PEDAGOGÍAS PARA PROSPERAR: #TATTED AND SHIMINAKUNA MEZCLA'O
METHODOLOGY TO SUSTAIN ANTICOLONIAL PRAXIS

By

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ABSTRACT

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Liberation is messy!

Liberation requires the death of life as we know it. Kuntur will only be liberated if, and only if, all of that which interrupts their thriving is completely halted.

Comprehending and tending to what is part of the human condition is the crux of this dissertation. First, I create and examine the roots of and define Shiminakuna Mezcla'o Methodology (SMM). Secondly, I analyze what defines thriving, what obstacles prevent human thriving and how tattoo counternarratives can illustrate sustaining and revitalizing epistemologies and ontologies. Lastly, I imagine a possibility for curriculum based on the tattoo counterstories. In attempts to capture liberatory learning spaces, including how curriculum and instruction can be more engaging for K-12 students, I conceive a co-constructed comic book series made with, for and by past, present and future students.

My life's work is dedicated to Phoenix Amor, Blanquita, Rosita, tío Ulvio, tío Walter, Max and all those who paved my path and walked on during my journey towards thriving
Kawsayta hamuy rikurisun

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CHAPTER 1 Introduction

Comprehending and tending to what is part of the human condition is the crux of this dissertation. First, I create, examine the roots of, and define Shiminakuna Mezcla'o Methodology (SMM). SMM is a tool combined and scaffolded upon other methodologies. Second, I analyze what defines thriving, what obstacles prevent human thriving and how tattoo counter-narratives can illustrate culturally sustaining and revitalizing epistemologies and ontologies. Third, and lastly, I imagine a possibility for curriculum based on the tattoo counter narratives. In attempts to capture liberatory learning spaces, including how curriculum and instruction can be more engaging for K-12 students, I conceive a co-constructed comic book series made with, for and by students and I.

Manuscript 1

Shiminakuna Mezcla'o Methodology has been formulated in manuscript 1, combining other qualitative ethnographic methods with the pandemic spatial temporal world considering how to stop compartmentalizing learning and fragmenting lived experiences. It is welcoming; asking readers to lean into discomfort and the unsettling of all things related to the nation state beginning with treatment of others. SMM is most effectively used in research that explores the human condition and is best used by researchers personally and professionally invested in disentangling from rigid ontological constructs to embracing multiple aspects of humanization.

SMM is not just a methodology and is beyond praxis; it is entirely immersive. For example, the project detailed here named "Bethinking Our Inking," or BOI, is about my research into what is thriving and how tattoo counterstories can contribute to thriving. I embarked on learning about tattoos nearly 20 years ago when I first decided to get inked. Then upon entering my doctoral studies, I combined my interests with an Indigenizing critical race lens and began to

learn about thriving and tattoos from reading and studying across biological, historical, anthropological, other sciences and other research.

I coupled my in\formal research with several documentaries, television shows, movies and tattoo conventions. Additionally, I engaged and built community with some tattooers and people in my community who wear tattoos. Finally, I became an apprentice and have since successfully tattooed some grapefruits, oranges, bananas and myself.

SMM is defined in manuscript 1 and I explain what methodologies are parents or related to SMM; and describe how it fits in curriculum, instruction and teacher education research. Data is not defined by traditional standards; learning is ongoing through the relationship building between researcher and collaborator across various digital and in-person spaces.

Manuscript 1 is useful for pre-service teachers and qualitative educational researchers. It challenges readers to re-construct relationships between researcher and collaborator(s) during a research study. Fundamentally, this writing asks readers to consider the ways that hegemonic Whiteness emerges and takes over Black and Brown lives. For these reasons, I can see Manuscript 1 being published in books that can be used within teacher preparation. Also, I can see the manuscript contributing to educational journals or compilations about progressive or radical education.

Manuscript 2

The Bethinking Our Inking project came to me as I was exploring ways to contribute my labor and resources to the Black Indigenous liberation movement - towards my own sovereignty. Yes, the way i intentionally misspell or fuck with orthography is sorta the point. Colonizer-imposed languages are not an authority on stolen Land. Can you understand what I am saying?

Good.

On the journey thru the Black Indigenous Liberation Movement (#BILM) came many stories that helped guide my praxis. One of the first most profound lessons I have learned from building people power within Black Indigenous-centered spaces is that we must take power back because it will not be relinquished. We cannot allow invaders and oppressors to have authority on stolen Land.

Knowledges from Alkebulan and Abya Yala nourish the thriving of all living beings!

Using an indigenizing and tribal\critical race theoretical framework for analyses, I draw from an intercultural exploration of sociocultural-political perspectives about power, equity and Black and or Native knowledges. Manuscript 2 is the empirical study of this dissertation, which aims to examine the roots and definition of (1) what is thriving? (2) how can tattoo narratives speak to thriving? (3) how can we utilize what tattoo narratives reveal about thriving to better support Black and Brown students?

Using the immersive Shiminakuna Mezcla'o methodology, manuscript 2 describes ways that I learned from collaborators and conceived we could disengage with hegemonic Whiteness. In order to ensure the thriving of Black and Brown bodies we must first disrupt the imperialist capitalist patriarchy - which I argue here, interrupts the thriving of *all* living beings.

Findings reveal that (1) wholistically, humans, like much other life on Earth are not thriving (2) colonial hierarchical structures such as White supremacy, capitalism, neoliberal logic and patriarchy all contribute to the interruption of thriving (3) tattoos depict counternarratives that sometimes challenge hegemonic normative ideologies which are rooted in colonial structures (4) thriving is related to indigenization (5) community well-being is necessary for thriving to occur (6) freedom of spirituality and cultural practices are essential for thriving. These analyses suggest a complete overhaul of the current antiquated colonial school system. P-

12 students are not thriving due to a rigid, individualistic, competitive, profit-driven, production-focused neoliberal system of schools. Each manuscript contemplates how researchers, collaborators, teachers, educators, and P-12 students can problematize current relational-standards which drive a wedge in the socio-emotional-psychological and physical development of all living things. Indigenizing - learning from the way the Land flourished prior to invading forces - is the process of which to dismantle colonial structures and one path towards a state of being beyond survival. In other words, indigenization is know-\be-ing in ways of the Land as She thrived independent of and prior to European invasions; it's living outside White gaze, far from any engagement with Western paradigms. Ppl>profit cos hoarding wealth is not a concept that makes sense in any space or time

I have dedicated myself to studying traditions, practices, knowledges and ways of which are heavily controlled (overtly or covertly) present day under the oppressive system; this includes tattoos, graffiti, Hip Hop, Reggaeton, sex, drugs and Rock n Roll. My goal with this piece is understanding counter-narratives about the tattoos of graduate students; posing a challenge to normative qualitative research, I demonstrate and truly try to attend to the needs and wants of K-12 students and their communities. I build curriculum in hopes of these knowledges contributing to the movement which aims to nourish specifically people of the global majority, whose knowledges and ways of being are also prohibited in many spaces under the system.

I see Manuscript 2 used (probably in parts) across multiple venues. Thus far, it has been used in high school art education classes, community artivist projects and my memoir. I'm trying to build artivist wellness spaces with, for and by youth in which I would feature my dissertation project in various art galleries with an interactive aspect that allows folx to participate via engaging in discussions via hashtags, blogs and or social media as well as sharing their tattoos

and body modifications and their stories. Not as exciting but "important for the field," my research on tattoo epistemologies also fit in spaces and discussions with tattoo anthropologists like Lars Krutak, who has written books, and been featured in encyclopedias, multiple magazines, and documentaries.

Manuscript 3

The third and final manuscript of my dissertation begins with the idea that we don't wait for change, we are the change we've been waiting for. In this sense, "we" includes all folx involved in Black Indigenous Liberation. We create the world that we deserve in the 3rd manuscript. This experimental creative piece shows up as a co-constructed comic book that contains tattoo knowledges and thriving pedagogies.

Under ideal conditions, I would have created this comic book *with* youth. Instead, Manuscript 3 will first be gifted to youth. My initial piece will be an "origins" comic book based on myself and the characters in my studies. Then I will ask youth to guest-write on various materials and formats and expand the narrative or to take it somewhere totally different. I've shared the story and art work with various age groups (toddlers to adults) and some have voiced a need of "villains" (I gave them present day villains being learned about in the future); others voiced wanting "better superpowers"; and some folx see themselves as characters and I'd like to someday invite them to build with me as well.

CHAPTER 2 Shiminakuna Mezcla'o Methodology

Shiminakuna Mezcla'o Methodology has been formulated in manuscript 1, combining other qualitative ethnographic methods with the pandemic spatial temporal world considering how to stop compartmentalizing learning and fragmenting lived experiences. It is a welcoming to lean into discomfort and the unsettling of all things related to the nation state. SMM is most effectively used in research that explores the human condition and is best used by researchers personally and professionally invested in disentangling from rigid ontological constructs to embracing multiple aspects of humanization.

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between researcher and collaborator across various digital and in-person spaces.

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challenges readers to imagine re-construct relationships between researcher and collaborator

during a research study. Manuscript one will be submitted to an anthology about Liberatory

education and learning spaces.

La Siembra: The seeds of SMM

La Cosmobiovisión

> *Activism is making coffee, serving elders, cooking, getting to know each other in a very*
> *deep way, to develop that trust so that we can have joy. A lot of people have forgotten*
> *how to have any kind of relationship, much less a healthy relationship, with the*
> *environment and with each other.* - K'asheechtlaa (Louise Brady) on "Restoring the
> Sacred" podcast #230

K'asheechtlaa, a woman of the Tlingit nation, shares the above message through oral

histories about acting with reverence and to protect all other living beings; she shares what place-

based joy feels like; how grassroots efforts can restore the sacred; and the importance of building

allyship outside of one's own circle. This manuscript tries to revitalize Indigenous knowledges

such as that which K'asheechtlaa expresses in order to nurture a framework for cultivating

relationships between and beyond research, data, researcher and collaborators.

This paper argues that Shiminakuna Mezcla'o Methodology (SMM) is best used for

research about the human condition as it involves knowing subjects multidimensionally across

sites. SMM also reconceptualizes relationability between researcher and the subject of study,

making it a good fit for ethnographic and qualitative researchers working towards dialogic

consciousness-raising and humanizing research (Paris, 2011). Whereas Western research is

commonly characterized by the extraction of information with little to no relationship-building

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(or coming as an afterthought), SMM means to bridge talking and relating to collaborators with movement towards Indigenous views about accountability for the well-being of one another. Indigenous views expressed in this manuscript emerge from mixed and reclaimed Indigenous concepts of my Manabita Andean ancestry. Researchers using SMM are asked to be cognizant of the subtle differences between "caring for" and "caring about" others, including collaborators. Researchers are urged to grow towards social justice while nurturing radical honesty and nourishing accountability for relationship-building, including moving towards a commitment to care for (not just about) all living beings. Humanizing research is a methodological position requiring that research questioning includes dialogic consciousness-raising and the building of relationships of care and dignity for researchers and participants (Paris, 2011). To exemplify the reasoning and values of SMM, I am going to share a story about making a special food that highlights the ethical and dynamic forces at play when doing this type of qualitative ethnographic research.

To learn about Manabí people can take lifetimes. It is a slow process of learning how to locate and assemble uniquely-shaped interlocking pieces and find their spots in the cosmos. Observation of the process of a mami making a Sango de Verde, I argue, is an important step towards understanding the epistemology and ontologies of Manabitas. A researcher may observe a matriarch doing the following to make the dish:

1. Chopping red onions, green peppers, garlic, and cilantro
2. Frying the vegetables in a reddish oil in a stockpot
3. Adding shrimp and or fish
4. Grabbing, peeling, and grating a few plátanos into the pot
5. Stirring in a couple spoonfuls of peanut butter with some water during a boil

6. Throwing in handful of cilantro when the heat is reduced for simmering

7. Pouring of the Sango over a bed of white rice with lime slices

After hearing the sizzling vegetables and the bubbling stew during the boil, the sound of simmering is almost imperceptible. Seeing and feeling the thick, wet, gooey brown texture while smelling and savoring the peanut-buttery fish is a unique experience for those who are not Indigenous to the coastal regions of the south of Abya Yala.

Observation of a matriarch making a Sango and consuming it with our community is hardly research into the ancient and complex histories of Manabitas. Formal interview questions about the dish and or Googling "Manabí" is also insufficient. Instead, I contend that coupling these methodologies with plática (casual vulnerable conversation), is one way to learn more deeply about the epistemologies and ontologies of Manabitas. Conversation looks different today than during an elder's time, of course; especially since the outbreak of the global COVID19 virus, we've been glued to all the devices that update us on our loved ones. We stay connected through many more mediums than ever before, visually enacting and constructing curated versions of ourselves "through diverse social practices and adaptive text forms" (Wargo, 2015, p. 563). With all the technological advances, humans are illustrating in multifaceted ways their lived experiences and how they make meaning of the surrounding world. I argue throughout this piece that documenting a particular phenomenon or culture of any time and space requires layers of knowing and kinship-building with the culture of which one is learning from, about and through.

To create relationships with Manabas, a non-Indigenous person should feel honored and show appreciation to be permitted to be in the very intimate Manaba space of traditional heritage

food making and sharing. Through casual conversations will researchers learn the names and diasporic origins for some of the ingredients along with a few narratives about Manaba ancestors and their relationship with the dish; the red of the oil, for example, is from achiote and the fried vegetable mix is called "refrito." Some of the chisme (gossip) de la familia may emerge during plática over the cooking which reveals the mixed realities of this Andean culture. Like, one time la Yuria ruined a Sango for cooking while menstruating. Another time the texture of Loria's Sango did not set correctly because of the moon's influence. There's also a narrative about the Mamaqucha family's baby who "le ojearon" that one time and a great Sango by Illari helped the family heal; curses are a pain to deal with and can be emotionally and physically exhausting, so food always helps. These oral stories add depth of knowledge about Manabitas, I argue, beyond what common formal academic inquiry or research does. But these stories are not shared openly or in depth with strangers. Relationship-building comes through informal talks (explained deeper in the subsection titled "From Plática") with someone cooking a Sango de Verde or another traditional dish.

Though a researcher may be tempted to seek anthropological texts to comprehend the socio historical context of Sango de Verde and how its components are unique to the coastal people of Land which is referred to as Ecuador today, I insist that the "official" texts are insufficient because they often are laced with deficit viewpoints, untruths, and the subsuming of other Indigenous groups. One must join and co-construct community in order to be blessed with our Manabí cuentos.

To learn about the social-communal structures of Manabí people, stories from los mayores are required and must be woven with observations and other engagement with the people, our modes of living, and our Land. Like many other Indigenous groups, Manabitas have

sustained life for millennials in fluid systems of power that allow for communal decision-making (Ugalde & Landázuri Nárvaez, 2016). These systems function within a matriarchal structure in my culture, centering the leadership of women; the matriarch(s) of a generation ultimately have the final say in many, if not all, socio-political-economic communal matters, so long as it maintains harmony within Pachamama. These systems, now referred to as "heterarchies" (Ugalde & Landázuri Narváez, 2016), "consist of an organization whose form can be compared to that of a network, unlike the pyramidal form that characterizes the hierarchical organization" (p. 198). Whereas a power dynamic in a hierarchical structure is vertical, a heterarchy "emphasizes the horizontal integration of elements within a system and their unranked or variably ranked status vis-à-vis one another" (Bray, 2008, p. 528) (Figure 1).

Figure 1 *Hierarchy and heterarchy webs*
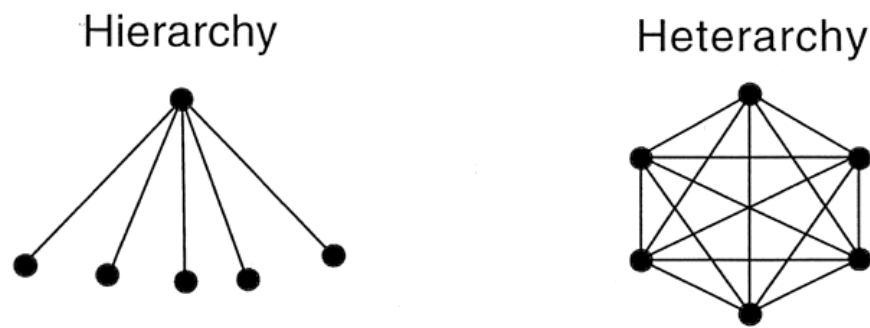
Along with the structure of a heterarchical matriarchy, la cosmovisión andina de los pueblos originarios Kichwa informs my ways of knowing and being and has guided my identity as an educator and educational researcher. The first aspect of the worldview, which is of utmost importance to Andeans, is the cosmoser and the non-hierarchical interrelatedness of all living beings; this way of knowing stressed that we are all Pachamama across space and time; humans are not superior to any other living beings; nothing is inert. The holistic vision of the Andean worldview is a way of "seeing" and pensasiento (thinking and feeling), of perceiving and

intuiting. The worldviews of Andean people also include different spatial-temporal states of consciousness which exist in nonlinear time:

- Uku Pacha is the world below the surface (dead, passed [not past] life)

- Pacha is the world of the present (here and now) space

- Hanan Pacha is the celestial world above, supernatural (just-minded people can enter)

Through la cosmobiovisión Andina, unity, reciprocity and autobastezca (self-sufficiency) are centered - we care for ourselves by sharing and without taking from others in basic solidarity. We do not deny care of other living, sentient beings.

From these worldviews emerges SMM, which attempts to translate these Andean concepts to utilize its foundations for qualitative ethnographic research. SMM methodology involves divestment from colonial research methods (namely anthropological) and engagement with sensorial dimensions and perceptions, rational thinking, meditation and spirituality or intuition. SMM researchers should not just seek to understand aspects of people as they relate to a topic of study but to take part in learning people at their depths, within their natural spaces and being in community with them in the surrounding world.

Although dissertation work and scholarly inquiry centers understanding, answering questions, and conducting empirical work to the ends by which that research, policy measures, and practices might develop, interrupting colonial structures - the actual worldviews that harm living beings - is the ultimate goal of SMM. This occurs through engaging in conversations about social justice issues by which both researcher and collaborator(s) challenge one another to know better and do better, as activist Maya Angelou once told Oprah Winfrey, "Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better" (Winfrey, 2011, 2:08).

SMM involves learning representations of an area, sharing stories, communicating non-verbally through symbols and images, and deconstructing and reconstructing knowledges with collaborators; SMM researchers can, from these concepts, learn to mold and shape relationships with collaborators. Finally, through rituals to show gratitude for Pachamama for what She has given us, humans can create intentional harmonious concatenation that nourishes all of us. Researchers can embody these teachings through not just "compensating" collaborators for "their time" but through being intentional about learning who their collaborators are. I recommend that researchers show appreciation often to their collaborators once they have learned their "love language," per se. It is widely believed that people prefer certain particular kinds of "love" such as words of affirmation; acts of service, receiving gifts; quality time and physical touch (Chapman, 1992).

As an anti-colonial research method, SMM seeks to understand human conditions within natural states of being; at once non-linear, loose-structured and without limitations on how, when, where, or for how long conversations/relationships across platforms take place. Additionally, researchers using SMM conduct check-ins with collaborators frequently throughout the studies and interact to triangulate the "data" but also to co-construct knowledges and build community. As the researcher responds to collaborators in real time, knowledges are built collaboratively. In the following sections, I define SMM, articulate where it comes from, and describe how it can be used in educational research.

Rationale for SMM

We are socialized to swallow extreme reactions, to be pleasant instead of present (brown, 2019)

I have been the subject of scientific research multiple times for pay and as a volunteer throughout my undergraduate and graduate studies from my late teens through my 30s due to my

various identities which include my mixed-race/ethnicity, activism, educational background, and occupation as an educator. In every single study in which I have participated, I felt disconnected. I always craved more information, deeper questions, and relationability. SMM works best between individuals who move in community towards similar goals; this is part of relationability. While the researchers that used me as a subject did their jobs (well) and maintained expected decorum, I was struck by the transactional nature of it all. There were such interactions between us as exchanges of words without deeper connection: "How are you?" follows an automatic "Fine. Thank you." These are customary greetings; so customary that no one sees the dehumanization. However, they function within "professionalism" and "polite" standards and serve as tools of White supremacy (Baker-Bell, 2020). Students of Color are well versed in the array of euphemisms or codes for behaviors which have proximity to Whiteness and those of which have proximity to Blackness. SMM means to move away from hegemonic White standards of expected behaviors.

SMM means to build concatenation, or community linking together (Maracle, 2015). If SMM seeks to act subversively against colonial structures in research, their rules cannot be adhered to. That is to say, formality should not be misplaced with keeping peaceful relations. Both researchers and collaborators are encouraged to engage in uncomfortable or challenging conversations or interactions in this qualitative research. Whereas, maintaining "appropriate" behavior is necessary within traditional researcher/collaborator relationships, power imbalances often ensue. This unequal power is due to the maintaining and proliferating of White superiority ideation. Manifestations of White supremacy emerge in many aspects of society including academia, which is dominated by Western methodologies. According to Jones & Okun (2001) manifestations of White superiority appears in organizations as:

1. Perfectionism

2. Sense of urgency

3. Defensiveness

4. Quantity over quality

5. Worship of the written word

6. "Only one right way" thinking

7. Paternalism

8. Either/or thinking

9. Power hoarding

10. Fear of open conflict

11. Individualism

12. I'm the only one

13. Progress is bigger, more

14. Objectivity

15. Right to comfort

Manifestations of White supremacy begins with consolidated top-down power; decision-making is afforded to some and not others or rules/policies are bent for favored (often the perfectionist) students or award-winners. What is called "traditional" at the institutional level is visible with disproportionate representation and retention of whites in higher education, especially in four-year institutions (Brown et al. 2003). Further, paternalism emerges at educational intuitions when those with power act entitled to make decisions for those without power. Claiming their experience ensures they "know best," professors, committee members, advisors and

assimilationist students openly share unwarranted opinions and advice to marginalized students based on the way the institution has been functioning rather than envisioning a new way forward.

In terms of educational research, stemming from Aristotelian logic and Enlightenment ideas objectivity are treasured in the academy (Aikenhead, 2008; Eisner, 1992) as well valuing written word over oral knowledges. Among the ways that this colonial logic is problematic, attributes of white supremacy culture resist change - those with power cannot conceive of functioning in other ways and have nothing to gain with changes.

SMM means to interrupt manifestations of White supremacy by countering such logic with Indigenous views of collective value and care. The rationale for SMM is to both affirm Indigenous methods of study and to build more equitable mutually beneficial relationships. Researchers must commit to a non-passive role in which there is a horizontal power structure and fluid movement and changes between/with researchers, collaborators, and contexts. There is no "going" to a research site to observe and follow protocols, sticking to questions and maintaining time allotments for study/ies *on* a subject(s). Shiminakuna occurs with horizontal power structure, meaning to be mutually beneficial and work towards shared goals. One engages with the "data," so long as it involves constructing and extending relationships. For example, my dissertation research involved understanding tattoo counter-narratives in order to understand the human condition of thriving. Relationship-building was integral to the research because tattoos are both sacred to some and worrisome to others. For one, tattoos make us identifiable; in situations of safety it may be wise to be unrecognizable at times. Two, we have deep relationships with the ink on our skin and we don't always share those stories with just anybody; tattoos have a wide array of meaning that vary between each individual and viewer. Using SMM enabled me to nurture relations with collaborators - some of us were able to open up and be

vulnerable about our narratives. At other times, the recorder was off and we chose to keep knowledges between us. Such is the natural progression of some relationships. SMM encourages making concerted effort to learn about the conditions of another interrelated being. Interrelatedness is central in many Indigenous worldviews. Aboriginal people seek to connect through shared stories; we picture our pathways of knowledge; we see, think, act, make and share without words; we keep and share knowledge with art and objects; we work with lessons from land and nature; we put different ideas together and create new knowledge; we work from wholes to parts, watching and then doing; and we bring new knowledge home to help our people (Kalantzis & Cope, 2020).

In these same research situations in which I have participated, I have not only felt disconnected, but also misrepresented at various degrees. Due to the structured, impersonal nature of questionnaires, surveys, and or interviews and the passivity of observation, I believe each of the researchers conducting those studies only understood a small fraction of who I am or how I think about the "research" about me. Furthermore, on multiple occasions, I even felt dissatisfied with the impersonal transactional nature of researcher/collaborator. For example, as a collaborator, gift card thank-yous are appreciated, especially since I am from the working class and can always use cash. However, this practice fits the capitalist paradigm due the transactional nature of this exchange. There is a price set for the extraction of knowledge, which can often seem as though it cheapens the lived experiences of individuals. I have often agreed to participate in a study - not for the compensation - because I genuinely wanted to construct knowledges collaboratively and, instead, felt restricted by having to "stick to the protocol." My dissatisfaction in the process should matter to a SMM researcher because the subject(s) of research are as important as the researcher.

Qualitative researchers rely on non-numeric data obtained from primary and secondary sources - first-hand observation, interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, recordings made in natural settings, documents, and artifacts (Creswell, 2002) to make generalizations. I maintain that likert scales, aptitude tests, multiple-choice surveys, and other standardized protocols need more nuance. The "traditional" methodologies are *exactly* inadequate, as they are. SMM, on the contrary, depends on nuance. One of SMM's goals seeks to mix methods and relate to the subjects of study in order to capture and understand pronounced and subtle differences between individuals toward the end of ameliorating inequities. Western research protocol usually follows certain etiquette, such as anesthetized relationships between researcher and collaborator, whereas an "ask and respond" form of communication is established, there tends to be absence of researcher opinion to "avoid bias" (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002), and a limit placed on the amount of data "needed" and time engaged in the research.

As an example, I was part of a sociological research project in Flint, Michigan to learn about environmental health literacy between 2018-2019 in which collaborators wanted to stay connected to me and the principal investigator (PI). Due to the violent nature of the Flint Water Poisoning Crisis, many collaborators felt vulnerable sharing and discussing the injustice they experienced; some collaborators voiced wanting to expand their views with follow-up chats and text-messages. This was shut down by the PI, who reminded me that we were there to extract information and not build knowledge with collaborators, though collaborators believed we were there to help ameliorate the water crisis in some way or to help the city obtain cleaner water and formulate some solution in dealing with abusive politicians and authorities that silenced them. The collaborators were compensated with $50 each and were offered lunches, without consulting them on their cultural foods, eating habits, or allergies. While attempting to be neutral, however,

scientists often disregard the natural human conditions of being biased, erroneous, prejudiced and engaged in shit-talking.

The first meaningful and logical aspect to attend to in SMM is a commitment to humanizing my work and centering my worldview without acting as a representative of my people, gender-identity, sexual-identity, racialized experience, or any other identity I share. To conduct humanizing research, I prioritize relationship-building and "dialogic consciousness raising" between myself and collaborators (Paris, 2011, p. 137). I literally ask collaborators in various ways, "did I make you feel like data?" Further, I argue that combining methodologies (i.e., Plática Methodology, Multimodal Methodology) is also more humanizing because it allows for a wider array of knowledge to surface and for research to expand in depth while circumventing obstacles that may arise from engaging with meaning-making through a singular set of methods.

Aims of SMM

> *Study can be contemplative, reflective, dramatic, responsive, analytical, dynamic, collaborative, and inspiring. It is capable of sparking and moving people toward social transformation, dissolving inequities, eradicating dangerous assumptions, and altering oppressive conditions. It is also capable of rationalizing those same oppressive conditions and upholding inequity by ignoring underlying assumptions that may prove dangerous to position* (Maracle, 2015, p. 231)

As Maracle (2015) explains in the above quote, studies and studying must confront underlying assumptions. SMM means to forefront social transformation, dissolving inequities, eradicating dangerous assumptions, and ameliorating oppressive conditions as an Indigenous person. The central axis of Indigenous methodology has approaches to, and undertaking of research processes and practices taking up Indigenous worldviews, perspectives, values and lived experience (Walter & Suina, 2019). Officially recognized as a "mestize" by "authorities" on my

ancestral lands, Andean worldviews of my people are influenced by West African and West European diasporic epistemologies that arrived on the continent less than 500 years ago and in which I was raised. Similarly, I conceived SMM from Indigenous methods of knowing. As Yin (1984) asserts, when research questions seek to uncover "how" and "why" answers, it is best to use non-experimental methods. SMM sims to fuse methods that make sense of uncovering multiple layers of hows and whys.

SMM is an entirely separate methodological paradigm and not just the opposite or a derivative of Western methodologies (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Walter & Andersen, 2016). Specifically, SMM aims to act subversively and to further radicalize progressive researchers and collaborators who may be involved in decolonial efforts that mean to restore ancestral ways of knowing and being. To act subversively implies behavior that does not conform to accepted hegemonic normative norms, specifically relationally. For example, Western (capitalist) notions of relationability within research require polite composure, surface-level connections, and transactional relationships. In sharp contrast, Indigenous methodologies require authentic care, reciprocity, and mutual aid.

Revisiting the social political structure of my ancestors and our cosmobiovision led me to envision a research methodology that involved layers of knowing, reciprocity, and community decision making or shared power towards concatenation. Whereas formal Western researchers often use the principles of scientific investigation, such as the rules of random sampling in surveys, in order to replicate results and make universal claims, these have historically de-humanized individuals and groups from already marginalized backgrounds (Bartolome, 1994; Freire, 1994; hooks, 1994). SMM is not random. Relationship-building is intentional, earnest, and profound for Indigenous people; when someone asks, "How are you?" in my community,

they want an *actual* conversation, not a rehearsed one-line polite answer. Indigenous methodologies shine light within the research process to what is meaningful and logical in Indigenous understanding of ourselves and our worldview (Porsanger, 2004; Walter & Suina, 2019). In this way SMM aims to repair interpersonal relationships damaged by structures of colonialism that separate and attempt to individualize the human experience.

As Maori researcher Tuhiwai (1999) explains, research has long been used as a tool of imperialism aiding in subjugating colonized peoples through complete disregard for Indigenous knowledges and Indigenous peoples' own research methods. Even "participatory" research makes the error of acting within power structures. For example, Youth Participatory Action Research, or YPAR, is a form of participatory research which facilitates "purposeful researcher roles that forefront youth's cultural assets, knowledges, and lived experiences, complicating static identities of youth, teacher, research(er) and contexts of academic literacy, standardized curriculum and teacher evaluation, as youth grapple with issues of educational equity" (Watson & Marciano, 2015, p. 38). The core steps and elements of this methodology integrate surveys, interviews, and collaborative data analyses with youth at various times of the study. However, while YPAR projects involve youth investigating issues of social concern, fore-fronting youth's knowledges and taking actions related to issues (Morrell, 2008), youth are not given actual decision-making power; they simply get to weigh in. SMM researchers, on the contrary, are expected to not only check-in or allow for collaborators to weigh in, collaborators are invited to be involved in the entire research process including changing or eliminating aspects that may be dehumanizing.

Recentering Indigenous and Afro Indigenous knowledges and knowledge-making is what seeded SMM. Uniting plática and multimodality, SMM is a form of qualitative

ethnography that aims to study cultures in an authentic and organic way as relationships naturally develop across non-linear time. SMM aims to gain insight from authentic interactions between researchers and collaborators in various virtual and analog settings.

Where does it come from?

Les Jóvenes

Manabitas engage with the world thinking across time space centering where one comes from (roots) and where one is going (seeding). The ancestors and elders are the mentors, the guidance from whom we must learn the ways to nurture, nourish, and care for children and all other living beings. The youth is who we build for. We cherish our youth by honoring their visions for improving the world around us. As such, I constructed SMM considering what our youth recommended during a 2017 preliminary case study trying to define what thriving means for Black Indigenous and other students of color in K-12 schooling contexts. I attempted to engage twelve middle school Brown (mixed Indigenous) youth who attended public and charter schools in Central, West and South Florida in conversations about their schools, the curriculum and what they appreciated or wished to change about the system they are obligated to engage within. Further, I paid attention to every detail I could learn about them based on observations, what other family members said, their interests and beyond-school topics.

I tried interviewing the youth and recording it via cell phone. Several of the youth voiced feeling discomfort with my methods. One youth, "Maddy," told me just "check out" her InstaGram for pics of the best parts of school - her friends. Another youth, "V" told me they'd text me some of the "stuff" they were working on - side projects from classwork we chatted about. It made sense. The youth were concerned with how I might portray them - whether I'd use images they approved. I learned from them to be flexible and not demanding with their time.

Also, since I was in and out of their lives physically (living in another state), we kept in touch via multiple social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram or WhatsApp already. Since my goal was to learn [about] the children, having access to their social media allowed me to observe and interact with multiple layers of who they are.

I have learned that new literacies appear faster and with ongoing changes, youth are using combination of literacy practices to tell their stories (Gardner and Davis, 2013; Wargo, 2015). From using a mix and blend of youth language and literacy practices, not only parts of who they are as students but, more importantly, what drives, excites, and engages them as whole people. We communicated by sending text and voice messages and sharing screenshots, emojis, memes, and links to other media. In this way, modern technology facilitated long-distance communication in digital form. I quickly realized that simply communicating via social media was not enough to learn and understand youth. So, I studied not only the words between us but attempted to gain a more holistic insight of my collaborators by observing, inquiring, and participating with and in their posts, stories, and commentary. As such, I acquired "insider status" per se (since their accounts were private), which allowed me to tend to the cultural meanings of collaborators, which is an aim of ethnographic research (Paris, 2011). Further, I moved within permitted spaces without time-constraints or production purposes and I also reacted and responded to their social media beyond my research questions, allowing me to be my whole self and display critical engagement and dialogue building with collaborators.

From los jóvenes, I learned real talk (Id-Deen, 2020), to chill and to stay flexible. Meaning, from youth I learned to learn about their culture from the way collaborators participate, create and showcase themselves within their culture. From them, I gained understanding of participating in social media spaces as myself in relation to my collaborators.

From Plática

     Shiminakuna means plática or discourse. This is not simply aimless conversation or debate but engaged discussion about systems of power and privilege towards praxis (Freire, 1970). To combat epistemic oppression and exclusion in school contexts (Carter-Andrews, et al., 2019; Dotson, 2014), I argue more sincere and thoughtful attention needs to be given to how we relate to those who are oppressed and excluded, specifically looking into those taboo ways of being in and through conducting research. I contend that the process of developing a critical awareness of one's social reality through reflection and action (Freire, 1970) alongside others needs attention. Building more humanized research (and world), true dialogue, or plática, can take place under the following conditions according to Freire (1970):

1. Love: Dialogue can and must exist with a profound love for the world and for human beings

2. Humility: Dialogue should entail humility, speaking to, learning and acting from a place of admitting the lack of knowledge or the expertise of others

3. Faith: Dialogue requires an intense faith in humanity and its power to (re)make and (re)create and re-create and to be more fully human, which is birthright of all people

4. Trust: Through love, humility, and faith, dialogue should be a horizontal relationship of mutual trust

5. Hope: Rooted in the incompleteness of human beings, there is a search for communion with others in order to create justice and expect (some)things to come efforts

6. Critical Thinking: Cultivating solidarity between all living beings of Pachamama recognizing reality as process or transformation, constantly immersed in thinking and acting

Researchers taking into practice these six conditions through relationship-building with collaborators involves vulnerability. Vulnerability is important as a behaviour and an action that counters domination logic and neoliberal capitalist ways of relating to our surrounding world.

Different from interviews or facilitated large-group discussions, SMM seeks to capture authentic *casual* conversations, which are part of the Indigenous cultural practice of "plática." As a methodology, plática has been used in Latinx scholarship, often within Latina feminist frameworks (González Ybarra, 2018). There are no formal norms or rules in plática. This type of informal conversation entails reciprocal knowledge constructed through dialogue and includes cuentos (storytelling), chismes (gossip), consejos (advice), and reflections (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016; González, 2001; Preuss & Saavedra, 2014).

There is no real power dynamic in platicar as everyone is welcome to share and scaffold onto knowledges as they are born within dialogue. As González Ybarra (2018) explains, pláticas are "grounded in trust, and emerge from strong relationships" (p. 511). This is similar to Id-Deen's (2020) concept of "real talk." Conceptualized as a social phenomenon and as social discourse, real talk is both "the physical act of engaging in candid conversations about critical, yet difficult topics" and "is grounded in the idea that one can honestly and without censor express their viewpoints, understandings, and experiences free of judgement and criticism" (Id-Deen, 2020, p. 7-8). In acknowledging and appreciating familial and cultural knowledge, platicando "becomes the process of drawing on that knowledge and making meaning across

experiences" (González Ybarra, 2018, p.xx). In addition, pláticas occur organically and within pre-existing relationships, built between collaborators and researcher in natural progression.

González Ybarra (2018) explains what Chabram-Dernersesian and de la Torre (2008) wrote in *Speaking from the Body: Latinas on Health and Culture*, "pláticas are dialogic opportunities to teach, learn, and understand who we are in relation to others and how our experiences are situated within the sociopolitical histories of our ancestors, mayores, and peers" (p. 511). As such, plática as a methodology resists and reframes dominant notions of method and methodology while also situating collaborators as collaborators in knowledge production and research (González Ybarra, 2018). Most crucial, this methodology acknowledges and values familial and cultural knowledge by constructing together upon all shared knowledges and making meaning across experiences. Modern-day technology has redefined how pláticas occur, however, and to find the proper methodology for my study I wanted to couple modern forms of communication – as suggested by les jóvenes - with ancestral ways of knowing.

From Multimodalities

Traditionally, platicar occurs face-to-face in community gatherings (in pairs or group settings). Rising in the past two decades, youth of Color express more and more attraction to technological advances and communication methods that do not require physical presence in a space. Pew Research (Duggan, et al., 2015) stated that Facebook stands out as the most widely used platform, regardless of race or ethnicity; 53% of online adults ages 18 to 29 use Instagram service, compared with 25% of those ages 30 to 49, 11% of those ages 50 to 64 and 6% of those 65 and older. It's worth noting that Latinx are significantly younger than other groups using social media (Duggan, et al., 2015). This influences how research is conducted and how we humanize collaborators in research by honoring their preferred method of communicating and

sharing data. For example, during a chat with an Indigenous Latinx youth from a preliminary case study about youth thriving through December of 2018, I pulled out pen and paper while I chatted with a youth who uses the pseudonym "kayxlenx." In the time I began writing the date, time and location, they immediately told me "can't you just ask me all this on Insta?" I was shocked but delighted that they were comfortable enough to express themselves in a forward manner and were avid supporters of their communication preference. What's more, I appreciated the frank manner of the youth kinda checkin me - voicing their comfort level in the space I chose. This experience led me to reading up on more studies with youth and trying to understand how decision making is or is not negotiating time and space and communication methods with them.

As I could not find Indigenous methodologies with newer technologies and youth but I fell upon multimodality. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) developed multimodality to attend to the many ways in which meaning is made through various media outlets. In dialogue with ethnographic methods and building on "visual grammars" (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996) and "social semiotics" (Hodge & Kress, 1988), practices and resources are used to make meaning in "many different ways, always, in the many different modes and media which are co-present in the communicational ensemble" (p. 111). Encompassing other media, multimodality is notable in the field of education, since it moves ideas of communication beyond the text to other representations of knowledge and learning (Kress & Bezemer, 2009). In the modern technology-ruled world, I conceive of shiminakuna occurring uniquely across a variety of mediums as the youth from my 2017 study guided me.

SMM involves researchers in casual non-structured conversations via freeware, cross-platform messaging and voice over IP services and social media. All with aims of birthing data

that is not truncated by formal processes. Through these means, research is obtained from ideas, philosophies, processes, and multifaceted meanings of the images, words and symbols chosen by collaborators.

<div align="center">**For Curriculum, Instruction and Teacher Education**</div>

Nurturing Humanizing Research

> *The history of qualitative and ethnographic work seeking, at worst, to pathologize, exoticize, objectify and name as deficient communities of color and other marginalized populations in the U.S. and beyond and, at best, to take and gain through research but not to give back, stretches back across the nineteenth century and forward to the current day… Our work here joins what we view as a trajectory toward a stance and methodology of research that acts against the histories and continuing practices, ideologies, and accompanying dehumanizing policies of discrimination and unequal treatment based on the race, ethnicity, and belief systems of Indigenous peoples, other U.S. born people of color, and people of color who immigrate to the U.S.; of class stratification and economically impoverished communities; of patriarchal norms and the unequal access to opportunities for girls and women; of the unequal, heteronormative and discriminatory treatment of LGBTQ people; of the mistreatment of immigrant people due to citizenship status; and, broadly, of the discriminatory treatment of those who speak languages other than Dominant American English* (Paris & Winn, 2013, p. xvi).

I draw from Paris and Winn (2013) that humanizing approaches to research means unlearning the ways the ruling class pushes for our assimilation and addressing harms that are structured within oppressive forces. Extending what they say, and for the purposes of SMM, we must rethink how we have learned to do research altogether. If quantitative and qualitative research methods "typically do" this or that, researchers should consider ways of engaging outside of the typical parameters. Common guidelines for research are robotic, unnatural, transactional and maintain hierarchical relationships; common methodologies maintain deficit views of marginalized populations by using and centering hegemonic logic, resources and methods for knowing and constructing knowledges. To defy the colonial capitalist patriarchal methods we must first identify what those look like and how to subvert those structures.

Choudhury (2007) described "the path to radicalization" as often involving "a search for identity at a moment of crisis" suggesting that the process occurs "when previous explanations and belief systems are found to be inadequate in explaining an individual's experience" (p. xx). For my dissertation project, I accounted for insufficient explanations by learning about the human condition from counternarratives (e.g., CITE) - not the usual stories told by those in power.

To humanize research in education means attending to inequity and connecting or collaborating with those most marginalized. Research studies in education, I argue, must be with, for and about the people who educational research will most impact. We must unearth life's truths and sit with the discomfort of knowing much pain and strife comes in healing each other. We must come together and analyze the purpose of education and how to better serve each other in our pursuits of knowledge with goals to emulate life-nurturing pedagogies. Otherwise, youth self-harm and self-extinction is what remains.

As stated earlier, plática begins with trust. SMM is demanding, complicated and non-linear; it is not for the weak of heart. There is "data" in all of our engagements with Pachamama. What we choose to "study" must be carefully sifted through the mess that is human relations.

In many ways, SMM is abolitionist. The way Love (2020) explained, "[i]t is a way of life defined by commitment to working towards a humanity where no one is disposable" (p.133). It is a lot of work - there is seemingly endless "data" to analyze and multiple ways of relating to the collaborators which we hope to learn with, from and about. However, SMM permits us to make space to be heedful of our own intuition, reasoning and criticality between the chaos and understand that we are always already learning from, with and about each other. As Love stated (2020), "we fight for a future that will never need to be reformed again because it was built as just from the beginning" (p. 133). As we consider the multifarious means of which we invest

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more time and put more energy towards being conscientious and discerning in our research about the human condition, other living sentient beings, their worldviews and how they contribute to the whole of Pachamama, I would like to ask readers to consider what anti-colonial research looks like.

Engaging in SMM: Researcher, Site & Collaborators

Shiminakuna begins with trust. Similar to phenomenology, collaborators are experts about their own lives and lived experiences. The processes of communication between researcher and site and researcher and collaborators begin by the researcher engaging with the spaces of the collaborator by invitation. For example, during my dissertation study, I shared my ideas with possible collaborators and asked if there were any online connections they would like to share with me; a researcher can send a "friend request" to the social media of potential collaborators to observe (posts, stories), interact with (e.g. commenting) and uplift (e.g. sharing their posts) collaborators but it would not be a random person - there must be some initial connection prior-to-study. Positioned as an insider in the collaborators' real physical and digital environments prior to study, observation and reciprocal interactions occur in various ways between collaborators and researchers during SMM. Since a formal consent form must be used for IRB approval, these can also be utilized to gauge which analog (in-person) and virtual spaces reproduce ideas, images and or symbols which could be part of the academic writing. Appendix 1 shows a form I created for part of my dissertation research. After sharing it with collaborators, I took in their advice to amend parts and re-write/design the consent form. The consent form asks for permission to record audio and to have access to collaborators' social media accounts, which allows (me) the researcher, to engage with multiple sites of "data."

Taking part in SMM, researchers may think about the idea of "choosing a site" or "inviting collaborators" by considering again what conditions are being researched. For my dissertation empirical study, for example, I wanted to understand the nature of thriving. So, first I considered folx in my network who openly shared details about their state of being, such as folx who were comfortable posting images and words that described themselves and what they were going through. For my study, I considered which of my connections on social media share personal narratives openly already. Invited collaborators align with the goal to build on the pre-existing relational interactions between research and collaborators by paying attention to their posts and responding as I felt moved. I researched and observed closely the collaborators that gave me full access to use anything on their social media; this involved coupling their social media along with reading whatever I could find that was open-access online about them. Some collaborators had personal blogs and others academic publications - before "using" any of the information as data I reached out and asked permission each time. The collaborators of this project expressed their views in many formats - through photographs, hashtags, quotes, short narratives and images. Their "data" is showcased in the dissertation manuscript titled, "Bethinking Our Inking: Studying thriving through tattoo (counter)narratives."

Data Collection with SMM

The guiding principles of data collection under SMM are real world immersion and ongoing authentic critical dialogue. Real world immersion takes dedicated time; one must seek to be present in at least part of the lives of the collaborators. This is intentional community building. As such, authentic dialogue elicits everyday, common sense perspectives, developing ideas and dealing with misunderstandings. Criticality takes literature (not just written text)

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review and much practice; researchers must engage in discussions about Liberation and connect their work to transformation of society from hegemony.

To keep track of my observations, I kept folders in Google Drive for every collaborator and shared access with them. When I saw an image or idea I was drawn to because it connected with their thriving, I took "screenshots" and placed it in the collaborator's corresponding Google Docs to facilitate data-sharing and to track real-time edits, keep conversations ongoing (as desired) and to timestamp the flow of information (to record for posterity's sake). There was not one way to navigate relationships within data collection. Some collaborators appreciated that I notified them when I borrowed something for research - I would shoot collaborators a text or voice clip letting them know and then a conversation would sometimes ensue about it. Others preferred no informal interactions about the data I collected, telling me they "trusted" me and to just notify them when the writing was completed.

SMM is an appropriate methodological tool if you are looking to support community building with collaborators and gather information from various discourse, or shiminakuna, exchanged across multiple mediums with collaborators, who have the shared power to co-create knowledge and weigh in on decisions. Just as modern lifestreaming is "a rhetorical act of streaming documents, texts, and visuals to curate an imagined and real self" (Wargo, 2015, p. 560), so much can be learned from how individuals curate a particular identity. Social media as a form of communication is desirable and useful not only for practicality but also because they allow for recordings, which can be later transcribed for analysis. There is not a precise number of interviews with each collaborator across the platform(s) designated by the collaborators, as they are the ones who will guide researchers into how much information they are willing to divulge in the ways, times, and spaces they wish.

With consent from collaborators, data is triangulated between virtual observations and online, shared-notetaking about relevant social media posts - for example, from Facebook (FB), Instagram (IG) and Twitter (Tw) - and considered alongside formal scheduled and recorded interviews, informal unscheduled chats on various platforms or applications and any other relevant publicly shared content. Observations through social media serve the purpose of situating face-to-face communications and expanding concepts. For example, I studied thriving during my dissertation research and some collaborators gave me permission to use "whatever" I could find about them. Still, I asked each time whether they were comfortable and asked for permission to view or quote a piece for my own writing; some collaborators had publications, blogs, websites, spotlights on other websites and various other public information. Fortunately, all of them were very clear with what images and words I could or could not use. While two collaborators only gave me permission to use the formal recorded data, the others allowed me to utilize anything I found.

The data collected from these interactions and searches serve as field notes. I took screenshots of posts or stories online and brought it up in chats; for my dissertation, informal chats mainly occurred via WhatsApp, FB Messaging or texting. Since all relationships are unique, researcher and collaborators must learn one another's preferred methods of communicating. The youth I have learned alongside all preferred social media tools to communicate while two of my grad student collaborators for my 2nd manuscript of my dissertation studies, called Bethinking Our Inking, preferred the "old school" phone calling or face-to-face meetings.

Data Analysis in SMM

Studying the human condition has moved far beyond an ask-and-respond, tv-investigative-reporter format. Even surveys and questionnaires fall short in illuminating the complexities of the human condition and how humans observe, engage with and investigate multiple layers of epistemologies and ontologies. As technology rapidly changes, an update in research methods is due. What folx convey in a natural setting is not fairly captured, I argue, in traditional research methods.

To engage in SMM data analysis requires careful attention to all the moving parts of a study. Researchers may create categories or try to group perspectives gained from study. For example, there will be dialogue for analysis that accompanies that observation of the online data. There will be analysis of the socio political cultural aspects of data along with investigation of modern tools that enable evaluation of user-generated symbols and concepts. Created by Christopher Reaves Messina (2007), hashtags have been used as tagging that enables cross-referencing of content sharing a subject or theme. Hashtags can inform analysis for any and all SMM research studies while also relating individual ideas to larger society. To analyze data and build conjectures, SMM means to co-construct knowledge between researchers and collaborators; therefore, multiple layers of meaning can be attended to through relationality. Similar to Andean worldviews, the Australian Indigenous knowledges are described as "How we learn – culture way" (Yunkaporta, 2009):

1. We connect through the stories we share.

2. We picture our pathways of knowledge.

3. We see, think, act, make and share without words.

4. We keep and share knowledge with art and objects.

5. We work with lessons from land and nature.

6. We put different ideas together and create new knowledge.

7. We work from wholes to parts, watching and then doing.

8. We bring new knowledge home to help our mob.

Engaging in SMM research will entail connecting through the stories and picture (social media posts/stories) our pathways of knowing while seeing, thinking, acting, making and sharing beyond words (with art and objects). This means moving naturally, at various speeds (for/with/as per different collaborators) co-creating new knowledge from wholes and parts and watching and doing towards community building with our new knowledges.

Discussion

Manabitas have multiple recipes that use the exact ingredients of Sango de Verde. Slight transformations of the shapes and sizes of the ingredients and subjecting them to water or oil and heat in other ways transmutates the final dish. Reading about the small differences between a sango, a cazuela or a corbiche gives a small window into Manaba people, traditions, spirituality and culture. Engaging in multimodal conversation and social media interactions with Manabitas gives a whole other spectrum and offers many dimensions into those dishes, their history and their significance to our people. Educational qualitative ethnographic research is due for an upgrade in terms of humanizing studies, especially study of individual cultures and exploration of cultural phenomena from, with and by the point of view of the subject as well.

The way we relate to each other is hella capitalist and colonial in structure. The concept of research is colonial and capitalist. Especially quantitative data, but also qualitative, is transactional in nature, meaning research is so often conducted by an authority (the researcher)

who is the ultimate decision maker offering something (e.g. a token of appreciation) for knowledge extraction from collaborators. Researchers often engage with collaborators insofar as the research questions are involved. collaborators are called such because they take part in a project but that part is generally passive and does not permit any decision-making power. SMM aims to Indigenize research spaces by rethinking relationship-building. Collaborators are treated as collaborators in a way that counters what is generally accepted in Western models of research because they cooperate jointly, adjacent-to rather than extracted from. Below recounts the ways in which I formulated this research methodology to do just that.

Developing deep relationality is often avoided, or pre-existing relationships are disregarded, for the sake of systematic ideas of respectability politics in formal research. In other words, researchers want to learn *a thing* and talk to and observe a sample to gauge what can be learned about *that thing* from other people. SMM argues that conversations about *a thing* posed by a researcher is insufficient to learning about that *thing* because people reveal so much more in their everyday lives and interactions than during time set aside for studies and involvement in projects.

I did not disregard my pre-existing relationship with any collaborator nor confine the evolution of my relationship with anyone based on any researcher/collaborator protocol codes of ethics. That is to say, I did not purposefully alter my relationships nor push for more or less within the relations I kept with collaborators. I stayed true to myself, jumping in sociopolitical emotional conversations that are important to me and making space for my collaborators' worldviews. Pushing against racism, sexism or any other social justice theme that came up as it came up.

I worked hard not to "freeze people in time" - if I heard anti-Blackness, I did not mark them as racist - there is room for growth and there is a racism scale (Figure 2; *retrieved from https://racismscale.weebly.com/*) in which all of us fluctuate given the sometimes overpowering demands of our racist-filled society. I did not come to the research to engage with collaborators about my research questions - my questions were born out of observation of the human condition and seeking to explore how we can uplift each other especially in times of heightened global unrest and pandemic.

Figure 2 *Racism Scale*

Racism Scale: Where do you fall?
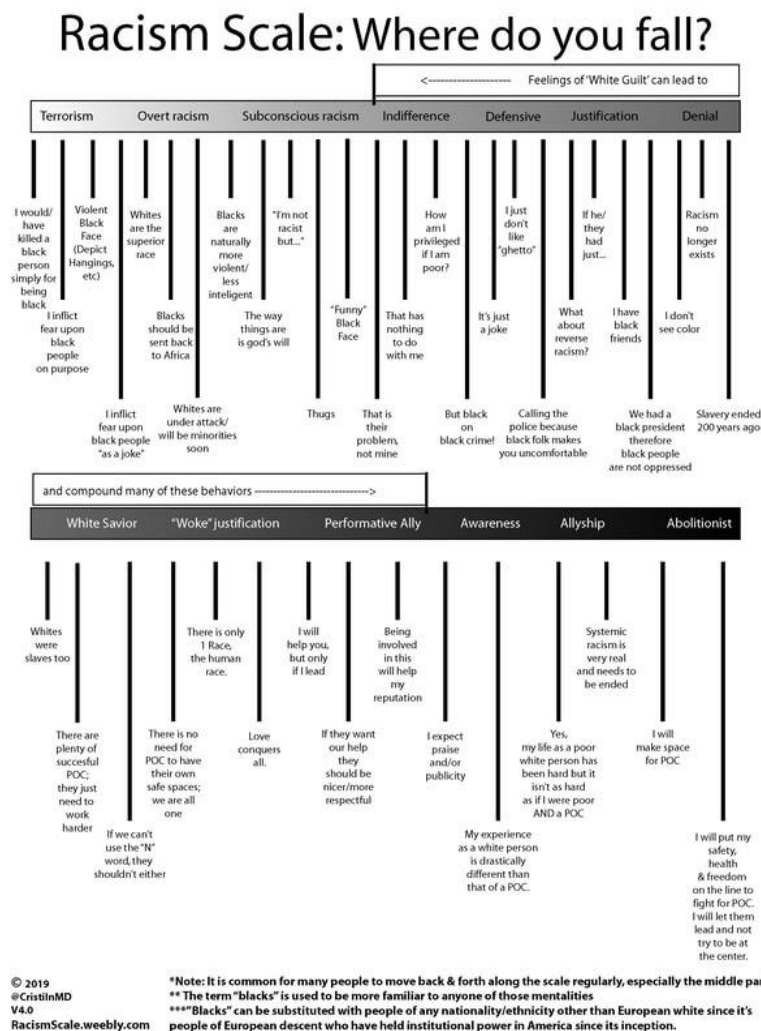
In so many words above, I explain what is simply a romantic quest towards solidarity. To be in solidarity with folx means understanding our concatenation and our quest towards collective liberation. This involves engaging in multiple ways on multiple levels with each other and learning each other deeply. SMM means to ensure that vulnerability increases and community expands.

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CHAPTER 3: Bethinking Our Inking: Studying thriving through tattoo (counter)narratives

Preparar la Tierra

"I want to make your tattoo a story!" (Pre-K student, vis-à-vis Shiminakuna, 11 October 2017)

How can tattoo (counter) narratives advance Black Indigenous Liberation? I sought out contemplating this question by considering the tattoo stories that nourish the life around me. At 4, my ahijade began taking an interest in my tattoos, asking me about meaning, about hurt, or why I got it *there*, sometimes asking me to draw on or around them, creating stories of their own from the symbols on my body. I began capturing some of these moments and sharing their stories with family and friends via social media like Instagram (See Figure 3). Engaging youth with storytelling and meaning-making about important marks on my body, I observed an enthusiasm I did not perceive when I asked them about what they learned at school.

Figure 3 *An InstaGram post of a four-year old drawing above a pink flower tattoo*

Los mayores of our communities have all voiced concerns about our children's survival in schools. At various times and in various ways, they have questioned how our children are

failed by schools. Coupled with these interactions, Shiminakuna with other members of my community seeded this research project. Unfortunately, our youth have voiced dissatisfaction with many aspects of their schools - from unhealthy (Fox et al., 2009) and unpalatable cafeteria food to culturally irrelevant curriculum (Lamar, 2019) and the harmful ways teachers hold implicit racial bias against students as young as Pre-K (Young, 2016). Teachers are challenged to consider their students of Color against a neoliberal capitalist notion of achievement, which exposes teachers to "descriptions of failure rather than models of success" (Delpit, 1995, p. 177). Educational researchers (Brock & Pennington, 2014) specifically point to *white* teachers being ill equipped to teach children from different backgrounds as their own. To the detriment of Black and Brown students, teachers thus inadvertently mistreat, malnourish and, I argue, interrupt their thriving.

Black and Brown youth are expected to survive colonial school models that employ a majority White teacher force (U.S. Department of Education, 2015) who deliver anti-Black curriculum (Coles, 2021; Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995a; b; Lamar, 2019; Lamar & Guzmán, 2019) and mandate middle-class White norms and measurements of achievement (Au, 2009; Knoester & Au, 2017; Lamar, 2019) in buildings that police Black and Brown bodies more than others (Oyedemi, 2016). The spirit murdering (Love, 2019) that occurs from having to divorce from our ethnic, cultural, spiritual and communal values to adhere to hegemonic Whiteness is ruthless. Unfortunately, schools are still presently not equipped to nurture life since many continue to center and enforce the hegemonic. Consequently, minoritized youth who are forced to assimilate are self-harming and ending their lives more than any other time of history and at alarming rates; Black children, in particular, have the highest rates (Lindsey, 2019). The following is an attempted interruption of the patterns of oppressive structures of education and

schools across the U.S.. If we mean to have a prosperous future, healing the present needs urgent attention and drastic changes.

My dissertation journey grew as I began rethinking schools, desiring safer, kinder, more equitable and more enjoyable learning spaces for marginalized youth. The seeds planted in me by youth and my community were fertilized by the epistemologies I encountered in graduate courses. Through my courses and experiences in classrooms, I learned that schools today were *purposefully* built to uphold European colonial structures. Their specific function was to maintain power through discrediting, denigrating, and disputing the knowledges and ways of being of peoples from Abya Yala and Alkebulan, those whose Lands were stolen and those enslaved to work the Land. Doctoral inquiries I pursued led me to seek out, comprehend, and utilize those omitted, occluded, misrepresented, or subsumed narratives (Lamar & Guzmán, 2019; Monroy-Miller, 2015) to deconstruct school models and construct new paradigms based on these epistemologies and ontologies. Comprehending, synthesizing, and analyzing my own experiences as a student for thirty years and an educator for fifteen years, alongside conducting a literature review about what is thriving, helped me think about the multidimensional ways colonial structures permeate every aspect of schooling.

The structures of colonialism, such as neoliberal capitalism, influence everything from the ways Black and Brown bodies are restricted in various spaces and subject to arbitrary rules, to which subject matters are deemed worthy of study in schools. My investigations into the ways schools function within colonial structures became a published autoethnographic study (Lamar, 2019) which involved a deep, multifaceted self-analysis about my role as a public school educator in New York City. Similar to how Black and Brown youth feel pushed out of school, I

too, became overpowered by the system, feeling obligated to uphold oppressive conditions and eventually left K-12 public school teaching feeling defeated (Lamar, 2019).

My autoethnographic research study led me to envisioning what schools could look like outside of the current antiquated, inequitable system. To rethink schooling, I considered the tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Delgado & Stefancic, 1993) and how to engage K-12 students with knowledges that challenge the Western paradigm instilled in public schools across the U.S. CRT's second tenet asserts that it is important to be familiar with the experiential knowledge and storytelling of individuals pertaining to larger marginalized groups in the U.S.; these narratives do not conform to common societal views or perspectives and, thus, can be referred to as "counter-narratives" or "counter-stories" (Delgado, 1989). According to Delgado (1989), counter-storytelling is a method of telling stories of uncommon experiences that are marginalized; counter-stories challenge the majoritarian story or that "bundle of pre-suppositions, perceived wisdoms, and shared cultural understandings persons in the dominant race bring to the discussion of race" (Delgado & Stefancic, 1993, p. 462). Delgado and Stefancic (2001) explains that counter storytelling is a "method of telling a story that aims to cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises or myths especially ones held by the majority" (p. 144). Global efforts to bring forth counter-narratives are ongoing and this is where I insert my work.

Counternarratives in the settler state called the Unites States are repressed. Countering cis heterosexuality is deemed offensive and is prohibited by hegemonic Whiteness, for example; as was the case for the book *Drama* by Raina Telgemeier, which was one of the most challenged books of 2019 due to its LGBTQIA+ content. In response to such blatant bigotry, xenophobia and other intolerant ideologies, the campaign "Banned Books Week" calls attention to the harms of censorship. During the last week of September since 1982, the American Library Association

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and Amnesty International have drawn awareness to histories of persecuted individuals and promote banned books in libraries and schools. Learning from such a CRT counternarrative-informed movement, I pondered how to investigate and bring forth unorthodox or unpopular knowledges that challenge hegemonic White epistemology.

Prior to calls by the establishments for book-banning, White supremacist imperialists first self-appointed themselves authority over Land. Indigenous worldviews, such as that of my Andean peoples, view humans as a part of Pachamama - interconnected across time and space - we are tasked to honor, share, care after and protect Land, Water, and all other living beings. Drastically opposing this worldview is the concept of "property rights" which diseased Abya Yala during European invasions beginning in the 16th century. This idea was expanded by the constructed concept of "manifest destiny," which claims that hegemonic White European-descendant colonial settlers were "destined" to expand across the Americas claiming ownership of all that was found.

In education, scholars such as Cintron (1997) challenge Western notions of property by investigating graffiti and gang culture. He used a lens of linguistic metaphors to read street-gang graffiti as "violently counter to any 'commonsense' understanding grounded in property rights of law-abiding citizenry" (Cintron, 1997, p. 195). In other words, graffiti is meant to disrupt the concept of ownership of the Land by explicitly defacing property. I believe graffitis are a source of deep epistemologies of resistance and survival that serve to counter hegemonic rule. Ideas survive through graffiti and give voice to that which hegemonic society tries to silence. Similarly, I think tattoos narrate ideas and concepts that often cannot survive when assimilated into hegemonic ways of living.

Tattoos episteme can challenge for example, how literacy is viewed and treated in schools. For instance, Kirkland (2009) explored the ways that the tattoos of a young Black man are an important site of cultural production which illustrates transformative, political, and personal topography of literacy (2009). Although tattoos have been found on bodies in all of recorded history throughout cultures around the world on virtually every continent (Deter-Wolf, 2016), tattoo knowledges have not been standardized in curriculum or instruction mandated in K-12 U.S. schools. Kirkland(2009) reveals some of the ways that tattoos can embody "the richness of cultural heritage" and narrate struggles in their symbolism; they can be treated as literacy artifacts that show meaning-making and "extend the possibilities of print" (Kirkland, 2009, p. 376). Kirkland's work led me to ponder what can be learned from and about or how to incorporate non-standard epistemology and ontologies in standard curriculum design, instruction, and teacher education. While I see tattoo epistemology rich for exploration in history, mathematics, science, social studies, and other "traditional" school subjects, neither graffiti nor tattoos are generally standardized in school curriculum, instruction or school culture and I have found little to no research to explain why. Is the reason of their marginalization based on how these knowledges do not conform to cis-hetero Christian White gaze and norms?

In response to the misrepresentation or absence of knowledges from Abya Yala and Alkebulan in public schools across the U.S., radical educators have been creating curriculum that fills in the gaps of K-12 public school curriculum. Collaborative grassroots groups such as the Black Lives Matter at School Movement are engaged with creating curriculum and teacher resources that specifically attend to Black and Brown herstories and intersectional identities at schools. They have consolidated and created curriculum and teacher resources that speak to the

histories and knowledges of marginalized groups and specifically work within communities to normalize and uplift intersectional identities to schools.

Similar to the Black Lives Matter at School Movement, some educators across the globe are invested in learning the ways that Hip Hop provides rich resources and serves as a uniting force within marginalized communities and beyond. Extending from the international movement, Educators involved in #HipHopEd aim to disrupt colonial educational systems and structures by appreciating the power of youth culture, voice, and agency. Hip Hop is not just a music genre but a part of Black culture birthed in the 1980s and which has been largely suppressed in society since its inception in the Bronx. Hip Hop pedagogies have extended the ways of "authentically and practically incorporating the creative elements of hip-hop into teaching, and inviting students to have a connection with the content while meeting them on their cultural turf by teaching to, and through, their realities and experiences" (Johnson, 2017).

Exploring and collaborating alongside the above named justice-oriented groups for the past decade in various ways further fed my ideas for this research. It is my contention that Hip Hop pedagogies, as well as the study of marginalized knowledges, is the key to understanding the human condition of thriving. I then realized that while Hip Hop or tattoos can be made to *fit* within the given school standards, abolitionist education aims to dismantle colonial structures. To understand the human condition of thriving through the examination of previously-decentered epistemologies, I wondered:

1. What are some counter-narratives expressed or depicted in tattoos?
2. How can these knowledges inform what is thriving?
3. How can educators utilize these knowledges to support the thriving of students?

I will draw from culturally relevant (Ladson Billings, 1995a;b), sustaining (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim 2014; 2017) and revitalizing pedagogies (McCarty & Lee, 2014a) through an Indigenizing Critical Race Theoretical (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012) lens to answer these questions.

Positionality

"Pitishka urku uksha shina, kutin wiñakmi kanchik, shinami, urku uksha shinawan pachamamata

katachishun" - Dolores "Mamá Doloreyuk" Cacuango

"We are like the straw of the highlands, which is uprooted and grows again and the straw of the

highlands will cover the world." - Dolores Cacuango Quilo

¿Y Porque Yo?

Seeded many generations before me
Conocimientos míos de Abya Yala y Akebulan
Paved by abueles y antepasados since time immemorial
my role right here, right now is to heal
To nurture ideas seeded in interconnectedness
In liminal temporal spatial dimensions
To water, give sunshine and nourish stronger life

Llegue a sanar
Equipped with empathy, appreciation, astute recollection
Of conocimientos míos de Abya Yala y Alkebulan
which invasive species attempt to de-root
Trim, mow, blow away, make symmetrical
Enduring generational traumas,
trials and tribulations faced with my Black and Brown siblings
for our niblings, our children's children, yours too
To sustain the life germinating from our concatenation
To feed, support and nourish thriving life for all

It is not unfathomable that I exist
Uninvested in your vertical power
It is not incomprehensible that we are here
Disinterested in your etiquette, normal, boring bland
We have not been extinguished
We have not been erased
We stand surviving
We take care of us
We fight to thrive

The fruits of our labor are sprouting
From the waves of our rEVOLution
Liberation shines on the horizon
We stand surviving
We take care of us
We fight to thrive

Figure 4 *Screenshot of a tweet by @MigrantScribble*

Alán ACAB
@MigrantScribble   ∘∘∘

"When do you feel the most Latinx?"

Me: "When my Blackness is erased and Indigeneity questioned."

11:51 PM · Dec 13, 2020 · Twitter Web App   ○ Reply
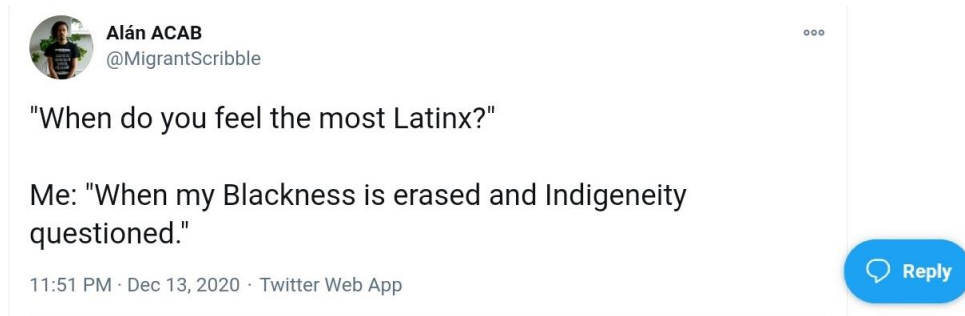
My legacy comes in potions, spells, recipes and secrets of the Land and her flora and fauna. Our stories emerge through our Sango de Verde, burned candles and herbs, songs and stories of freedom. That I maintain and push forward my cultural heritage, healing from intergenerational traumas, is my gift to the generations after me. That I am both hispanophone and anglophone was part of the plan. Both English and Spanish are colonial languages imposed upon us. It is not in anyone's interest that we uphold the sacred laws and rules of those languages which exterminated our mother tongues.

There is an ongoing debate that seems to valorize being colonized. Among folx with mixed descent on Abya Yala, some groups believe in using terms like "Latin" "Latina" "Latino" and or "Hispanic" or nation-state words for themselves, such as Colombian, Puerto Rican. The most recently fabricated term, "Latinx," was created to disrupt the Western gender binary imposed by the Spanish language and meant to be inclusive of all folx. I argue, on another plane, that the divide for some of us about the "Latine"\Latinx" divide is not about whether or not the terms "anglicize" the Spanish language but more about the actual roots. Yes, we need words to

validate the gender spectrum and also we can create words that also liberate us from the violent forced that mean to erase our actual heritage. Growing up, I was taught that "Latin American" meant ancestral roots in the Americas and the word "hispanic" meant from Spain. The terms are now used interchangeably.

¿Y Porque Yo? answers itself. There is nothing normative about me and my heritage and my existence! I fight towards Black Indigenous Liberation and our collective thriving. My Alkebulan and Abya Yalan ancestry is sacred; it guides me and teaches me how to be and how to relate to other beings. We are not found in common school textbooks but I learned about my history from the oral storytelling from my elders through songs and cuentos about our flora, fauna and the people who helped sustain our culture today. Oddly, my identities have been policed throughout my life though they have been ingrained in me. I've been questioned by teachers and other authorities from Kindergarten through my PhD studies about what I appear to be to others. In grade school, for example, teachers often asked me to use my "English" name (as though I *had* one) and some argued with me that Spain was my "motherLand" although I knew from visiting and living in Spain that nothing of my culture, faith, politics, family structure and knowledges matched that region of the world. Another example happened more recently during the fall of 2018; a professor told me that "all the Ecuadorians [she] know[s] claim to be White." Flabbergasted, I could only internally ask myself, "how many Ecuadorians could she possibly know?"; "Has she ever even been to Manabí?"; And "how the fuck would she know how racialization happens in Ecuador?" She clearly does not.

I continue to describe my existence like "an irregular verb you cannot conjugate" (Lamar, 2019, p. 147) because I exist waaaay outside of the periphery of binary, boxed-in, cookie-cutter, standardized spaces. Intersectionality, as Crenshaw (1990) explained, must consider how race,

specifically, complicates other identities within power structures. So, not only am I a product of mixed ethnicity - Black and Red people raped by White people - I am gender fluid and a sapiosexual pansexual person who grew up working class in an actual communal way. School has made me well aware of the ways cis hetero White middle-upper class monotheistic norms invalidate my existence.

The tweet by @MigrantScribble (FIG 2) above describes my relationship with the word "Latinx." The struggles of Black Native or Afro Indigenous communities are interconnected through our experiences of fighting against colonialism and White supremacy. I have never been confused about my ancestry. The knowledges of my antepasados are not just in my blood but also in my ways of knowing and my ways of being that provide and care after all living beings around me. I problematize ways that I am "usually labeled 'Latina'" (Lamar, 2019, p. 151) because I am a hispanophone person who is Indigenous to Abya Yala mixed with descent rooted in Alkebulan. Latinx is a political stance that I sometimes use in order to bind to folx who exist beyond the Western colonial binary views of gender imposed upon us. For these reasons, among many others, I argue for the termination of the terms Latina, Latino, Latinx, which are imprecise terms and have contested meanings. "North America," "Central America," "South America" and "Latin America" is not what the Land has ever been called by Indigenous folx. Colonial boundaries are new - just a few hundred years old. It is time we retire these racist and xenophobic classification systems. Instead, I press us to identify our connection to the Land that we are on, honor the original people of this Land and imagine ensuring the thriving of each of us in a more varied, multifaceted, beautifully complex organic way. The ways of the Land have been studied by Her people in many dimensions since time immemorial. We know the secret to our own thriving because we are experts about our lived experiences as children of Abya Yala.

<center>**Literature Review: Nourishing Land**</center>

<center>"Monito ome goronte enamai." -Nemonte Nenquimo, Waomi Leader</center>

What Thriving is Not

Indigenous leader Nenquimo first consulted with elders of the community then pushed for legal action that resulted in a 2019 court ruling protecting 500,000 acres of Amazonian rainforest and Waorani territory from oil extraction, which brings death on all living things. The literal degradation of the environment is but one example of how neoliberal capitalism, colonial structures, interrupts the thriving of living sentient beings. Other more insidious ways of diminishing the life quality of humans, involves a poisoning of the mind.

For me, the first memories of schooling begins with being asked if I had an "English name" by my White teachers and experiencing mockery by White peers about the four letters of my name along with teasing about the way I look, dressed (in clothes hand-made by my mother), the way I talked (with a Manabita Brooklyn accent) and my Manabita food. In my culture we only eat food that comes from the earth as pure as we can find. My parents raised their three biological children and countless others by first feeding us only the flora and fauna endemic to our Land; grocery shopping took long hours across many stores because my parents had to read all labels and ask store workers all kinds of questions to determine how natural and free of preservatives their food was. At school, the food my mother cooked for me every day was called gross - kids often made retching sounds when my warm meals were uncovered. I could not participate in the culture of school lunch where children display their lunch and traded items because the only capital at lunch was in the form of bagged symmetrical crunchy or chewy textures full of high fructose corn syrup and a bunch of other ingredients that I could barely read.

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Though my parents fought very hard to teach us our Manabita ways of being, including our traditional food practices, I longed to eat garbage like Gushers, Cheetos and Fruit-by-the-Foot.

I longed to eat garbage

full stop

My ancestral knowledges and ways of being were seeded and germinated from the Andean Cosmovision, from los antepasados el sur de Abya Yala. The food custom of my Afro Indigenous people is curative and actually elongates life (Egüez, 2018) - we have many elders who live into their hundreds without disease and with much joy and gratitude. Sharply contrasting, the foods and food customs of White settlers seemed to literally diminish the quality of life for many people - and their life expectancy is in the 70s. As I began studying what constitutes thriving, obstacles on the path of human survival emerged, such as the epistemic violence I have endured throughout my own schooling (Lamar, 2019). For there to be governance, there must be a program of social control. Epistemic violence, violence exerted against or through knowledge, is a very important element of hegemony and the domination process (Villenas and Deyhle 1999).

Less than 600 years ago Abya Yala experienced invaders from across oceans plundering, looting and inflicting gruesome violence on gente originaria, including the colonization of our food systems and practices. In order for colonizers to maintain power, they engaged in epistemic violence because colonization ensures domination by forcing hegemonic ideas and concepts onto subjugated bodies. Manaba worldviews, as many Indigenous groups, exist independently and are fundamentally different from that of European culture and have neither a science nor religion counterpart in Western terms. European colonization was rife with epistemic control.

Disastrously, Christianity and capitalism were the primary impositions by European colonizer settlers and today the structures of colonialism have not been de-rooted. The physical violence on Abya Yala begins with treatment of the Land; about 97% of Landowners, 96% of farm owner-operators, and 86% of tenants are White (Horst, 2019). Many Black and Brown bodies have been killed for protecting Land and Water and resisting colonial structures. Survivors continue to be bombarded with Western concepts of relationship with other living beings and are still subject to a rigid value system that centers Whiteness. In these ways Abya Yala has suffered not only physical violence but epistemic violence beginning with our people's most sacred spiritual beliefs.

Christian imperialism and capitalism has remained and has continued to interrupt the thriving of Indigenous people insidiously. For example, the Gregorian calendar has been standardized across many colonial nations worldwide and dictates in many places what are considered "holidays." During "the holiday season," engagement with Christianity and capitalism is seemingly inescapable due to the many spaces afforded to "holidays," s Dr. Warren J. Blumenfeld of LGBTQ Nation described in an article (2020):

- *Christmas music in public spaces and on radio stations; Christmas specials on television throughout November and December each year.*

- *Christmas decorations (*often hung at taxpayer expense*) in the public square in cities and towns throughout the United States.*

- *The highly visible and widespread availability in retail stores of Christian holiday decorations, greeting cards, foods, and other items during Christian holiday seasons.*

- *The president and first lady lighting the "National Christmas Tree" on the Ellipse behind the White House* (retrieved from https://www.lgbtqnation.com/2020/11/avoid-christian-asshole-holiday-season/)

The "holiday season" is specifically designated according to capitalist structures that place value on specific times through the year in order to enrich those who consolidate power.

Folx marginalized by religious intolerance - societal centering of Western religions - get by in life (i.e., not thriving) thru enduring much trial and tribulation. Many living beings are capable of surviving lots of pain and much strife. In biological studies, tiny organisms that assimilate or are tolerant to environmental extremes and who have evolved to grow optimally under one or more extreme conditions, are called extremophiles (Steven, et al., 2009). On April 11, 2019, Israel spacecraft "Bereshit" was sent to land on the surface of the moon with a "backup" of planet Earth; onboard were human DNA, 30 million pages of information and a sample of one of Earth's most resilient animals called water bears (sometimes "moss piglets" or tardigrades). Less than a millimeter in length, tardigrades were named water bears by Thomas Huxley in 1869 because of their inherent pawing that resembles the clumpy actions of a circus bear. They can survive extreme conditions, such as temperatures from -272 to 150 celsius and extreme radiation and pressures (6000 atmosphere); they survive these extremely hostile conditions through a process called cryptobiosis; metabolism lowers to less than 0.01% of normal and when conditions improve they get back to life (De Vera et al., 2014).

A common misconception is that tardigrades *thrive* in hostile and harsh conditions but, recently a team of scientists (Gross, et al., 2019) found that water bears neither enjoy nor prefer living in extreme conditions, they're just good at surviving them. This reminds me of my elders.

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Los mayores in my community have shared with me horror stories of survival that made me think of them as indestructible. One common story I heard from many of my mayores was about the punitive system of their colonial schools. White European nuns, priests and Christian-converts or sympathizers controlled the schools and used physical punishments to enforce rules. Literal strikes (beating) were most common. When Native students were perceived as too "rowdy" or "disrespectful" they were isolated, beat with whips, and/or forced to kneel on seeds, hay or grains of rice for hours, holding bibles in each hand over their shoulders; if students dropped a bible, an additional weight (another bible) would be added or their sentence lengthened in time. Sometimes students would be beaten for such minor offenses as not abiding by "etiquette" standards such as not sitting upright, "poor" penmanship, holding eating utensils "incorrectly" or being "too loud."

The stories of the mayores match the colonial manners based on a set of rules composed by French Jesuits in 1595, which were later transcribed by George Washington around 1746 and titled *Rules of Civility & Decent Behaviour in Company and Conversation: a Book of Etiquette* (printed in 1996). The schooling my mayores describe supported "the destruction of tribal culture, spirituality, and language, and facilitated the breakup of Indigenous families and community structures" (Johnston-Goodstar & VeLure Roholt, 2017, p. 31). Therefore, the miseducation of Black and Brown bodies was arranged specifically by internalized racial superiority mentality in order to erode and replace knowledges from Alkebulan (Woodson, 1990) and Abya Yala.

Gente Originaria gather to discuss how our cultures have survived multiple invasions and how we can use our knowledges to survive the future, often feeling unbreakable because we have endured extreme violence for generations. I argue this is not thriving. Thriving must be beyond

surviving trauma. We should not have to be resilient and live an existence of perseverance in great chaos and hostility like water bears. To thrive, I argue, Black and Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies must not only be tolerated, but centered.

Angela Davis (2003) explained that, "When children attend schools that place a greater value on discipline and security than on knowledge and intellectual development, they are attending prep schools for prison (p.38)." Unfortunately, schools today across Abya Yala still rely on punitive systems. According to the Education Department's Office for Civil Rights, 19 states still allow for corporal punishment in schools and, during the 2013 - 2014 school year, over 106,000 children were physically punished at public schools (Caron, 2018). The impacts of corporal punishment include immediate pain, and can result in lasting physical injury as well as socioemotional injuries; corporal punishment humiliates and degrades students, and may leave them depressed, anxious, angry, or with other psychological symptoms or disorders that lead to academic disengagement and truancy (Gershoff, 2002). Worse, psychologists argue that there are correlations between accepting corporal punishment and perpetrating domestic violence later in life (Gershoff, 2002). Even in schools that do not physically punish students, a "Culture of Power" persists (Delpit, 1988, p. 282) where:

1. "Issues of power are enacted in classrooms.

2. There are codes or rules for participating in power; that is, there is a 'culture of power.'

3. The rules of the culture of power are a reflection of the rules of the culture of those who have power.

4. If you are not already a participant in the culture of power, being told explicitly the rules of that culture makes acquiring power easier.

5. Those with power are frequently least aware of - or at least willing to acknowledge- its existence. Those with less power are often more aware of its existence."

These codes are connected to ways of talking, writing, dressing and interacting. From the ban of traditional African hairstyles (Edwards, 2020), to the policing of Black Language and literacies in schools (Bryan, 2020; Johnson et al., 2017; Love, 2019; Paris, 2011), youth of Color are taught and later internalize the white imagination (Baker-Bell, 2020). As Rowe (2019) explained, "[t]he school is a space in which whiteness as property is enacted in terms of authorising and legitimating what and whom is acceptable and what is not; the included and excluded" (p. 56). There is no need for explicit White supremacy discourse in schools and society at large because the normalization of White epistemologies and ontologies already others dissent. Building on and extending Franz Fanon's (1952) concept of the "epidermalization of inferiority" (p. 45), educational institutions and educators uphold anti-Blackness and create a paradigm whereas proximity with Blackness is correlated to wrongness and proximity to whiteness is correct. Anti-Blackness is the parent of racism and other interrelated forms of oppression function to contribute to the controlling of Black and Brown bodies figuratively, socio-emotionally and in actuality.

The rules of the culture of power ratify hegemonic White reasoning, epistemologies and ontologies. Ergo, classrooms today in the U.S. still reflect and perpetuate the culture of power when it imitates the social relations and hierarchical dynamics based on everyday interactions of the wider society (Applebaum, 2009). The culture of many classrooms across the U.S. are often microcosms of a larger society where privileged students who are racialized as White are able to manifest their destiny more easily, with less obstacles, and are provided and supported in their

thriving by educators and the school system at large. White Western culture and matching socio political structures maintain the fundamental premise "that the human individual is of primary importance in the struggle for liberation" (Borgohain, 2013, p. 2). This idea is shown in schools by their competitive structure - grades, extrinsic rewards system, testing/classifying - and policing. Power in this structure is consolidated by an elite few (e.g., administrators) who are given decision-making, autonomy and authority to inflict punitive measures and or change the rules without notice or explanation.

Power, according to Delpit (1988) is transmitted in the cultural rules that govern the ways in which people speak, write, dress, and interact with others, including marking normal adolescent behaviors and actions as problematic. Western researchers (Achenbach, et al., 2001) describe violating the rules at home, at school, or anywhere else as rule-breaking behavior. However, an Indigensizing lens requires critical analysis when investigating the purpose and creation of rules by individuals to promote and proliferate a system of power. For instance, if youth are engaged in stealing, lying, running away from home, using drugs, and trancy, are there underling causes within the structures of an environment rather than a behavioral dysfunction of youth? Behavioral school engagement (Li & Lerner, 2011) involves participation in academics by means of effort, concentration, and doing homework (Birch & Ladd, 1997); an Indigenizing lens questions the purpose of academics, homework, and the means of which learning occurs. While medical researchers observe adolescence as a delicate period in which there is social-emotional growth and academic pressure (De Laet et al., 2015) and a decrease in behavioral school engagement (Li & Lerner 2011), it is the structure of capitalism which qualifies people based on their productivity rather than innate, natural human behavior. The organic evolution of a person is pathologized in order to maintain a profit-driven system (neoliberalism).

Regarding human development as problematic when it cannot be capitalized upon is reinforced with a harsh punitive system. There is a kind of "striking" that is common in schools today, in which arbitrary "offenses" are marked wrong or disrespectful and adults in school buildings write complaints on paper, which are added up and punished in various ways including detention, suspension, and removal from or expulsion from school. For example, Chicago public school students have been fighting "strikes" for such minor offenses as wearing a hoodie in classes (Zacarias, 2019). I can corroborate stories that match with the colonial structures that marked the educational experiences of my mayores as both student and teacher; in 2019, I described events such as being written up as a teacher for such silly "issues" as having poor penmanship or using colors for decoration that were not perceived by administrators as "child friendly" (Lamar, 2019). These punitive systems - reified in schools - maintain the status quo and marginalize in all aspects of life those who do not assimilate to the structures. These systems are disproportionately oppressive for folx who exist in ideological paradigms from Alkebulan and Abya Yala Black; these colonial structures, I continue to argue, interrupt the vitality of Black and Brown youth specifically.

Violence is simultaneously overt and also more covert for Black and Brown bodies. Corporal punishment is still practiced in some schools at the same time that school inhabitants inflict other forms of violence on students of Color: microagressions, minimizing, gaslighting, silencing and erasure. For example, in a study I conducted with Afro\Indigenous\Latinx youth in 2017 none of the collaborators (n= 9) felt that their culture, traditions, or backgrounds were truly learned about or engaged with in their schools (locations ranged from NewYork, D.C. Florida, Texas, Illinois, Michigan, California) (Lamar, unpublished). Black and Brown students widely experience administrators, teachers, and the curriculum that silence parts of their identities,

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cultural knowledges, and ways of being in multiple ways again and again, year after year (Lamar, 2019; Lamar & Guzmán, 2019). The result of such implicit violence is deculturalization; this is "the educational process of destroying a people's culture and replacing it with a new culture" (Spring, 2016, p. 8). Indigenous students in particular often experience displacement, silencing, and cultural genocide in our schools, just as in various aspects of society, due to the standardization of middle-class White European culture, values, and definitions of success and achievement (Brayboy & Castagno, 2008; Ladson Billings, 1995a; b; Lamar & Guzmán, 2019; McCarty, 2003; Paris & Alim, 2012; Tuck & Yang, 2012). The insidious process of deculturalization is ingrained in schools and facilitated by the rise of neoliberalism in education.

Studies corroborate how deculturalization affects youth of Color and show that racial microaggressions in schools negatively affect the socio-emotional well being of Black and Native students, as well as their success in schools (e.g., Johnston-Goodstar & VeLure Roholt, 2017; Matias 2013; 2016). Winters (2015) demonstrated that it is not the case that students of Color are simply not unwilling or unable to learn; rather, they feel pushed out of schools for various structural and institutional reasons. This was true for me. I was seen as a "good student" early on.

I was welcomed into the International Baccalaureate Middle School Years Programme (IB) in the 8th grade due to my assimilation to the school culture and my "excellent" academic performances (although my behavior always needed "improvement," as my report cards read). After much questioning about why school contradicted my home-values and challenging my coursework and teachers into high school, my life came to a halt when Trevor committed suicide when we were 16. To this day remains the hurt of losing a friend and peer and then being expected to show up in school with a "business as usual" attitude. The school audaciously had

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Christian-based quotes adorning the building such as "Love your neighbor as you love yourself." Yet, right when students most needed compassion, teachers turned cold. Although I do not recall most of my high school experiences and most teachers, I do remember the names of the callous teachers who pushed us to perform when we were feeling our worst after our friend took his life. I moved through school mechanically, eventually gave into truancy, and was eventually kicked out of the IB program. Around that time, I planned my first tattoo.

Sadly, I was so deeply affected by the chaos and hostility of the environments of my school, I learned self-deprecation, and in my teens, I began self-harming, eventually attempting to end my own life multiple times. Miraculously to many people, including some of my family, I survived high school and got through college, constantly looking for engagement and purpose in my learning. Tattoos became part of my thriving just after high school, marking moments where I felt I survived an ordeal and signifying moments when I got to make decisions about my body and feel a sense of - even if for only a moment - autonomy and self-determination.

I am not an anomaly. Today, worldwide, youth self-harm and suicide is higher than ever. One study claims that one out of every 4 girls and one in 10 boys engage in self-injury today in the U.S. (Monto, et al., 2018). According to the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (2018), Native American male (identified) youth are the most likely population to think and attempt suicide; Black teen boys are closely second. Espey et al. (2014) reported that suicide was the 6th leading cause of death for American Indians/Alaska Natives compared with Whites between 1999 and 2009. Additionally, a survey conducted by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2019) reported that 1 out of every 4 teenage girls and 1 out of every 10 teenage boys in the Latinx community has considered suicide in the year prior to the survey (Ivey-Stephenson, et al., 2020). Suicidal ideation and behaviors among high school students—youth risk behavior

survey, United States, 2019. MMWR supplements, 69(1), 47.. This data is separate from other violence that interrupts thriving and literally extinguishes life.

The Federal Health Program for American Indians and Alaska Natives (2016) stated that specifically American Indians and Alaska Natives are also still dying at higher rates than other groups in the U.S. in categories such as chronic liver disease and cirrhosis, diabetes mellitus, unintentional injuries, assault/homicide, intentional self-harm/suicide, and chronic lower respiratory diseases. The Urban Indian Health Institute (UIHI.org) reported that 5,712 cases of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) were reported in 2016; murder is the 3rd leading cause of death among American Indian Alaaskan Native women; 29 is median age of MMIW.

Another form of violence plagues "modern" society, affecting all races: mass shootings. In my lifetime, the Columbine school massacre haunted us; my middle school, in particular, had copycats. Strangely, schools don't teach us about what drives a person to commit such acts and why they are called "criminal." The only violence schools taught/teach about were wars, which were all justified according to educators across the U.S., even today. There is no "home ec" class devoted to direct instruction of or critical analysis about why youth want to end the lives of others or themselves. Is there a connection between the dehumanization of youth in schools and their inability to attain justice? Can we ask why, on July 26, 1764, a Lenape youth shot and killed a school "master" and killed about 10 of their peers? On November 2, 1852 a school "master" was killed for punishing a child the day before. We also know that another boy sought revenge on his teacher for being whipped on December 22, 1868. Can we figure out how to stop interrupting the thriving of our future?

Mass shootings were at an all time high before the global COVID19 epidemic. The nonprofit group Gun Violence Archive (GVA), which tracks every mass shooting in the U.S., explained that the year 2019 saw 417 mass shootings - the highest number of mass shootings in any year since; also GVA recently reported that this March 2020 was the first since 2002 in which there was not a mass school shooting. This not only influences how our youth see and treat life but also has drastic traumatic consequences. It took a global pandemic to keep youth from wanting to kill their peers and teachers. Such dire data deeply concerns Indigenous people, like my Manabita community, who fight to nurture all living beings.

Bacigal (2020), communications director at Indigenous Climate Action, made connections between colonization, patriarchy, and environmental destruction. Sto:lo author Lee Maracle (2015) asks whether "the degradation of the life conditions of living beings can be such that suicide seems their only option" (p. 52), further adding that, "in the oral records of Indigenous people, animal, and flora, the business of war and mass suicide tend to travel in tandem. They are connected to each other, and so are their habitats" (p. 53). In other words, there may be a strong correlation between deteriorating living conditions, hostile ecosystems, and/or strong feelings of devaluation in society and auto-extinction. These views seem to match present day research. Students of Color in the U.S. became a majority in the 2013-14 school year (Hussar & Bailey, 2014) and continue to face deculturalization, forced assimilation and other traumas related to colonial structures. Worse, data showed that approximately 850,000 high school students didn't have access to a school counselor and that 1.6 million students went to a school that employed a sworn law-enforcement officer, but no counselor (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). These statistics add to the lack of wellbeing of youth of Color in schools today in the U.S.

All of the above are examples of *not* thriving. One can conclude that a serious lack of adequate socio-emotional and psychological nourishment in schools interrupts human thriving. Though my research does not directly contribute to ameliorating such problems in schools, I predict that extending tattoo knowledges with youth of color can offer insight into ways that schools can be altered towards a more positive, more equitable manner.

Piecing what *is* thriving

Andean metaphysics sees the world as alive and sees all matter as spiritual (all things have spirit). We believe in a reciprocal relationship with all living sentient beings in which we show gratitude daily, in all acts, and act to nourish our interconnectivity and, thus, ensure our survival. My Manabí mayores first began educating me about what thriving is through sharing narratives about the "violent, beautiful, revolutionary pieces of my culture and ancestry" (Lamar & Guzmán, 2019, p. 99) on Abya Yala. Manabí people believe it is our duty to ensure that all sentient beings on Pachamama have food, clothing, and shelter. As my tío Ulvio Ítalo used to say, "No hay bastante, pero hay suficiente" (Lamar, 2019, p. 167), meaning we are responsible for each other; even if resources are scarce, it is our duty to share with all living beings because we are interrelated, or exist in concatenation.

Beyond ensuring that each individual is living with the minimum to survive - food, clothing, and shelter - some gente originaria like mi familia also believe that oral and musical storytelling cultivates thriving in all life. Growing up I often saw los mayores singing or reading to our plants as they watered or fertilized them. They've taught me songs, chants, stories and rituals for mourning plants when they don't blossom or if they die. Our mayores explain that all living beings are sentient and that life flourishes best through being fed Pachamama's fruits and the stories and songs she gives us. These are the saberes passed down from our ancestors.

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Storytelling has an impressive and ongoing tradition in Indigenous (Deloria, 1969), African-American (Bell,1987, 1992, 1996; Lawrence, 1992) communities. As Delgado and Stefancic (1998) observed, "oppressed groups have known instinctively that stories are an essential tool to their own survival and liberation"'(p.238). We believe that art in various forms adds extra sustenance to the natural development of living sentient beings. These worldviews of my Afro Indigenous family first helped me conceptualize thriving.

Western science is catching up to the knowledges shared by my ancestors. Across many disciplines, there is now empirical data that shows how oral communication between living beings inspires extraordinary growth in a multitude of ways. Research by the Royal Horticultural Society (2019), for example, concluded that talking to plants encourages faster and successful growth (Alleyne, 2009). Medical researchers (East et al., 2010) have shown how reflecting on storytelling may develop resilience in people. Specifically, music has been shown to have a positive impact on the physical and physiological conditions of living organisms (Ramekar et al., 2016). Beethoven's (1801) "Moonlight Sonata," in one study, was played to rice plants and proved to support quicker growth in rice plants and they blossomed to bloom earlier (Jeong, et al., 2008). Similarly, a curious study by the Bern University of the Arts (2018) in Switzerland hypothesized that exposing semi-hard cheeses to different types of music during the maturing process would cause different sensory properties to develop. Swiss chefs, politicians, and artists in the study concurred that the cheeses which "listened" to Hip Hop were sweeter than other cheeses (Balibouse & Mantovani, 2019); cheese preferred "Jazz (We've Got)" from Hip-Hop legend A Tribe Called Quest over Vril's "UV," Mozart's "The Magic Flute," and Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven." Is human vitality, like cheese, not just in need of art, but transformed by what is related through song and story? The late neurologist Oliver Sacks (2008) explained:

Music brings us together in song and dance, in ritual and play. It inspires and consoles us. It is a way to pass down traditions from generation to generation ... Humans are uniquely able to produce and enjoy music—very few other animals can do so. But not only is music one of the fundamental ways we bond with each other, it literally shapes our brains.

His research showed the positive effects of musical therapy on people with aphasia, Parkinson's disease, Tourette's syndrome, Alzhemer's and other dementias (Sacks, 2007). The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences published research that provided evidence that music enhanced connectivity (implicated in sensory and higher-order cognitive functions) in some altered parts of preterm infant brains (Lordier et al., 2019). Another study showed how music instruction gives consistent benefits for spatiotemporal reasoning skills in youth (Črnčec, et al., 2006). While music has been studied extensively to determine its impact on the growth of living organisms, my dissertation seeks to explore whether storytelling with another art form - tattoos - affects youth in similarly positive ways.

Educational journals show some scholarship on the thriving of teachers, Australian college students, and Black deaf college students. Research on the thriving of teachers (Nieto, 2009) revealed that those with choice, partnerships, working within an open climate in schools that promote dialogue, interaction and collaboration alongside allowing for learning about themselves, their students, and their students' communities all accounted for thriving. Research from the University of South Australia (Richardson, et al., 2012) found, "that thriving students are engaged intellectually, socially and emotionally, while those just surviving tend to be isolated, disillusioned and overwhelmed" (p. 90). Another study described resistance (against audism) as part of thriving alongside feeling support and encouragement from families and friends and usage of support services such as tutoring and engagement in opportunities of college

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(Stapleton, 2014). In other words, community, including but not limited to the nuclear family, helps sustain college students.

Digging through numerous articles about thriving, it is important to note that none of the articles I found gave a working definition of thriving. Unremarkably, I did not find scholarship on thriving, specifically, for Indigenous K-12 students. In particular, students grouped as "Latinx" or "Hispanic," like Black students, are most often talked about with deficit language and rarely recognized for flourishing in schooling and or academic achievement (Brown, 2013; Delpit, 1995; Matias, 2016a; b). Teachers have been found to uphold views that paint people of color as lazy and victims of their circumstances and perpetuate the myth of American meritocracy (Picower, 2009). For example, one report (Young, 2016) showed that teachers had implicit biases against Black children as young as preschool aged and teachers were only empathic towards children with (named) traumas in their lives if the children were of the same race as the teacher. Young (2016) describes implicit biases as "subtle, sometimes subconscious stereotypes held by white teachers, which had been shown to result in lower expectations and rates of gifted program referrals for black students" (retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/04/black-students-teachers-implicit-racial-bias-preschool-study). Though I did not find many articles about thriving, researching "thriving" led me to articles about happiness. Cartagena (2019) investigated happiness across African American, Asian American, and Latinx students in public schools and found that satisfying teacher–student relationships may promote happiness via meeting psychological needs.

According to Merriam Webster online, "thriving" is simply an adjective meaning "characterized by success or prosperity" (accessed at https://www.merriam-webster.com). But what is success, to whom, how, when and where? What does prosperity look like? What are the

attributes of a living sentient being who is thriving? As my questions remained unquenched, I looked elsewhere for answers. To understand the dictionary's definition, I connected it with a graphic (Figure 5) provided by the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation's (Litz, 2013):Litz

Figure 5 "*Stress First Aid for Firefighters and Emergency Services Personnel" graphic*

Thriving "I got this."	Surviving "Something isn't right."	Struggling "I can't keep this up."	In Crisis "I can't survive this."
Calm and steady with minor mood fluctuations	Nervousness, sadness, increased mood fluctuations	Persistent fear, panic, anxiety, anger, pervasive sadness, hopelessness	Disabling distress and loss of function
Able to take things in stride	Inconsistent performance	Exhaustion	Panic attacks
Consistent performance	More easily overwhelmed or irritated	Poor performance and difficulty making decisions or concentrating	Nightmares or flashbacks
Able to take feedback and to adjust to changes of plans	Increased need for control and difficulty adjusting to changes	Avoiding interaction with coworkers, family, and friends	Unable to fall or stay asleep
Able to focus	Trouble sleeping or eating	Fatigue, aches and pains	Intrusive thoughts
Able to communicate effectively	Activities and relationships you used to enjoy seem less interesting or even stressful	Restless, disturbed sleep	Thoughts of self-harm or suicide
Normal sleep patterns and appetite	Muscle tension, low energy, headaches	Self-medicating with substances, food, or other numbing activities	Easily enraged or aggressive
			Careless mistakes an inability to focus
			Feeling numb, lost, or out of control
			Withdrawl from relationships
			Dependence on substances, food, or other numbing activities to cope

Adapted from: Watson, P., Gist, R., Taylor, V. Evlander, E., Leto, F., Martin, R., Vaught, D., Nash, W.P., Westphal, R., & Litz, B. (2013). Stress First Aid for Firefighters and Emergency Services Personnel. National Fallen Firefighters Foundation.

While this graphic is helpful for conceptualizing thriving, just as the dictionary definition these only seem to fit the Western binary capitalist patriarchy paradigm. Additionally, some of the terms used in the explanations are ableist constructs which completely disregard neurodiversity and physical diversity in beings. Thriving is defined here by "I've got this," which is described with words like "performance," "adjust to changes of plans," "focus," "effectively," and "normal" bodily functions. The Western binary capitalist patriarchy paradigm is concerned with production - that is what is generally considered "success." Wellness is established individually and physically, which is tied to or determined by the ability to function in working scenarios.

Even within the narrowly defined definition of thriving, as stated previously, schools in the U.S. are still pressed for meeting the socio-emotional, psychological and physical needs of students. The knowledges and ways of being instilled in schools do not even account for youth of Color. Purposefully. This begs the questions: What knowledges or ways of being nourish thriving? Are some of these knowledges situated on inked skin? Does tattoo storytelling, like other art forms, cultivate thriving in our youth? The following sections will respond to my questions here.

Situating Tattoos

This research project was unofficially seeded about twenty years ago when I did not feel as though I was thriving. I planned my first inking after experiencing the loss of a friend, which I briefly alluded to above. My first tattoo came two years after one of my friends committed suicide and I contemplated the meaning of life. Through an existential crisis, I was drawn to a symbol that captured my faith, philosophy and the complex emotions I experienced at the time. My first tattoo functions today to remind me about loss and the grieving process.

My investigations for this dissertation study began the fall of 2016 during a course by Django Paris titled "Youth, Language and Literacy." In the course, we explored the ways youth engage in oral and written communication in cultural practices and activities such as spoken-word poetry, rap, graffiti and tattoos. I, then, set out to better understand what is communicated and what knowledges are embedded off-paper. Following the explorations of Kirkland (2009) in which bodies are treated as contested spaces and "permanent bruises act as sites of struggle and storytelling" (p. 378), I began to investigate how art and marginalized knowledges expressed therein are situated on contested spaces. Kirkland explains that tattoos can function to "better understand literacy as a practice not limited to technical, prescribed, or academic functions that

privilege and serve only specific forms of texts and groups of people" (p. 376). Hence, while

schools in the U.S. proliferate the idea that literacy happens through reading and writing, tattoos

offer "evidence of performed or human deeds- [which] can be explored for radical content quite

similar to how literary critics pore over texts for meaning (p. 378-379). As there are multiple

ways of knowing and being literate, or having literacies, my dissertation is focused on what

knowledges are expressed through art on bodies. I wondered how marginalized folx "curate an

imagined and real self" (Wargo, 2017, p. 560) and if tattoos contained these personal narratives.

For me, tattoos are puzzles that require pieces of interrelated lived-experiences and

narratives in various temporal spatial dimensions in order to make some sense. Tattoos have

meanings that vary perspectives for wearers and observers. When I began research for this

dissertation project, I didn't even know where to go to learn about the history of tattooing or

where to find engaging stories about why and how people get tattoos and what are the various

meanings of the symbols/figures/words etched on the epidermis. Then, during a preliminary

exploratory search through my institution's libraries and Google, my research about the history

of tattoos astonished me. The two oldest preserved tattoos found by scientific research so far

belong to bodies on Abya Yala and Europe. Ötzi, a Tyrolean Iceman who passed around 3250

B.C.E., bears 61 marks around their body, which are believed to be the oldest preserved tattoos

in science's hands (Deter-Wolf et al., 2016). A Chinchorro mummy of over 4,000 years with

markings on their face is believed to be the second oldest. In Ancient Egypt, tattoos have

predominantly been found on women's bodies who were "dancing girls" or slaves; some

evidence shows that some high-ranked women were tattooed as well (Huehnergard & Liebowitz,

2013). Facial tattoos are historically common for Berber women in Tunisia or in remote parts of

northeastern Myanmar, though they are less common today (Huehnergard & Liebowitz, 2013).

I found another answer to my inquiries watching a December 2018 TedTalk. Nanotechnologist Carson Bruns shared his work of creating high-tech tattoos that react to their environment and can deliver real-time information about human health. Though Bruns (2019) recognized that the oldest tattoos had function (acupuncture), he concluded,

> *I envision a future where tattoos enable us - tattooable wires and tattooable electronics enable us to merge our technologies with our bodies so they feel more like extensions of ourselves rather than external devices. In the future, tattoos will not only be beautiful, they'll be functional too"* (2018, retrieved from https://ted2srt.org/talks/carson_bruns_could_a_tattoo_help_you_stay_healthy).

While my first tattoo functions to remember and work through the human condition of suffering, there are also other medical purposes to tattoos (even some of my own).

Tattoo function and meaning is commonly linked to mythology, to Indigenous history, to religious affiliation, to statements about personal values and beliefs and is sometimes used to identify the social or religious groups to which the wearers belong; additionally, tattoos sometimes proclaim dedication to a lover, celebrate a life-changing event, or honor a departed respected chief or elder (Huehnergard & Liebowitz, 2013). Further, extensive research by Huehnergard and Liebowitz (2013) revealed that some tattoos demonstrate marriage eligibility, such as tattoos of Tofi women of Papua New Guinea, or to signal that a man is a warrior, such as in Borneo and Tahiti.

As I continued learning about tattoos, I spent some time taking in some visual arts. In the episode "Tattoo" on the Netflix show *Explained*, anthropologist Lars Krutak (2018) explains that, "[w]e have this natural impulse to mark significant life-changing events." The impulse extends to branding our bodies. Body inking, I also learned, has long been used as part of pain relief treatments (Krutak, 2012; 2013; Pesapane et al., 2014) and has acted to negotiate relationships between individuals and their society, nature, and the spiritual realm (Krutak, 2007;

2012). The teacher in me began to wonder: has any of this ever been used in K-12 curriculum? If so, how? If not, why?

My question as to why tattoo knowledges have not been utilized in school curriculum was answered when I investigated how tattoos are treated in U.S. mainstream society. I found that there are still associations of tattoos with lower social class and behaviors such as substance abuse and risky sexual activity (King & Vidourek, 2013). My own experiences seem related to this. As early as elementary school, I would draw on my arms or legs with friends during lessons or at recess. When seen by my family, I received lessons from the elders about how body modification, such as piercings or tattoos, were part of ancient Manabí communal rituals during which honored leaders with great accomplishments were marked. In modern times, tattoos have no "real" purpose, the elders would say. Our mayores cautioned against them present day, explaining that inked people are treated as deviants in our current space in time, having migrated to the north of the continent.

The messages I got from teachers about tattoos were that people with inked skin are associated with drugs, criminality, and "bad behavior." I didn't understand how or why then, and I still do not understand the correlation. Just because criminals wear tattoos does not mean tattoos cause drug addiction or criminality! What is criminalized in a world where slavery was once perfectly legal?

Interestingly, though not shocking, my research has pointed me to the fact that negative sanctions against tattoos have a relatively short history corresponding to colonialism and the imposition of monotheistic religions (Pesapane et al., 2014). The Hebrew Bible says something similar to: "You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh ... nor tattoo any marks on you: I am the Lord" (Leviticus 19:28). There has not been too much investigation as to why this is

demanded of people but it is a "rule" that has been established by such dogma. Religious leaders have interpreted this passage as a literal rule bestowed upon "the creator" to all of humankind. Huehnergard and Liebowitz (2013) researched this and found that in the biblical period, only slaves in Mesopotamia and Egypt were marked and that "tattooing was associated with the mark of slavery" or servitude (p. 74). In other words, a social hierarchy exist(ed) in which the ruling class was free to own those of "lower-classes" and, thus, marked or branded such people. Folks who accept and function within a social hierarchy, perhaps, have internalized that "lesser" people only have "marked" bodies. The problem of assimilation or body-control extends to public institutions such as schools in the U.S., which impose many official and non-official rules and regulations based on Western religious ideologies brought to Abya Yala by European invader settler colonizers.

Researchers such as Deter-Wolf and colleagues (2016) date the ostracization of tattoos to just about 1700 years ago when the Eboracum army proclaimed Constantine I a "Roman Greek emperor," a man who converted to Christianity and ruled between 306 to 337. It is documented that he believed that, "the human image was a representation of God and should not be disfigured or defiled" (Pesapane et al., 2014, p. 145). While the practice of tattooing the body was never fully accepted by Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, they were specifically prohibited in the year 787 among Christians by Pope Hadrian I (Pesapane et al., 2014, p. 145). As Christianity began infiltrating Abya Yala through invasion, colonial structures began dominating many aspects of society; many official and non-official rules and regulations have since been created aligning to biblical interpretations of what is "goodness" and "proper" conduct.

While my mayores were subject to specific etiquette lessons in their schooling, today such ideas have been rebranded and have insidiously creeped into common pedagogy of schools

in the United States. Neoliberal mandates and policies created for schools often hold teachers and students accountable to what seem to be arbitrary standards. Research by Perry (2020) tells us that enforced codes of conduct in U.S. schools today inculcate those White Christian cultural norms and ways of life are "advanced and [the] most beneficial way of living for everyone, including non-Whites" (Warren, 2012, p. 199) and require acquiescence to established norms. So, while hegemonic standards are appealing to some people, society obliges all with the rules that privilege those with proximity to hegemonic White Christian culture. Schools foster compliance, not consent, of these standards or functions within "ideological hegemony theory" (Tozer et al., 1998). Under the banking model of education (Freire, 1970), ideological hegemony theory is standard and authority should never be questioned.

U.S. society still treats tattoos as part of a sub- or counter-culture (Atkinson, 2004) and tattoos are still raced, classed, gendered, and stigmatized in many realms of colonial U.S. society, including schools. The ruling class criminalizes those who do not conform to established laws across fields (Atkinson, 2003; Copes & Forsyth, 1993; DeMello, 2000; Irwin, 2000) and often relate tattooing to cultural deviance and as part of disenfranchised communities. Further, pediatric medical researchers (Carrol et al., 2002) have created studies which correlated participants with tattoos and engagement in "risk-taking" behaviors. This elucidates how there is already pre-conceived notions as to what tattoos convey - how they are viewed and treated in society.

Educational institutions and policies now use words like "professional" to define what is deemed "proper" in schools. For example, there is still enforcement in schools today about student appearance and even how parents are supposed to present themselves (Dillard, 2019). Grooming standards conform to iterations of white supremacy (Joseph-Salisbury 2018a;

Latimore 2017) and Black hair, in particular, is subject to inequitable disciplinary measures (Jackson 2005; Lazar 2018; Pells 2016; Taylor 2011). Just as hair is policed in U.S. schools today, body autonomy is limited and controlled in many educational spaces. Tattoos can be situated here.

Scholarship I found when I began this research seemed to fit into one of three categories: (a) the psychology of people who have tattoos,(b) the science behind tattooing, and (c) negative aspects about getting permanent ink. Some articles focused on specific complications that may arise through the tattooing process (Kazandjieva & Tsankov, 2007; Koljonen & Kluger, 2012; Long & Rickman, 1994) while others focused on the treatment (Bernstein, 2006) or removal of tattoos (Kuperman-Beade et al., 2001). Other articles focused on assessing the motives (Grumet, 1983) and self-perception of tattooed persons (Armstrong, et al., 2009; Kosut, 2006); how college students perceive tattoos (Broussard & Harton, 2017; Dickson et al., 2014) including how (Western) religious beliefs inform perceptions about tattoos (Koch et al., 2004); and some researchers attempted to link tattooing and "risky behavior" of college students (Carroll et al., 2002; King & Vidourek, 2011).

Conservative Christian values have informed how tattoos have been stigmatized and outlawed in public spaces, such as schools, and treated as being part of the underclass (Atkinson, 2004). Since the 19th century tattoos have been reintroduced and popularized in many societies across economic classes and, an Ipsos poll showed that three in ten U.S. people have at least one tattoo (2012). Still, due to disparaging treatment, tattoo counterstories are not commonly taught or studied in schools, though I argue they may hold the key to what nourishes life. While Kirkland's (2009) pedagogical ethnographic research on the tattoos of a Black male high school

student greatly informed this dissertation study, I have not found many additional "academic" educational articles that relate specifically to the knowledges of the ink on our skin.

Seeking research on tattoo knowledges within K-12 curriculum, instruction, or teacher education, I found one study. Stuckey and Eilks (2014) conducted research with ninth graders who were involved with doing hands-on experiments with tattoo inks of varying quality in a chemistry class. The research showed that students experienced an increased level of engagement with this lesson compared with standard school chemistry lessons. But does "increased engagement" mean the students feel as though these lessons contribute in any way to their thriving?

I believe that (some) tattoo narratives can defy hegemonic societal views or perspectives and, thus, can be referred to as counter-stories. They are, afterall, narratives related to and told by folx marginalized in society. As I read through article after article, I began wondering: Which tattoo counterstories may contribute to the thriving of K-12 students? How might learning about this type of art impact people? This led me to the three specific research questions I mentioned earlier:

1. What are some counter-narratives expressed or depicted in tattoos?
2. How can these knowledges inform what is thriving?
3. How can educators utilize these knowledges to support the thriving of students?

Methods and Analysis

As a culture worker who belongs to an oppressed people my job is to make revolution irresistible. - Toni Cade Bambara

Shiminakuna Mezcla'o Methodology

"Shiminakuna" is the Kichwa word for dialogue or pact. Knowledge is created about the world through collective action and dialogue with others. To work towards equity in society

means participating in Black Indigenous Liberation. Shor (1992) specifies that students should critically analyze,

> racism, sexism, class hierarchy, homophobia, militarism, excessive consumerism, self-reliant individualism, environmental waste, the elite monopoly on the mass media, the bureaucratic control of institutions like schools and colleges, and the fascination with the rich and powerful cultivated by the dominant media" (p. 130).

If students are engaged in critical analysis about the world around them they can be part of ameliorating the world around them of these woes because, as Freire (1970) explained, "To exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it" (p. 69). A defining trait of humanity is people's ability to make sense of and alter the world on one's own volition. Interpreting reality is not static or complete. Rather, it evolves as new information is acquired and actions become endeavors. Conscientização (conscientization) is this process; Freire (1973) describes this dialogue as a horizontal relationship when there is a "relation of 'empathy' between two poles' who are engaged in a joint search" (p. 45) as opposed to anti-dialogue,a vertical relationship with a broken "relation of 'empathy" (p. 46). Similar to Habermas' (1971; 1973a) ideal speech situation where all the parties stand on equal footing, in the Freirean tradition "democracy" refers to a state of affairs in which everyone has an equal ability to shape collective or communal knowledge. Hierarchies are seen as antidemocratic because they amplify the voices of certain individuals or groups while silencing others. Democracy is not the ideology I propose, moving forward on this Land. Designing my research methodology led me to address ways to transgress from ways of the occidental.

The goal is to give power back to the Land and Her ways of being; Her children are the protectors, we have been gifted with Her knowledges. Andean worldviews inform my ways of knowing and being and have guided my identity as a student, an educator, educational researcher, artivist and abolitionist. The first aspect of our cosmobiovision is the non-hierarchical interrelatedness of all living beings (we are all Pachamama across space and time; humans are not superior to any other living beings; nothing is inert). The holistic vision of the Andean worldview is a way of "seeing" and pensasiento (thinking and feeling), of perceiving and intuiting. The cosmic and biological worldviews of Andean people include different spatial-temporal states of consciousness which exist in nonlinear time. Further, through la cosmobiovisión Andina, unity, reciprocity and autobastezca (self-sufficiency) are centered - we care for ourselves by sharing and without taking from others in basic solidarity. We do not deny care of other living, sentient beings. We do our best to embody our ideologies in all aspects of our lives. For this dissertation research I searched for ways of building community and uplifting us as I learned what is thriving throughout the process.

From these worldviews emerges Shiminakuna Mezcla'o Methodology (SMM, see also Chapter 2 of this dissertation), which attempts to translate the Andean concepts in order to utilize its foundations for qualitative ethnographic epistemological research. SMM methodology involves indigenizing spaces or divestment from colonial research methods (namely anthropological) and engagement with sensorial dimensions and perceptions, rational thinking, meditation and spirituality or intuition as well as non-structured, authentic, transformational relationships and a common goal of emancipation. SMM rethinks the White supremacist transactional relationship form of common research on humans and non-humans. Transactional relationships uphold capitalist values because they emphasize being economic and functional and

are based on exchange of money, goods, or services. In research this looks like relationships between researcher and subjects, participants or collaborators lasting for the length of a study and solely for the "official" purposes of study. The aim of SMM is to allow for authentic development of relationships but also purposefully trying to build upon common values, such as solidarity. SMM is not democratic because it centers Black and Indigenous ways of knowing and being - not inclusive or towards "sharing" power with invaders on the Land but moving away from Western views about power and power-hoarding altogether.

SMM is an entirely separate methodological paradigm and not just the opposite or a derivative of Western methodologies (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Walter & Andersen, 2016). Specifically, SMM aims to act subversively and to further radicalize progressive researchers and participants, called collaborators hereafter, who may be involved in decolonial efforts that mean to restore ancestral ways of knowing and being. Recentering Indigenous and Afro Indigenous knowledges and knowledge-making is what planted SMM.

Uniting Shiminakuna, or "plática" in Spanish (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016; González Ybarra, 2018; Preuss & Saavedra 2014) and multimodality (Hodge &Kress, 1988; Kress & Bezemer, 2009; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996; 2001), is a multimodal ethnographic qualitative research method that centers African and Indigenous ways of knowing. Operationally, SMM aims to dismantle colonial structures by interrogating every aspect of research beginning with asking "Why structures?" and "To what end?" SMM pushes researchers and collaborators to engage in the sometimes difficult conversations about power, privilege and oppression.

SMM begins first with relationship building. We are each other's keepers. The way we come to know, according to Andean cosmobiovisión for example, is through our intuition and senses, meditation/praying and through research. The world vision stresses that we are not only

accountable but also responsible for caring about and for all other living beings and it is our duty to address harmonious living. The common Western paradigm, in sharp contrast, centers individual learning through literal senses and research alone, valuing "logic" (in the Greek philosophy sense) above all other modes of learning and knowing; racialized researchers are often told they are "too close" to a subject of study if one investigates epistemology or ontology of one's own ancestry or background. Having intimate knowledge of a subject - because one is expert of their own lived experiences - is valued less than venturing beyond, interculturally. It is not treated as rigorous or unbiased if one researches their own culture because it is seen as anecdote-sharing. However, I contend, as Brayboy's (2005) mother elucidated, "locating theory as something absent from stories and practices is problematic in many Indigenous communities and in the work of anthropologists who seek to represent Indigenous communities" (p. 426).

In educational research, we engage with collaborators by observing, using our senses, and asking questions to (single or group) collaborators and other (written) sources, for "data." Researchers are often asked to remain "neutral" and "not get close" with collaborators (CITE). There is an invisible line not to be crossed to remain valid. Praying about collaborators or for guidance about the folx involved and the direction of our work is rarely if ever spoken about because we must also separate ourselves from our spirituality unless it is explicitly the subject of study (CITE). Similarly, meditation or seeking or channeling intuition to make decisions about collaborators is uncommon in what is labeled "scientific research." For this research project, all of who I am is brought into the spaces with my collaborators, vulnerability included, in attempts to treat us as equals. Further, in attempts to make "the (Black Indigenous Liberation) revolution irresistible" (Bambara, 2012) I pushed for conscientização (Freire, 1970), or critical consciousness through explicitly centering Black\Indigenous knowledges during conversations

with the contributors. This involved a lot of vulnerability from researcher and collaborators,

which was sometimes unwelcome.

Vulnerability does not usually happen without some level of trust. And trust is tricky to

cede to since we have - under the imperialist White supremacist capitalist patriarchy (hooks,

1997) - been trained to be suspicious of our neighbors and see/treat them as competitors for

limited resources. In the case of my dissertation research, which depicts parts of the actual bodies

of collaborators, making them identifiable, trust is needed to co-construct knowledges so that

ideas are not misconstrued or misinterpreted. To create authentic relationships and in attempts to

share power with them, I first approached collaborators for "Bethinking Our Inking" (BOI)

whom I already knew and based on my authentic curiosity about the stories behind their tattoos.

Then, I explained and contacted each individual with honesty, explaining in the "Purpose of

Research" section of the IRB approved "Research Participant Information and Consent Form"

(Appendix A):

> *The purpose of this study is to understand the knowledges on the tattooed skin of graduate student instructors who attended a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) in the Midwest between 2015 and 2020. The goal was to make meaning with participants about. Participants were also invited to contribute to the research project with ideas and images during any moment they wished, to co-construct knowledge (especially during the creative component of my dissertation, in which I created comic-book superheroes based on my participants!).*

I did not prepare or curate or stage a presence for my interviews or interactions with

collaborators. I showed up in pajamas, smoking, eating, wearing amulets or political slogans,

with "messy hair," wearing big hoops—I purposely did not wear a suit and attempt to be

"professional." I meditated, at times, to still my Western-trained mind so that I could just be my

genuine self during our interactions. Most importantly, I maintained my values and points of

view and highlighted my culture in my interactions with collaborators - I made the marginalized

parts of myself visible in interactions. This is important to authenticity, which is imperative for

SMM to unfold and reveal the epistemologies and ontologies of those of whom we engage.

Operationally, SMM is quite different from other qualitative methodologies that seek

similar goals. During each interaction, for example, that I had with my collaborators or their

data, I would only think and try to focus on what I could learn about thriving and did not use a

standard set of questions for each collaborator. Rather, I had the broad question about "what is

the story of the tattoo" but based other questions on how I felt about individual tattoos and what

they meant to me. I did not hide my beliefs or my reaction to things collaborators said during our

interactions. On the contrary, I engaged with collaborators in socio-emotional conversations and

political discourse based on what was actually concerning me at the moment and/or based on

what we posted on various social media.

Shiminakuna Mezcla'o is meant for educational research that seeks community

solidarity. Important in this pursuit is the idea that,

> *[c]oalitions that are productive are based on principled associations of mutual understanding and respect, not just declarations of solidarity that mean well but because of privileges of class, "race" or ethnicity, gender, and sexuality do not engage the work of transforming such subjectivity* (Perez, 2010, p. 123).

Transformation is a long arduous process and it is important to reiterate this. The present

capitalist pandemic coupled with the current widespread global COVID19 health crisis may lead

folx to look for quick fixes, but I strongly urge researchers to seek the benefits of SMM as they

intend to heal from the degradation brought forth by colonialism and its structures that remain

alive and well today.

Collaborators y La Causa

When I considered collaborators, I first thought about folx who align with my fight towards Black Indigenous Liberation - I wanted to be surrounded by people, their visions, passions, ideas and their fight pushing the movement forward. I wished to find collaborators committed to the thriving of Black and Brown bodies and I hoped for collaborators that would be open, honest and comfortable with me learning from and engaging with them through various avenues including anything publicly accessible.

The collaborators who lasted throughout this ongoing study were ones who were about *La Causa.* The goal of all my educational research is to fight for our collective liberation by centering knowledges and ways of being from Alkebulan and Abya Yala - this *is* La Causa. My view of ethics requires me to defend, honor, protect and uplift the Black and Brown bodies that continue to be denigrated, oppressed, silenced and erased under a hegemonic White system.

In the process of identifying collaborators for this project I considered superficial matters. On the surface, some folx have incredibly beautiful ink art. One layer in, I learned tattoo narratives of individuals. Another layer consisted of coupling these stories with an extensive literature review and deep dive into tattoo socio-historical epistemology, ontology and modern day culture. Next I sought depth by asking if there is a connection between the ink on individual skin and their ways of living? Do certain ideas drive or nourish the tattoo wearer's thriving? Personally, each of my own tattoos binds me to my ancestry, my purpose, my self-determination and drive; my first tattoo embodies my spiritual beliefs and my second describes my political views. I wondered if this was the case for other people with ink and I considered how iterations of our viewpoints inked on our skin encouraged our living the way other art has been proven to nourish the soul.

"Bethinking Our Inking" began with my family. It seems as though every single person in my community that has tattoos has at least one about us and many have ink that describes our relationship to our Land as well. I decided against sharing my own personal family's knowledges in an academic avenue because I'd like to better protect us. Stemming from that preliminary study with my family, I tried connecting with 12 individuals from my graduate studies life - seeking alignment to a unified vision. In the case of this dissertation study, I wanted to build with folx who are in the fight towards Black Indigenous Liberation.

I created SMM as an experiment towards transformative justice. To get at the root of harm (brown, 2019) may allow me to become more cognizant of the supports needed in place to make space for thriving. There is no formula that can be used to measure thriving. Those who live in that condition are not obvious. When it came time to consider collaborators for the BOI project I just contacted folx who seemed socio-emotionally-physically healthy and well-loved. I did not consider able-ism and how my views about wellness are distorted by my own wellness. My disabilities are not obvious to the naked eye and I have internalized invisibilizing my own disabilities and neurodivergence for the sake of appearing "well" - to need from nobody! I learned throughout the project that this viewpoint affirms hegemony and capitalism's urge for and imposition of individualism.

Though BOI began with 12 graduate students of diverse backgrounds, Table 1 below includes the four collaborators who remained the entirety of the study with an overview of the details of their backgrounds. Pseudonyms are listed alongside identified ethnicity/race, gender, age, and their graduate programs. Additionally, I added the category of "K-12" because I asked collaborators about their kindergarten through twelfth grades experiences through interviews and

also through a "K-12 Student Experience Survey," (Appendix B) in order to gauge their perspectives of what thriving looked like throughout their schooling.

Table 1 Bethinking Our Inking Collaborator Data				
Pseudonym	**Graduate Program**	**Identified Race/ Ethnicity**	**K-12 schools**	**Identified Gender**
Erica	Education	Black	Michigan	Cis-Male
Búho	Community Psychology	Salvadorian/ Latina	Florida	Cis-Female
Sandra	Community Psychology	Chicana/ Latina	California	Cis-Female
Julián	Chicano Latino Studies	Chicano	Texas	Cis-Male

I intentionally selected collaborators from a variety of academic disciplines and was also intentional about selecting collaborators across lines of race and gender and time and space. That is to say, I sought varying tattoo narratives from folx with diverse backgrounds and lived experiences. All collaborators were asked if they wanted to choose their own pseudonyms or they allowed me to pick their pseudonym. Three collaborators chose their own pseudonyms and the remaining one was given the opportunity to give feedback about their pseudonym when they were given access to check the data.

Prior to studying various meanings of thriving, I considered what I observed in my day-to-day life. Thriving individuals should be successful in multiple aspects. When I considered thriving individuals, I thought about aspects beyond having food, clothing and housing-security.

Though graduate students, in general, suffer in multiple ways - psychologically, socially, emotionally, financially, etc - I believed that "they made it this far" due to safety, some sort of support system in place in their lives, some level of health\wellness and joy.

The most important aspect of collaborator selection for me was relational. I believe that tattoos tell us cuentos about those who ink their bodies. For my dissertation study I chose collaborators with which I felt comfortable sharing my values, beliefs, politics and my own body art. I do not often feel as though I can be open about my various identities without being shamed; sadly, my research reveals this is all too common. So, my relationship with the individuals ranged from acquaintance to roommate at one time and through Shiminakuna Mezcla'o Methodology I gained the courage to be radically honest. With time I became comfortable enough to push for conversations specifically centering race, racism, colonialism and capitalism.

I tried checking in with collaborators often and I became very close to three of the collaborators directly because of this study and our radicalization processes through having those difficult conversations. The relationships that strengthened during this study aligned with the anticolonial SMM goal of building community. Whereas colonial capitalist relations exist so far as there is something to be gained, profit or to exalt the individual, to counter this there is purposeful connection and unity between folks and horizontal power relationability. Through multiple levels of interaction, sometimes hitting difficult conversations, I found myself genuinely seeing some of my collaborators as friends.

In the end, I had zero White collaborators. Some simply ghosted; in modern day, "to ghost" means to disappear. I was pressed to find White folx fully invested in the thriving of Black and Brown bodies and what I experienced, instead, was performative allyship and actual silence when I confronted my White collaborators about their anti-Black words and actions while

they acted to maintain their own power and privileges. I refuse to spend too much space writing about the ways that the White almost-collaborators took advantage of even my investigations to elevate their status of allies or to take pride in being "one of the good ones" so the following reporting on findings will sprinkle in some of what I learned from them vaguely and underdeveloped just as our unfulfilling relationships panned out.

Data Sources

During the first phase of data collection a heterogeneous sample of graduate students engaged in plática with me through various communication software and conversations were recorded and transcribed. Data for this research project was collected from Zoom and Skype semistructured active interviews (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002) as well from their posts and stories on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. Additionally, some collaborators exchanged WhatsApp voice and text messaging with me (all recorded within the application). Interviews lasted between 60 to 90 minutes and were divided into topical categories (e.g. digital social practices, navigating online/offline contexts, dialogic selection of exemplar posts), eliciting responses related to the features of their writing about selves across contexts as well as the larger research questions. This process revealed individual her/histories, their tattoo counternarratives and significance of the tattoos on my collaborators.

The 2nd part of data collection involved me feeling obligated to do traditional research and, thus, creating an "Exit Survey" for collaborators (Appendix IV). The goal was to connect and check-up on collaborators. I asked about identities they wished to share and comfort level with various aspects of sharing it within the manuscripts. Then I inquired about their current grad schooling and teaching experiences. And finally, I gauged their feelings about the interview

process by asking them this directly and also requested for any suggestions about the interviewing processes with me.

In the 3rd phase of data collection, I journeyed through and participated in collaborators' virtual geographies (Wargo, 2017) while keeping field notes from these social media observations of my collaborators (which acted as fieldwork sites). Then, during the 3rd phase of data collection, graduate collaborators responded to a "K-12 Student Experience Survey" (Appendix 2) that aimed to establish a cross-comparison of attributes, backgrounds, and K-12 school experiences to help identify various aspects of thriving. Finally, data was collected with an "Exit Survey" (Appendix 3) which probed into the experience of being a collaborator and being involved in SMM.

Analysis Through an Indigenizing Critical Race Theory Lens

I coded data based on themes found in both the public displays of collaborator tattoos that were used in the study and responses (or dialogue) by followers of the collaborator on social media. First, I coded each tattoo based on the seven categories by the anthropological findings of Krutak (2007; 2012; 2014a); he postulates that tattoos are made:

1. for pain relief

2. to negotiate relationships between individuals and their society

3. to channel and direct preternatural forces or to connect with nature/the spiritual realm

4. to indicate individual coming of age

5. to reflect social status

6. to document martial achievement

7. to demonstrate lineage and group affiliation

The categories put forth by Krutak (2007) served to generalize the purpose of tattoos for collaborators of this project and are outlined in Appendix III. I soon found that these categories were insufficient when I was trying to understand how the ideas represented in tattoos could be tied to individual thriving.

From the multiple ways of communicating, as per SMM, I obtained photographs (screenshots), written and oral text, as well as socio-cultural context in the form of hashtags, memes, GIFs or other modern codes. I looked at their Instagram, their Facebook, their Twitter, I started to see some trends with hashtags that they use. For example, #LivingMyBestLife or the example #BlackJoy. And so when I started to see, so then those themes kind of became more individual.

Instead of saying these are the codes for all of the folks that could be connected to their thriving, I started to look at what the individuals were telling me throughout their social media, through their blogs, through their writing. Because I chose collaborators who were in my grad program, many were familiar with methodology and were open to some experimentation, afterall, some had their own publications. Social media narratives led me to triangulate "data" from their academic publications - like, what they wrote about positionality - and what they narrated via posts and stories on social media. I started to gain a deeper understanding of what thriving means on a different plane.

Shiminakuy involves trusted chat, like vulnerability and shit. During the BOI learning, I had to be authentic (Id-Deen, 2020) like the way middle schoolers tell you directly what's on their mind without sugar coating or hidden intentions. With the BOI collaborators, I kept it 100. I tried to be unapologetically myself and respond or be in dialogue with my collaborators

whenever it was natural as we moved in similar spaces (precisely why I chose folx already in my real life spaces). Whatever I commented on, I tried to follow up in public or in direct messages (DMs) or other mediums such as WhatsApp. All those chats were kept in individual password-locked files in Google Drive. I kept notes, screenshots, recorded videos or voice memos as well as transcribed documents; each collaborators had access to their Google doc.

Coding became very individualized in the second round. My coding the second time around involved me engaging with my praxis, through deliberate efforts to embody solidarity towards Black Indigenous Liberation. This indirectly led to the narrowing of collaborators because I started to understand that for me to be an abolitionist educator and for me to push that through my research and my dissertation and all my work means that I need to be intentional about engaging in, for example, critical race conversations with my collaborators. A shocking reveal (See Findings Section "La Germinación") came from changing the way I do coding.

When I was intentional about indigenizing spaces and critical race theory discourse, the discomfort of some of my collaborators came out and some refused to engage with me thereafter. I lost some of my collaborators because I decided to engage with conversation about race. On the contrary, none of the collaborators shied away from talking about race, racism, power and systemic and institutional inequities. There are things that I learned about these intimate conversations. For example, some collaborators of Color did not want all of the knowledges we communicated to be accessible to everyone. Meaning, some conversations between collaborators and I are not meant to be academically published. So, in terms of "coding" or whatever, that was something I had to make space for when it came to coding and understanding some very complex cultural epistemology.

Decolonization offers a different perspective to human and civil rights based approaches

to justice, an unsettling one, rather than a complementary one. Decolonization is not an

"and". It is an elsewhere (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 36).

Millions of young people wake up each day before el alba, dress in bland uniforms and travel to be still in front of "Knowers" (Freire, 1970). Sorted by grades (age/ability) and gender (folx enforce a gender binary on many occasions throughout the day), once in cell-blocks called "classrooms," the students are expected to sit quietly or silently for several hours per day in groups or in rows that center the Knower of each room. Each Knower is equipped with so MUCH paper and much, much power plus has multiple punitive systems in place (at the behest of themselves) to maintain order and the silent stillness. They speak *at* the young people predominantly Western European epistemology divided into 5 subjects deemed important (Anyon, 1980) in increments of 45 mins (standard) or 90 minutes ("block" schedule). Within the powerlessness of the youth in these cold (both literally and figuratively) factories exists so many measures of failures and cruel punishments, including state-approved actual physical assault. All the content delivered to young people is entirely standardized - even scripted - and is delivered in 9-12 week periods with formative assessments (daily, weekly homework and classwork) and summative assessments (quizzes, tests, examinations). Students, teachers, administrators and many other staff of many, many schools across the U.S. see schools as failing. How is my research - my be - contributing to the complete overhaul of the grotesque colonial institution?

Cultivar Indigenizing Spaces

ALL OF MY PURPOSE

HERE

RIGHT NOW

RIGHT HERE

                                                              is to undo that reality

Indigenizing spaces

   Because we can prove that our way of living was marvelous, healthy

we exist prior to and nowhere near the white gaze

prior to european contact

Elsewhere, privileged children are given a whole different set of rules, epistemologies,

ontologies, curriculum, instruction and teacher education (Anyon, 1980). Along with a range of

time to enter school and classrooms and complete work, in whatever order they come, with

adults in spaces chosen or approved by children (e.g. Montessori, Sudbury, Private schools).

Privileged students are afforded autonomy and choice in learning spaces unlike colonial school

models which mandate work that follows the steps of a (usually) mechanical procedure,

involving rote behavior and very little decision making or choice (Anyon, 1980). To end these

educational inequities means a critique of imperialism and a move to unsettle, undo, unlearn the

colonial ways. As Fanon (1963) describes,

> *Decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is, obviously, a program of complete disorder. But it cannot come as a result of magical practices, nor of a natural shock, nor of a friendly understanding. Decolonization, as we know, is a historical process: that is to say it cannot be understood, it cannot become intelligible nor clear to itself except in the exact measure that we can discern the movements which give it historical form and content" (p. 36).*

Spelled out by Tuck and Yang (2012) "[d]ecolonization brings about the repatriation of

Indigenous land and life; it is not a metaphor for other things we want to do to improve our

societies and schools" (p. 1). As such, decolonization is not just an "activity that seeks to

overcome the modern logic of colonization of natural resources, of the body, and of the mind of everyone but particularly of people of color--that is, of the colonized and enslaved and their descendants" (Isasi-Díaz & Mendieta, 2012, p. 204). Rather, decolonization is a literal returning of Land and life to the original people of an area.

While my dissertation aims to interrupt and combat oppressive conditions brought on by colonial structures that uphold middle-class White European standards through endorsing, proliferating and normalizing counter-narratives, it does not accomplish decolonization; as Tuck and Yang (2012) remind us: "an anti-colonial critique is not the same as a decolonizing framework" (p. 19). Anti-colonialism is simply fighting against imperial rule and colonial powers. Decolonization is the process of giving Land back, - Indigenous sovereignty as literal (Tuck & Yan, 2012). So since, my work cannot give Land back, literally, I turn towards remembering a time before colonization before the White gaze. I use the definition of grassroots organizer, Francisco Antonio Escobar, when I consider that Indigenizing spaces entails "the internal and external assembling of Indigenous cultures and spirit to reconcile, revitalize, and empower what has been lost, stolen, dismantled for future generations" (as per Facebook chat March 2021). Deeper still, I see my work fitting in with rematriation, which is returning to living with the rules of the Land with reciprocity and interconnectedness.

As other ethnic studies scholars, I view my stance as advancing "views from another time/space that disrupts the temporal and spatial coordinates that give sense to the modern/colonial world and its institutions, including the secular university and the religious seminary" (Isasi-Dias & Mendieta, 2012, p. 205). I firmly believe that colonization has led to the direct destruction of all life forms and it is my duty to interrupt colonial structures and involve myself in its destruction. Only time will tell whether my work has contributed to the decolonial

process. I am first committed to unsettling colonial structures through anti-colonialism pursuits in the process of reaching a decolonization that "is not accountable to settlers, or settler futurity" but, instead, "is accountable to Indigenous sovereignty and futurity" (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 35). As an Indigenous person, I put much effort into de-racializing, un-gendering, unsexing, and socially rethinking myself attempting to "[a]ddress the hidden politics of privilege" (Perez, 2010, p. 125). Specifically, as a Manabita, privileging the laws of Pachamama reign over all others - we are each other's keepers, *all* living sentient beings alike. Colonialism requires an inequitable system as "an ideology of racial and cultural hierarchy" (Kelley, 1999, p. 3). Therefore, fighting racism is imperative to undoing colonial structures. Liberation would entail "a complete and total overthrow of a racist, colonial system that would open the way to imagine a whole new world" (p. 10). I turn towards a CRT analytical lens, then, in order to understand and utilize what I learn in my dissertation studies towards these goals.

Pedagogical theorists and educational scholars have used CRT as an analytical framework for examining educational inequities for over twenty years now (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Lynn, 1999; Solórzano et al., 2000; Tate, 1997). CRT supports researchers in investigating the ways that multiple forms of oppression intersect within the lives of people of Color and how those intersections manifest in the day-to-day to arbitrate education experiences. CRT confronts racism by drawing on the lived-experiences of people of Color to deconstruct discourses and paradigms on race and by evaluating intersectional oppressive systems (Carter-Andrews, 2008). The tenets of CRT utilized to analyze data in the Bethinking Our Inking (BOI) study include: (a) Race is a "social construction" created by social thought and relation and is ever evolving; (b) Intersectionality and anti-essentialism is necessary to understanding race relations; and (c)

People of Color offer a distinctive point of view, which is necessary to identify and determine praxis and commitment to social justice work (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

As noted previously, I integrated a focus on CRT with TribalCrit lenses (Brayboy, 2005). Specifically, I analyzed the data obtained from five graduate students from differing programs and of diverse backgrounds by integrating CRT and TribalCrit (Brayboy 2005) lenses. Namely, I explored how tattoo narratives speak to the ways notions of culture, knowledge, and power mean something else altogether when examined through an Indigenous lens (TribalCrit tenet 5). Additionally, stories are viewed as legitimate sources of data which make up theory and express ways of being (TribalCrit tenet 8, see below). Liken to these tenets, race has been socially constructed, is maintained and how these counterstories can attend to intersectionality and anti-essentialism and contribute towards more educational equity. Although CRT argues that racism is endemic in society, TribalCrit stresses that colonization is endemic in society, acknowledging racism as a part of colonial structures (Brayboy, 2005).

Particular to my dissertation's aims of drawing on my Indignous worldviews, Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) was more central in the analysis of the data of this study. Stemming from CRT, TribalCrit, described by Brayboy (2005), includes nine tenets:

1. Colonization is endemic to society.
2. U.S. policies toward Indigenous peoples are rooted in imperialism, White supremacy, and a desire for material gain.
3. Indigenous peoples occupy a liminal space that accounts for both the political and racialized natures of our identities.
4. Indigenous peoples have a desire to obtain and forge tribal sovereignty, tribal autonomy, self-determination, and self-identification.

5. The concepts of culture, knowledge, and power take on new meaning when examined through an Indigenous lens.

6. Governmental policies and educational policies toward Indigenous peoples are intimately linked around the problematic goal of assimilation.

7. Tribal philosophies, beliefs, customs, traditions, and visions for the future are central to understanding the lived realities of Indigenous peoples, but they also illustrate the differences and adaptability among individuals and groups.

8. Stories are not separate from theory; they make up theory and are, therefore, real and legitimate sources of data and ways of being.

9. Theory and practice are connected in deep and explicit ways such that scholars must work towards social change.

Prior to investigating the tattoos of graduate students I considered how some of TribalCrit's tenets are relevant to the treatment of tattoos of Indigenous people (and others treated as secondary citizens). Indigenous sovereignty involves self-determination, and self-identification (tenet 4), which can be depicted and learned by the study of tribal inking processes that may identify Indigenous knowledges and culture in ways not standardized in school writing (tenet 5). Policies pushed on Indigenous people are exactly about assimilation (tenet 6). Expressed differently, marking people or disallowing people to ink themselves (autonomy) is about control. Just as tattoo anthropologist Krutak (2019) explained on the show Explained (Klein et al., 2018) that colonial logic holds that, "Once you could remove the tattooing from the [Indigenous] people, it made it much easier to subjugate them to these Western ideals and break these Indigenous patterns of local power and belief." In other words, as tenet 1 states, colonial

structures are ordinary - policing of bodies for its sake is normalized. Indigenous tattoo artist Festin (2019) further extrapolates that, "Colonialism and the Church, like, erases their history, their ancestors for them to disappear basically off the map - and for them to have an identity crisis it's easier for them to assimilate." This aligns to tenet 2 of TribalCrit whereas policies are made to shape how Indigenous folx are obligated to be a part of the system and, I argue, makes the case for why tribal philosophies, beliefs, customs, traditions, visions and stories are imperative to comprehend the lived realities of Indigenous peoples and illustrate the heterogeneity of individuals and groups (tenet 7).

Alongside a CRT analysis, I examined how some tattoo narratives can function as counternarratives in order to center non-hegemonic epistemologies. Additionally, I pushed for the usage of the term indigenization over words that stem from "tribe" (e.g. "TribalCrit). For one, not all Indigenous people live in tribes or call them such but also Indigenous knowledges pre-date race constructions (which began in the 16th century) and race theorizing. Indigenizing involves ways of being that existed prior to contact with European invaders on this Land. Since contact, we have all been witness to the ways the current hegemonic mode of living has led to the destruction and demise of all living things. I came to the BOI project thinking that there must be stories we permanently place on our bodies that describe some of the characteristics of thriving. The following stories will be shared wishfully seeding, not ceding, the future.

La Germinación: **Findings from Bethinking Our Inking**

When I first asked Búho about what tattoos mean to her she wrote me via WhatsApp

Figure 6 *17 September 2019/WhatsApp message with "Búho"*
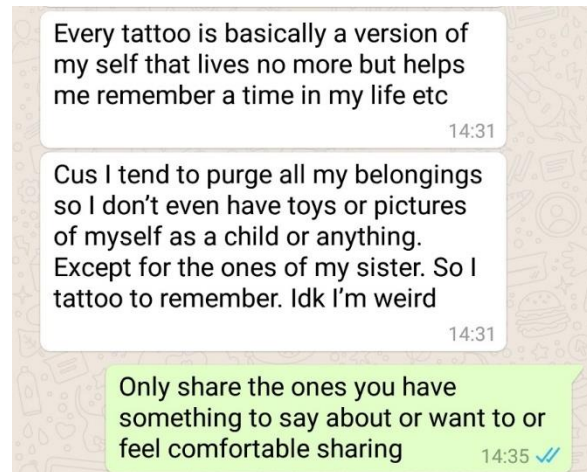
Wow! I thought that already told me a lot. I had so many questions, like, is Búho's purge part of

a ritual like one of my culture's holidays El Año Viejo?

Erica's tattoos mean something else, which she shared via a November 2019 Zoom chat

with me: "Each of them was thought through and with purpose related either to family, myself,

or friends... Four of the six have special meaning" (of which I will explore a few in the following

section). Sandra's response shocked me a bit, she told me that she "felt bad" at first due to the

belief that "[Tattoos] should mean something;" but then she decided, "It doesn't need to have a

meaning, it's whatever I want" (October 2019 WhatsApp voice message). I, myself, had been

caught in the conundrum of making meaning with my own art and hearing someone else voice

that felt validating.

The biggest hurdle of this dissertation is precisely due to the methodology. Since data

was coming from many sources across various time frames during SMM, a need for some form

of organization arose. There was so much data! Each collaborator shared a Google Folder with

(only) me that contained images, documents that detailed our exchanges, and links to associated

articles or books. Though it was tedious, I do admit that sorting through all the data was actually

enjoyable for me. I sometimes kept conversations going in my mind with the collaborators about

their ink and their socio-political emotional worldviews (which I sometimes shared with the collaborators I was most comfortable with). The themes I learned pertaining to the term thriving from the words and symbols on the bodies of five persons who contributed to this manuscript follow.

Faith counternarratives expressed through tattoos

Just as two of my own tattoos illustrate my affiliations with particular belief systems of my people, two collaborators shared with me depictions of their spirituality. Both Erica and Búho shared with me some of their sacred beliefs. I will first describe my relationship with Erica then Búho and then describe their ink alongside analysis.

I first experienced Erica's distinguished, powerful presence the winter of 2015 at a conference at the university in which we'd get our doctorate degrees from. As a group, during one conference event, a professor asked us about our experiences teaching and our "preferred age group to teach," and I learned that Erica and I both had an affinity, even a preference for, working with middle schools-aged students. While many folx in the group shrieked or labeled middle schoolers "difficult," Erica and I jumped into a conversation about how youth of Color, in particular, are enjoyable to be around and that we appreciate their candor. We agree that youth are in many ways very cognizant of the many facets of their lives (Id-Deen, 2020; Sadowski, 2015). We both seemed to appreciate the many ways youth express themselves and push us to express ourselves.

Búho and I are both rock climbers and we share some very specific musical tastes. Sharing that passion and talking tattoos happened day one of meeting Búho. We bonded over difficult, sometimes funny though, conversations, throwing in talks about our cultural food. During one chat, for instance, I learned that one of Búho's favorite snacks are special

Salvadorean crackers that one can find in her hometown of Hialeah, Florida. Early on in our relationship, we established that we are both introverts that communicate best without the confines of time and space. Sometimes our conversations were maintained across multiple mediums across multiple days or weeks; I'd leave a voice message and she'd respond in chunks of writing or we'd chat over memes or ideas depicted through InstaGram or Facebook posts or stories. Overall, the majority of our conversations came through WhatsApp, a U.S. freeware, cross-platform messaging and Voice over IP service owned by Facebook, Inc.

Both Erica and Búho were people I wanted to learn from and be around not just for this project; I hoped to build long-term relations with them. They were first considered for the BOI study because they seemed to be doing well by multiple societal standards and expressed joy in multiple ways. They both seem well-liked and cared for by others, they had multiple degrees, and they had experience working in their chosen fields prior to entering doctoral programs. When I first learned about their tattoos I felt drawn to their ink based on my experiences with the symbols on their bodies. I approached each of them wondering what similarities existed in our worldviews as related by the tattoos.

One of the first stories that Erica shared with me was about her faith. I first correlated her tat with my cosmobiovisión, which includes a special reverence and movement associated with Mama Killa (the moon). From hair cutting or dyeing my hair to when I make certain foods or seek solitude or companionship, Mama Killa guides me. The way ancestors leave a path for us so does Mama Killa. Erica taught me something else. On her body, she showed me a mark that represents a part of her faith, her worldviews:

> [T]hat star and crescent not only represents Islam to some degree but also reminds me of light, shining and thriving through anything and everything. It's also not necessarily along the jugular vein but it's very close so that, to me, is also placement.

When you think about the importance of where it is in relation to your body. This is our lifeline, essentially. This is my lifeline.

So, Erica's thriving, her light, is informed by her faith. Her beliefs carry her through survival and make her shine. As we continued to chat, I learned that a second tattoo is linked to her beliefs. Erica's tattoo which "means infinite faith" is situated right above her heart. She explained to me that "knowing that I need to have infinite faith and trust is something that the heart requires and the soul needs" (See Figure 7). Her commitment to faith is an important aspect of self-awareness, which nourishes who she is at the core. Her unwavering faith allows for Erica to both be self-fulfilled and also support her community in many ways.

Figure 7 *"Erica" shows her shoulder containing 3 birds and the word "faith" tattooed in an infinity symbol above her heart near her left shoulder*
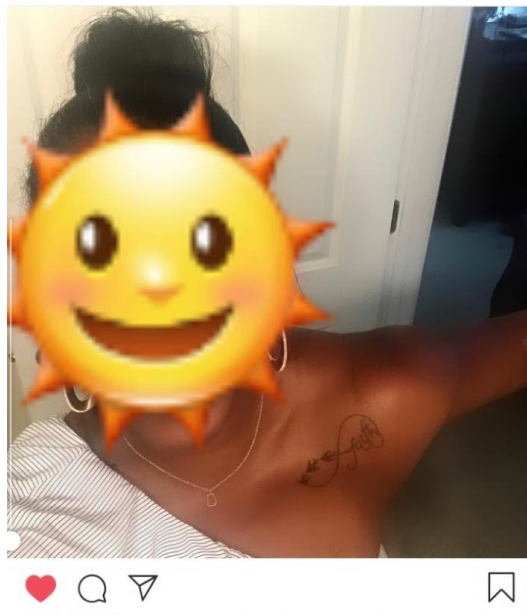
Similar to Erica, Búho described movement when she shared some of her beliefs and an incredible tattoo made by a "close friend" (Figure 8):

> *This is her rendition of the tarot card, The Eight of Swords. The card's meaning represents forgiveness and moving forward with your life. The card is meant to illustrate how life can be difficult at every turn, but serves as a reminder to always take action in things you can control to make better for yourself. In many instances, I have difficulty*

forgiving those who have made me suffer throughout my life, so I have it here to remind me that forgiveness is important and that I will not be able to control all the terrible things I face in everyday situations. It is basically a reminder that "things will be ok, just keep moving" (WhatsApp Shiminakuna 28 July 2019)

Figure 8 *"Búho "shows her arm inked with "The Eight of Swords" shown on an Instagram post dated August 8, 2018*

A second tattoo adds a deeper level to beliefs held by Búho. She shared a tattoo about her faith. She started with a disclaimer that her tat was "incomplete" and that she will later add "a woman spirit figure." Then Búho explained, "this is related to my spirituality as a woman and as a Latina. In thinking about my ancestors, I wanted something that illustrated my spirit and guidance from that spirit… The idea is that it would be a magical woman holding a spirit ball (WhatsApp shiminakuna, 2019).

Erica's expressions of her life of Islam, like Búho's guiding spirituality, counters the religious privileged normative in the United States. Christianity (and forced conversion) is the crux of colonialism and is often associated with Whiteness, whereas Whiteness is a "set of assumptions, beliefs and practices" (Rollock et al. 2015, p. 15) validated and ratified in schools. In this paradigm, tarot as well as crystal balls are associated with the occult, which challenges the rules and regulations of Christianity. The Bible's Leviticus 20:27 explains that "A man or a

woman who is a medium or a necromancer shall surely be put to death. They shall be stoned with stones; their blood shall be upon them." I neither understand tarot in the Christian depiction of omen-telling nor comprehend how it is death-worthy. What is evident to me is the link of colonialism to policies that criminalize anything deemed anti-imperialist, or anti-Christian such as reading tarot cards. TribalCrit's first two tenets (Brayboy, 2005) are helpful to consider here when the Bible is referenced as law. For example, Deuteronomy 18:9-12 explains:

> *When you come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord. And because of these abominations the Lord your God is driving them out before you.*

In the above passage an anti-colonial TribalCRT analysis may point first to the Land. The laws given to people align with political and material gains. The ruler of the Bible gives Land (Manifest Destiny) to those who follow him (White colonizer settlers and sympathizers) but instructs Land pillagers to detest and avoid behaving as the Natives of the stolen Land.

Comparable to the othering of tarot-use or "the occult," Islam is also treated as a threat to Christianity and Whiteness (Gorman & Culcasi, 2020). Islam is often associated with people of the Middle-East and, especially after 9/11 in the U.S., Muslims or those perceived to be of Middle-Eastern origin, have been othered (Wronski, 2002) based on xenophobia. Research by Byers and Jones (2007) found that after 9/11 83.3% of hate crimes were anti-Islamic and of those, 36.6% perpetrators were white offenders. The social construction of race shows (CRT tenet 2) an acceptance/rejection scale that exists in differing times and spaces of history. Delgado & Stefancic (2012) describe how,

[i]n one age, Middle Eastern people are exotic, fetishized figures wearing veils, wielding curved swords; namely, and summoning genies from lamps. In another era, they emerge as fanatical, religiously crazed terrorists bent on destroying America and killing innocent citizens (p. 9).

As such, Islamophobia wanes during increased fear tactics by authorities. On a personal note, as someone raised in my AfroIndigenous spirituality, I was treated poorly in most, if not all of my school and, in turn, internalized spiritual inferiority. I learned, like my family, to hide our traditions, practices and faith as a form of survival. Now the research I've conducted explains that the instilling of Christianity reifies that deculturalization is integral to the imperial project. Present day, Islamophobia is becoming increasingly prevalent and more socially acceptable in the contemporary world - proliferated and, at times, popularized further through social media. Some are even calling the current U.S. president "The Islamophobia President" (Beydoun, 2016). I suggest that we researchers with our project collaborators scrutinize stereotypes contrived by those who are currently in power who uphold what hooks (2004) refers to as the "imperialist white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy" (p.17), which describes the interlocking political systems that are the foundation of our settler nation's politics."

With these examples, I argue that faith counternarratives expressed through ink reveal that religious freedom, in a true sense of the word, is a part of what makes people's lives fulfilling; it is not just survival or just habitual living. Practicing one's faith openly and freely without criticism, invalidation or erasure is crucial not only for the thriving of culture. Monotheistic religions have overpowered the global majority for far too long and the narratives about religious persecution and reparations need to be centered, I suggest, in order to move towards a more equitable future. That Christianity has been imposed on people as part of the European colonial project is a direct assault to the livelihood of non-Christians. Spirituality and faith is as integral to folx as food, clothing and shelter.

I will continue to argue that tattoos about non-Christian spirituality are exactly forms of counter-storytelling. The collaborators of color that trusted me with their faith narratives showed me how their faith is intricately tied to their well-being. This impacted me a great deal. From them, I learned to challenge my internalized inferiority and center my faith in my quotidian life, unlike my pre-doctoral life, instead of hiding it.

Communal counternarratives expressed through ink

"If only some of us are well, none of us are." -Johanna Hedva

The Andean worldview and histories of flexible, heterarchical systems of shared power is distinct from Western notions of hierarchy and concentrated power. For one, the Andean cosmobiovision centers the laws of the Land and we are obliged to function within Pachamama, not see ourselves as superior to Her. The Western paradigm is individualistic and centers material gains. On another point, White Western culture views authority as static (CITE). While Black\Indigenous folx and other people of Color sometimes hold that authority is earned or granted when a person(s) demonstrates leadership qualities (Delpit, 1995), White Western culture capitalizes on titles - even self-appointed ones. A third important aspect that distinguishes some Indigenous worldviews, such as that of my Andean people, is the notion of communal decision-making. It is non-democratic, however. In sharp contrast, the Western paradigm maintains a socio-political economic hierarchy (capitalism) that allows only an elite minority to have both autonomy and power to deny others control of their bodies and ways of being. While democracy attempts to ensure representation towards productivity and profit, communal decision making is rooted in observations of the natural world - decisions are all towards the thriving of the Land. Ideas about community emerged from a few collaborators, namely Sandra who studies community psychology.

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I was already one year into the BOI investigations when I met Sandra, who self-identified as a Chicana. Although Sandra was the last collaborator I met, she built community with me immediately. Even the twelve years between our ages didn't change how we related. We shared social media profiles the day we met and exchanged numbers. Her and I chatted casually about grad school work, road trips, various relationships, and current news and politics through WhatsApp, InstaGram, Facebook and even through emails here and there. Sandra was one of the easiest collaborators to be vulnerable with because she so openly shared her worldviews with me during our conversations. For example, she shared her community psychology expertise and engaged in conversations with me about ways to ameliorate the mental health of students and others, especially during this global coronavirus health crisis.

Sandra has three tattoos, none of which were visible on any of her social media. This came up during one of our first conversations about tattoos. It struck me how Sandra's response showed consideration for her community. She felt responsible for her familial relations, in particular, though she has been living separately from them since she was 18 and considered an "adult" by societal standards (and U.S. law). Sandra explained to me via WhatsApp voice messenger October 2019 that because "people think about tattoos as so taboo," that made her hesitant about getting her first tattoo. She voiced thinking, "my parents are gonna hate me" (October 2019) since they had previously voiced an understanding of some stereotypes associated with tattooed people; she had been told you can't get a job with a tattoo, it's part of gang culture, and no one will like you. I'd heard the same things growing up and we wondered together how our parents and their identities trained them to hold on to those views. So she continued to hide her inking in front of partner's parents because they are religious and she

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shared with me that, perhaps, there was a link between her ethnicity/culture and religion because her dad, specifically, just didn't like tattoos.

Though most of Búho's friends had and loved tattoos, she voiced similarities to Sandra's narrative. We had a WhatsApp Shiminakuna on 17 Sept. 2019 when she voiced that both of her parents hate tattoos:

> *It's traditional Latino culture. They don't necessarily like that, on women especially. My dad would say that I looked unprofessional, that I looked like callejera, a street kid which I was so I don't know why he was mad about that but anyway, for that family aspect of it, I mean, I didn't care. It didn't stop me, but I still feel that when I come to my boyfriend's family's house, I still feel like I have to hide them. I try not to do that anymore but because culture is so strong, I have it in the back of my mind. It's constantly me going back and forth with that Latino culture and then everything else, right? I had to fight for that - fight for that right, really, to express myself with my tattoos and not have to give into that conversative frame that people shape you as.*

Seemingly in juxtaposition to being attentive to community and their dislike of tattoos, Sandra and Búho. alike, have tattoo narratives linked to community. For Sandra, tattoos on a whim aren't uncommon. That's not where importance is placed. Sandra has tattoos with part of her community; she explained that she got her first tattoo after the passing of her older brother with her niblings who she sees as siblings because they're close in age with her and grew up close. Sandra and one nibling got matching tattoos in the same place to have "something to connect us" and with both niblings inked an anklet of sea creatures (Figure 9) as a reminder her nephew explained as "we are in the same world. We are related by blood." In more than one way, both the communal-decision making and the tattoo process was part of healing.

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Figure 9 *An October 24, 2020 texted image of 3 aquatic animals inked on Sandra which matches her 2 niblings.*

During a March 2020 chat via Zoom with Sandra, we chatted about our schooling and our culture. We shared our research about the survival rates of Black and Brown people. Sandra did not shy from voicing her views and sharing about her background; she identifies as Chicana (mestiza) but does not use "Indigenous" or "Native." Sandra explained in October 2019 that her blue succulent (Figure 10) tattoo depicts her cultural heritage. We jumped into the views about what is an Indigenous lived experience and appropriation - we hit on a lot of the CRT and TribalCrit tenets this past March!

Figure 10 *An October 24, 2020 texted image of a blue succulent tattoo on an ankle.*

Her succulent is not only pretty but is also connected to her roots. Sandra's dad is from the Sonoran desert "Saguaros." She expanded on the meaning of this particular tattoo during our March 2020 Zoom chat after I inquired where her tattoo studies may fit in school subjects saying, "I think about my family. I think about my roots. I think about where succulents come from or where they're found usually… and succulents can resist - are resilient. They don't need water. They don't need that many things." In other words, Sandra was teaching me, in that moment, that there is much to learn about succulents, flora which are endemic to every continent minus Antarctica. A basic Google search taught me that Saguaro, in particular, are native to the Sonoran Desert in Arizona, the Mexican state of Sonora, and the Whipple Mountains and Imperial County areas of California; their lifespan can exceed 150 years; and Saguaro absorb and store considerable amounts of rainwater which enables them to survive during periods of drought.

Stories make up theory and as such are real and legitimate sources of data and ways of being (TribalCrit Tenet 8). Sandra's bold and beautiful Saguaro tattoo narrative commemorates her concept of community which is tied to the land of which she has settled today. Thriving is related to how we are in community and how we nourish our communities and are nourished by them. This is what Sandra taught me as we engaged in shiminakuna; she described to me that thriving means "to be a part of, taking care and being taken care of by a community (via Zoom 14 March 2020)"

Thriving for Julián involved creating boundaries between himself and observers. He describes, the tattoo has multiple functions, one of which is to create unity or space between him and people who would read the symbol as it was not meant; about one of his ancestral Aztec tattoos (Figure 11) he explains:

Honestly, I wanted people… if I was standing in line in this White spaces, if I'm wearing a short sleeve or something, that little fucker is going to peek through. Again, even for someone who was connected to, or is connected to his Mexican roots and these icons, even I was like, "Damn, Tlāloc looks freaky." So I legit have it back here as my brother watching my back. Anybody who's not attuned to that, I want them to be a little freaked out. Like, "hey, what the fuck is that?" It just looks… it looks out of this world. I wanted it here so that people who were standing behind me and generally, or looking in my direction, can be like, "Oh." It's a little pause, right? It's not a rejection. It's not anything. It's just a little space giver, right? It's just a nice little "hey, give me some space." Again, I think the right people would be attracted to it. Like, "what is that?" If you're genuinely curious, I'll tell you. If it scares you or is off-putting, then fucking great. It is, right? Tlāloc did his job.

Julián also expressed another idea of community somewhat similar to Sandra. On November 21, 2019 we jumped into a Zoom call about a tattoo on the left back part of his tricep, above his elbow (Figure 10). He shared his tattoo narrative with me:

I started working on a mural project back in 2012 with an artist who… we were doing a mural that was dedicated to the Braceros of the community in which we were placing the mural. The main image was a farm worker doing farm working labor. The sun was Tonatiuh. It was an Aztec sun… As I was working with this (Chicano from Austin) muralist, he was like my guiding teacher... he was drawing some clouds and he was drawing some rain, and the rain was feeding the fields that these farm workers were working. He was like, "This next indigenous image is Tlāloc," and it was really easy to say...So I was really drawn to… It looked kind of freaky. Tlāloc looked kind of fucking weird. He looked like… I don't know. Not human. He just looked odd, but I was drawn to the water element to it. It was really cool and he was like, "Tlāloc is the god of rain and water." It was first dios that was bouncing around in my head… So, so dope... Kind of left it there, came to <university>... On my own time, I started to do my own research or just my own curiosity into Aztec symbols and gods y todo eso. So, I started getting those tattoos. My brother, for some reason or another, I don't know, but he started gravitating toward Tlāloc and he references him a lot. He admires Tlāloc a lot. When I got this tattoo, I was thinking of how people often get tattoos for their deceased relatives or deceased friend or something. I thought, "Why don't we get them while they're alive?" I was like, "I'm going to get this for my brother while he can appreciate it, while he's here." Not like "this is dedicated to him." No, it's decided to him now and he's still alive. He's not passed away and so I got it from him and I got it in 2017.

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Figure 11 *Tattoo of Tlāloc on Julián's left tricep*

Julián's Tlāloc tattoo did not necessarily fit with Krutak's (2007; 2012; 2014a) anthropological

findings about why people mark their flesh. Though tattoos for deceased people are common, as

Julián points out, the mark he got was made to commemorate and honor a living community

member: his brother. This type of relationability is important to distinguish from honoring only

people who have achieved according to European White middle-class standards. To show

appreciation to the living, just as we render the past, is part of our worldviews about

interrelatedness and the way we understand our thriving to be connected.

Like, Julián, showing appreciation to other living beings in our immediate surroundings

(along with Taita Inti y Mama Killa, AKA the sun and moon) is a daily practice of Manabitas,

like many other Indigenous groups. We thank all living things immediately around us daily,

including the food and water used to nourish our bodies. We often show gratitude to inanimate

objects for fulfilling our needs (not wants). This is dissimilar to Western notions of giving thanks

in that showing appreciation is guided by direct action to ensure the wellbeing of the subject of

our gratitude. Andean celebrations are all prefaced by an act of offering tribute to Pachamama.

For instance, when some Indigenous people celebrate a birthday, they are invited to offer a lock

of their hair to the Pachamama. Further, many Indgenous groups such as my own don't "do

presents," as is commonly depicted in hegemonic society; gifts are linked to life experiences and

are meant to encourage growth and change. Also gifts are not solely for the person whose born

day it is but, rather, a communal celebration to honor the existence of the community member.

This sharply contrasts cultures rooted in individualism that honor a single entity; birthday

celebrations are about a single person who is gifted material items (generally part of U.S.

culture). It resembles the practice of praying to a single god as opposed to praying to our

ancestors. I argue from this learning that the counter-narratives presented here are pivotal to

comprehending the lived realities of Indigenous peoples (TribalCrit tenet 7).

Tattoos depict counter narratives about autonomy

During one chat with Erica, she highlighted her views about self-actualization through

another tattoo. She has a butterfly tattoo which shows some of the ways she is cognizant about

her potential and her commitment to her own development. She explains that the tattoo signifies:

> *metamorphosis and growth as a person. I love butterflies. I'm always trying to become the best version of myself and grow and also help others grow. A butterfly, to me, is the perfect metamorphosis of who I am. I think about even physically, you know, growing up in different levels of esteem and self-efficacy and self worth. You know, I always thought I was a cute girl, but over the years, especially as I got older, more and more people used to tell me how beautiful I was. Not pretty, but beautiful. I thought about the external and internal meaning of that and I embraced that and realized that people weren't always talking about my outward beauty but also my inward beauty and I believe that a butterfly reflects that because caterpillars are beautiful in their own selves. Even when they wrap themselves up and emerge, they're even more beautiful. I think about that inside out aspect of beauty and how butterflies, to me, represent that* (21 Nov. 2019).

What a simple butterfly tattoo symbolizes, on the surface, is transformation or transmutation. Through an anti-colonial and CRT lens, however, Erica's explanation of what butterflies mean to her draws attention to the social construct of race, which stems from hegemonic impositions. White supremacist ideologies, which dominate U.S. marketing and media, center European beauty standards along with expected attitudes and behaviors by women that conform to patriarchal ideas of modesty, virtue, and fragility (Carter-Andrews et al., 2019; Deliovsky, 2008; Méndez, 2015; Roberts, 2003). Erica challenges these notions by exemplifying self-awareness as a beautiful Black woman both physically and within. As she shows conscious knowledge of her own character, feelings, motives, and desires, Erica also counters the idea that "Black girls are silenced when ideas about who they are or should be are projected onto them without their consent" (Carter-Andrews et al., 2019, p. 2536). As restated in her July 2, 2018 Instagram post:

Figure 12 *InstaGram post with the caption "...and it's a B E A U T I F U L thing" (July 2, 2018).*
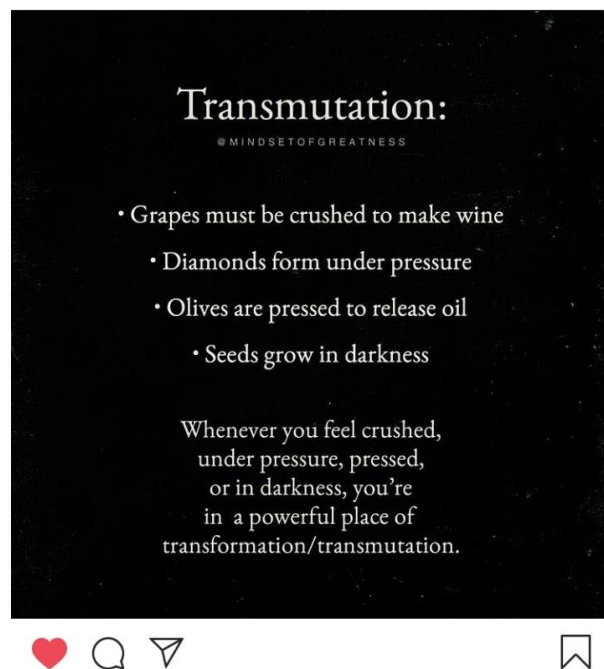
Unsurprising, from the Exit Survey for my collaborators (Appendix IV), I learned that schools across the nation (collaborators were schooled on the regions known as the East coast, the South and the Midwest) did/do not represent Black and Brown bodies and knowledges with dignity and respect or at all sometimes. Like students of Color keep explaining (Brown, 2021), "When educators are silent about racism, marginalized students assume the educator is comfortable with the status quo" (retrieved from antiracistfuture.org). Silence (to racism in any form) means complicity. Silence (to racism in any form) is violence.

Side Note: "Come Correct"

It was first disappointing that the White collaborators were simply not interested in even talking about Liberation. They each expressed interest in "justice" during particular events or through social media but, on multiple occasions, when Black and Brown bodies asked for solidarity, each collaborator bowed out. They would say things like "I'll fight my way" or advise that "we have to be strategic." But who is we? Why would *their* way work? Why can't they follow the lead of those *most* marginalized? Also, why does their work entail the least amount of work from their white bodies and the blunt of the force on ours?

Interest convergence theory specifies that Black people achieve civil rights victories only when white and Black interests converge (Bell, 1999). I do not read that as a rule but a pattern observed thru specific time and space. That White folx only jump on and perform allyship for their own interest is what I observe. Yes, starting with my anonymous collaborators and the world around me, my expert opinion is that White folx do not do shit for or leading from Black and Brown bodies unless they stand to gain. When I pointed out an inefficient form of allyship or an antiBlack stance by my collaborators they gaslit, demeaned and mocked my words because

their intent matters more. This is reminiscent of my school life and the purpose of this dissertation and my life's work

My life's worth.

While I explained in so many ways my abolitionist goals in my work and methods, my White collaborators nodded in agreement until I called them out and even when I "nicely" tried to "call them in." They did not seem to "get it." My actual concern is about the thriving of Black Indigenous people (Black, African-descendants, Black Native, Afro Indigenous people) with all that I say, do and work towards. Unlike the collaborators of Color, the three White collaborators that were first a part of this dissertation did not relate their inking to their thriving; one of the cis-males I interviewed shared that he never even uses the term. Another find about the White collaborators is that the narratives they shared that were expressed or depicted in their tattoos were not what I would call counter-narratives. The stories of their tattoos were for and related to only their individual selves and separate from their communities or collective wellbeing. Not that my Black or Indigenous collaborators did not have tattoos devoid of community-relations; the White collaborators' ideas of community were simply small - composed of only their partner and or their nuclear family and sometimes other blood relatives or only people in their immediate neighborhoods or groups at work or school. This is a form of individualism that maintains capitalistic ways of relationability since community is defined as finite and exists exactly as hierarchical societies mean - that power, protection and care is consolidated instead of being treated as plentiful and boundless and or meant to be infinitely gifted. Individualism is one of the characteristics of White supremacy culture (Okun & Jones, 2001) and ideas about kinship from

Alkebulan and Abya Yala are far extensive, more complex, and encompassing as I reviewed in

the literature above

During shiminakuna with a community leader on Calusa, Tocobaga, Taino Lands,, Zee

Liberación, they explained to me basic expectations for folx who identify as "ally" that they

organize with:

> *Come Correct means when you enter a space, remember your privilege in it and take up*
> *less or more space depending on that privilege - remember whose land you are on and*
> *who you came to support when you are in that space -Black and Indigineous, First*
> *Nation knowledge and ways of being should always be centered -know that we as people*
> *of color are not all the same, and we cannot speak for each other -we use a progressive*
> *stack so when yall have questions, the most marginalized folks will be answered and*
> *given space first -sit in your discomfort and give yourself a real opportunity to learn*
> *instead of just reacting -and abolition is our goal here* (sic) (face-to-face shiminakuna,
> 27 March 2021).

My White collaborators did not "come correct." While I voiced again and again the goals of my

research, my critical race lens, and that I was guided by my Afro Indigenous worldviews and

fight towards Black Indigenous Liberation, the White collaborators I once had explicitly

expected me to ignore my prior experiences with them and also divorce myself from my most

precious views and modo de ser. At least one white collaborator seemed motivated to be in the

study for interest convergence. CRT's 2nd tenet states that material determinism (or interest

convergence) explains that, historically, those in power promote or contribute in the struggle for

racial liberation only if and when they stand to gain something as well. They treated our

interactions as transactional - tit for tat. They did not come correct.

The three white collaborators acted as though my studies were about tattoo

counternarratives alone and sometimes fell silent or refused to respond to critical questions or

asked me to ignore what I knew to be true about them in other contexts. They explicitly did not

engage in conversations about race, racism, power and privilege or derailed conversations

elsewhere. How could I pretend as though I did not know what I know? As though my social

political beliefs can be compartmentalized. As though remaining passive, quiet, or seemingly

objective was at all my values or a part of my ethics. They did not respect my be. They did not

come correct. For these reasons, I gladly removed the White collaborators from this study.

Though I decided against having white collaborators, I wanted to share an unshocking

find from them: Not one white collaborator had tattoos (they shared with me) related to the Land

of their ancestry or their culture. Using a TribalCrit lens, I was not surprised by the narrative of

one collaborator who linked their family property to their idea of community. The edifice

tattooed on the white collaborator is on Land not Indigenous to them. To me, this illustrates

perfectly their settler identity. This is totally property of Whiteness. Not only does the concept of

property stem from capitalist ideals, it also protects settler colonist rationales of ownership.

None of my findings about the white collaborators, of course, are representative of *all*

white people. My data of three white tattooed people, which I am not even diving into in this

manuscript, just corroborates the hegemonic colonial structures that remain and are maintained

by assimilation.

Through my dissertation research I found that thriving is a gratifying condition in which

living, sentient beings on la Pachamama flourish in a strong, healthy, hearty and vivacious way

nourished by spiritual belief systems, interrelatedness and consisting of self-determination,

community safety, wholistic growth and well-being. Black and Brown bodies, the global

majority, are not thriving and colonial school models contribute to the interrupting well living.

From my research I offer advice for educators, namely the vast majority of White educators in

the U.S.,. Educators need to first learn to define the system that currently holds power. To learn

about the system, educators can conduct deep investigations into Critical Whiteness Studies and

couple those knowledges with unlearning the destructive White ways of being that have diminished life on earth. White educators can push to relinquish power in favor of supporting the centering of epistemologies and ontologies from Alkebulan and Abya Yala in schools (especially on these continents) and use the types of counternarratives related in the BOI project to redefine relationship-building in schools and work towards our collective Liberation beginning with righting historical wrongs against Black and Indigenous people.

La Cosecha: Discussion

Tenemos Que Sanar: We Take Care of Us

"Naya saparukiw jiwyapxitaxa nayxarusti, waranqa, waranqanakaw tukutaw kut'anipxani"

"A mí solo me matarán… pero mañana volveré y seré millones"

"They will only kill me ... but tomorrow I will return and I will be millions" - Túpac Katari, 1781

Before his dismemberment, his ideas were seeded, intentions were set and the words of the beloved Aymara revolutionary echoed into the sprouting future. Túpac Katari is still revered by millions of Indigenous people today - living up to his prognostication - because his praxis included total rejection of all things related to the colonizers. Just as some of my own canciones de cuna were full of stories about Katari's brilliance and bravery, his legacy lives on in the cultures of many Indigenous children in the form of oral storytelling, through music and written word; we remember him as a reminder to interrupt oppressive forces that disrupt our thriving. Túpac Katari lives through inspiring many resistance movements and the creation of Katarism, an anti-colonial ideology taken up by leftist global leaders such as present-day Aymara leader, Evo Morales.

Higuerilla, or Ricinus communis (the castor bean), is a seed endemic to the southeastern Mediterranean Basin, Eastern Africa, and India. The invasive flora probably left their indigenous

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habitat during various waves of external invasions and transatlantic journeys. On the Land called by human invaders "the Americas" the seeds, among many uses, were utilized to inflict pain on Black and Indigenous bodies; children were made to kneel on the seeds while they were being whipped or when they held heavy objects to the punisher's content. The etymology of the words for this seed can become part of language lessons. The natural and man-made movement of the seeds can be explored in history and science lessons. I can further see how, with youth, educators could explore whether higuerrila came to Abya Yala via colonization and research can be conducted to comprehend and analyze the social political realities of the seeds and how they were utilized in racialized punishment by European settlers on Indigenous inhabitants of the occupied Land. These knowledges are not explicitly taught. Youth today are not privy to histories that explain the progression of slave catchers to modern-day police. This dissertation means to present possibilities of engaging youth with critical conversations about such knowledges.

Though schools never taught me much about my own histories, I'm happy that my elders did and continue to do so. Many symbols, cultural codes/puzzles, images and ideas from Alkebulan and Abya Yala have been tattooed on bodies since Time Immemorial because they are seeded with knowledges for the future of the Land's children. I argue that learning the epistemologies of the marking on Black and Brown bodies is just one way to rethink school curriculum, instruction and teacher education in order to interrupt colonialism's hold on our bodies. Radical educators continue to explore other forms of art that challenge the system while investigating the many ways of remembering, reproducing and proliferating the therapeutic and healing secrets of Black and Brown cultures that have survived many forms of epistemic violence alongside the multiple forms of brutal physical violence.

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CHAPTER 4: Crear La Realidad

"Our stories belong in and to our future. The process of story creation belongs to the future too."

(Maracle, 2015, p. 215)

Preface

We are all Pachamama. All of us have been gifted with superpowers that are generative, curative, and sustain life. We have been tasked to care for and protect all life. Superiority is a myth. We are all superSheroes that have yet to realize our full potential. In part, this is due to the short time-period of human existence in which there has been experimentation by a few people on a quest for perfection - who mean to hoard power and create supremacy. The 1%, those trying to consolidate power and resources, promote rules and codes of conduct that mean to force assimilation to one very specific version, a single prototype of what people can be. Unfortunately, this experimentation has failed and proved to be deadly for all life forms. Much of our magic has been extracted in attempts to abide by the hierarchical degenerative system. So, it is time to revitalize knowledges meant to be forgotten by a select few. It is our duty to interrupt harmful ways of living and not abide by the rules of the 1% and bring back to life our extraordinary gifts of which transcend time and space

I am fortunate that my colonial schooling has failed to keep me from myself. Luckily, my seeds were sown well by mis antepasados and our ways greet me from Uku Pacha (the world of the dead) through Kay Pacha (the world we inhabit) and towards Hanan Pacha (the world above). Who I am is intricately tied to and enveloped by my rich ancestral lineage rooted in Alkebulan and Abya Yala within some of the oldest pristine civilizations independent from other cultures. Our knowledges and ways of being are timeless and have survived because we center thriving. My dissertation journey drove me out of disastrous experimentation with the capitalist patriarchy

and flew me closer to the serpientes, jaguars and kuntur of my homeLands. My research led me to understand some crucial aspects of healing, surviving and thriving.

As a life-long educator, I have spent a great deal of time learning from youth. From my first group of preschoolers (back in 2005) I learned that sharing creations was part of our joy, which is a crucial component of thriving. One activity we used to do was community story-writing where one person gives an incomplete idea or a sentence and another imagines onto it. We'd get some wacky stories for sure! Community story-writing brought us much giggles and communal joy. From my last group of high school students (in 2020) I learned about the power of autonomy and self-expression through symbols. We studied tattoos narratives and engaged in dialogue about how inked skin conveys stories about the body, ancestral knowledges, personal values, spiritual beliefs and other ideas. We wrote and shared "Where I Come From" poems (Appendix 3) and expressed testimonios in the form of collages made with images that depict a part of who we are.

From the Bethinking Our Inking project, I imagined exploring and extending what I could do with K-12 students and Tattoo Studies. When I conferred with youth of my community, they came up with many ideas like that I should "just" become an "influencer" and become "a tattooer." Observing their not-school activities I noticed that several of our youth enjoy comic books. Since all age groups have voiced enjoying story-writing, I contemplated the desires of my community and I considered what radical comic book artist Seth Tobocman (2020) stated on an advertisement for a course he taught,

> *comics today have emerged as an important art form, influencing film, politics and other aspects of culture. Many organizations today use graphic novels to draw attention to their issues. But comics have a long tradition. Cartoonists played a significant role in the American, French, and Russian revolutions, in the abolitionist, civil rights and feminist movements. Most of the pioneers of American comics were from working class backgrounds.*

What I learned about the human condition from my dissertation research inspired me to create alternative realities - Afro Indigenous Futurisms - in which there is a culture that centers nurturance and all living beings are well-nourished and cared for. Coined by Dery (1994) and expanded by Nelson (2002), Afrofuturism is a cultural aesthetic, philosophy of science and history that explores the progressing intersection of African diaspora culture with technology. Birthed from my dissertation, what follows, is my attempt to "Crear La Realidad" (create the future) by drawing attention to issues of our present day and offering some lessons for the future.

Figure 13 shows the first draft of the cover of "A Liberar" an origin story about the characters of the "Crear La Realidad" series. The images are based on what I learned about myself ("Pakarimuj") in the process and what I learned about the collaborators, "Erica," "Sandra," "Búho," and "Julián," from the "Bethinking Our Inking" project. The first draft of the "A Liberar" comic book cover in the "Crear La Realidad" series depicts five characters whose powers emerge from marks on their body. They all engage in various forms of what is called "guerrilla discourse" in the Unguy days (defined later in "Plot").

Figure 13 *First draft of cover page design of "Crear La Realidad" Comics*

Character Development

On the cover, "Dr. Erica" (Figures 14, 15, 16) is featured pregnant with curative knowledges from various temporal spatial dimensions and helps develop and birth people's super strengths and also redirects intuition. The kuntur riding the cape of Dr. Erica is "Pakarimuj" (Figures 19, 20, 21, 22), a genderbender superShero who transforms from a runa pacha (Andean human being) to a kuntur when there is neurodivergence and or drastic emotional variations. Their powers emerge from a hammer tattoo that becomes real and transforms old edifices with graffiti (messages) from other time periods. "Búho" (Figures 17) is appearing from the top corner hanging upside down; this superShero creates empathy by developing and organizing community. She brings wisdom about solidarity when she transforms into an owl.

The character with glasses, green hair and dressed in green is the superShero, "Profa Sandra" (Figure 18) who derives power from a flora tattoo - with a stomp of her foot, she enacts guerrilla gardening, repopulating deforested areas with greenery. Sandra wears armor on her shoulders that become alive as "Atl" (Figure 24). Atl is based on the BOI character "Julián" and his "Tlāloc" tattoo; he brings various forms of water to nourish the flora of Sandra and to push the growth of all flora and fauna on Pachamama (life across time and space).

After spending time hand drawing and coloring with markers and colored pencils, I could not ignore the physical pain that came from exacerbating my carpal tunnel and ulnar palsy. On top of that, in the middle of a pandemic (the one fictionalized in this comic), I my anxiety and depression became obstacles. So, I made a healthy decision and worked with the Queer nonbinary Chicanx Detroit artist known as Davi, alongside the collaborators, to design the characters prior to illustrating scenes. The following is pieces of the comic book series imagined from a place where I am working alongside multiple students co-creating the characters and

pieces of the storyline. In many instances, co-creation naturally deviates from a specific type of logic or order. Ideas emerge in a non-linear, incomplete way when multiple people are a part of designing something such as stories.

Figure 14 *The first draft of the headshots of Dr. Erica.*

Figure 15 *The second draft of Dr. Erica's full body*

Dr. Erica's powers emerge from her belly and are distributed to others who feel fear about the unknown, or xenophobia, and need to share faith in the new post-Unguy world. The

knowledges rooted in Alkebulan are birthed in the form of fruits after a short gestation period in which an infinity symbol (on her left shoulder) glows and brings folx together in solidarity towards intersectional equity.

As per Shiminakuy Mezcla'o Methodology, I let collaborators weigh in and advise me as the character based on them was being developed with the artist. After sharing the superShero "Dr. Erica" with the collaborator from the BOI project of which she was based, she made some recommendations about her character. Namely, she wanted to be smiling in the depictions of her. When I talking through the character with the illustrator Davi, I specified that Dr. Erica should be smiling. Then, after that draft, I decided to make her tattoo visible in the new depiction (on her left shoulder) and enlarged on the far right of Figure 16. In order to highlight her womb impregnated by knowledges, Davi and I decided to accentuate varios foods that contain knowledges that Dr. Erica shares in one of the comic book scenes.

Figure 16 *Updated full body "Dr. Erica" smiling with plátano, yuca and a lime in her womb and with a visible tattoo on her shoulder.*
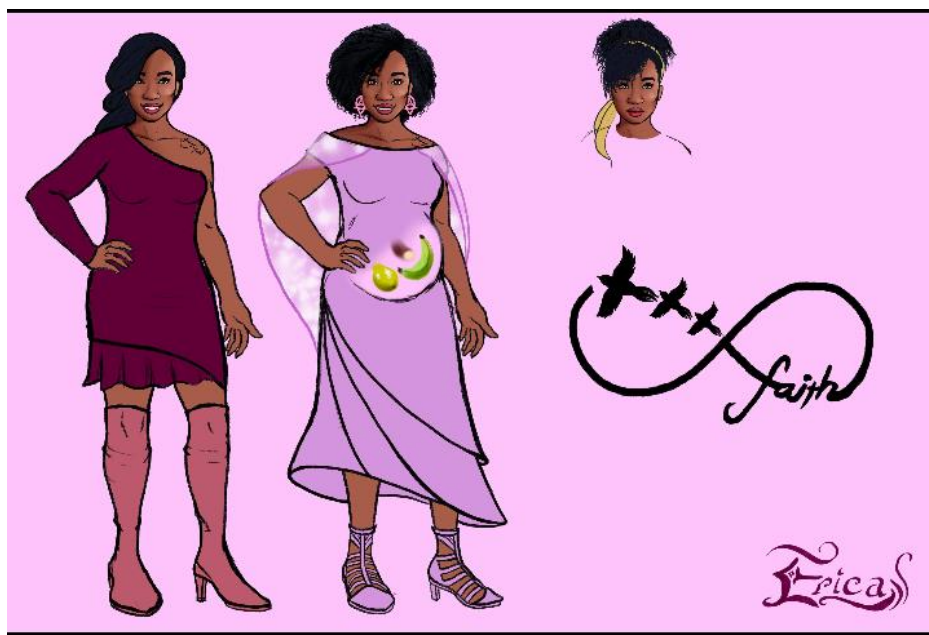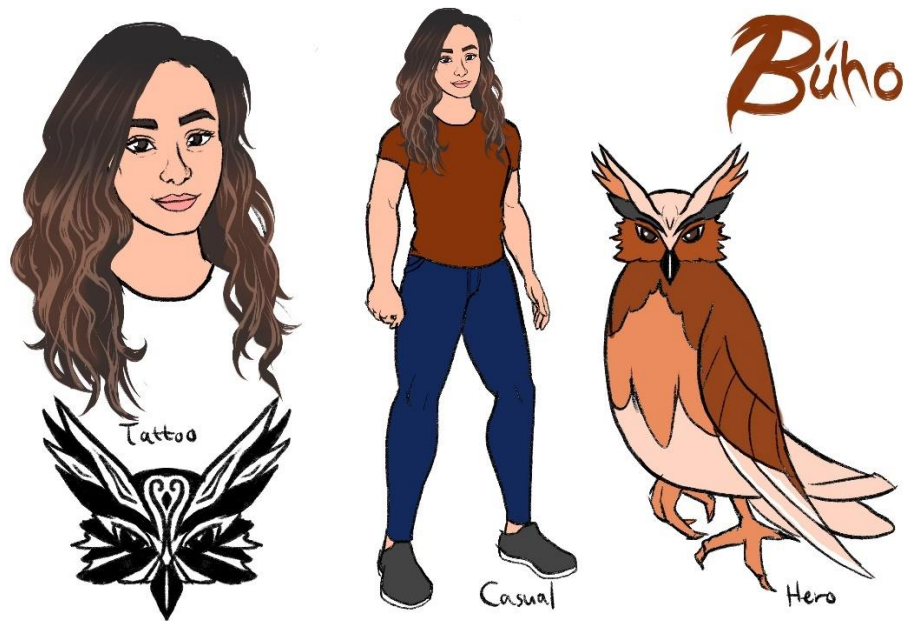
Figure 17 *Headshot of character "Búho" beside her full body and the owl she becomes*

Búho is a Salvi psychologist who connects with the souls of living beings. She can channel strong emotions like vulnerability, empathy, and unconditional love. During the time of the Unguy there was much unrest and kkkapital structures peaked by governments around the world forcing people to work 12-16 hour days for very low wages. Poverty, crime, suicide and other woes of the world were worsened during this time. The Thriverse uncover these truths and Búho emerges as a community organizer who impart knowledges about trauma and healing. When her tattoo is activated, she travels inwards and connects with others' unconscious. Búho's powers allows her to engage with rapid cell regeneration to heal the bodies of people, superSheroes, and other flora and fauna starting with their memories of joy and well-being. Through helping living beings remember wellness, Búho reignites a culture of nurturance and makes space for envisioning of community care learning from the errors of the ways of self-appointed rulers of the time of and before the Unguy. She helps redefine authority in the new world.

Figure 18 *The final draft of the "Profa Sandra" headshot, full-body with street clothes, superShero clothes and her power tattoo*
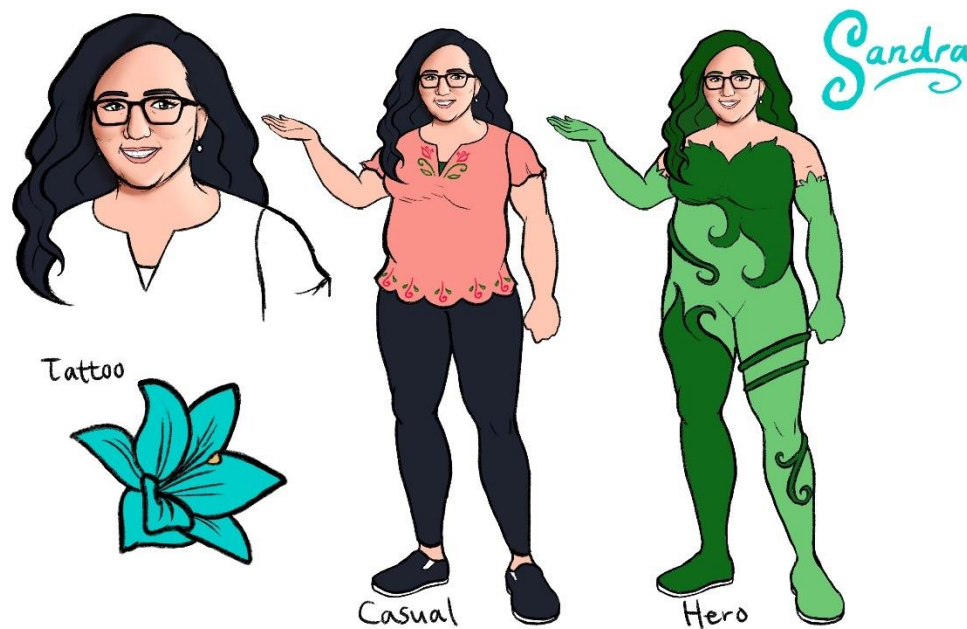
Profa Sandra is a Chicana educator who teaches and enacts guerrilla gardening; she shares secrets of how to repopulate the Land with flora and fauna that had become extinct during and before El Unguy. Her power comes from a sanguar plant ankle tattoo; to create natural life, she stomps her feet on the Land and replenishes the Land with new life derived from Uku Pacha.

When I shared the character "Profa Sandra" with the collaborator from who she is created from, the collaborator was delighted and told me that she (the depiction) was great. She especially appreciated that the body was not made thin. This was an important step towards Indigenizing beauty standards which do not encourage specific (thin) body structures. This is an important aspect of Crear La Realidad Comics; this project means to interrupt all the ways that pop culture has instructed bodies to look and behave.

Another character that defies (Western) societal norms is "Pakarimuj" (Figure 17-20). Pakarimuj is an Andean warrior educator who is a gender fluid half-human/bird with short, curly, colorful hair, nose ring, muscular tone, facial hair, a non-defined figure and wears the wiphala

pattern across their chest. This character expresses a wide-array of emotions and behaviors that are not commonly depicted in youth literature, such as anxiety, depression, self-harm and suicidal ideation through their transformed self as Kuntur. Their super-power and source of strength comes from a marking on their body resembling a hammer, which they use to graffiti buildings (as part of guerrilla discourse).

Figure 19 *The first draft of character "Pakarimuj".*

After paying closer attention to character development, I decided that I wanted "Pakarimuj" to have curls that were more pronounced, which is uncommon in comic books. I also met and shared with Davi that the pattern of the wiphala of the region called "chincasuyu" with a pattern that has specific significance where:

- Red: represents Mother Earth and the expansion of Andean runa (human) on the continent.
- Orange: represents society and culture symbolizing education, health, medicine and training.
- Yellow: represents energy and strength; the collectivist practice of humanity and solidarity.
- White: represents the development of science and technology, art and intellectual work. It represents a time to carry out intellectual and harmonic progress.
- Green: represents the Andean economy and production while symbolizing natural wealth.
- Blue: represents cosmic space and infinity. It's the expression of the astral systems and their natural effects on Earth.

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- Violet: represents Andean politics and ideology. It also symbolizes the philosophy and the harmonic power of the Andes.

Figure 20 *The second draft of "Pakarimuj" reflecting a pronounced wiphala*

pattern on the chest.

Figure 21 *The final draft of "Pakarimuj" with a headshot, full body in casual clothing,*

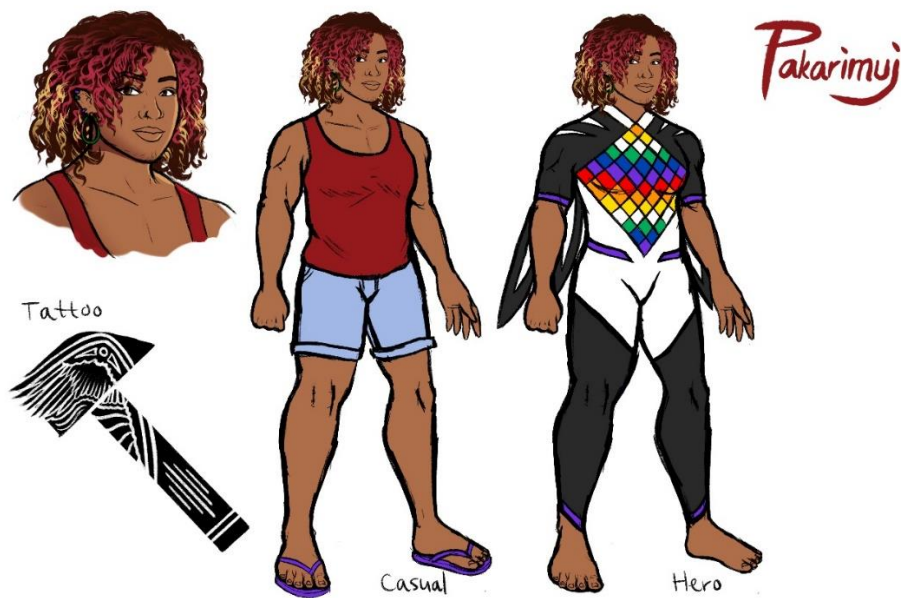*superShero outfit and tattoo of her hammer*

Figure 22 *The mark of a hammer on the body of Pakarimuj is highlighted in one scene emerging to graffiti a building with knowledges about the time of the Unguy*
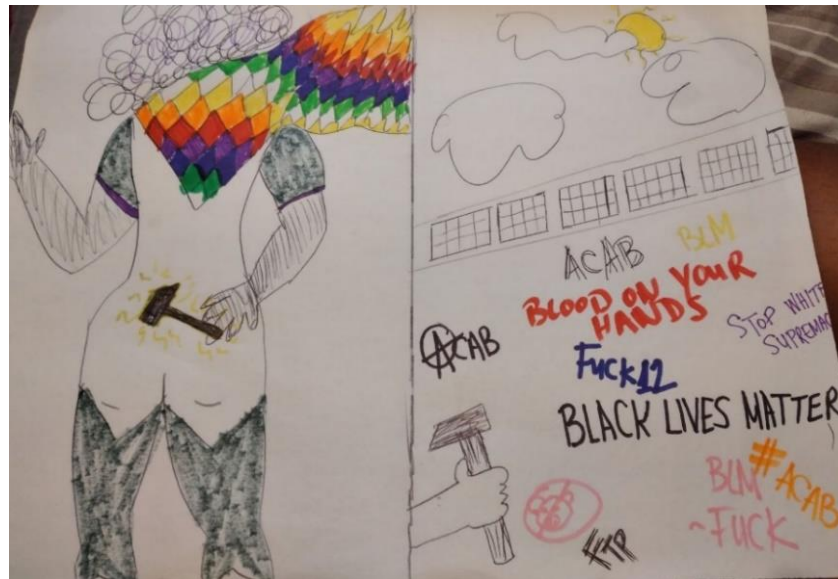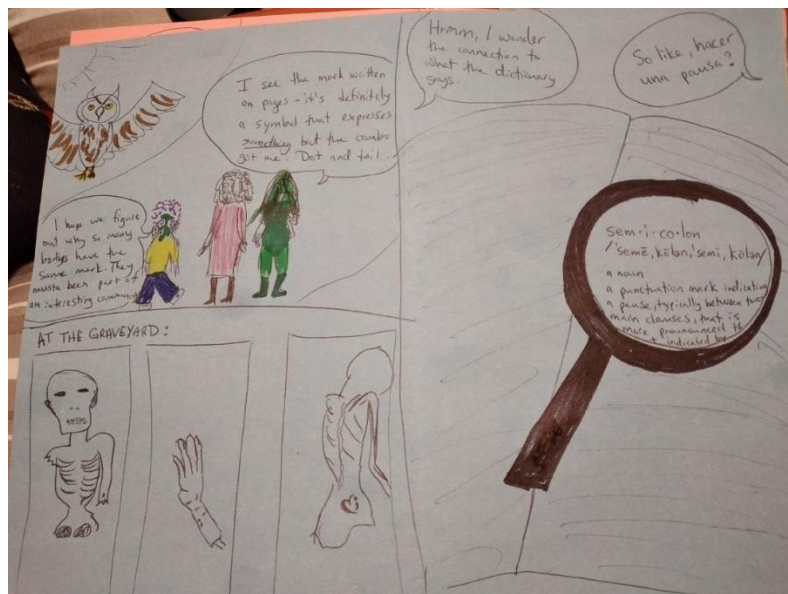

Figure 23 *In a scene, the Thriverse investigate bodies that were exhumed and studied for their marked bodies.*

Atl is an character based off of the BOI participant "Julián" and his tattoo of the Aztec rain god named "Tlāloc," which literally means "He who makes things sprout." Julián offered no feedback on his character and told me he trusted me to do him justice.

Figure 24 *The Headshot and development of Atl.*

Plot

The year is 2121. This origin story follows groups of super-beings who are the offspring of people who lived on Abya Yala during El Unguy, which was a worldwide pandemic between 2019 and 2023 and killed ⅔ of the world's population. During that time period the Kkkapital system finally collapsed after the self-appointed authorities committed mass suicides with their cults who believed it was the end of the world. Before their demise, the 1% destroyed much technological advances and conducted mass erasures of written human knowledge, a tradition rooted in Book Banning, which first occurred on Abya Yala in 1624. The first steps in eradicating the Kkkapital structures came during the first year of El Unguy, when radicalized youth fought to abolish colonial school models that imposed the religion, language, economics, and other cultural practices of the Western invaders onto Indigenous peoples of Abya Yala.

The Surviverse, as they called themselves, from this period began documenting pieces of the past in various codes so that future generations could understand how to protect and nourish living beings after their departure. The generation that followed, who called themselves the Thriverse, were born with extraordinary gifts never before seen in humans and they dedicated

themselves to examining and learning from remains of the past world. Groups of Thriverse organized to create learning spaces in order to piece together knowledges from the past.

The Thriverse studied messages left on structures, exhumed bodies and artifacts and pages from texts remaining from the Wretched Fire, as the destruction of knowledge was called. In these were secrets of blueprints gifted from those passed for praxis work for the future to learn ways of thriving after five centuries of the devastating social, political experimentation Kkkapital by invaders. The Thriverse united worldwide to help restore much of the damage inflicted by a fatal pandemic by Indigenizing spaces with the knowledges from the First Peoples of the Land. Mutual aid structures replaced KKKapital transactional relationships and sustained communities. They led to the return of communal heterarchical systems between lives sharing the same spatial or social territories of Abya Yala. The following recounts how Pachamama began to heal and how rethinking schools led to a reimagining of learning spaces to center a culture of nurturance.

Scene Sample

Before dusk on the eve of Mushuk Nina, Pakarimuj rode up to the Guerrilla Gardening equipment center to meet up with Yachaykay to bike home together. They loved riding with Inti's last light of the day and today was extra special because of the upcoming celebration of renewal.

- Hey Madrina! Yachaykay beamed. Wanna see the seed bombs we learned how to make with Profa Sandra today?

- Show me, show me! Yelped Pakarimuj as Yachaykay led them to a table covered with seeds of all kinds, soil, and clay on top of ripped pages containing the fundamental natural phenomena and processes of plant life, the classification, and description of plant diversity, and a multitude of applied topics about plant studies. There were containers of ready-to-go Explosive Eggs, Seed Pills, and Seed Balloons piled on an adjacent table.

Yachaykay had some Seed Bombs in hand as they explained; we can make either explosive or degradable cap-a-sules… son como pastillitas.... the balls are a mix of clay soil, compost, and seeds in a 5:1:1 ratio with just some water to make it stick. I loooove the texture of clay! And when we come back from holiday, we can choose to join classes about raciosocio-linguistics with Dr. Erica, and we can learn about the Japanese farmer biologist named Masanoby Fukuoka, who, like, invented the bombs, with Dr. Atl. Did you know that European settlement and their government policies and monoculture nearly eradicated the farming practices of First Nations people?

- Nope, appreciate the info tho, Pakarimuj sighed with satisfaction at their ahijade's education.

- Hey, can you remind me to tell papi and mami so I can remember to check the times for those classes?

- Of course, amorcito. I'm so excited that you had such a great day.

- Ay, Madrina. That's not all. You're gonna be so proud of my latest essay I wrote with Profa Búho's guidance, ancient texts and resources. I wrote about the advantages of knowing our Cosmocer - like if the pre-COVID humans only knew about the Harmony Laws that govern the cosmos and the universe. Like for real, Madrina, there would have been many, many more survivors from that world. I wrote about how growing up with Los Mayores teaching us about the Sumak Kawsay, laws of harmony, encouraging integration, complementing differences, respecting all diversity and developing our pensasiento...all that love for Pachamama Los Mayores talk about is precisely what the Fake New World needed! I argued that practicing socio solidarity and finding a place within community mutual aid networks helps us heal from individualism and develops our superpowers.

Pakarimuj loved picking up Yachaykay from school and seeing them like this. They especially loved learning with them. Pakarimuj felt full seeing what joy all the children expressed about what they learned with the teachers, collectively called the Thriverse. The Thriverz each had nurtured themselves into wellness after the terrible Unguy and their body marks emerged so beautifully as their thriving became apparent.

A piece of the second scene depicts the Thriverse finding parts of a book called "What We Believe: A Black Lives Matter Principles Activity Book by Laleña Garcia, illustrated by Caryn Davidson (Figure 10). The group explores what some terms such as "empathy" mean. Character

"Atl" is makes a debut here derived from the Bethinkikng Our Inking project collaborator named Julián.

The pieces of "Crear La Realidad" presented here serve to showcase what curriculum could be. is a communal narrative that will be written across time and space. All creators are challenged to remember their lived experience and recreate those experiences with thriving narratives.

<h1 style="text-align: center;">Definition of Terms</h1>

* Disclaimer: The kichwa used here is very distinct than other forms of the language because pre-Inkan peoples remain and influence the tongue. The terms and concepts described below are not meant to be entirely understood by non-Andean people but encourage readers to take what they can and conceive forward what it could mean.

Guerrilla discourse: a term used to describe daily micro actions that are conducted, additional to macro movement, to challenge the impositions, rules and regulations of the colonial system and structures. To engage in guerrilla discourse means being innovative with not participating in those manifestations.

Guerrilla Gardening: the act of cultivating Land that is considered to be privately owned under colonial capitalism's views of nature; often, guerrilla gardening is used in political protest to reclaim stolen Land

Pensasiento: a balance between reason and feeling, perception and intuition; with a dee

El Unguy: the Kichwa word for "illness"; used to describe the 2020 Global COVID19 Crisis. COVID-19 was an infectious disease caused by a coronavirus which was capitalized on by self-proclaimed authorities and led to the deaths of about two million people globally between 2020 and 2021. M ** "The Wretched Fire" is a fictional event of 2021 in which White governments banned, collected and then burned many texts that centered Black and Brown people in any way but with contempt, denigration, and disgust

Seed Bombs: For gardening those areas where access is difficult or a long dig is unsuitable, use a seed bombs (sometimes called green grenades) which are seeds and soil held in an explosive or degradable capsule. There are many different methods, some you can easily make at home, some that require a bit more ingenuity. I've compiled a list of six options and their pros and cons on a new Seed Bomb page

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Research collaborator Information and Consent Form: Interviews

You are being asked to participate in a research study being conducted by a researcher at Michigan State University. Researchers are required to provide a consent form to inform you about the research study, to convey that participation is voluntary, to explain risks and benefits of participation, and to empower you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask the researchers any questions you may have.

STUDY TITLE
Bethinking Our Inking: Counternarratives on contested spaces extend K-12 Culturally Sustaining and Arts-based Pedagogies

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH
The purpose of this study is to understand the knowledges on the tattooed skin of graduate student instructors at a predominantly White institution (PWI) in the Midwest between the years 2015 and 2020 with the goal of meaning-making with collaborators about absent knowledges of their K-12 experiences in order to expand Culturally Sustaining and Arts-based pedagogies.

WHAT YOU WILL DO
You are invited to participate in interviews related to tattoos on your body and the knowledges they contain. If you choose to participate in this project, you will be asked to participate in 3 - 4 interviews about issues related to your tattoos as well as discourse about tattoos in present-day society and schools via Skype, Zoom and social media communication applications such as WhatsApp, InstaGram Messenger or Facebook Messenger. The interviews will last between 30 and 90 minutes and will expand the 2019 - 2020 academic year. During interviews you will be asked questions related to your experiences with tattoos in general and you will be asked background information. You may also be encouraged to expand upon the stories of the meanings of your tattoos, and you will be asked how the knowledges of your tattoos relate to knowledges in your K-12 schooling experiences. You may choose not to answer any questions that you would prefer not to answer. Additionally, you may choose to end participation in the interviews and the project at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

You may also be invited to contribute images of your tattoos of which you speak about during the course of the interviews or you may be asked access to publish images the researcher has to your tattoo posts on social media. You are under no obligation to participate in any parts of this study. Over the next year, the researcher plans to develop a curriculum based on knowledges gained from these interviews to expand the study of student thriving and to build on Culturally Sustaining and Arts-based pedagogies. I welcome your input and participation in this process as well.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS
You will receive no direct benefits for participating in interviews. Although you will receive no direct benefits from participating in the study, I hope knowledges gained from our discussions will contribute towards better resources and options for K-12 public school curricula and

instructional practices. Most people find participating in interviews such as this interesting and thought-provoking and I do wish this for you.

POTENTIAL RISKS
There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study and the study is not expected to cause any physical, legal, or emotional harm. In general, many people may feel a variety of ways about showing their body (parts) as it is highly personal in nature. Participating in this research may not alleviate these feelings. If you feel additional stress from participating in any interviews, please contact the researcher to abstain from using your narratives.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY
All of your information for this study will be kept confidential and we will not identify you as an individual or include any information that could identify you personally in any reports resulting from this research. Your confidentiality will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. Paper and electronic records will be kept in the locked offices and in a password-protected computer, to which only the certified researchers and the MSU Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) will have access. Your data will be kept for at least three years from the date of the end of this study (November 2022), after which it will be destroyed.

AUDIO RECORDING
In order to get the most out of the interview experience, audio recording of the sessions may be made. This allows your facilitator to pay better attention to the activities and conversation taking place. Your facilitator may also take notes during the session. The audio recording will be typed up into a transcript and then the audio file will be destroyed. The recording will not be shared publicly and will only be used for research purposes. If you prefer not to be audio recorded, please let your researcher know. Additionally, during any interview if you wish to have the recorder turned off for a brief period it can be done so at any time.

YOUR RIGHTS TO PARTICIPATE, SAY NO, OR WITHDRAW
You have the right to say no to participate in the research. You can stop at any time after it has already started. There will be no consequences if you stop and you will not be criticized. You will not lose any benefits that you normally receive.

COSTS AND COMPENSATION FOR BEING IN THE STUDY
There are no anticipated costs or compensation to you for participating in this study.

CONTACT INFORMATION
If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact the researcher, Alba Isabel Lamar by mail: ****; by email at l****@gmail.com; or by telephone at 917-***-****.

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research collaborator, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 4000 Collins Rd, Suite 136, Lansing, MI 48910.

FUNDING
There has been no funding for this research project.

Your signature below means that you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

I agree to allow audiotaping of any interviews.

☐ Yes   ☐ No   Initials_____

I agree to allow images from your social media to be used for this study (you will have access to view the images and consent or deny consent at any time and about single or all images).

☐ Yes   ☐ No   Initials_____

Appendix B: K-12 Student Experience Survey
(*adapted from Montilla, 2018 and Western States Center*)

1. How many schools did you attend for K-12?

2. What city(ies) or state(s) did you attend K-12?
.

3. School Experiences

Outcome	Yes	Somewhat	Don't know	Rarely	No
I saw myself represented in my classwork					
I knew teachers/staff that I can connect with regarding my race or culture					
I felt comfortable talking about my race, ethnicity, or culture with my teachers					
The teachers/staff were interested in getting to know my family					
I felt like I can express myself freely at school(s)					
My homework assignments and classwork were challenging					
I felt comfortable talking about political issues like police brutality with my teachers and staff.					
Students were disciplined fairly at my school(s)					
Teachers/staff did not judge students based on the way they look					
Students did not receive special treatment or favoritism					
Teachers/staff at my school(s) respected me and view me as someone they can learn from					
Teachers/staff at my school wanted me to learn and had high expectations for me					
Teachers/staff at my school(s) were invested in the learning of all students, not just the students who were passing their class					
Teachers/staff at my school(s) wanted me to be a better thinker, not just pass tests					
Teachers/staff at my school(s) taught how to learn from our mistakes					

Appendix C: Exit Survey

1. Are you still comfortable with your pseudonym? If not, what do you prefer?

2. What pronouns would you like me to use?

3. What racial, ethnic identity would you like me to use or not use?

4. What years were you a graduate student? What program?

5. How much teaching experience do you have and in what context?

6. How did you feel about the interview process?

7. What, if any, changes for the interview process would you suggest?

Appendix D: "Where I Come From" Poem Format

Fill in the blanks in the poem below. Use the words suggested or choose your own words to communicate your thoughts as clearly and powerfully as you can. Feel free to add lines of your own, to remove lines, or to change words to fit your purpose.

I'm from a street where _____

I'm from faith in _____

I'm from a long line of people who _____

I'm from confusion about _____

I'm from laughter over _____

I come from _____

I'm from love, and I know that because _____

I'm from fear, especially when I think about _____

I come from a long line of _____

I come from experiences like _____

I come from _____

And I wish my life would become _____

That's where I'd like to be from

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