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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

WILEY

Intersectionality and Education Work during COVID-19 Transitions

Testimonios de las atravesadas: A borderland existence of women of color faculty

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Abstract

The temporalities of COVID-19 and resultant economic crisis, along with increased visibility of white supremacy and anti-Blackness, have exacerbated the longstanding challenges Women of Color (WOC) faculty experience, particularly around negotiating labor and navigating the academy. Through Anzaldúa's borderlands framework, and an interwoven methodology of testimonios and pláticas, this paper's findings illuminate how the fixed, shifting, and messy boundaries of academic work have, especially for WOC faculty working through COVID-19, violated the limits of the personal and professional, intruded into the homes as sacred spaces, and continued and expanded demands to provide labor. Institutions have placated these fraught borders with professional development and networks of mentorship—all while pivoting away from addressing the material and structural conditions that disintegrate the borders, particularly for WOC faculty. By exploring the layered complexities of traversing the academy—a space not made for our existence as WOC within them—we offer a nuanced understanding of academic borderlands. As a part of this, we highlight our resistance to carve out spaces of solidarity and collectivity in the face of Eurocentric, individualistic institutions to imagine

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new possibilities, a practice necessary toward transforming the academy.

KEYWORDS

borderlands, COVID-19, labor, testimonios, women of color faculty

1 | INTRODUCTION

[B]orders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe. To distinguish *us* from *them*. [...] It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants.

– Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*

The existing literature on Women of Color (WOC) faculty has long documented how the borderlands that marginalized faculty navigate is a space that is unwelcoming (Motha & Varghese, 2018), riddled with violence (e.g., micro/macroaggressions; see Harris & Nicolazzo, 2017), and oftentimes dehumanizing (Martinez & Welton, 2017). Yet the year 2020 (further) revealed how universities were built without the intention of addressing such long-standing disparities of inequity and harm. Such accounts as *Inside Higher Ed's* report that gendered differences in journal submissions during COVID-19 were due to “women in all fields who are desperately trying to balance teaching and otherwise working from home with increased caregiving responsibilities” (Flaherty, 2020, n.p.) reveal the pandemic's exacerbation of disparities that have been further compounded for WOC faculty through intersections of race, class, immigration status, and even the institutional types in which they work (Duncan, Dutt-Ballerstadt & Lo, 2021).

As four then-untentured WOC faculty who have different racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds within a North American context, and whose work intersects around issues of oppression, we sought to understand how the unique context of COVID-19 and the resurgence of white supremacy intensified tensions related to our professional and individual intersectional identities. We sought this both as individuals, analyzing experience as we lived through it in real time, and as scholars in this field, well versed in the literature of WOC faculty. To give nuance to the complexities, tensions, and points of resistance that we ourselves experienced within the liminal space of the academy and our intersecting identities, and to explore how COVID-19 further exacerbated an already hostile academic space for women, generally, and WOC specifically, we drew on Gloria Anzaldúa's (1987) borderlands framework, especially the remark that serves as epigraph to this paper: “[B]orders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe. To distinguish *us* from *them*. [...] It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants” (p. 3). This framework, with its attentiveness to blurring and blurred boundaries, speaks to the complex realities that WOC faculty, *atravesadas* [see Appendix A], face in navigating the professoriate when the physical borders that once existed between academia and the home, and the ever-permeable boundaries between care work and academic/professional labor, have been further blurred by today's circumstances. We offer this article to build upon the growing body of research on the challenges Faculty of Color, and specifically WOC, faculty experience (e.g., Neimann, 2012; Patton, Shahjahan & Osei-Kofi, 2010), and we complicate it from our positionality as WOC faculty who were untentured at the time of data collection.

Instead of the Eurocentric, individual models of scholarship prioritized by institutional processes of tenure, which could not be adequate to relay either these experiences or these insights, we drew on testimonio and plática methods, similarly as the scholars in Decolonizing alliance (2021), where our writing, thinking, dreaming, and discussing did not happen linearly in conventional, logocentric, and Eurocentric constructions of argumentation. This scholarly act was both healing and strategic. Even while we engaged in a nonprivileged methodology, we acknowledge that, as scholars, we are situated in the Global North (i.e., the United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany,

and Italy), and are, thus, privileged from our geopolitical context in a way that may inadvertently reproduce white/Eurocentric/masculinist experiences (Grosfoguel, 2013). The findings that emerged through this reiterative, collaborative process of braiding voices together distilled three key themes: institutional violence (Cueva, 2014) and harm; resistance (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001); and the messy positioning of ourselves within these borderlands. The result is scholarly work that is both personal and deeply grounded in the literature we study. It also points to a way forward for how, within this borderland space that we collectively and individually occupy, we may attempt to heal nuestras heridas abiertas.

2 | THE LANDSCAPE FOR WOMEN OF COLOR FACULTY

To understand the contexts in which COVID-19 has continued, expanded, and intensified the raced/gendered burden of labor laid upon WOC faculty (Auger & Formentin, 2021; Oleschuk, 2020), we must first consider the prior conditions that existed, starting with the working conditions for all faculty. Expectations of faculty labor, typically categorized through research, teaching, and service, had already rapidly evolved (Rhoads, 1998) to include increased demands for administrative and service-related responsibilities like serving on committees, filing paperwork, and coordinating programs. Yet the tenure process in U.S. institutions continues to propagate the false illusion of an academic labor distribution of 40% teaching, 40% research, and 20% service. In (our) reality, service comprised far more than 20% of our (faculty) time, often overshadowing our teaching responsibilities and—of greater consequence in our pursuit of tenure—our research.

At the same time that service demands increased without compensatory offsets, faculty, including the growing ranks of untenured and adjunct faculty, faced incompatible pressures to increase performance. While all faculty were faced by COVID-19 challenges, faculty of color, and particularly WOC, have done so while also experiencing microaggression, harm, and unequal treatment by students and colleagues. In addition, faculty of color have encountered challenges to their credibility (Settles, Jones, Buchanan & Brassel, 2021). As just one instance, course evaluations for WOC faculty reveal harsher feedback and undeserved cruelty arising from sexism, genderism, racism, and anti-Black misogynoir (Lewis & Miller, 2018; Pittman, 2010). Yet these same intersecting identities of race, gender, class, generation, and immigration status have resulted for WOC faculty in an expectation of—even a demand for—increasingly compounded labor (Beeman, 2021; Pittman, 2010), and, as demonstrated here, particularly emotional labor.

Anthologies by WOC faculty, like *Presumed Incompetent* (Gutiérrez y Muhs, Niemann, Gonz, 2012), have highlighted how students expect women faculty to undertake roles as mothers, caretakers, and counselors, a service neither expected of men counterparts nor recognized by the institutional tenure system. For instance, the phenomenon of ghost advising—advising students who are not formally assigned—often results in WOC faculty being the *actual* advisors for students, while more high-profile white faculty men gain both the credit and release time (from doing the work of advising) to progress toward tenure and to expand their reputation (June 2015; Schultheiss, 2018). Additional labor done by WOC faculty includes helping students traverse microaggressions and navigate white-centric Title IX policies. In addition, WOC faculty also communicate with colleagues, act as a mediator, and guide students through bureaucracy (Harris & Linder, 2017; Neimann, 2012). Yet the merit and rigor of this differentially practiced emotional labor is devalued or nonvalued (Bellas, 1999; Neimann, 2012).

The absence or invisibility of emotional labor as *real* work is rooted in the gendered, raced, and classed history of educational work, framed as a natural part or extension of women's work (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006). In K-12 education where women are more of the labor force, teachers tend to be white, middle-class, English-speaking, cisgender, heterosexual women while teacher aides and assistants tend to be WOC with lower pay and lower valuation (Quinn & Ferree, 2017), illuminating the further intersectionality of race and class. At higher education institutions, the stratification of campus staff positions and promotions similarly reflects broader sociocultural and political economic systems of oppression (Cho & Brassfield, forthcoming).

It should, thus, not be surprising then that, long before COVID, the mental health, teaching, and research of Faculty of Color were negatively impacted by both white-centric review processes that devalue their research (Stanley, 2007) and by epistemic exclusion (Settles, Jones, Buchanan & Brassel, 2021). Yet in 2020, amid the unique context that included both the COVID-19 pandemic and the resurgence of white supremacy, conditions for WOC faculty worsened considerably, leading to further elevated levels of anxiety and worsened sleep, eating, and exercise habits (Weyandt, Francis, Shepard, Gudmundsdóttir, Channell, Beatty & DuPaul, 2020). For some WOC faculty, the challenges of motherhood and single-mothering during the pandemic (Silbergleid, 2020/2021) were intensified by demands to balance conference calls and care for young children (Tan, 2020/2021). For other WOC faculty members, they had to bear the isolation and stress of singleness. In sum, no matter what WOC faculty members' partner or caregiver status was, they experienced that their tenure clocks and research agendas were heavily impacted and required readjustments (Gao & Sai, 2020).

All of this existing research highlights the compounded work and unrecognized emotional load that burdens WOC faculty and that extends into the unique context that includes the COVID-19 pandemic and resurgence of white supremacy. Collectively, it demonstrates the ways that ancillary labor, feelings of guilt, and additional care work manifested and how administrative responses within higher education intensified and shaped an increasingly strained, messy borderlands existence for WOC faculty.

3 | WRITING FROM WITHIN THE BORDERLANDS

Seeking to voice our impression that universities had not only been unprepared for a crisis like COVID-19, but had also failed to imagine the intersecting identities of their marginalized communities on campus, we drew from a framework (i.e., borderlands) and a methodology (i.e., testimonio) that honored the different intersectional identities (including differing entry points into academia) we hold without essentializing or conflating them. More explicitly, we hold a variety of salient identities: a Korean American daughter to immigrant educators (Katherine); a Chicana/Tejana mother of five (Racheal); a daughter of formerly undocumented Mexican immigrant parents (Érica); and a biracial woman with Latina/Columbian Heritage (Brittany).¹ Despite our differing identities, our common commitment to work that intersects around issues of oppression and our (then) untenured status, motivated us to contribute to the growing body of research around challenges WOC faculty experience while providing a more nuanced and intimate glimpse into how these challenges were further manifested during the time of COVID. We sought to do this through sharing examples from our personal experiences. Additionally, our identities and different contexts for beginning our relationships with academia reveal our continued navigation of academia—that is, what our priorities and research agendas are and how we engage with or in academia or resist academia. Specifically, our entries into the professoriate included starting immediately after the Ph.D. (Katherine and Érica), receiving a postdoc-like fellowship (Racheal), and beginning as a visiting assistant professor (Brittany). At the start of the project, all four of us were at Miami University, with Brittany and Katherine moving to different institutions in 2022. Additionally, we came from differing family-academia contexts: Katherine comes from a long line of educators; Racheal and Brittany are the first in their families to complete a doctoral degree; and Érica is part of the first generation in her family to attend college and the first to earn a doctorate.

While we sought to recognize how our identities both complicated and shaped our work as faculty in some differing ways, we also recognized that our identities provide a unifying dimension for us and that we, collectively, as WOC, share in an experience as *atravesadas* within an academic space not created for us. As we recount briefly below, our eventual solution to our varied, yet overlapping and intersecting identities was to draw from Anzaldúa's concept of borderlands as a theoretical framework and leverage methods of testimonio and *plática*. This decision stood in contrast to conventional Eurocentric constructions of scholarship and provided us the scholarly apparatus and creative space to preserve the distinctiveness of individual experiences amid collective dialogue that uncovered the undergirding commonalities running through all our testimonios: a collectivist orientation that grounds us to

our comunidades, familias, colleagues, mentors, and others and also reminds us that we are more than just a faculty member.

3.1 | A lens of blurring and blurred borders

In approaching our project, we applied Chicana, feminist, and queer theorist Gloria Anzaldúa's (1987) borderlands framework to theoretically capture how COVID-19 has further exacerbated an already hostile academic space for women, generally, and WOC specifically. The borderlands that WOC navigated before the pandemic was, as demonstrated previously, already a space that was unwelcoming (Motha & Varghese, 2018), riddled with violence (e.g., micro/macroaggressions; see Harris & Nicolazzo, 2017), and oftentimes dehumanizing (Martinez & Welton, 2017). Yet the rapid shifting of the pandemic landscape of higher education to virtual/remote made the realities of navigating the professoriate as *atravesadas* even more complicated, further shifting already messy boundaries of academic labor and further blurring physical borders that, prior to COVID, had existed between academia and the home. These disrupted boundaries intensified tensions related to our professional and individual intersectional identities. In other words, the borders that once confined the institution and, to some extent, protected aspects of ourselves from the institutional gaze and the gaze of others has now extended into our home, invading parts of ourselves that we had worked to keep separate.

3.1.1 | An attempt to heal nuestras heridas abiertas

We also applied a borderlands framework to examine the *heridas abiertas* that we have endured at the hands of institutional and systemic violence, and we also drew on McKittrick (2006), whose work distinguishes what is considered sacred (e.g., homes) from spaces of violence and bloodshed that reflect capitalism and settler colonialism. Together, these concepts helped us frame the extension of this violence through the invasion and/or cooptation of the sacred spaces of our homes by institutions that not only were unprepared for a crisis like COVID-19, but that also failed to imagine the intersecting identities of their marginalized communities on campus. We, as WOC faculty, found ourselves suddenly forced to navigate borderlands that now intruded into our intimate home spaces and made all of our intersecting identities available for public consumption and interpretation. From this borderland space, we were left to collectively and individually attempt to heal *nuestras heridas abiertas*. Yet, during this process, we discovered—through reading the growing literature and through our own testimonios and pláticas—that the *heridas* were kept perpetually *abiertas* by institutional policies that demanded increased labor, even during a pandemic, all the while ignoring our intersectional identities and violating our boundaries.

3.2 | Testimonios as reflection and research

While applying a borderlands framework offered a lens with which to examine our experiences and *heridas abiertas* as *atravesadas* navigating academia during the pandemic, the methodology of testimonios (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga & Flores Carmona, 2012) allowed us to unearth and (re)center how we experienced, navigated, survived, and/or resisted borderland tensions. Testimonio can be thought of as a “form of expression” that facilitates critical reflection, praxis, and conveys experiences with others. Through a testimonio methodology, forms of individual and collective expression/dialogue are recognized as knowledge and (valid) methods of data collection. Thus, by adopting a methodology of testimonios, we were able to both critically reflect on and then share with each other how our intersecting identities and positionalities have impacted our work as WOC within the academy. This methodological approach empowered us to “[name] the workings and abuses of institutional power, the human costs, and our

collective *sobrevivencia* (survival and beyond)" (Prieto & Villenas, 2012, p. 415, italics in original). In an effort to engage in the sharing of our individual testimonios, we utilized a method of *plática*, "a collaborative process consisting of sharing stories, building community, and acknowledging multiple realities and vulnerabilities" (Espino, Muñoz & Marquez Kiyama, 2010, p. 805). Through *pláticas*, we were able to share and collectively make sense of our individual testimonios.

3.2.1 | The process of writing testimonios

In alignment with the Latina Feminist Group (LFG, 2001), we crafted our own testimonio process "in which the personal and private became profoundly political" (p. 13). Through our testimonio method (used as data for this manuscript), we intentionally sought to make visible our experiences, trauma, pain, and moments of joy. The process of sharing ourselves with one another, created a (counter)space within the academy that legitimized our existence and validated our experiences. Thus, this act of unapologetically centering ourselves as a collective became political and strategic. We were/are here not only to physically disrupt the academy but also—by virtue of our intersectional, embodied, and ideological understandings of the world—to create (counter)spaces, inspired by collectives like LFG, through vulnerable yet humanizing practices of constructing and sharing testimonios.

In Fall 2020, after having several informal exchanges via text, email, social media, etc., we individually and collectively expressed our exhaustion from our work during COVID-19 as particularly gendered and racialized labor. Having seen *Gender, Work, and Organization's* special call for manuscripts that take up issues around intersectionality and education work during the COVID-19 pandemic, Racheal suggested we all engage in the project that resulted in this scholarship. Entering a working (counter)space through multiple vantage points, including our gendered identities and experiences (i.e., geographic, ethnic, national, status), we related to the LFG who shared that "we began to see common themes and similar experiences despite differences of national, ethnic, or regional background" (p. 13). Despite our intentionality to subvert hegemonic, Eurocentric, masculinist, and individualistic forms of scholarship that are privileged in the academy, we still found our (counter)space intruded upon by academic expectations and tenure requirements. Specifically, in our initial meeting, we found ourselves forced to interrupt our *plática* to discuss authorship. To meet imposing academic demands, yet resist conforming to the notion of individual contribution, we agreed upon an equal authorship.

Our written testimonios of academic work experiences during the time of the pandemic and sociopolitical unrest due to white supremacy and anti-Black recent events were produced between December 2020 and March 2021. At this point in time, Brittany, Érica, Racheal had experienced the upheaval of "going remote" for nine months (since March 2020), and Katherine had experienced entering the academy in August 2020 and working through a semester of meetings, teaching, and orienting to her new faculty position through solely online interactions. Having begun to acclimate to the shock and overwhelm of pandemic work across the previous months, we found that sharing our stories allowed us to pause and begin to process all that we had just experienced. This moment of "catching our breath" (or perhaps gasping for air) was manifested in the emotional and cathartic process of writing about our experiences.

Rather than requiring a specific structure for our testimonios, we organically responded to guiding topics (such as our relationship to the academy) and documenting how we were feeling at that moment. Through this process, each of us created testimonios that were between four to seven pages. We then asynchronously engaged with each other's testimonios in different ways including, adding written comments within each other's testimonio documents, writing longer responses in other places, and keeping mental notes. After completing this process, in early March 2021, we held three *pláticas* that ranged from 90 to 180 min. During our *pláticas*, we asked each other for additional details and continued reflection; we all noted strong moments of solidarity and shared experiences or feelings.

3.2.2 | Engaging in pláticas and the analytical practice of braiding

Throughout our pláticas, we also began to intentionally braid together our individual testimonios. Through our engagement in this Chicana feminist analytical practice (Delgado Bernal, 2008; Godinez, 2006; Quiñones, 2015), we were able to identify themes and their intersections with our personal lives and careers. Out of our pláticas, additional topics, such as how we entered into the academy, emerged for us to write into a new round of testimonios. Thus, similar to Quiñones (2015), our analytical process of (re)braiding involved reiterative and nonlinear reading, responding to, and reflecting on one another's comments and questions.

Ultimately, our pláticas organically resulted in a consensus of how to braid our distinct yet overlapping stories around three main themes: *institutional violence* (Cueva, 2014) and *harm; resistance* (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001); and *the messy positioning of ourselves within these borderlands*. And, as we discovered, the braiding of the stories went well beyond superficial connections and empathy. Rather, we extended the braiding of our testimonios even to each other's selves (e.g., our cultural intuition, our histories, our ancestral knowledge and ways of being; Delgado Bernal, 2008; Godinez, 2006) to make sense of our collective experiences as *atravesadas*. In response to each theme, we used excerpts from our testimonios to capture how we, as *atravesadas*, experienced and navigated the shifting borderlands that resulted, in part, from the COVID-19 pandemic. After this, we continued to meet regularly (every two to 3 weeks), writing together, discussing excerpts, and reworking different sections of this paper as we continued to hold space for each other's capacities. Moreover, while our meetings centered on this project, they also served as spaces of refuge and comfort to share strategies of resistance, commiserate, continue processing and healing, and celebrate our milestones.

4 | FINDINGS FROM BRAIDED TESTIMONIOS

Our multidimensional and intersectional identities, along with the sociopolitical context of the pandemic and (more visible) white supremacy, meant our experiences of navigating the borderlands of academia as *atravesadas* have been complex and messy. While our full testimonios lie beyond the confines of this article, in the findings below we share excerpts to provide deeper and more intimate glimpses into our experiences in order to illuminate our construction of knowledge through three themes: *An Herida Abierta: Institutional Violence and Shifting Borderlands*; *Resistance: Reclaiming Space and Self*; and *Positioning Ourselves Within These Nuanced Borderlands*.

4.1 | Theme 1: An herida abierta: Institutional Violence and Shifting Borderlands

Through engaging with one another's testimonios between meetings and from our pláticas, we realized that across our experiences navigating the borderlands of the academy as WOC faculty with intersecting identities, we each had an *herida abierta* caused by persisting institutional violence. To be clear, while institutional violence was not new or unique to our experiences (Barceló, 2014; Cueva, 2014), what we recognized and acknowledged through our project was that the historical and ongoing institutional violence we were experiencing was steeped in anti-Black oppression and white supremacy (Mustaffa, 2017). This violence manifested itself in subtle and not-so-subtle ways in the workplace: in hiring, tenure, and promotion processes (White-Lewis, 2020); in micro/macroaggressions (Aguirre, 2020); in invisible and emotional labor (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006); and in the erasure of ancestral histories, knowledge, and pedagogies (Ramdeholl, 2020). These experiences held especially true for WOC faculty (Mirza, 2014). Yet as our testimonios illuminated, the institutional violence we each experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, together with intersectional historical oppressions, was intensified by the shifting of the borderlands that we previously navigated. Before, these forms of institutional violence were fixed and located within the academy; now they began to inhabit and invade the personal and sacred spaces of the home.

For instance, Brittany described how these shifting borderlands allowed her to closely examine her relationship with the academy. She stated:

I began this reflection thinking about my relationship to the institution. If I am being honest with myself, we are in a toxic relationship. But as any person who is working on healing, I get more and more confident each day in the moves that I make. I refuse to be in this intimate relationship with the university anymore. I have seen the ways that the pandemic has further blurred these boundaries for people, myself included.

While Brittany used the blurred boundaries as an opportunity to acknowledge, reflect on, and ultimately begin healing from the very real herida abierta of her toxic relationship with the academy, Racheal noted how the quickly shifting borderlands dissolved the work and life boundaries that she had worked hard to establish—creating another severe herida caused by the academy. Racheal reflected, “When COVID-19 hit our university community and we ‘went remote,’ the fairly neat borders of academy and home that I had worked hard to set up so as to allow myself to walk in both my professional and personal identities (though certainly still overlapped) were dissolved in an instant.” Collectively, Racheal and Brittany describe how the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic revealed the power (i.e., to colonize home life) and control (i.e., to create and sustain toxic relationships) of the academy—traits of ongoing institutional violence consonant with the literature we recounted earlier. Below we further describe how these shifting borderlands intensified ongoing acts of institutional violence (e.g., via microaggressions and the internalization of guilt) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.1.1 | “This is not new!”: Navigating institutional violence within academia

As WOC faculty we are far too familiar with how institutional policies and practices ignore, evade, and/or actively work to erase our multidimensional and intersectional identities. In many cases, we enter the professoriate equipped with strategies that we hope will protect us from the institutional gaze and violence that we know we will experience. However, as noted by Katherine, reading the manuals and attending workshops designed for WOC faculty still may not always prepare us for what lies ahead amidst an *atravesada* existence. As Katherine described:

By the time I started this tenure-track position [...], I had read quite a bit about faculty life and particularly about the added labor placed on Faculty of Color, especially Women of Color, at predominantly white institutions (PWI). I had read articles about ghost advising, emotional labor, and even conducted a study on faculty trends [...]. The workshops I attended for emerging scholars and faculty included tips on how to say no, how to protect our time, how to negotiate so that service could include research and writing. As a result, I entered my first year knowing the context and thinking that I could avoid the same service trap. But what I have realized is that the trap of service and the inability to say no are almost impossible to avoid when in a program of two full-time faculty supporting over forty graduate students, during a pandemic, and as a Woman of Color whose research is “timely” for university efforts for diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism work.

For Katherine, the context and structure of being part of a graduate program comprising only two faculty created the fixed borders of a service trap that delimited her ability to say no, a constraint that, arguably, is a form of institutional violence conducted through the disproportionate exploitation of WOC faculty. And so, even while Katherine had read the articles, engaged in the research, and attended the workshops, there was no opportunity for her to shift fixed borders and use her agency and ability to say no to additional service and emotional and (re)traumatizing labor.

She was caught in a trap of the academy's fixed borders even before setting foot (both literally and metaphorically) into the professoriate.

Similarly, Brittany noted how she understood that “boundaries set up in the academy [have] so many layers.” In her testimonio, Brittany highlighted an often overlooked border that includes many harmful assumptions about single and childless women faculty, particularly as related to access to time. She noted:

You don't have excuses to not get work done, answer emails, work on weekends. I also would get shade thrown at me if I posted on social media too much ...when does she ever work? I used to find myself apologizing to my colleagues who have families and taking on extra responsibilities because of this. However, that was not sustainable for me either. I needed to nurture my single self—after all, I am the only one looking out for me. [...] I think the more important analysis we need to undergo is why are we even feeling a need to pit our experiences against each other in the first place, especially as women? We should each be able to live the lifestyles we have and be able to survive.

This excerpt from Brittany's testimonio demonstrates that not only were assumptions being made about who can conceivably create buffers and self-imposed boundaries between themselves and the academy, but these assumptions also were dismissive and seemingly erased aspects of Brittany's life and intersectional identity. In other words, Brittany's identities as single and childless falsely generated the assumption within academia that her sole responsibility is and should be her labor to the academy. However, Brittany argues that such a construct with its fixed ideological borders creates (un)intentional tensions between women faculty. Academia thus not only fixes the borders but also determines who is allowed to traverse them. And still, as we describe in later sections and as was reflected in Racheal's testimonio, motherhood is often also weaponized against women faculty members.

Yet, despite this marginalized existence, the attempt to erase aspects of our identity, and the additional labor that is very much expected (but unacknowledged) of WOC faculty, our testimonios still echo with the residual effects of guilt. As noted by Katherine:

[W]hat was also unexpected is the compounded levels of labor—especially because I care. We care. Exhausted, stretched, tired are all part of the rhetoric of COVID-19. This rhetoric also stems from the guilt of still not being enough—guilt on top of the forewarned ‘normal’ first-year faculty guilt of not producing enough.

The academy has a subtle way of creating a complex that results in the internalization of guilt, which then excuses institutional harm. We understand that the academy was not meant for us (i.e., WOC), is not built to support us, and seeks to erase us—as Racheal put it, “I am left to think that the university simply never imagined [me].” And yet, even with this understanding, we still question if we are doing enough, if we are enough, if we are worthy. After all, only 10% of women faculty lines are held by WOC (Colby & Fowler, 2021)—leaving us to navigate feelings that emerge from larger and broader messaging that tells us: “You are lucky to be here.” Or as one of us has been told when she sought support, “What's wrong with doing the work? That's why you came here, right?” (Racheal).

As a result, we are left to navigate yet another shifting borderland that encompasses complex feelings of gratefulness and indebtedness (Hong, 2020). On the one hand, we are (expected to be) grateful because we secured a tenure-track position, and yet, on the other hand (and perhaps because we are grateful), we do feel indebted to the academy for *allowing* us to hold these positions. These complex feelings, further explored in Theme 3, explain the guilt that many of us felt as we navigated the academy and why this guilt only intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.1.2 | “I felt intimate pieces of me on display”: The invasion of sacred spaces

With the sudden shift to remote instruction brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, the academy's once semifixed borders became largely dissolved. Suddenly, faculty and students alike were forced to share with others the most intimate and sacred of spaces—our homes—placing our personal lives and (previously) somewhat more hidden identities on full display for the consumption (and judgment) of students and colleagues. As an example, toward the end of one Zoom class Racheal was teaching, she noticed that one of her students who was participating from her bedroom, had her computer turned so that the open closet was visible with black lingerie hung up—now within the sight of the entire class. Whether intentional or not, this example demonstrates the blurring of borders that resulted in the exhibition of personal spaces.

For us, the professional requirement of remote work was an invasion and intrusion more than a welcome change. For Racheal in particular, the sudden shift to remote instruction meant that intimate aspects of her life as a mother were also put on display. She described the violent intrusions she faced as she literally shifted her home space away from family needs in order to meet work requirements. Since their large family lived on a single income and so she had no home office (even though the university seemed to expect all faculty had one), she had to carve out a makeshift office that, at times, was just the floor of the living room. Racheal recalled:

Wherever I go, there is always a chaotic mess of unfolded laundry, untied toys, piles of outgrown baby clothes, children's artwork, and the like to be seen by that tiny camera in my computer that seems to capture so much of our family's personal life. On many occasions I turned off my camera or angled it up as I latched and breastfed one of the babies. At other times my two young children would burst into the room interrupting my visual and/or audio work space with cries of pain or for attention. [...] I worry that if I turn my camera off, it will be thought I am not present or engaged, yet if I leave my camera on [...] I feel we are a distraction as the baby bounces and wriggles across the camera's view. [...] In all of these instances, I felt intimate pieces of me on display in a way that I had never imagined pre-pandemic.

As Racheal noted, the shifting borders of the academy and the home created a new borderland, forcing us to “figure out” how to navigate this newly established and constantly shifting space while also trying to preserve some of the sacred elements of our homes and personal lives.

4.1.3 | Complexities and contradictions

The blurred borders that arose in the wake of the pandemic, including a remote landscape and other virtual changes, posed new issues by their incursion into the sacred spaces of our homes, yet they also offered security in somewhat unexpected ways. For instance, despite the violent intrusion into our homes, it was also not lost on us that working from home was a privilege not afforded to so many others. Additionally, the act of working from home helped protect us and our families from both exposure to the COVID-19 virus and the onslaught of microaggressions that we experienced when we were on campus (e.g., Author B being cornered and verbally threatened in her on-campus office by a student). Within our testimonios and pláticas, we recognized some advantages of working remotely—a complex finding given that we all experienced these at the expense of our sacred home/personal boundaries. Érica recalled the complexity finding a physical safety through seclusion:

We as faculty have the privilege to work from home. The least that I can do to support and stand in solidarity with mis comunidades is stay home. I've done that. I haven't gone out, unless I absolutely

needed to. I spent the holidays physically alone. I do this because Black, Brown, and Native communities are disproportionately dying because of COVID. Mi raza are dying.

Here, Érica highlighted how her positionality as a faculty member allowed her to work from home and engage in actions that protected her comunidades. Similarly, Racheal noted that the virtual transition offered the following benefits:

To be honest, when we first went remote, I was also relieved. At six months pregnant with twins, my once active body was just incapable of taking four flights of stairs up to my office. I struggled to breathe while standing and teaching my classes and often ended up sitting while still gasping for air between sentences. In all, I was just exhausted and it was an incredible struggle to make it through the day. Moreover, as a vegan trying to eat whole foods to support the growth of two babies, I found I had to eat and drink many times throughout the day. And on top of this, the struggle to find professional clothes that would fit my blossoming body while on a tight budget only added to the other stresses. Working from home offered a reprieve on this front and illuminated a glaring lack of structural support for, even recognition of, (very) pregnant faculty.

In fact, across our testimonios, we saw contradictory push/pull forces from academia. Despite the changed sociopolitical landscape, higher education institutions still expected faculty to continue with pre-COVID-19 responsibilities (and more). As Érica noted, our institution required us “to do more—do more service, do more teaching, do more research—do more but I physically cannot do more. I am helping ensure that my parents, familia, and comunidades are safe. That they have access to those basic human needs.” Through this excerpt, Érica highlighted how she traversed the shifting borderlands and how, despite the institutional attempt to invade and intrude upon her time and space, she continued to anchor her commitment to her familia and comunidad, an act of resistance taken up in Theme 2.

Another contradiction was the mental and physical exhaustion we experienced during the pandemic, despite working from home and (in theory) having more time due to not having to commute, prepare, etc., that on-campus work required, and despite having the opportunity to engage in work that was of value to us. For instance, Érica's commitment, care, and sense of responsibility resulted in additional, unrecognized emotional labor (Lawless, 2018). In fact, across our testimonios, we all described how these notions of care, commitment, and responsibility were weaponized against us to elicit additional work and labor from us. As previously noted by Katherine, the expectation that she would provide care to her students was weaponized against her, resulting in feelings of guilt. Similarly, Racheal recalled the increased demand for “service” labor:

While the existence of white supremacy is by no means new, 2020 brought about increased opportunity for addressing it. Not only was there more opportunity and need [to address it] within the academy, but it became the everyday. I was asked to provide insight, explanation, and personal experience by friends and acquaintances as well as students. At the departmental level, we engaged in increased anti-racist work, which I was also called upon to help lead. Though I had already engaged in this work, the dual pandemics brought about an intensifying of this already difficult emotional labor.

Through these examples, we saw how navigating these shifting borderlands as *atrasadas* left us contending with complex and competing forces and emotions, as an institutional overburdening of service labor resulted in exhaustion and burnout even though it was work (i.e., care for students and anti-racist educating) we valued and wanted to do.

Collectively, as *atrasadas* navigating the borderlands of the professoriate, academy, and our intersecting identities, we experienced historical and ongoing institutional violence as WOC faculty, leaving us to tend to our *heridas abiertas*. In the wake of COVID-19, this was only intensified by the shifting borderlands that invaded the most

personal and sacred aspects of home and lives. However, while our heridas remained abiertas, we still found ways to resist the violence we experienced at the borderlands.

4.2 | Theme 2: Resistance: Reclaiming Space and Self

During our pláticas, guided by our testimonios, we discussed the fact that higher education institutions were not just designed to be unsupportive of us, but in fact never imagined our existence to begin with. As we all struggled against the violent, imposing institutional borderlands, we did so by holding on to our identities—identities first not imagined in the academy's design and, later, sought after by the institution to be stripped, coopted, and commodified. This bold centering of our identities underlies two central strands that were woven through our testimonios: 1. Putting the university second (though it demands to be first/only); and 2. Forming collectives (in the face of a Eurocentric, individualistic system). These acts become resistance as they display a resolve to not just quietly navigate the academy, but to push back against it, demanding our existence be recognized—be imagined—and be valued.

4.2.1 | “The academy is secondary”

A university mentality creates an impetus to devote our careers to tenure, even at the expense of our family life, our social life, and our health. Yet, as WOC faculty, we have all come to feel that the university is secondary to us—to who we are as individuals, to our familias, and within our identities. Our developed-over-time ability to say no can be placed within the perspective of our *unexpected* existence in the academy and our driving priorities, as elaborated on by Érica:

In order to ensure that my parents are safe from COVID, from the fear of ICE—yes, they still fear ICE even after becoming naturalized U.S. citizens over 15 years ago because illegality still frames their existence, the trauma they experienced, we experienced as a mixed-status family still frames our existence, I prioritize them, mi familia, y comunidad. The academy is secondary—it has always been and it always will be. Neither my existence nor my mechanism of accountability is or has it ever been the academy. I stand on the shoulders of mis antepasados—I walk in their legacy. My way of being, of navigating the world, my “accent,” my unapologetic framing of all of my Chicana ways of knowing is the way I honor mi familia. It is this reminder that centers my identity as an hija, first.

Throughout our testimonios, we express ourselves first—and above all else—as daughters, mothers, sisters, and women. Yet doing so is costly, especially when the pressures of the university are reified internally through feeling like an impostor or feeling as a WOC faculty member that we should be “grateful” to be here (as discussed in Theme 1). Érica explained that “Centering my parents and mi comunidad in this work and amidst these intersecting pandemics has left me vulnerable in ways that I could not have ever imagined or prepared for.” Despite our different points of entry, experiences, and positions in the academy, we have each heard the rhetoric urging us to *conform*, to *publish or perish*, and to just *push through*. Yet the borderlands has created the space for *both/and*: *both* to navigate in ways that help facilitate a WOC faculty pipeline and support system within a space not built for us (i.e., to reconstruct the space), *and* to navigate in ways that center our whole selves and our communities (i.e., to remember and humanize ourselves).

4.2.2 | Countering individualism by forming collectives

To be clear, our resistance was not prompted by the pandemic. Our survival was always centered around recognizing the individualistic nature of what the academy expects and, instead, creating channels of collaboration, of collectivism, of care. Thus, when the pandemic hit, we were able to enact and to lean into the communities and relationships we had established—a reservoir of connections we needed in order to survive the chaotic transitions to virtual workspaces and classrooms.

In retrospect, through our testimonios, each author recognized how the formation and intervention of WOC faculty networks both on and beyond our individual campuses holistically sustained our intersectional identities (e.g., mother *and* scholar), our well-being (e.g., mentors intervening in academic labor expectations and helping us to learn to say no), and our primary commitments to our familias, comunidades, and razas. As Racheal recalled,

During summer 2020, I was teaching a course and at the end of my twin pregnancy. I asked Brittany if she could plan to teach my last week so that I would have that covered and not have to worry about going into labor just before or during that time and she agreed almost before I could finish my request. Then when another member from our Latina Diaspora Group needed someone to take two weeks of her class in the fall 2020 semester to enable her to have some maternity leave, I immediately offered to take on one of her courses and suggested another faculty member for the other course. We were there for each other and we kept reminding each other of that.

As Racheal described creating chains and networks for teaching, Katherine recounted similar networks of support arising in the face of racial violence. In March 2021, following the Atlanta shooting of eight victims, six of whom were Asian and/or Asian American women, Katherine, who entered academia during the pandemic, relied on her Asian American community to process, communally grieve, and connect in ways that felt almost impossible solely within the institution, given the dearth of representation of Asian American women faculty in her college. When the academy asked—expected—Asian American women faculty and student affairs practitioners, given their racial and gender identity, to write the “solidarity” statements for their departments, programs, cultural or academic centers in the wake of these events, Katherine and her community collaboratively co-created the framing, language, and resources regarding this anti-Asian violence, sharing the burden of this labor.

As these examples suggest, our abilities to endure, to resist within the academy, were rooted in our identities and comunidades, and were not dependent on external university policies or on university support. This type of community building was intentional and immediate for us as WOC joining our predominantly white institutions. Racheal and Brittany were founding members of a Latina Diaspora Group, which Érica was immediately asked to join when she arrived at the university. Likewise, within 2 months of signing her contract, Katherine was invited to join the university's Asian and Asian American collective. Our narratives and testimonios reveal that survival, sustenance, and continued resistance occur *despite* the university or even *in spite* of it—and as Brittany suggested in her testimonio, perhaps even *to spite* the academy:

NO SUCCESS that I have had is because of just me, myself, and I. One of the things that I learned early on is that to survive, I need family—familia. I did find that here. I am in a teaching collaborative space where we have ebbed and flowed with each other's situations. Sometimes I will take on more responsibility than they do, but the next time they will take on more responsibility than me. And even though the university wants us to “quantify” who has done what—we just “equal author” that shit ... as a fuck you to the university.

Our collectivist ways allowed us to resist and to counter competitive, individualistic institutional systems, and enabled us to weather the storms of the pandemic (Reyes, Barrios, Banda, Aronson, Berlioz & Castañeda, 2021). In

this resistance, we cannot help but think of activist Lilla Watson's quote, "If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."

4.3 | Theme 3: Positioning Ourselves Within These Nuanced Borderlands

The navigation of these borderlands reflects the multiple ways we both experience the violence of academia and offer resistance in order to create spaces for our survival. Yet these navigations, these journeys de las atravesadas, reveal a nuanced way of understanding security, safety, and the slow disintegration of space.

4.3.1 | Security and geopolitical mobility

Our research finds that matters of safety remain foremost and must be confronted. As described in Theme 1, a contradiction we found was in how the rapid changes brought on by the pandemic did, in some ways, offer reprieves—reprieves from commutes, from demands on our bodies, and from strained budgets. We were *safe* from being cornered in our office, *safe* from uncomfortable, intrusive informal microaggressions in the hallways, *safe* from experiencing the very things we have read about all too often in the literature regarding WOC faculty experiences and have too many times experienced ourselves. Yet, we found this reprieve to be fleeting. More specifically, with the *back-to-campus* transition (despite COVID-19's continued resurgences), campus messaging outlined safety through communication about masks, vaccines, testing, and the like, while simultaneously denying instructor requests to continue with an online course format. Additionally, there are other layers of safety that remain unconsidered. The return to campus does not acknowledge that the primary roads leading to our university continue to be (at the time of this writing) lined with pro-Trump and "fuck Biden" signage, as well as Confederate flags, or that, even in the campus setting, we regularly see pro-white-supremacy paraphernalia that once again reminds women, WOC, and Faculty of Color that both the metaphorical and the physical road into academia is not meant for us.

The return to campus must also acknowledge, as Alderman (2018) described, the biopolitics of mobility through the lens of where Black Americans—their identities, their bodies—had to navigate safety and violence during the post-Jim Crow era of travel. As our pláticas revealed, we must understand and redress the biopolitics of mobility we face as WOC faculty as we traverse institutional spaces not designed for or receptive to women, maternity, class struggles, and physical ability.

4.3.2 | The messiness of entrenched borders and positioning

At the start of this project, we realized that we were operating under the assumption that borders are fixed—indeed, all our professional development workshops on the personal/professional balance seemed to tell us this—and we found ourselves reflecting upon ways the borders of academia continued to encroach on our well-being in the context of the pandemic, demanding more of us at every turn. Yet an unexpected outcome of the testimonios, and subsequent pláticas, has been a new understanding of where these borders actually were (or were not) located to begin with. As Brittany explains,

As we think about the impacts of COVID and borders—I can't help but think how little of a border I even had up with the academy in the first place. I've just been forced to examine it now. As [we] discussed in our Zoom meetings planning this writing, we immediately opened our homes up to our students, our colleagues, and oftentimes strangers through the back-to-back virtual meetings we were

all suddenly on. Also—the boundaries seemed blurred all of a sudden when there were no longer meeting times in person. Am I accessible to everyone, all the time?

Brittany's point about her imagined borders and how she positioned herself overlaps with the aforementioned ideas regarding how these boundaries were (un)defined for us by an overburdening of service and unvalued labor. Yet this understanding also includes the internal language of how we view and make meaning of our own positions. As Cathy Park Hong (2020) wrote,

Being indebted is to be cautious, inhibited, and to never speak out of turn... The man or woman who feels comfortable holding course at a dinner party will speak in long sentences, with heightened dramatic pauses, assured that no one will interject while they're mid-thought, whereas I, who am grateful to be invited, speak quickly in clipped compressed bursts, so that I can get a word in before I'm interrupted. If the indebted Asian immigrant thinks they owe their life to America, the child thinks they owe their livelihood to their parents for their suffering. The indebted Asian American is therefore the ideal neoliberal subject. I accept that the burden of history is solely on my shoulders; that it's up to me to earn back reparations for the losses my parents incurred, and to do so, I must, without complaint, prove myself in the workforce. (p. 185)

The relationship between indebtedness and gratefulness is critically important to explore, particularly given the positional privilege of working in academia. As described earlier, we know that the path to tenure-track faculty positions, particularly for WOC, is difficult, and Hong's words illuminate how so much of our self-rhetoric is enmeshed with gratitude and indebtedness. The feelings of "lucky to be here" slowly, insidiously turn into "needing to prove myself" or "not letting people down" or even "making the most of this opportunity"—sentiments that can help hold us accountable, but that can also allow us to become, as Hong described, "the perfect neoliberal machine."

5 | MOVING FORWARD AND REIMAGINING

As we reflect on our work, we acknowledge that many of the issues raised in this article are not new; nevertheless, through the themes presented here, it is clearer to us that the COVID-19 pandemic intensified and illuminated both the brokenness of, and the lack of caring within, academia. Research already highlighted the marginalization, unequal labor, and microaggressions that women, especially WOC faculty, face in the academy (Neimann, 2012; Patton, Shahjahan & Osei-Kofi, 2010; Settles, Jones, Buchanan & Brassel, 2021), but our testimonios, along with reports like Flaherty's (2020), describe how this labor was compounded during the pandemic. Through the intersections of our multiple identities, including our work and personal lives, and our health and safety, we saw the struggles that emerged while *trying* (and being "*encouraged*") to do it all.

As we move forward, we must complicate the ongoing rhetoric of what it has meant to "return to normal" and question who has benefited in this return. The academy is a violent place that works perfectly well for those it was designed to serve, but it is not made for faculty, students, or staff who hold marginalized identities. Gloria Ladson-Billings (2021) has written that so-called normal "is the wrong thing for children and youth who were unsuccessful and oppressed in our schools before the pandemic" (Ladson-Billings, 2021, p. 68). Similarly, in our rush toward *normalcy*, we see the same patterns that led many educators to be treated as "disposable" during the pandemic, as they were told they had to return to classrooms before being offered vaccinations or given appropriate teaching equipment. This disregard for those deemed disposable speaks to the tension in Theme 1—the complicated form of

privilege we carry as tenure-track educators, yet WOC within a PWI—as well as the dynamics of gratitude and indebtedness that were explored in Theme 3. Our recommendation, then, is aligned with Ladson-Billings's (2021) argument:

The global pandemic known as COVID-19 gives us an opportunity to dig more deeply into our study and use of culture as a way to reset education. Given that the occurrence and mortality rate for COVID-19 falls disproportionately upon African Americans and Latinx citizens, we can begin with a question as to why this is the case. Responses are likely to include their overrepresentation in front-line, lower wage jobs, underlying health challenges, and dense living conditions. Teachers [and faculty] can use each of these issues to build powerful units of study that trace back to historical injustices as well as cultural resilience to overcome injustice. (p. 76)

These opportunities for reimagination call upon us to critique notions of “normal”—the normalcy of living conditions and staff wages; the normal expectations of productivity; or even the term “normal” within its ableist roots. Disability scholars have challenged the nested ableism within the concept of “normalcy,” particularly in pre-COVID dynamics, as well as this rhetoric reaffirming harmful cultures within social life (Goggin & Ellis, 2020). Likewise, one legacy of COVID is a permanent grief—one that has disproportionately impacted Communities of Color. The devastating impact of COVID-19 is one of continued trauma and loss, resulting in the shifting of spaces (such as virtual mourning or digital grieving). This, too, reinforces our prioritizing of the university as second. The pandemic forced us to reexamine borders—both those that did exist and those that turned out to be somewhat imaginary—including the borders around working in our private and sacred spaces at home, which we had to then put on display through video conferences, and the borders of time that were already intruded upon prepandemic. Our collective work, described here, has also provided us the opportunity to (again) challenge the normalized practices of siloing and individualism that seeks to fragment our identities as WOC within academia, reminding us that beyond any measures and assessment of productivity, we remain whole beings.

In our return to campus, then, we recognize that not every border should be reestablished; in fact, some are necessary adaptations that serve to humanize the academic space. Thus, in our refusal to go back to “normal” and in our commitment to remember these lessons from the (still ongoing at the time of this writing) pandemic, we align with the work of M. Jacqui Alexander (2006) in holding that memory and recollection are powerful forms of strategy and healing to be held against oppression. We argue that these reimaginings are not just about dismantling these spaces, but also about building—and in truth, building on what Communities of Color had already begun constructing. Yet even within these reimaginings, we would be remiss not to acknowledge that academia is still very much a neoliberal project, built on coloniality and anti-Black enslavement (see Wilder, 2013) and legitimized through Eurocentric, heteropatriarchal constructions of rigor (Patel, 2016). Thus, the spaces we have redrawn and constructed for our survival are still regularly pitted against the guilt and pressure to do more, to do *everything*. Academia demands productivity from us. Even as we carve out spaces for our own, we recognize that within this Global North context we are still very much beholden to the larger constructions of the capitalist hegemonic oppression of white supremacy.

One way that we actively resist the capitalistic oppression of white supremacy is by relying on the resistance of our ancestors and of those that came before us. More specifically, we do so by centering the historically enacted strength within Communities of Color: collaboration, collectivism, and solidarity toward the well-being of all. While we each engaged in individual moments of reflection on the matters addressed in this paper, more importantly, we did so together. We engaged in analysis of our reflections together, which in turn generated additional reflection. This collaboration countered the extreme isolation we experienced in academia, which was compounded by the COVID pandemic. Across two different departments and across multiple differing intersecting identities, we found each other in the borderlands of academia, brought together out of necessity and shared struggle. Thus, this work also highlights an opportunity to imagine academia as a better, less violent space.

Prieto and Villenas (2012) remind us that “the writings by [W]omen of [C]olor faculty in PWIs also help us draw strength from the spaces of marginalization. They highlight processes of self-healing, resilience, and transformation

that result in pedagogical transformations” (p. 413–14). As *atrasadas*, we recognize that our braided testimonios of *sobrevivencia* (Prieto & Villenas, 2012) are a testimony and legacy of those *atrasadas* who came before us. And yet we venture to imagine a future where WOC faculty no longer struggle to survive the borderlands of academia; instead, *atrasadas* will unapologetically stand as their authentic selves in the academy. This prospect creates a radical vision for those *atrasadas* who have yet to arrive into this borderland space. Until then, with *heridas abiertas*, we will continue to navigate and resist within these academia borderlands as *atrasadas* and, along with Lilla Watson and others before us, we look forward to working with you, with whom our liberation is also bound.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Research data are not shared.

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ENDNOTE

¹ Racheal and Brittany hold a racially mixed heritage and recognize their light-skinned privilege. Brittany is a multiracial/biracial Latina, and while she no longer identifies as a white woman, she typically does not identify as a WOC. She acknowledges she holds light-skinned privilege. For the purposes of this paper, she groups herself with her colleagues under the umbrella of WOC.

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Katherine S. Cho is an Assistant Professor of Higher Education at Loyola University, Chicago. Guided by her experiences as a scholar, educator, administrator, advocate, and activist, Dr. Cho's research agenda centers on how colleges and universities serve as both sites of transformation toward social justice and as sites of harm and violence. Her work spans across student activism; institutionalized racism; retention efforts; and her pedagogy is grounded in (re)humanizing education and challenging the ways academic socialization contributes to neoliberalism, competition, and constructed scarcity.

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Érica Fernández is an Associate Professor of Educational Leadership at Miami University, Ohio. Her research is anchored and inspired by the experience of her parents who were themselves formerly undocumented Mexican immigrants. Because of the influence of her parents in her life and work, Dr. Fernández's research specifically focuses on the parent organizing initiatives of un/documented Latina/o/x parents, which centrally positions them as educational and community leaders and activists. In doing so, her collaborative research with and alongside un/documented Latina/o/x parents challenges and expands notions of who and what counts as leaders and leadership.

Brittany Aronson is an Associate Professor of Teacher Education at Pennsylvania State University and teaches classes in social justice and anti-racist education. In her scholarship, she focuses on preparing educators to work against oppression as well as critical policy analyses of both popular and political discourse. Her research interests include critical teacher preparation, social justice education, critical race theory, critical whiteness studies, and educational policy. Dr. Aronson earned a PhD in Learning Environments and Educational Studies from the University of Tennessee in 2014.

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APPENDIX A: BORDERLAND CONCEPTS

In this appendix, we go beyond literal translation of words we have included in our writing to provide some nuanced understandings for terms that may not be familiar for all readers. We intentionally chose not to italicize or define these terms within the manuscript so as to not exoticize or create a foreigner status for terms that hold significant, everyday meaning and value for us and others who draw from a Chicana/Latina framework. Additionally, we recognize we speak to a global and multilingual audience and seek to disrupt Eurocentric English-only oppression and limitation.

Atravesadas – A person inhabiting and traversing the borderlands (Anzaldúa, 1987).

Comunidades – A collective sense of responsibility to one another that may include but is not limited to physical borders and boundaries. Comunidades can extend nation-state borders and include shared identities, cultures, or experience.

Familia – While familia includes immediate and extended family as well as established kinship, it also embodies a sense of responsibility to uphold familial and cultural ways of knowing. Moreover, familia carries with it a connection and responsibility to uphold the legacy of our ancestors.

Heridas Abiertas – Open wounds (both literal and metaphorical) *atravesadas* acquire as they inhabit and traverse the borderlands (Anzaldúa, 1987).

Sobrevivencia – A way of being and knowing that extends beyond the literal translation of survival (Kasun, 2015).