
coloniality and decoloniality, even through lyrics, scholars could be helping to empower Latin America to create its future.

We will always carry coloniality within ourselves and decoloniality is the constant response to it. And these responses change based on the political climate, geopolitical location or current events. They change even based on the perspective of the individual or the artist. Where the artist of the 70s and 80s gather to create political exchanges and support causes, artists today create elaborate videos to find ways in which to give their people voices and visibility. For Latin America and other colonized places it is important to understand these projects are important because, through them, its people can find an identity and build their own prosperity.

In conclusion, I have mentioned time and again that there were countless songs written about the continent. There have been songs that were political in nature, rose from all segments of the populations, all genres, spoke beyond identity or coloniality, and denounced the crimes and impunity caused by the hegemonic powers, all while asking for a solution. These songs have given a voice to the people and have given me a voice; but why are these songs important and what change is it that they can truly create? Well here I would like to explain what I believe is the importance of the songs which give Latin America a voice and what my own hope is in studying them as vernacular discourse and rhetoric.

Greene (1998) speaks of rhetoric as a human technology with which can be used to create publicity he says, “Rhetoric becomes an apparatus which helps governments create judgement about population needs” (p. 32); given what we know about the power
struggles in Latin America and all of the corruption, then a skeptic would say that Greene’s theory is erroneous or insufficient to the argument. However, my faith in both rhetoric and my American identity do not allow to fall into this hypothesis. I argue that Latin American music has been able to create changes and even helped them push new governments, but the complete changes have not materialized. I would like to cite the great Gabriel Garcia Marquez (1982) in saying that, “The interpretation of our reality through patterns not our own, serves only to make us ever more unknown, ever less free, ever more solitary,” and that if took, “London took three hundred years to build its first city wall, and three hundred years more to acquire a bishop; that Rome labored in a gloom of uncertainty for twenty centuries…” (n.p.). Because in recalling Garcia Marquez and his own decolonial work, one remembers to have faith in Latin America, but also what Ono & Sloop (1995) claim about understanding things from the perspective of the people. For the lovers of Latin America, decolonial scholars, rhetoricians, and storytellers alike, it should be clear that Latin America will heal on its own time, that it needs its own conversation of power, to tell its own stories, and failed governments, because in them eventually it will prevail.
CHAPTER 4: DELINKING THROUGH KNOWLEDGE, ART, AND LOVE

Figure 7: The Dolphins (2012).
I stand staring at another white wall in an empty hotel room in the middle of night. To get a better view, I plop down middle on the brown tiles, a mojito in one hand, and a pencil in the other. Exhausted, I look over at the supplies I was able to gather with my lack of Italian, at the tiny hardware store where I bought my paints. Outside I can hear the wind and just a few swirls from the waves; One of the most of the interesting things since my arrival are the waves in this part of the world. The water is unlike any other, it is warm and still like a large pool. It is so tranquil, that in the mornings before work, when I go swimming; the boats start beeping at me, the Calabrian fisherman think the American girl is crazy. They don’t understand, that to a girl who grew up between the waves of Baja California and the ice of Tahoe this water is a gift.

Back I go to staring at the wall, I want to get this done tonight. The deal is for every painting that I finish in the hotel I get a trip into Italy. It’s not hard, I just need a plan. I’ve done this dozens of times, once I figure out the mathematics and technicalities, I am good. I have the drawing, I just need to get going instead of daydreaming; but I can’t help it, as I stand here, I am still in awe. How does a legally blind, immigrant girl from Baja, make it to painting murals at a villagio in Calabria? There is something to be said about determination and genius; but more so in my ability to pull things apart, re-invent, explore the angles in which things can be made. Whether I am the brush or the canvas, the best stories of my life come from the ability to delink, understand things, and create a new.
**Around the Gallery**

The intent of this exhibition is to study the ways in which intersectionality and delinking have taken part in different aspects of my life from knowledge to art. Starting from my love of knowledge and going on into the importance of painting in my life, I will be studying processes and ethics that I was taught as a child, incorporating painting and drawings into each narrative. I have yet to have my own galaxy like the authors of “Navigating with the Stars: Critical Qualitative Methodological Constellations for Critical Intercultural Communication,” but my project could be in a gallery in New York, Bologna, or Guadalajara. Curating images which have composed my life, the project will look at my intersectionalities and delinking as an immigrant, artist, and scholar, all which I could not be without. The objective is to see how these processes have liberated me from many things, but also caused grief. My delinking was led by codes and colors that were instilled long before I was acquainted to the many scholastic terms that I use now. Here I am both the artist and the curator; the scholar and the instrument.

To paint one full image before going, this gallery entails different projects of my life each with their own story and delinking experiment. The description in each gallery are in English and Spanish, but also in chronological order, to be better understood for those who do not speak English. The stories vary, they begin at the time of oppression and of my clash between being a child of the border and new immigrant, but go on to depict the way in which I learned to paint the canvas of my life, and other times in which I have had to reinvent and delink myself through my love of knowledge or passion for art.
Figure 8: Huejuquilla (2003).
This is the town where my stepdad was born. I chose this painting because it’s a representation of my training and attention to detail, but also of the importance of coloniality in my life and history. Like the colonial buildings still standing in many parts of Latin America, coloniality itself stands in us as peoples and nations.

The Stroke of Coloniality

Coloniality according to Anibal Quijano (1992) was the political dominion of a society, which resulted in the dominion of their culture and creation of knowledge. The colonies unable to create their own culture and knowledge became dependent on Western societies:

_Esa dominacion se conoce como colonialismo. En su aspecto politico, sobre todo formal y explicito, la dominacion colonial ha sido derrotada en la amplia mayoria de los casos. America fue el primer escenario de esa derrota._

_Posteriormente, desde la II Guerra Mundial, Africa y Asia. Asi, el colonialismo,_
en el sentido de un sistema de dominación política formal de unas sociedades sobre otras, parece pues asunto del pasado. El sucesor, el imperialismo, es una asociación de intereses sociales entre los grupos dominantes (clases sociales y/o "etnias") de países desigualmente colocados en una articulación de poder, mas que una imposición desde el exterior. (p. 11)

Though in most parts of the world colonial control is gone, the legacies of it remain in imperialism and the ways in which knowledge is still reproduced and filtered from the West to different parts of the world. As for me, colonialism, post-colonialism, even de-colonialism, have always hurt. I have never been able to read the texts or look at the history of it as being ok. The idea of culture or a person being repressed by another makes me sick, I am not sure if that is the artist, the rebel, or something I carry in my veins and spirit.

A Brush of Delinking

I believe full-heartedly in what Lorde (1979) says in “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House.” As a woman of color, I know, I cannot be expected to use their rules to prosper, but I have learned to make my own rules, paint my own story; based on what is given and what I want to give. Lorde does say, “Survival is not an academic skill. It is learning how to make our differences and make them our strengths” (p. 99). And because I can feel colonialism from the core of my existence to the tips of my curly hair, when I came I across delinking, intersectionality, and intercultural communications, they became necessities, almost a way of survival in life.

In his first writings about decoloniality and delinking, Quijano (1992) explains, that its purpose is to bring freedom from the intercultural relations based on colonialism and allow them to choose from the relationships that nation-state to the cultures that they
want to be part of. He says that more than anything it is the freedom to choose, exchange, and critic, cultures and society, to at last be liberated from organized powers, inequality, exploitation, and dominion:

La liberacion de las relaciones interculturales de la prision de la colonialidad, entranatambien la libertad de todas las gentes, de optar individual o colectivamente en talesrelaciones; una libertad de opcion entre las diversas orientaciones culturales. Y, sobretodo, la libertad para producir, criticar y cambiar e intercambiar cultura y sociedad. Es parte, en fin, del proceso de liberacion social del poder organizado como desigualdad, como discriminacion, como explotacion, como dominacion. (p. 20)

It’s what Quijano (1992) wrote about decoloniality and delinking that others built upon, in his project about modernity, Mignolo (2007) says decoloniality is not enough, that we should be working towards a vision of human life. Delinking is then, a project of denaturalizing concepts in naturalized fields without western philosophy, it’s ongoing and changes with space and borders. Iris Deana Ruiz (2018) writes about decoloniality as global phenomena which ultimate goal is for societies to delink from the economic dominion of the west. Ruiz describes decoloniality as a global, which aspires for economic liberation from coloniality. The importance of this is that in taking control of their societies’ education and knowledge, people globally will be able to choose what is best for them. Ruiz (2018) explains:

Hegemonic knowledge has power. It has power for example to convince people who are dying of cancer, that they are dying because of natural occurrences, when, cancer has been found to be symptom of capitalist development (i.e. water and soil being
polluted with cyanide). It has power to convince those who are rising up to defend their very lands to consider themselves as “delinquents” of society because they dare to confront modernity and development. (p. 226)

In this way knowledge is the key to delinking, but it is an education that has to come from with each nation and person. It has to be able to choose what is best and grow from those it. This idea is something that goes well with the notions that I was raised in. In my grandparents’ household there were hardly rules instead there were questions, actions, and expressions that were repeated often out of a devotion for knowledge and thought. My grandparents believed in a love which allowed the person to discover their own way in giving without expecting, or interfering; “Do not get angry or you will lose,” was a phrase that was heard constantly growing up; “What is the plan?” every time I embarked on something my grandpa would ask me this question; “Is it the right time?” My least or favorite expression, depending on how it was being used. “I am teaching you to think,” my dad would say.

Because we were raised in an agnostic house, on a set of core values based on a love for knowledge and culture, for a long time it was hard for me to describe our identity. We are Mexican, but border people nevertheless a little too free spirited, too American, and most of us artists. I can only think of one time we all went to church: It was for a quincenera, there was a minister walking around who told us were could not be close to the altar because we were showing too much skin and tattoos. Standing in front of that row of pews, adults and teens, including my grandparents, we couldn’t look at each other without giggling. We were out of place, it was not hard to see how our set of core values might not align well with traditional values on either side of the border. They were ideals not suited for a classroom, church or even for the job force. I say it with great
love, given the amount books, art, music, and just the border culture we were exposed to
my cousins, my brother and I became misfits, rebels in our own ways. We delinked
unknowingly from most traditional values, set forth through our own rules and
personalities.

Had we stayed home and I not become immigrants, the niche and culture my
grandparents created would’ve been all I needed to grow. I can honestly say, for most of
my life, these values that I was given, saved me, but as a young immigrant girl, coming to
Reno was brutal. Aside from our love of knowledge, when I really think about it, we are
people of the border just as Anzaldúa (2012) describes, always in a state of transition and
never really belonging anywhere.

**The Canvas of Intersectionality and Intercultural Communication**

In coming to the Sierra Nevada, I was not ready to move between places, I did not
fit with the region, and it was not until later that I would understand the importance of
intersectionality and intercultural communications in my life. In *Power Lines On the
Subject of Feminist Alliances*, Carrillo Rowe (2008) writes about the politics at stake in
our belonging. She describes the way in which our identity shifts from place to place and
explains how in our lives we can move from the politics of the individual to the
community as a whole and create change. Though I had an idea of what this was in my
life, it wasn’t until graduate school, that I had a clear image of the power of
intersectionality in my life and what I could do with it.

A term that would have also been useful and not just for myself, but for those that
surrounded me, would’ve been intercultural communication; how useful it would’ve for
those teachers that first welcome me into states, to have taken an intercultural course.
From “Defining and Communicating What “Intercultural” and “Intercultural
Communication” Means to Us,” intercultural communication per Lily A. Arasaratnam (2014) is, “A symbolic representation of an instance when communication between individuals is affected by cultural differences in a way that would not have been noteworthy in the absence of these differences” (Alexander et al, 2014, p. 15). Fairly new in my vocabulary, these last two terms have been become essential in my life and for the depictions of it.

**Annie’s Gallery of Stories**

![Image](image_url)

*Figure 9: “May your roots collide on a well rooted flight” (2012). Sometimes when I can’t express my thoughts, so I give them images, this one means that in order to fly high we must understand who we are. This is what delinking at its core means to me, it means that we must understand our roots to choose where to go. The roots of our people are colonial, they hurt; and more than that, roots grow, they change, and move; they are intersectional sometimes digging deep into places searching for life in the darkest places; others growing out searching for light creating life; They also push back make things uncomfortable; they resist, they are strong; without them the tree cannot hold and neither can life. In order to understand where I was going, a long time ago, I decided I had to understand, who I was. In this first section, I talk about my arrival to the U.S. and the way in which the system attempted to forged and hurt me; I do so in order to then explain the ways in which I broke free, delinked, can fly even when at times my roots still hurt.*

**Colonialism, Racism, the System and Me**
What I remember about coming to the U.S. is in colors and strong scents. I remember the green of the trees as you drive into the Sierra Nevada, the projector light when I walked into fourth grade in my new school, the smells I mentioned earlier in my work. Within weeks, my mom also found out that I had myopia that was so forceful, that my eyesight had never fully developed. From the time that I was small, I had walked around by instructions or by memorizing things, safe and surrounded by the ones I loved. To this day, thinking of my first weeks here, fills me with anxiety, I could neither see or understand things.

Of my childhood in Mexico, I only remember really bright colors, instructions, and the way some things made me feel. Really bright music and colors could terrify me, even if they were Aladdin or Fantasia. I would jump at the climax and fortes in a melody or strong contrasts in the colors of a screen. I could hear the colors and the sounds more intensely than most people, I still do; Now I think not being not being able to see, made me able to paint, to memorize things better, and take in their colors and textures differently, but I didn’t know it then.

There was also the fact, that I was being raised by *atravesados*, to be a rebel from the get-go. The more they told me I could not do something, the more I set out to do it. I always wanted to prove I could do anything. I climbed the trees without looking down; almost drowned a couple times because I did not care how deep the water was; and at 8 years old after volunteering in a group home for migrants, I decided that is what I was doing with the rest of my life. But this was all before I came to the U.S., I was being raised to thrive in between places, and taught to think as my dad would say, because as a border child you move between cultures and you have to able to decipher things on your own.
The problem was that when I arrived in Reno those values from the dessert did not go. From the first months of my arrival I neither fit, with the children of immigrant nor with the Anglo children whose language I did not speak. I was in 4th grade and my math skills were that of a 7th or 8th grader, so there was a decision in which I was pulled out of all math to concentrate on language. I knew of the hegemony of English (Tsuda, 2010), from the time I was small, everyone around me spoke English, but here I had to immerse myself in it.

The confusion between cultures and “the immigrant experience” was so grand, that by 7th grade, I remember my algebra teacher saying to me, “You know, you are probably going to end up with your friends pregnant, maybe dead, I don’t expect you to go anywhere.” A few years later I ran into that teacher on UNR campus, once again, his exact words were, “I never thought I would see you here.” Even at 20 years old, I just glared at him. I was not taught to be apologetic or show emotion. The rules of the house were to not get angry, so I did not; but that was just one teacher. I had another science teacher, that upon me pointing out his ignorance working with at-risk children, set up a desk for me on the corner and called it “the baboon chair.” For a semester he would sit me there at the beginning of each class. A couple of times, I heard him say he was putting me into place, teaching the other ones a lesson; I am not sure what that means, I just learned to stay quiet. From 8th grade until 11th, I placed between 1st and 2nd place in the States’ French Language Contest; but in 11th grade, my teacher changed and the one put in her place was a woman who found me too distracted for her AP Class. She pulled me aside a couple of times and suggested that I needed medication for ADHD. I wasn’t about
to tell her everything that was on my mind, so eventually, I dropped her class. I never took a French class again.

Looking back, it is easy for me to understand that it was at this point in my life that the colonial and imperialistic perspectives had the greatest toll. I was a child trying to fit into the roles of an adult, an *atravesado*, the system failed me, it broke me. I love to learn, but I despised school and distrusted most systems. They saw me as a rebel and so I became one. Anzaldua (2012) says you can be a rebel by,

> It is a part of me that refuses to take orders from outside authorities. It refuses to take orders from my conscious will, it threatens the sovereignty of my rulership. It is that part of me that hates constraints of any kind, even those self-imposed. At the least hint of limitations on my time or space by others. (p. 38)

I carried that distrust into my adult life. It did not help that at nineteen I began working for the school district and hearing firsthand how some of the people there felt about immigrant students. I heard the racism and lack of empathy from both whites and colored people alike. Often the colored school employees would refer to the at-risk populations they worked with, “as them vs. Us.” More Americanized and with a grip of English, I witnessed employees who were racist on their own people. I could never do that, I am an immigrant myself; I have many privileges now and can move between spaces, but it wasn’t always like that and I refuse to forget that. More than once I was also told, “Well you are not like them,” or even better, “You are not full Mexican, are you? I just thought you were half Asian, you are too educated.” As an young adult, I left many rooms infuriated, at the insensitive comments made from teachers’ inherent racism and ignorance. When principals asked me what I thought their schools needed, I often suggested culture classes. I wish I would have known the term “Intercultural
Communication,” because when I think back, that is what they needed. That is still what they need, in the world in which we live in we need to learn to have the empathy of other cultures to be humble and kind.

Lorde (1979) says, “Difference is that raw and powerful connection from which our personal power is forged” (p. 99) and to me this is key. It is all the same to teach children, Math and Language Arts, a STEM education as they say today if we cannot show them kindness and empathy towards themselves and others. If we cannot teach them that within those differences is the power to forge alliances and paint a better world; but those examples start with the adults and are what I saw little of in the system of education. What I found, is that as, I became more comfortable with who I was, I also became more comfortable with being a voice for many of the girls I worked with like Alexander (2010), in “Br(other) in the Classroom,” I began to see each of the girls I worked with as my own family.
Delinking Through Art & Mary

I hated school, but I did not hate learning; I love reading and find peace in it. I spent so much time at the library, that at fifteen I was offered my first job ever, shelving books. I worked a few months, and then the library started going through a renovation, they brought in artists and were painting murals. I am not sure how it happened, I had never done anything in art, but one of the girls painting invited me to help her paint a mural. From the first time that I took a brush to the wall, I was hooked. Later, my mom would say I ate, breath, and slept paint. Really, all I did was help her outline a few butterflies on a border of a mural, but I loved it. I imagine I love art, the way other people say, they love a significant other. I have yet to understand the concept of being completed by someone else, because to me, my creativity made me whole from the get go.

From that summer, I took the money earned shelving books and every cent I made, on painting classes and art supplies. Mary, my beautiful 82-year-old painting teacher, had more faith in me than anyone I had met in a while. We spent 2 nights a week with her, three hours at a time on oils. She was strict, we sat her 5-6 students in a small room, with classical music on, a while she rotated between us giving instructions. The talking was kept to a minimal, but halfway through we took a break with cookies and tea. Since I had no drawing background, Mary had to teach me the basics of studying things. It was a form of instructed teaching, where we reproduced a picture of our choosing based on her direction. I did not know it, but Mary was giving me my first lessons on
deconstructing a project. She was teaching me to pull a painting a part, separate its depths and layers; and see the colors underneath the colors. Mary’s technique was all the instruction I would have artistically, but it would take me places I never imagined.

To this day, one of my favorite things is just sitting before a project, planning the layers in which things can be pulled apart and the way in which I will put them back together. Painting gave me more than anything a sense of self, I never had to belong to anything or anyone again. Painting is my gift, more for what I am able to give others, for the solace it brings me. Iris Deana Ruiz (2018) says that,

The first step of decolonial “delinking” is to re-inscribe, in contemporary debates and toward the future, social organizations and economic conceptions that were banned and silence by the progressive discourse of modernity. (p. 226)

Painting and art, did this for me, they allowed to rewrite my story. All those hours by myself, with a canvas or a wall, taught me that I was able to re-inscribe myself find the best parts of me and move forward. At 18, I had no intention of going back to school, my goal was to be happy. I created a bucket list and set out to do the things in it, I flew a plane, moved away, went to New York, worked summer camps, painted, volunteered. I painted everything I could, and was able to survive better than most, on my painting and administrative jobs with district.

In teaching me to paint and use what I had within, Mary also gave me an agency to relate to others and communicate. Being able to look within myself, taught me to look into others, for what they need. I learned how to use my many intersectionalities, to pull from and to look for more. Almost as big as the excitement that I get from staring at white wall about to start a project, is the thrill I get in pitching said project. Being able to put an idea together based on what a person has given me and what I observe in them is
unlike any other feeling. I have never considered myself the best at anything I do, I make a horrible student, my precision is always off, but when clients began to tell me about what the projects they saw, I could see them and make them happen. For many years I would work for the school district, but live on my paintings, my love of books, and traveling.

![Figure 11: Positano, (2012). This is the painting that took me through school and Italy; one of my favorite stories of all.](image)

**Delinking Through Academia, Carlo, and Italy**

It was 2008 and I was listening to a lady called Laura Pausini; but her music in Spanish sounded inauthentic to me. I began to look for her music in Italian, I found a song called *Io Canto* (Pausini, 2006), and it became my favorite song for a long time. I listened to it so much that I decided I needed to take an Italian class. I went back to school, I signed up for an Italian class, and a calculus (to get financial aid). All I wanted was to learn Italian, but my plan changed the minute I met my professor.

I knew, the second I saw Carlo that I needed to go to Italy. My Italian professor was by no means what I would call attractive. Carlo was an older, Sicilian man, a little...
taller than me (I am almost 5’3), but with one of those smiles that could captivate anyone. I will never forget him on that first day of class dressed in white head to toe, white suit, white vest, matching shoes, and gold accessories. He stood like a first grader outside of class, impeccable, and excited. He did a 10-15 minutes introduction in Italian and the class just watched mesmerized. None of us spoke the language yet. I remember catching a few things, but mostly I thought to myself, “If all the men in Italy are this charming, I need to go.” Later on, I would tell people Carlo was my platonic boyfriend; He was just magical, his stories and personality fascinated.

I walked out of my first Italian class knowing I was going to Italy, I did not know I was going to finish a degree, just that I was going to Italy. I believed that to do it, I had to do more than visualize it, so I started a painting and told myself that by the time I finished that painting I would go to Italy. The painting took three years and a half, but by the time I finished I had a college degree, a nannying job in Italy, and I had found a love for school and educators.

Carlo became not only my Italian teacher but a true mentor. He had me in his Italian class for two semesters and then pulled me to his culture studies and native Spanish classes. Sometimes his lectures were 86% of stories and 14% methods, his father had been a scientist and through his job, they had traveled all over the world. Carlo considered himself a citizen of the world and spoke of Africa, Argentina, and Mexico as his. I spent so much time in his classes, I learned his stories and would sometimes laugh ahead as he got to the punch line. I remember many of those stories, the way he smiled and the way he made each of us feel. In our native Spanish classes, he looked us in the eyes and asked us what more we would do with our lives, he told stories of helping people going to college; to the young women in his class, he encouraged us to break
boundaries. Often, I would hear him say, “Don’t just be a nurse, be a doctor.” “You are already here, why not go to UNR? What’s stopping you?” and then one I can always hear, “what’s yours is yours, look at all you have been given, use it.” He wanted us to learn about who we were, and use that.

Looking back, I understand what Carlo was doing was decolonizing us, he was pulling us away from any given thoughts. I think he had spent so much time in between cultures, that he understood better than most about the coloniality of the mind. “Why not be the person in charge?” he would challenge us. Through his travels and work he must have known not only about the inherent racism and annihilation of coloniality. He would laugh as he told us about his mom dressing the corpses of anthrax or malaria, stricken Africans, found in the desert, but he was not laughing at the bodies; he was smiling at remembrance of his mom and the Catholic women that thought, that by dressing those corpses in proper attire they were saving their souls.

When their souls had probably been lost when they had lost their homes their way of culture to colonialism. He understood what Aníbal Quijano (1992) said about the destruction of Africa and Latin America, but also about knowledge and the importance of intercultural communication and exchanges of experiences to delink, “En primer termino, la descolonizacion epistemologica para dar paso a una nueva comunicacion intercultural, a un intercambio de experiencias” (p. 19).

When he wasn’t at the community college, Carlo worked for the San Francisco Opera in the summers, and for the court system translating. His stories varied from the musicals he participated in, to the people he interpreted for, who he would describe as falling to the system for not being able to afford a bail; One day he could be telling us about the limoncello he had for his cold, and the next he devouring a torta brought to him
by a custodian for speaking on behalf of them to the college president. I truly believe that at his age, Carlo was a Neplantera, that he had become skilled at moving between worlds, negotiating his contradictions, facilitating dialogues (Gutierrez-Perez, 2018).

Carlo would say that he wanted his Latin American students to thrive more than anything. He pushed for us to go school and learn about our identities. He empower us to learn who we were and what we could do. In May of 2012 I graduated college with a degree in International Affairs and Spanish Literature, I was not sure what I would do with it, but I understood so much more of who I was and the coloniality within me. That summer, I left to Italy with a nannying job, but once I was there, I was offered the opportunity to paint. For every painting that I did, I traveled to a place outside of Montepaone, the coastal city, where I lived. I was painting my story on my terms and ideals. I still cannot believe that a song and a painting had taken me so far. On my return, I went to go tell Carlo about my adventures, he per usual wanted to know, “Que mas?” “Que sigue Ana Luisa?”

Figure 12: The One For Galia, (2016).
The painting I did for my daughter, my greatest adventure, work of art, and reason for continual delinking.

**Delinking With Love for My Abuelo and Galia**

Four years after returning from Europe, in August of 2016 I had my daughter; that same year also took Carlo, my godfather, and my best ally, my Abuelo. I came home from finding out my baby’s gender, to my Abuelo being diagnosed with cancer. As my daughter grew within me, I had wondered about the connection I would have with her. My grandfather was my favorite person in the world, so I wondered how my daughter would measure; imagine the bond that I would have with her.

When he passed, I was stuck in the duality: of life and death; it did not help that a week prior to as we waited for him to go, my Godfather had a massive heart attack. As much as I was looking forward to my Galia, all of life hurt; my heart was broken for the past and for the future.

My daughter would not meet two of the most important men in my life. I pondered over and over again, who would teach her the kind of courage and love that I was taught when I hardly carry it myself. In my grief, I came to understand that even though death takes time from the person we love, it does not stop life,

*Robar la vida no puede.*

*No puede concretar esa farsa... porque la vida...*

*la vida es una antorcha que va de mano en mano,*

*de hombre a hombre, de semilla en semilla,*

*una transferencia que no tiene regreso,*

*un infinito viaje hacia el futuro,*

*como una luz que aparta*
irremediamente las tinieblas.

In his poem *Transferencias*, Hamlet Lima Quintana (Bucay, 2011, p.65) says, that it is a lie that the death can take a life; life goes on, but it is more than that, it is like a torch that goes from hand to hand, and infinite voyage into the future. It did not take long to I understand that the only one that could teach my daughter the strength and love that I was given was myself.

But in that torch that Lima Quintana speaks of I also carry coloniality. I think it was during that time of grief that I first understood I had to come back to school, that there was more for me to give and do. I understood that in order to teach Galia to be happy I had to be happy; and in order to do that I had to be true to my love of servitude and my love of knowledge, both which are deeply rooted in my coloniality. I love to learn because my grandfather taught me to love to learn, and he loved to learn because in it he found the peace he needed for his own coloniality. He was able to find out some of who he was, but more than anything who he wanted to be, delink. So that in that, in torch that Lima Quintana speaks of along with my love knowledge, is also my coloniality, and delinking; of the strengths that I have to give my daughter is the ability to understand who she is, wrestle with the pain that can come from it, but walk proudly, keep learning, keep choosing who she wants to be.

To me, that Galia keeps choosing, that I find alternative ways to teaching her, is key. Because as most decolonial authors explain the key to decoloniality is to keep away from the notions of the west and create our own ideals and societies. Wanzer-Serrano (2015) says, knowing how to prosper through decoloniality, delinking, and intersectionality means finding identity he says that, “So long as the liberal tradition maintains a stranglehold over democracy, we are doomed to myopic proceduralism” (p.
My thought is that I need to teach her to be a rebel, create her own narratives and find her own identities, and to do that I have to keep being that rebel myself.

Figure 13: La nina y las estrellas, (2017).
This is a painting that sits in my bathroom, it’s a one-hour painting; a painting that I prepared in an hour to teach to a group Latinx, teens. The importance of it, more than the colors or textures, is the relevance that it has to my life’s work, that it reminds me of what I can do and what I can give to others.

A Closing Note by the Artist

“I come as one, but I stand as 10,000” within the last couple years, I say this variation of Maya Angelou’s poem line a lot, I said it when I decided to apply to graduate school, when walked in to take the dreadful GRE, and on my first day of school. I repeat it daily, when I walk into a new place, when I drop my daughter off at preschool, or when I am giving a presentation. I am reminding myself of it right now. I should probably recite a prayer too, but I cannot think of any. So mostly I call on them, I call on the women that came before me and I say it in remembrance of who I am. Interesting
enough, as I write I am realizing that my ancestors are such a part of me, that I probably invoked them into my studies. Calefell (2012) says she became obsessed with her own grandma’s story, but I think there is more than that; like once you call on them there is no going back. There is no privacy, their thoughts and feelings seep through like a bag of tea. I am realizing, I have spent so much time calling on my grandmothers and their grandmothers’ strength, I also probably carried their feelings into my work.

Ten years into academia, it is those emotions, that I take everywhere I go and that sometimes take over me, when I least expect it: when someone gives a “compliment” on my daughter’s light skin; when I am given a compliment on my education; or when I am sitting in a classroom with a heated debate over immigration. I carry most sentiments than most, but at this point I also carry the lessons given to me by my grandmother and grandfather. I also know to stay quiet, observe, search for intersectionalities, delink and build myself up again. My resources now vary from Juana Ines de La Cruz (2018), to Anzaldua (2012), to Carrillo Rowe (2008), or Audre Lorde (1979).

Post Colonialism, colonialism, even de-colonialism, have always hurt and in my case, they will always hurt they are those roots that I talk about in my tree which move and grow, they push me to different places, always wanting to learn more. It is a grief that carries over from those before me, but also my identity as an atravesada and an immigrant. I cannot help but wonder from what was taken, to how I am supposed to raise my daughter in a world that fundamentally opposes the evolution of a woman of color. It is a sentiment that goes beyond empathy, to an intangible grief that connects me to those before me, and those after, knowing that I what I create is a stepping stone for Galia’s wellbeing. But, you cannot sit on grief, you have to grow, you have to delink, deconstruct as many times as you need to. Iris Ruiz (2018) says that,
Engaging an indigena, decolonial position is a type of decolonial action; it is one of the most deepest and liberating forms of agency because decoloniality is a type of alchemy that transforms ancient elements into a new language and, thus, a new way of being the world, otherwise known as occupying the alternative subject position. (p. 227)

I would say that alternative subject position is one we have to find more than once in our lives; more than once we have re-write our stories, choose who we want to be from the bottom up, or in my case paint it on a blank canvas. It has been a few years since those paintings in Italy things and have changed a lot. I am now a mom, have a deeper understanding of who I am, have experienced grief, and more than an artist lately I have been a scholar, but the fundamental has not changed. More than ever, I believe that I always have to ask myself: What more? What more can I learn what more can I do? What more can I give or build for Galia?

I am in school because I understood that I needed to be true to my nature of helping others, but now I understand more than ever that my life itself is a project worth sharing. That sometimes it feels like it has too many pieces; too many intersections that change as I go, but as I understand and come to terms with each of those places, I develop an agency to change things; the power to change things for the better for those around me. This the power that Carrillo Rowe (2008) spoke of in saying, “I belong in this place I belong to and from people here and there. And I long for each in its absence and neither is complete without the other” (p. 25). I belong to many places and arrive from many stories; and I will continue to draw not only from the little girl that believed she could do anything but from my coloniality, the love I’ve been given, and why not my creativity; all
to delink, repaint my canvas, to find out what I can do, what else I can give, time and again.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

12:32 AM
Annie
huh?
I love this song
I always feel like it’s so perfect for you

It’s 12:32 AM. I look down at my phone. It’s Ave, in common slang “my brother from another mother,” the one I always answer to because I am not sure what I would do without him. We have seen each other through a decade of friendship, failed relationships, childbirth, and places, so many places, from college, to work, to those places we only dreamed of that then came true. I listen to the song and it makes me cry, so I listen to it a couple more times. It’s a call A Letter to My Younger Self (Ambar Lucid, 2018), the song is in Spanish and English, and in it, the artist is talking to the girl that she once was:

I've just seen a ghost
The memories I hate the most
Reflections I feel
Were something I forgot were real
A little view of the past
I promise all of this is not gonna last
Trust me, I know

Ya no quiero que llores
The universe is gonna give you *muchas flores*

In the video, there is a little girl, with long curly hair playing in a house, somewhere in Mexico or the Southwest. I think Ave thinks that she looks like me, but also he knows me to well. He is sending this song because the message to her younger self is, “*Ya no quiero que llores,*** I don’t want you to cry anymore, things are going to get better, you are going to do great things, the universe is going to give you many things. I cry more as an adult than I did as a child, but I would tell myself the same things, “It’s going to be ok, just wait for all the great things.” Of course, he also sent the song at a time, when I have done nothing but reflective work for a few weeks. In writing this, I too saw the ghost of memories I had forgotten.

A day later, I am on the road to Mexicali. I am almost home, just a couple hours away, taking in the view of the fields as we drive into the southern border. The view is a contrasting opposite of the Sierra Nevada, desolated desert stretches, in between a few farms that plant grapevines, citruses, or dates, which can grow in arid conditions. This is where my journey as a child began. I am listening to the song one more time, it really is exactly how I feel lately; in awe of everything going on around me. I wish my Abue could see me. I wish I was going home to one of his hugs. Even as I started my journey through a second round of graduate school, I never imagined where it would take me, or how much my perspective on life would change in the last year, or the doors it would open. I keep driving through the desert, paying attention to the powerline wooden poles, the palm trees, and grape vines, that I still recognize as home. I think of Aimee Carrillo Rowe (2008) and my belonging. “I belong to these places. I belong to and with these people here and there. And I long for each in its absence, and neither is complete without
the other” (p. 25). And so I am crying not so much for the girl that was, but for the woman that I’ve become and the alliances that have pulled me through.

I believe that my all coming and going, my ethnicity, my class, my gender, my immigrant status, all those intersectionalities made me stronger than most. Being a child immigrant is not ideal, it is not something I like to think about, but it is an important story to tell these days for those who do not understand it. It is important because it promotes understanding and kindness, but more than anything because along the lines of rhetorical discourse, they are stories of the people and in them is a way to create alliances and help each other, create a better world, better humanity. In seeking to understand my intersectionalities and pushing back the hegemony consistently pushed me by school and family, I’ve learned to find places and people that help me delink and create the alliances that I need to move forward.

The universe will give you flowers, but they are based on understanding who you are and how you use the power that you’ve been given. How we use the politics of relationality to understand beyond our own story, the call that we might have in the universe. The people that we can reach through our becoming and articulating our stories has transformative power. If “whom we love is who we are becoming, [then] the duo power/ knowledge must also account for the politics of love” (Carrillo Rowe, 2008, p. 1). It’s important to love and it’s important to understand that with each relationship we are becoming. I have many stories to tell, but each person that enters my life also plays a role in where I am going, and what I can do. My belief is that in order to delink, to find ourselves time and again, we must find the people that empower us to do so. We must have networks that accept us, for who we are and also help us find new ways within our norms, not theirs.
This is also true for Latin America and its identity through music, though in many instances the West continues to dismiss its value. Often the US and Europe do not listen to its stories and vernacular discourse. They do not understand that Latin America is more than immigrants and impoverished towns. They fail to see a collective voice within it, and that to really promote its development, we must listen to from its perspective. For both people and nations to succeed their stories must be told, understood, from their perspective to create alliances and move through power lines, the way that Aimee Carrillo Rowe (2008) describes.

If we did more to understand each other, then we could do more to create agency for each other. We could use rhetoric as an apparatus and help each other create meaning and publicity to our stories; to then help nations delink and create movements within their own understanding.
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Que vivan los estudiantes

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