

## University of Texas Rio Grande Valley ScholarWorks @ UTRGV

---

Mexican American Studies Faculty Publications and  
Presentations

Interdisciplinary Programs and Community  
Engagement

---

Winter 2017

# Chicana/Latina Feminist Critical Qualitative Inquiry Meditations on Global Solidarity, Spirituality, and the Land

Cynthia M. Saavedra

*The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley*, [cinthya.saavedra@utrgv.edu](mailto:cinthya.saavedra@utrgv.edu)

Michelle Salazar Perez

*New Mexico State University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarworks.utrgv.edu/mas\\_fac](https://scholarworks.utrgv.edu/mas_fac)


 Part of the [Chicana/o Studies Commons](#), [Latina/o Studies Commons](#), and the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Saavedra, Cynthia M. and Salazar Perez, Michelle, "Chicana/Latina Feminist Critical Qualitative Inquiry Meditations on Global Solidarity, Spirituality, and the Land" (2017). *Mexican American Studies Faculty Publications and Presentations*. 1.  
[https://scholarworks.utrgv.edu/mas\\_fac/1](https://scholarworks.utrgv.edu/mas_fac/1)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Interdisciplinary Programs and Community Engagement at ScholarWorks @ UTRGV. It has been accepted for inclusion in Mexican American Studies Faculty Publications and Presentations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ UTRGV. For more information, please contact [justin.white@utrgv.edu](mailto:justin.white@utrgv.edu), [william.flores01@utrgv.edu](mailto:william.flores01@utrgv.edu).



# Chicana/Latina Feminist Critical Qualitative Inquiry

## Meditations on Global Solidarity, Spirituality, and the Land

Cinthy M. Saavedra and Michelle Salazar Pérez

**Abstract** In this article we take a journey into using Chicana/Latina feminisms as one way to unearth new possibilities for critical qualitative inquiry (CQI). We start by offering a brief overview of Gloria Anzaldúa's influence on Chicana/Latina feminism, focusing on how she has inspired researching and writing *from within rather than about* as a decolonial turn (Keating, 2015). We then venture into new imaginaries to pose questions that would lead us to ponder about global *feminista* solidarity, the spirit, and the land. Our hope is that these contemplations lead us on a path of *conocimiento* where we can put the broken pieces of our/selves back together again.

Keywords: *Chicana/Latina feminism, spirituality, decolonizing methodologies, critical qualitative inquiry*

## Introduction

Perhaps one of the most entrenched and internalized modern projects is the bifurcation of the mind and body. René Descartes (1999) redirected us on a path of knowing that began with the famous phrase, "I think, therefore, I am." Grosfoguel (2008) explains, "the Cartesian 'ego-cogito' . . . is the foundation of modern western sciences. By producing a dualism between mind and body and between mind and nature, Descartes was able to claim non-situated, universal, omniscient divine knowledge"; the (white European male) mind became superior to the body. In seeing the mind as the way to know, an onto-epistemological proclamation, we lost not only the importance of the body, but *all* that is associated with it. That is, we became vivisectioned from the corporeality of feelings, emotions, and other ways of knowing (for instance through connections with the land), thereby limiting our capacity "to know" and cutting us off from thousands of years of wisdom (Parry, 2015; Peat, 2002). While not the focus of this article, we begin with this matter of concern as an important intersection for ourselves and other Chicana/Latina feminist scholars who have

centered the body (Anzaldúa, 1987; Moraga, 1983a; Trujillo, 1998; Yarbrow-Bejarano, 1999) through critical qualitative examinations of complex hybrid identities, epistemologies, and spiritualities, birthed from the literal and metaphorical borderlands of the United States and Mexico (Elenes, 1997). These critical inquiries have and continue to recenter the lived/body experience to theorize the world (Anzaldúa, 1987)—a clear departure from western, scientific, and most social science thinking.

For us, theorizing the world through lived/body experience has necessitated an alternate way of communicating both socially and through critical qualitative inquiry (CQI). It has required listening deeply to political, cultural, intellectual, emotional, spiritual bodies/selves traveling and engaging with the earth/land. In exercising theories in the flesh (Moraga, 1983b), we have come closer to multimodal viewpoints and experiences, allowing us to see and feel research and the world in drastically different ways. To explicate these new imaginaries, in this article, we first briefly explain Gloria Anzaldúa's influence on Chicana/Latina feminism and how she has inspired researching from within rather than about. We then offer new openings for CQI through a discussion on how Chicana/Latina feminisms can help us rethink global solidarity and connections with spirituality and the land.

## Chicana/Latina Feminism

Feminisms in general have made important challenges to the patriarchal roots of inquiry by addressing issues of gender, equity, and "voice" (Hesse-Biber, 2006). As such, feminist researchers without question have transformed and opened different ways to engage with CQI. However, because feminism is/was mainly white middle class in its academic rendition, Other voices are/were needed to address its myopic focus. Chicana/Latina feminism, like other feminisms inspired by women of color, provides a framework that embraces multiplicity, a feminism for everybody (hooks, 2000). In doing so, Chicana/Latina feminist researchers have birthed epistemological and methodological tools that continue to redraw the cartography of research (Calderon, Delgado Bernal, Pérez Huber, Malagón, & Vélez, 2012; Saavedra & Nymark, 2008). Examples include considering notions of cultural intuition (Cervantes-Soon, 2014; Delgado Bernal, 1998), critical reflexivity (Flores Carmona, 2014; Saavedra, 2011a; Villenas, 1996), and the brown body/sexuality (Cruz, 2001, 2011; Yarbrow-Bejarano, 1999). From these ideas, methodologies such as *testimonio* have been birthed (Blackmer Reyes & Curry Rodríguez, 2012; Calderon et al., 2012; Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, & Flores Carmona, 2012; Latina Feminist Group, 2001) that forge connections between the individual "I" and the collective "we." That is, *testimonio* allows for one individual to

tell her story while connecting it to similar conditions across her community, whether within a national and global context, or even in privileged spaces such as academia (Flores & Garcia, 2009; Prieto & Villenas, 2012; Saavedra & Pérez, 2012). Though not the focus of this article, we see influences of this foundational Chicana/Latina feminist work in the new CQI imaginaries we later discuss.

## Gloria Anzaldúa

Gloria Anzaldúa is undeniably the most influential figure in Chicana/Latina feminism (Keating, 2015; Keating & González-López, 2011; Saldívar-Hull, 2000). Her work has had far-reaching implications not only for Chicana/Latina feminist theory and borderlands studies but also for women's, queer, and postcolonial studies. Anzaldúan scholar AnaLouise Keating (2015) has captured her influence, explaining that "Anzaldúa is a proactive philosopher of the highest caliber, weaving together mexicana, Chicana, indigenous, feminist queer, tejana, and esoteric theories and perspectives in ground-breaking ways" (p. xxxvii). As a testament to Anzaldúa's far-reaching impact, when Calderon et al. (2012) reviewed the new generation of Chicana/Latina feminist educational research, they did so by foregrounding the Anzaldúan concepts *nepantla*, *El Mundo Zurdo* (that space where "the disposed, the queer, the surplus and subaltern coexist" [p. 517]), and *Coyolxauhqui* (putting our broken pieces of our selves back together again).

These and other Anzaldúa (1987; 2002; 2015) concepts, such as borderlands, new mestiza, and spiritual activism from her seven stages of *conocimiento*,<sup>1</sup> guide not only one's inner work but also positions, as equally, one's outer work (Keating, 2015). In fact, Anzaldúa has been regarded as the "Curandera<sup>2</sup> of Conquest" (Hartley, 2010, p. 135) for her ability to not only challenge and problematize western epistemology but also to *heal it and us* from its violent processes and colonial legacies inherited and embodied, especially through dominant forms of inquiry. Thus, for many, ourselves included, Chicana/Latina feminism is more than just a standpoint or a marginalized epistemology. It is about healing the split (our separateness) and decolonizing our lives and world through theories in the flesh (Moraga, 1983b), theories of spirit (Anzaldúa, 2015; Facio & Lara, 2014), and theories of the land (Calderon, 2014; Pendleton Jiménez, 2006).

## Writing From Within

According to Keating (2015), Anzaldúa "writes from within, and it's this shift from writing *about* to writing from *within* that makes her work so innovatively decolonizing"

(p. xxix). Speaking from *within*, through expression of lived experiences, has been a necessary decolonial tool for many (Saldívar-Hull, 2000); that is, Chicana feminism *needed* to be birthed because of the exclusionary practices of white *hermanas'* feminism and brown *hermanos'* nationalistic ChicanO studies (Anzaldúa, 1990; Saavedra & Nymark, 2008; Saldívar-Hull, 2000; Sandoval, 1991). Chicana/Latina experiences were made invisible, whether intentionally or not, and therefore, there has been a need to articulate spoken word from *within* mind/body/spirit. Chicana/Latina feminism since has brought to the forefront counterhegemonic narratives (Anzaldúa, 1987, 1990; Moraga, 1983a), decolonial imaginaries (Pérez, 1999), new methodologies (Sandoval, 2000), reinterpretations of methodologies and the world (Elenes, 2011; Lara, 2005, 2008), notions of hybrid identities (Hernández-Ávila & Cantú, 2016), and new and/or reclaimed metaphysical realities (Anzaldúa, 2015; Facio & Lara, 2014). As such, Chicana/Latina articulations have “created alternative avenues, ‘safe spaces’ to develop intellectually and continue the trajectory of political dissent” thus *ofreciendo* “new categories of analysis that reshape and expand established intellectual boundaries” (Pesquera & de la Torre, 1993, p. 4–5). Anzaldúa (1990) believed that by “bringing our own approaches and methodologies [to research], we transform that theorizing space” (p. xxv).

Because Chicana feminists have spoken from *within*, they have not ignored interconnectedness and relational aspects to epistemologies and conditions of other people of color as well as the influence of and affinities to Euro/North/South American theorizing (Lugones, 2007; Pérez, 1999; Sandoval, 2000; Trinidad Galván, 2014). Consequently and intentionally, Chicana/Latinas have used multiple epistemologies and perspectives to rework, reclaim, and rewrite dominant forms of knowledge and knowledge production (Preuss & Saavedra, 2014; Saavedra & Nymark, 2008). This remaking of theories has been a way of healing the alienation and marginalization that Chicanas/Latinas have endured.

Although Chicana/Latina feminism prompts us to traverse boundaries in ways that other forms of CQI do not allow, it is important to be cognizant of the limitations of theorizing through any situated/embodied epistemology. This includes how Chicana/Latina feminism cannot speak for and/or give “voice” to everyone, nor can it essentialize experiences and/or re-create unmalleable identities. Chicana/Latina feminist research is meant to be performed in ways that speak from the localized particularity and diversity of experiences in oppressive systems, thereby avoiding totalizing or subsuming discourses of oppression. At the same time, challenging Chicana/Latina feminist research when it is finally surfacing in denied spaces should be done with caution as to not impose a white supremacist critical lens that,

intentionally or not, is suppressive rather than constructive. The tensions and conflicts explored in Chicana/Latina feminist research are not always easy to work through or even recognize as one engages in CQI. However, awareness of tensions and conflicts is deeply needed when attempting to decolonize and deacademize CQI (Saavedra, 2011a). Considering our embodied experiences and how they connect to larger sociopolitical and historical contexts is imperative, as is grappling with the colonizer/colonized nexus as we (brown, black, white) engage in CQI.

## New Directions/Realities in/for Chicana Feminist Research

One of the ways conquest for all marginalized peoples has been and continues to be successful is through divide and conquer mechanisms, resulting in deep divisions that work against the subaltern. The theft of land through conquest has not only resulted in removal and genocide of Latinx and Indigenous peoples (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014) but has also severed strong spiritual and knowledge connections to the land (Cajete, 2000; Meyer, 2008). Consequently, European importation and imposition of the matter/spirit split has *almost* eradicated cosmological and ontological ways of knowing (Lugones, 2007; Meyer, 2008). This stripping of the Indigenous and ourselves through conquest has manifested in all forms of social science research. However, as time-space constantly collides, we posit that one can embrace openings that have always been present, awaiting our acknowledgment through interconnected visions, heart, and spirit. We believe using Hartley's (2010) notion of Anzaldúa as the *curandera*/healer of conquest could provide decolonial imaginaries (Pérez, 1999) that are so desperately needed to heal wounds of oppression and challenge each of our positionalities as oppressors.

We describe three ideas that can assist in moving CQI and Chicana/Latina research in new directions and uncover new ways to heal. These ideas are not part of a list to be checked off or Truths to be followed, they are contemplations that can position us in spaces to heal from wounds of conquest and offer reimaged ways to engage in CQI. While not new, we believe the ideas we present urge researchers to pay closer attention to how we can use theory in different ways that further the project of decolonization from suppressed angles and spaces. These ideas coincide with Womanist perspectives (Maparyan, 2012), Indigenous worldviews (Anzaldúa, 2015; Cajete, 2000; Meyer, 2008), and other metaphysical work (Parry, 2015; Peat, 2002). Part of the task, then, is to begin to see ourselves in more interconnected, spiritual ways and, moreover, to examine our engagements with the very geopolitical locations and the (stolen) land many of us occupy. As such, we posit that our efforts

to decolonize research should consider globally solidarity and interdependence, spirituality, and the land.

## Global Solidarity and Interdependence

To the immigrant mexicanos and the recent arrivals we must teach our history. The 80 million mexicanos and the Latinos from Central and South America must know our struggles.

(Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 87)

By . . . positing our radical interconnectedness, threshold theories contain but exceed the exclusionary ontological frameworks, the principle of negative difference, and the either/or thinking found in oppositional consciousness and other Enlightenment-based worldviews.

(Keating, 2013, p. 11)

The divide and conquer mechanism that is still felt today is a wound that must be healed to work more effectively across artificial divides—divides that only serve to support and feed the very domination we struggle with and against. Anzaldúa (1987) believed that we must learn each other's histories and conditions to liberate ourselves from white supremacy. She boldly states:

The whites in power want us people of color to barricade ourselves behind our tribal walls so they can pick us off one at a time with their hidden weapons; so they can whitewash and distort history. Ignorance splits people, creates prejudices. (p. 86)

If we fail to learn each other's histories, she goes on to say, "other than a common culture we will have nothing to hold us together. We need to meet on a broader communal ground" (p. 87). We interpret this to mean that we must learn from each other to liberate ourselves.

In making attempts to learn about ourselves, Trinidad Galván (2014) theorizes that the global south (within and outside the north) is an epistemological source to decolonize methodologies and create "glocal" alliances. Influenced by Mohanty (2008), Suárez Navaz & Hernández (2008), and Hernández Castillo & Suárez Navaz (2008), Trinidad Galván positions the global north and south divide as "a metaphoric distinction between capitalist abundance (North) and marginalized two-thirds of the population (South) regardless of geographic area" (p. 135). She continues that by

using these geopolitical meanings, “we can situate the marginalization of Indigenous and Black communities all over the world, and in the case that pertains to us, Chicanas as women belonging to the two-thirds in the one-third world of the United States” (p. 135). To illustrate the importance of focusing on glocal relations in our methodological approaches to inquiry, Trinidad Galván uses the example of femicides in the borderlands of Mexico and the United States to show the intersection of hypercapitalist policies such as NAFTA, which benefits the global north while colonizing the south, and acts of violence against women of color. She concludes by calling for “feminist global solidarity” informed by Chicana feminist methodologies that are used “not simply [as] research endeavors—[but that] are about activism and transformation” (p. 138).

Dismantling and transforming postconquest education, epistemology, and research, however, cannot be achieved using the master’s tool (Lorde, 1984). In her groundbreaking work titled *Transformation Now! Toward a Post-Oppositional Politics of Change*, AnaLouise Keating (2013) believes that our inherited binary thinking (either/or mentality) reengages us in social movements that become oppositional, even within movements striving for social justice, liberation, and decolonization. She affirms that “these oppositional energies, politics, epistemologies and battles are inadequate” (p. 3). Keating further suggests oppositional energies can become self-interest driven and unproductive, with the focus shifting from social justice to eviscerating our opponents. This energy is then carried within us, making us less effective in working with difference. Keating reminds us that “we can’t turn off the negative energies once we remove ourselves from the battlefield. We take these energies with us into our work, our homes, our minds, our bodies, our souls” (p. 9). She asserts that we become less imaginative and “without [a] larger vision, we remain locked in an embattled, us-against-them status quo” (p. 3). Keating posits moving closer to threshold theorizing. She uses the term *threshold* to “represent complex interconnections among a variety of sometimes contradictory worlds” (p. 10). For Keating “thresholds theories are relational . . . start . . . with the presupposition that we are intimately, [and] inextricably linked with all humans and nonhuman existence” (p. 11). This link could be a remedy to oppositional energies among our/selves and with the earth/land in postconquest times.

CQI *Lecciones/Lessons*. As we engage in CQI, we ponder how we can re/member to reconnect with Others? Aside from simply using/citing Other’s work, how can we find points of connectivity and affinity? How can CQI be more about finding the thresholds of theories and analysis, as well as the thresholds between our participants and us? Is there room to be more imaginative in our research endeavors?



Methodologically, this could mean that we reinvent, reimagine research tools that allow a space for reconnection and foster interdependence instead of usurping knowledge and information from our participants, whether spiritually or through inquiry with/among people, animals, or the land. Perhaps to achieve and strive for these imaginaries, we must reconnect with the pedagogies of spirit.

## **Spirituality, Re/membering/Claiming Otherworld Wisdom**

In the world in which we currently live, it is a risky proposition to speak of politics and spirituality in the same breath.

(Fernandes, 2003, p. 102)

We've been taught that the spirit is outside our bodies, or above our heads somewhere up in the sky with God. We're supposed to forget that every cell in our bodies, every bone and bird and worm has spirit.

(Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 36)

As mentioned in the introduction, we suffer from the splitting of not only the body but also the spirit (Fernandes, 2003). This vivisection has allowed us to live in a world of separateness from each other and the world/universe around us. It gives birth to the binary system and beliefs that we have embodied and internalized for centuries. For many Chicana/Latina feminists, it has been imperative to reclaim spirituality in their work and lives (Anzaldúa, 2001, 2002, 2015; Elenes, 2011; Facio & Lara, 2014; Lara, 2002, 2005, 2008; Medina, 1998). Spirituality is both a source of strength and hope and is the inner knowing tied to the body and experience (Facio & Lara, 2014). As an example, intuition or a listening to the gut or body sensations as a form of practicing spirituality becomes a necessary strategy or way of being/ doing. Thus, one is letting go of the addiction to the rational mind as the all-knowing entity that gives meaning and purpose to life.

Spirituality is also entangled with our ancestors and spiritual guides (Anzaldúa, 2001, 2015) as forces that breathe and whisper knowledge into our being. However, because spirituality is an unseen force, it is not taken as a serious source (if not The Source) for understanding, transforming, and healing the world (Keating, 2015). The use of spirituality, intuition, and unseen forces plays a crucial and central role in the decolonizing turn that Chicana/Latina feminism offers and, not to mention, the biggest soul *cura* for western epistemology (Medina, 1998). In many ways,

through Chicana feminism, the reclaiming of Indigenous and Other spiritualities for Chicanas/Latinas can serve as a departure and break from western patriarchal religion (Medina, 1998)—one of the most powerful and violent colonization tools used in the Americas (Lugones, 2007). It is a remedy for the unification—a yoga and suture—of body/mind/spirit.

Part of centering spirituality for Chicana feminist educational researchers has been to recapture and reclaim spiritual identities such as *bruja*/witch (Lara, 2005). Lara helps us to confront western patriarchal biases against these embodied practices, biases that must be shed to undo the evil associated with *brujas*. It is important to decolonize this westernized belief because it not only pertains to those who might engage in *brujeria*, but it also spills onto and has implications for women of color as they are often likened to *bruja* like women. For Lara, then, embracing our *bruja* positionality is about using our internal powers for ourselves and our communities, a journey that she likens to Anzaldúa's spiritual activism (2002). Lara writes that "it is the empowering experience of such deep feeling, or eroticism, that creates well-being and connection within oneself and in relationship to other people and the earth as whole" (p. 23). *Bruja* positionalities also embrace sexuality. Here, the spiritual Virgin Mary can be a sexual woman. One does not have to choose between being a spiritual warrior virgin *mujer* (good) or the nonspiritual sexual woman (bad). Embodying *bruja* positionalities is both. The suturing of spirituality and sexuality then cures the Virgin/whore dichotomy propagated through Eurocentric, homophobic, and patriarchal religions that ultimately serve to control racialized women the world over (Gaspar de Alba, 2014).

Moreover, spirituality as an ontological belief also allows us to connect "between different forms of consciousness [and] realities" (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 38). For Anzaldúa, spirituality "is a different kind of knowing. It aims to expand perception; to become conscious, even in sleep; to become aware of the interconnections between all things by attaining a grand perspective" (p. 38). But for Anzaldúa, this different knowing is achieved first through the self and later should be put to work in the outer world. This work is what she calls spiritual activism (Anzaldúa, 2002). For Anzaldúa (2015), spiritual activism is the process of getting dirty where "you have to plunge your hands in the mess, plunge your hands en la masa, into embodied practical material spiritual political acts. This politics of embodied spiritualities (that I term "conocimiento") es nuestro legado" (p. 90). Though some have used Anzaldúa's (2002) concept of *conocimiento* in educational research as a form of critical consciousness in the political sense (Reza-López, Huerta Charles, & Reyes, 2014), we use it here in the metaphysical sense. That is, *conocimiento* is a deep knowing from

a spiritual realm that is birthed from Earth-shattering encounters and/or epiphanies in one's life that breathes new knowledge and understanding into one's being (Anzaldúa, 2015). Therefore, we cannot ignore the spiritual process of *conocimiento*. In sum, spiritual activism deals with the way we change the self to change the collective. Keating (2008) explains: "For Anzaldúa and other spiritual activists, self-change and social transformation are mutually interdependent" (p. 59). Developing a spiritual consciousness of Anzaldúa's work is in many ways a form of "curanderismo, [in] which she consciously applies the concepts and practices of the curandera to the social ills of colonialism that she hopes to help heal" (Hartley, 2011, p. 141).

CQI *Lecciones/Lessons*. To engage in a new kind of spiritual knowledge production in CQI, or *conocimiento*, the journey cannot be solely material/linguistic or based upon what can be seen and sensed through the rational mind, as the language of critique through critical discourse analysis, postmodernism, poststructuralism, and deconstructions has allowed us to do. The journey must embrace the unseen, the metaphysical. For Anzaldúa, she drew upon multispiritual beings, guides, symbolism, and nature as sources that provide guidance and strengths (Keating, 2008, 2015). Anzaldúa (2015) explains that the "universe is conscious and the spirit and soul communicate by sending subtle signals. We receive information from ancestors inhabiting other worlds" (p. 24). This challenges our understanding of where knowledge comes from or the purpose of knowledge production. As researchers, we have been trained to believe that knowledge comes from objective examinations and through what can be proven. Even as those who engage in CQI, we find a disconnect remains between "knowing" and spirituality. Anzaldúa challenges our notion of knowledge production to include what is unseen and how interrelated our knowing can be through *conocimiento*.

The path of knowledge requires that we apply what we learn to all our daily activities, to our relationships with ourselves, with others, with the environment, with nature . . . through knowledge we liberate ourselves; through knowledge we question the limitations of single culture/nationalistic identity. Walking el camino de *conocimiento* by the light of one's knowledge enables us to close the gaps, bridge the abysses. (p. 91)

Spirituality has implications for knowledge production that stems from both positivist research and CQI. Being open to feel and capture the vibrations of wisdom via nature, the land, the Other, ancestors, and our multiple selves is another way to think about knowledge we gain from and share with the material world. For

methodology, this means learning anew how to listen without the rational mind. Embracing this way of knowing that is drastically different than what Eurocentric approaches to inquiry have imposed in postconquest times becomes necessary. Perhaps, then, CQI from a spiritual way of being is about unlearning our colonized embodiment that has been inherited and internalized, even at a cellular level.

## The Land: Decolonizing/Reclaiming Cart(ge)ographies

The land was full of spirit, full of life energy. Each entity—a rock, a tree, a plant, a mountain, an animal, a bird, an insect—had its own expression of life and way of the spirit.

(Cajete, 2000, p. 180)

Indigenous people are all about place. Land/aina, defined as “that which feeds” is the everything to our sense of love, joy and nourishment. Land is our mother.

(Meyer, 2008, p. 219)

According to theoretical physicist David F. Peat (2002),

Western science—the science of analytic chemistry or elementary particle physics—can be carried out in a well-equipped laboratory anywhere in the world, because the knowledge it gives about the world is assumed to be objective, independent of the individual who discovers it and the location in which it was investigated. Indigenous science, however, refers to the particular landscape that the People occupy. (p. 85)

The land for many Indigenous and Latinx peoples around the world is a sacred ground concept (Cajete, 2000; Meyer, 2008) that was violently taken from them (Galeano, 1973). In postconquest Euro-American education and through research, we have been taught and trained to take the land for granted. Cajete (2000) explains that in “Western arts, sciences and humanities the perceptions of the Earth and its places as living presences has been largely absent . . . in contrast, Native cultures describe their place as a living presence in the context of its mythic and spiritual meaning” (pp. 181–182). This spiritual meaning derived from the land can be useful for CQI. Meyer (2008) explains that “knowing with land should help you find out more about your own self, and when the process begins as a researcher, you start to open your own phenomenological inquiry into your origins of space” (p. 219).

But how does, or can one, reconnect with and acknowledge the land? Pendleton Jiménez (2006) she reminds us that “for Chicanas, learning about the land risks dredging up 500 years of colonial and Indigenous knowledge in conflict, or hurtful understandings of ourselves in the world” (p. 220). However, through this hurtful or conflictive experience, we might realize that “learning from the land could save the land, could strengthen our bodies, could sustain our political struggles, and could nurture our imaginations” (p. 220). In centering epistemologies of the land (Alfred, 1999; Haig-Brown & Dannenmann/Kaamatweyaashiik, 2002) and of the border/lands (Anzaldúa, 1987), Pendleton Jiménez asks us to engage in groundwork for Chicana/Latina pedagogy (as she so aptly titles her work “Start With the Land”). In her search for land reconnection, she challenges the Cartesian dichotomy of human and nature, a plea central to decolonizing methodologies as well as remedy for our postconquest context. In centering epistemologies of the land and challenging dichotomies, Chicana/Latina feminism attempts to decenter the self for the land to surface. While doing so, one also rediscovers the strong connections to land, thereby challenging the human/nature dichotomy.

Taking seriously the importance of the land, Dolores Calderon (2014) also urges decolonial research through “anticolonial” (p. 81) methodologies. She posits that Chicana/Latina feminisms, when braided with anticolonial methodologies, “foreground colonial subjectivities and practices that must be identified and subverted if working towards decolonial ends” (p. 87). Thus, for Calderon, it is important to trace the literal land tracks of her journey because these tracks have their own wisdom and story to tell. Her/stories are connected to the land— in her case, El Paso, Texas—and are in and of themselves counterstories. For Calderon, “this geographic, cultural, political, and economic landscape allows me to identify the manner in which colonial logic through its multiple forms (ideology, structural, and legal) operates to maintain coloniality” (p. 84). She offers, instead, an indigenized (Smith, 2012) notion of *territorialization* as a way to connect Chicana/Latina feminism to anticolonial methodologies and challenge the embeddedness of coloniality in educational discourses and in ourselves as we have to understand that perhaps even as Chicana/Latinas, we can embody the settlers’ colonial mentality.

CQI *Lecciones/Lessons*. Theorizing our work is not just about romanticizing a naïve notion of the land and Indigenous/Latin@ peoples. It’s a matter of urgency. It’s about re/membering wisdom that can heal our current colonial context. As critical qualitative researchers, we can begin, as Four Arrows (2013) describes, with a “sense of personal relationship with the natural world” (p. 225). Yet how often do we think of the land and the natural world in which we research? Calderon (personal

communication, April 14, 2015) challenged Saavedra to think of the land (spiritually, bodily, and metaphysically) when theorizing second language education. It was, for Saavedra, the first time she grappled with this question. Thus, Saavedra (2015) realized that English/Spanish language education is directly tied to colonization and its important connection to Chicana/Latina feminism and indigeneity. For example, both English and Spanish are colonialist languages that have been used to colonize Mesoamerican/Indigenous peoples, stripping their spiritual and cosmological ties to not only Other peoples but the land and universe.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, living on stolen land, Saavedra's positionality as Chicana settler is a hurtful realization (Pendleton Jiménez, 2006). The question remains, then, how to "ground" second language acquisition education so that we grapple with its historical roots based on land acquisition.

## **Mending the Fragments of Our/selves**

Now let us shift . . . conocimiento . . . inner work . . . public acts.

(Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 117)

For Chicana/Latina feminists and women of color from the global south, whose embodied experiences remain violent and in a colonialist state, they/we are unable to depart the unhealed material world just yet. Movements toward global interdependence, relationships with the land, and spirituality, then, become important aspects of CQI to consider, if not center, in research that unfortunately can be easily ignored if we negate, as we have done for so long, our connection to each other, the earth, and the universe. After all, our violent separation from each other, spirituality, and the land are part of our Cartesian heritage. Through global solidarity and spiritual activism in our methodological engagements, however, we can reimagine how to work with our Others to suture mind/body/nature/spirit. We agree with Anzaldúa (2015) when she states that "conocimiento es otro modo de conectar [is another way of connecting] across colors and other differences to allies also trying to negotiate racial contradictions, survive the stresses and traumas of daily life, [of conquest] and develop a spiritual-imaginal-political vision together" (p. 153). Thus, we leave the readers to wonder, imagine, and contemplate how knowledges derived from CQI become *conocimientos* that heal the wounds of conquest by mending the fragments of our/selves, the land, and spirit.

## Notes

1. The seven stages of *conocimiento* is a complex nonlinear, recursive, journey or path to spiritual knowing. This knowing starts from the personal and extends to the collective. The stages are eclectic and incorporate other traditions such as the Indigenous “four directions (south, west, north, east), below and above” (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 123) and a seventh direction, the center. Additionally, *conocimiento* draws from Hinduism, “the seven chakras of the energetic dream body, spirit body . . . the seven planes of reality” (p. 123). It is important to note that “together, the seven stages open the senses and enlarge the breadth and depth of consciousness, causing internal shifts and external changes” (p. 123).
2. A *curandera* is a Mexican healer who practices traditional medicine with herbs and plants to heal physical, emotional, and spiritual ailments. According to Hartley (2010), this knowledge was suppressed during the conquest and has roots in regions around the world, including within Arab, Spanish, and Amerindian cultures. Hartley points out how “Anzaldúa describes the open wound of the border [between the United States and Mexico] in specific terms, as specific types of ailments” (p. 142). *Curanderismo*, then, could potentially heal ailments from the wounds of conquest.
3. Important to acknowledge are other ways to understand language besides as a human-centric form of communication. Parry (2015) describes the inextricable connection between language, land, and epistemology. Language is not just part of the human realm. In fact, it’s the land that offers the sounds and consciousness that gives way to thought. This challenges our conception of the origin of language as a strictly human activity.

## References

- Anzaldúa, G. E. (1987). *Borderlands/la frontera*. San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books.
- Anzaldúa, G. (1990). Introduction. In G. E. Anzaldúa (Ed.), *Making face, making soul/haciendo caras: Creative and critical perspectives by women of color* (pp. xv–xxviii). San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books.
- Anzaldúa, G. E. (2001). *Prietita and the ghost woman*. San Francisco, CA: Children’s Book Press.
- Anzaldúa, G. E. (2002). Now let us shift . . . the path of *conocimiento* . . . inner work, public acts. In G. Anzaldúa & A. Keating (Eds.), *This bridge we call home: Radical visions for transformation* (pp. 540–578). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Anzaldúa, G. E. (2015). *Light in the dark/luz en los oscuro: Rewriting identity, spirituality, reality* (A. Keating, Ed.). Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Blackmer Reyes, K., & Curry Rodríguez, J. E. (2012). Testimonio: Origins, terms and resources. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 45, 525–538. doi:10.1080/10665684.2012.698571
- Cajete, G. (2000). *Native science: Natural laws of interdependence*. Santa Fe, NM: Clear Light.
- Calderon, D. (2014). Anticolonial methodologies in education: Embodying land and indigeneity in Chicana feminisms. *Journal of Latino/Latin American Studies*, 6, 81–96. doi:10.18085/llas.6.2.96wkl5357125j70x
- Calderon, D., Delgado Bernal, D., Pérez Huber, L., Malagón, M., & Vélez, V. N. (2012). A Chicana feminist epistemology revisited: Cultivating ideas a generation later. *Harvard Educational Review*, 88, 513–539. doi:10.17763/haer.82.4.l518621577461p68

- Cervantes-Soon, C. (2014). The U.S.-Mexico border-crossing Chicana researcher: Theory in the flesh and the politics of identity in critical ethnography. *Journal of Latino/Latin American Studies*, 6, 97–112. doi:10.18085/llas.6.2.qm08vk3735624n35
- Cruz, C. (2001). Towards an epistemology of the brown body. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 14, 657–669. doi:10.1080/09518390110059874
- Cruz, C. (2011). LGBTQ street youth talk back: A meditation on resistance and witnessing. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 24, 547–558. doi:10.1080/09518398.2011.600270
- Delgado Bernal, D. (1998). Using a Chicana feminist epistemology in educational research. *Harvard Educational Review*, 68, 555–583. doi:10.17763/haer.68.4.5wv1034973g22q48
- Delgado Bernal, D., Burciaga, R., & Flores Carmona, J. (2012). Chicana/Latina *testimonios*: Mapping the methodological, pedagogical, and political. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 45, 363–372. doi:10.1080/10665684.2012.698149
- Descartes, R., (1999). *Discourse on the method and related writings* (D. M. Clarke, Trans.). New York, NY: Penguin Classics.
- Dunbar-Ortiz, R. (2014). *An Indigenous peoples' history of the United States*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Elenes, C. A. (1997). Reclaiming the borderlands: Chicana/o identity, difference, and critical pedagogy. *Educational Theory*, 47, 359–375. doi:10.1111/j.1741-5446.1997.00359.x
- Elenes, C. A. (2011). *Transforming borders: Chicana/o popular culture and pedagogy*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Facio, E., & Lara, I. (Eds.). (2014). *Fleshing the spirit: Spirituality and activism in Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous women's lives*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- Fernandes, L. (2003). *Transforming feminist practice: Non-violence, social justice, and the possibilities of a spiritualized feminism*. San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books.
- Flores, J., & Garcia, S. (2009). Latina *testimonios*: A reflexive critical analysis of a 'Latina space' at a predominantly white campus. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 12, 155–172. doi:10.1080/13613320902995434
- Flores Carmona, J. (2014). Cutting out their tongues: Mujeres' testimonios and the Malintzin researcher. *Journal of Latino/Latin American Studies*, 6, 113–124. doi:10.18085/llas.6.2.gr44n072hhh72584
- Four Arrows. (2013). *Teaching truly: A curriculum to indigenize mainstream education*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Galeano, E. (1973). *The open veins of Latin America: Five centuries of the pillage of a continent* (C. Belfrage, Trans.). New York, NY: Monthly Review Press.
- Gaspar de Alba, A. (2014). *[Un]framing the "bad woman": Sor Juana, Malinche, Coyolxauhqui, and other rebels with a cause*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Grosfoguel, R. (2008). Transmodernity, border thinking, and global coloniality: Decolonizing political economy and postcolonial studies. *Eurozine*. Retrieved from <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2008-07-04-grosfoguel-pt.html>
- Haig-Brown, C., & Dannenman/Kaamatweyaashiik, K. (2002). *To be in good relation: The search for community*. Paper presented at the International Society for Cultural Research and Activity Theory, Amsterdam, Netherlands.
- Hartley, G. (2010). The curandera of conquest: Gloria Anzaldúa's decolonial remedy. *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, 35(1), 135–158.
- Hernández-Ávila, I., & Cantú, N. E. (2016). *Entre Guadalupe y Malinche: Tejanas in literature and art*. Austin: University of Texas Press.



- Hernández Castillo, R. A., & Suárez Navaz, L. (2008). Introducción. In L. Suárez Navaz & R. A. Hernández (Eds.), *Descolonizando el feminismo: Teorías y prácticas desde los márgenes* (pp. 11–28). Madrid, Spain: Ediciones Cátedra Grupo Anaya.
- Hesse-Biber, S. N. (Ed.). (2006). *Handbook of feminist research: Theory and praxis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- hooks, b. (2000). *Feminism is for everybody: Passionate politics*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.
- Keating, A. (2008). "I'm a citizen of the universe": Gloria Anzaldúa's spiritual activism as catalyst for social change. *Feminist Studies*, 34, 53–69.
- Keating, A. (2013). *Transformation now! Toward a post-oppositional politics of change*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Keating, A. (2015). Editor's introduction: Re-envisioning Coyolxauhqui, decolonizing reality. In G. E. Anzaldúa, *Light in the dark/luz en lo oscuro: Rewriting identity, spirituality, reality* (pp. ix–xxxvii). Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Keating, A., & González-López, G. (Eds.). (2011). *Bridging: How Gloria Anzaldúa's life and work transformed our own*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Lara, I. (2002). Healing sueños for academia. In G. Anzaldúa & A. Keating (Eds.), *This bridge we call home: Radical visions for transformation* (pp. 433–438). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Lara, I. (2005). Bruja positionalities: Toward a Chicana/Latina spiritual activism. *Chicana/Latina Studies*, 4(2), 10–45.
- Lara, I. (2008). Goddess of the Américas in the decolonial imaginary: Beyond the virtuous virgen/pagan puta dichotomy. *Feminist Studies*, 34, 99–127.
- Latina Feminist Group. (2001). *Telling to live: Latina feminist testimonios*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Lorde, A. (1984). *Sister outsider: Essays and speeches by Audre Lorde*. Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press.
- Lugones M. (2007). Heterosexualism and the colonial/modern gender system. *Hypatia*, 22(1), 186–209.
- Maparyan, L. (2012). *The womanist idea*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Medina, L. (1998). Los espíritus siguen hablando: Chicana spiritualities. In C. Trujillo (Ed.), *Living Chicana theory* (pp. 189–213). Berkeley, CA: Third Woman Press.
- Meyer, M. A. (2008). Indigenous and authentic: Hawaiian epistemology and the triangulation of meaning. In N. K. Denzin, Y. S. Lincoln, & L. T. Smith (Eds.), *Handbook of critical and indigenous methodologies* (pp. 217–232). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mohanty, C. T. (2008). De vuelta a 'Bajo los ojos de occidente': La solidaridad feminista a través de las luchas anticapitalistas. In L. Suárez Navaz & R. A. Hernández (Eds.), *Descolonizando el feminismo: Teorías y prácticas desde los márgenes* (pp. 407–464). Madrid, Spain: Ediciones Cátedra Grupo Anaya.
- Moraga, C. (1983a). *Loving in the war years*. Boston, MA: South End Press.
- Moraga, C. (1983b). Theory in the flesh. In C. Moraga & G. Anzaldúa (Eds.), *This bridge called my back: Writings by radical women of color* (2nd ed., p. 23). Brooklyn, NY: Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press.
- Parry, G. A. (2015). *Original thinking: A radical revisioning of time, humanity, and nature*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books.
- Peat, F. D. (2002). *Blackfoot physics*. Boston, MA: Weiser Books.
- Pendleton Jiménez, K. (2006). "Start with the land": Groundwork for Chicana pedagogy. In D. Delgado Bernal, C. A. Elenes, F. E. Godinez, & S. Villenas (Eds.), *Chicana/Latina*

- education in everyday life: Feminista perspectives on pedagogy and epistemology* (pp. 219–230). Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Pérez, E. (1999). *The decolonial imaginary: Writing Chicanas into history*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Pesquera, B. M., & de la Torre, A. (1993). Introduction. In A. de la Torre & B. M. Pesquera (Eds.), *Building with our hands: New directions in Chicana studies* (pp. 1–11). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Preuss, C. L., & Saavedra, C. M. (2014). Revealing, reinterpreting, rewriting mujeres. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 24, 901–921. doi:10.1080/09518398.2013.808775
- Prieto, L., & Villenas, S. (2012). Pedagogies from *nepantla*: Testimonio, Chicana/Latina feminisms and teacher education classrooms. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 45, 411–429. doi:10.1080/10665684.2012.698197
- Reza-López, E., Huerta Charles, L., & Reyes, L. V. (2014). Nepantlera pedagogy: An axiological posture for preparing critically conscious teachers in the borderlands. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 13, 107–119. doi:10.1080/15348431.2013.821062
- Saavedra, C. M. (2011a). De-academizing early childhood research: Wanderings of a Chicana/Latina feminist researcher. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 10, 286–298. doi:10.1080/15348431.2011.605678
- Saavedra, C. M. (2015). *Unsettling ESL teacher education: Infusing theories in the flesh and don't forget the land!* Paper presented at the annual American Educational Studies Association (AESA) conference, San Antonio, Texas.
- Saavedra, C. M., & Nyemark, E. D. (2008). Borderland-*mestizaje* feminism: The new tribalism. In N. K. Denzin, Y. S. Lincoln, & L. T. Smith (Eds.), *Handbook of critical and indigenous methodologies* (pp. 255–276). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Saavedra, C. M., & Pérez, M. S. (2012). Chicana and Black feminisms: Testimonios of theory, identity, and multiculturalism. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 45, 430–443. doi:10.1080/10665684.2012.681970
- Saldívar-Hull, S. (2000). *Feminism on the border: Chicana gender politics and literature*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Sandoval, C. (1991). U.S third world feminism: The theory and method of oppositional consciousness in the postmodern world. *Genders*, 10, 1–24.
- Sandoval, C. (2000). *Methodology of the oppressed*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples* (2nd ed.). London, England: Zed Books.
- Suárez Navaz, L., & Hernández, R. A. (Eds.). (2008). *Descolonizando el feminismo: Teorías prácticas desde los márgenes*. Madrid, Spain: Ediciones Cátedra Grupo Anaya.
- Trinidad Galván, R. (2014). Chicana/Latin American feminist epistemologies of the global south (within and outside the north): Decolonizing el conocimiento and creating global alliances. *Journal of Latino/Latin American Studies*, 6, 135–140. doi:10.18085/llas.6.2.1160715w62582591
- Trujillo, C. (Ed.). (1998). *Living Chicana theory*. Berkeley, CA: Third Woman Press.
- Villenas, S. (1996). The colonizer/colonized Chicana ethnographer: Identity, marginalization, and co-optation in the field. *Harvard Education Review*, 66, 711–731. doi:10.17763/haer.66.4.3483672630865482
- Yarbro-Bejarano, Y. (1999). Sexuality and Chicana/o studies: Toward a theoretical paradigm for the twenty-first century. *Cultural Studies*, 13, 335–345. doi:10.1080/095023899335310

## About the Authors

---

Cintha M. Saavedra is associate professor and academic program director of Mexican American studies at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Her research centers Chicana/Latina feminist epistemology in education. In addition, her scholarship addresses critical methodologies such as *testimonios*, *pláticas*, and critical reflexivity. Her work has been published in the *Review of Research in Education*, *Equity & Excellence in Education*, the *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, and *TESOL Quarterly*.

Michelle Salazar Pérez is associate professor of early childhood education at New Mexico State University. She is co-editor of the book *Critical Qualitative Inquiry: Foundations and Futures*, and her work has been published in the journals *Qualitative Inquiry*, *Cultural Studies*→*Critical Methodologies*, and the *Review of Research in Education*. She is co-editor (with Saavedra) of two special issues in the *Journal of Latino-Latin American Studies* on Chicana/Latina pedagogies and methodologies.