

PERSPECTIVAS

HISPANIC THEOLOGICAL INITIATIVE

TWENTIETH ISSUE – 2023

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TWENTIETH ISSUE, 2023

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P E R S P E C T I V A S

TWENTIETH ISSUE | 2023

Editorial [ENGLISH VERSION]

Not long ago, I was in a discussion in which some of the participants spoke of theology in a universal sense without qualifications. The conversation struck me because of the conspicuous absence of any sense of diversity in theological thought. By absence of diversity, here I mean the lack of racialized scholars and scholars from the Global South. Although none of those participating stated it explicitly, it was obvious to me that they were talking about Western European and Anglo North Atlantic expressions of theology. The participants seemed oblivious of the fact that since the 1960s there has been a rich proliferation of theological strands that ought to make it very difficult for anyone to speak about theology without acknowledging this wide array of theological expressions. After the conversation, I started thinking about the conditions within academic scholarship that prevent scholars from coming into contact with and learning from this marvelous theological gamut. In some circles, I have noticed, this great motley is often reduced to the handle of “contextual theologies.” In other contexts, people group these diverse strands of theology under the language of liberation theologies.

The realities that these theological schools represent spill out far beyond the specific nomenclature that the labels contextual and liberation seem to suggest. Their concerns, the challenges they confront, the social reality to which they are speaking, the actors involved, the communities from which they speak, and the theological insights they offer are irreducible to a single definition or category. To complicate matters more, each of these theological strands are internally diverse and correspond with multiple points of concern and perspectives. That is certainly true for Latina/o/x theological strands. The range of issues and concerns confronted by Latina/o/x scholars and the themes they have engaged over the years have multiplied exponentially. For some time now—as Fernando Segovia would say—we have ceased to think of ourselves as second-class theologians and scholars. At the same time, it is worth recognizing that—in the words of Ada María Isasi-Díaz—la lucha continúa/the struggle continues!

Notwithstanding our struggles, we have a voluminous legacy of great contributions, theological insights, and methodological approaches that now can be found across the academic theological spectrum. Our works and writings are now the subject of dissertations by a new generation of theological students from dominant cultural groups as well as those from racialized and minoritized groups, including our own Latinas/os/xs students. So, we find ourselves at a unique crossroads in which a new generation of Latina/o/x scholars are raising critical questions about previous theological contributions, and in the process are expanding our own contributions to the critical study of theology.

[Continued on next page]

Three of the articles in this issue of *Perspectivas* put on display the back-and-forth dance between critically appreciating the theological legacy from previous generations on one hand and imagining ways forward that respond to our current reality on the other. Considering the recent discussions on synodality by Pope Francis, Amirah Orozco engages in a process of reclamation of the Encuentros for Hispanic Ministry as contextual expressions of synodality since the 1970s. Meanwhile, Neal Spadafora engages in a critical re-reading of Enrique Dussel's treatment of Marx to highlight important resonances between Marxism and Latina/o/x theological thought. Lastly, Isabela Leonor Rosales invites us to creatively rethink how we engage indigenous communities as we move towards the creation of a decolonial theoretical framework. Rosales challenges us to go beyond the romanticization of indigenous identities and instead move towards "authentic solidarity" with these communities.

Our fourth and final article takes on Catholic moral teaching with regards to questions of sexual identity and its implications for members of the LGBTQIA+ communities. Taking the tragic attack at the Pulse Nightclub in Florida in June 2016 and other ethnographic studies as point of departure, Leonardo Mendoza proposes other avenues for rethinking Catholic moral teaching by engaging the works of Shawn Copeland and Ada María Isasi-Díaz. We are also pleased to include five book reviews (two of which have been translated also into Spanish) showcasing the continuing theological production by Latina/o/x scholars. The editorial team is delighted to offer to our readers this 2023 issue of *Perspectivas*.

Néstor Medina, Senior Editor

P E R S P E C T I V A S

NÚMERO VEINTE | 2023

Editorial [SPANISH VERSION]

Hace no mucho tiempo, yo estaba en una discusión en la que los que participaban hablaban de teología en un sentido universal y sin matizar sus afirmaciones. Tomé nota de la conversación por la obvia ausencia de cualquier sentido de diversidad teológica. Por ausencia de diversidad quiero dar a entender aquí a la falta de estudiosos y teólogos racializados y del sur global. Aunque ninguno de los participantes lo dijeron explícitamente, me era evidente que los participantes de tal discusión se referían a las expresiones de teología europeas occidentales y anglo nortatlánticas. Parecía que los participantes ignoraban el hecho que a partir de los 1960s ha habido una rica proliferación de corrientes teológicas que deberían hacer difícil que cualquier persona hable de la teología sin reconocer esta amplia diversidad de expresiones teológicas. Después de la conversación comencé a pensar acerca de las condiciones dentro de la academia que previenen a académicos a que entren en contacto con y puedan aprender de esta maravillosa gama de discursos teológicos. En algunos círculos, he notado que esta variedad de discursos es reducida a la etiqueta de “teologías contextuales”. En otros, la gente agrupa esta diversidad de teologías bajo el lenguaje de teologías de la liberación.

Las realidades que estas escuelas representan se extienden más allá de una nomenclatura específica que las etiquetas contextual y liberación puedan sugerir. Las preocupaciones, los desafíos que estas confrontan, la realidad social a la que se están dirigiendo, los/as actores/as envueltos/as, las comunidades desde las cuales hablan, y las lecciones teológicas que ellas ofrecen son irreducibles a una sola definición y categoría. Para complicar más las cosas, cada una de estas escuelas teológicas son internamente diversas y corresponden con múltiples puntos de interés y perspectivas. Eso es ciertamente verdad en lo que respecta a las escuelas teológicas latinas/os/xs. La gama de asuntos y preocupaciones confrontadas por estudiosas/os/xs y los temas que han abordado en el transcurso de los años se han multiplicado exponencialmente. Ya por un tiempo—como diría Fernando Segovia—hemos cesado de pensar de nosotras/os/xs como teólogas/os/xs y académicas/os/xs de segunda clase. ¡Al mismo tiempo, cabe reconocer que—en las palabras de Ada María Isasi-Díaz—la lucha continúa!

[Continúa en la página siguiente]

A pesar de nuestras luchas, tenemos un legado voluminoso de grandes contribuciones, nuevos conocimientos teológicos, y acercamientos metodológicos que ahora pueden ser encontrados en todo el espectro teológico académico. Nuestros trabajos y nuestros escritos son ahora el sujeto de disertaciones doctorales por una nueva generación de estudiantes de teología de los grupos dominantes como aquellas/os/xs que son racializadas y minorizadas, incluyendo nuestras/os/xs propias estudiantes latinas/os/xs. Así que nos encontramos en una encrucijada particular en la que una nueva generación de latina/o/x académicas/os/xs están abordando críticamente nuestras contribuciones teológicas previas, y en el proceso están expandiendo nuestras contribuciones al estudio crítico de la teología.

Los tres artículos en este volumen de *Perspectivas* exhiben el baile para adelante y para atrás entre, por un lado, la apreciación crítica del legado teológico de las generaciones anteriores, y por el otro, la imaginación de maneras de avanzar y responder a nuestra realidad contemporánea. Considerando las recientes discusiones de sinodalidad por el papa Francisco, Amirah Orozco aborda un proceso de reclamar los Encuentros por el Ministerio Hispano como expresiones contextuales de sinodalidad desde los 1970s. Mientras tanto, Neal Spadafora se ocupa de una lectura crítica del tratamiento de Marx por Enrique Dussel con el fin de resaltar las resonancias entre el Marxismo y el pensamiento teológico Latina/o/x. En el tercer artículo, Isabela Leonor Rosales nos invita a repensar creativamente como tratamos la cuestión de las comunidades Indígenas, en la medida en que trabajamos para crear un marco teórico decolonial. Rosales nos reta a ir más allá de romantizar a las identidades indígenas y, en su lugar, entrar en una “auténtica solidaridad” con estas comunidades.

El cuarto y último artículo discute la enseñanza moral católica en relación con asuntos de la identidad sexual y sus implicaciones para miembros de las comunidades LGBTQIA+. Tomado el ataque trágico en el club nocturno Pulse en Florida en junio del 2016 y otros estudios etnográficos como punto de partida, Leonardo Mendoza propone otras avenidas para repensar la enseñanza moral católica en conversación con el trabajo de Shawn Copeland y de Ada María. También estamos alegres de incluir cinco reseñas de libros (dos de las cuales han sido traducidas al español) que demuestran la producción teológica continua por estudiosas/os/xs latinas/os/xs. El equipo editorial está encantado de ofrecer a nuestras/os/xs lectoras/es/xs este volumen de *Perspectivas* del 2023.

Néstor Medina, editor principal

The First Three National Encuentros of Hispanic Ministry as Processes of Synodality

Amirah Orozco

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• THIS ARTICLE IS ONLY AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH •

Abstract

On December 8, 1965, the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church was closed by Pope Paul VI. The Council had opened in October of 1962 and as the bishops met in Rome, writing, discussing, and voting on each document, the world of the 1960s outside the walls of the aulas raged on. In the United States, Dolores Huerta and César Chávez were leading a movement that began with the migrant farmworkers in California and it was having ripple effects throughout many different sectors and communities. The Church was no exception. The thesis of this paper is that the ongoing Chicano Movement and the reception of the Second Vatican Council in the United States gave birth to the ecclesial gatherings known as the National Encuentros for Hispanic Ministry in 1972, 1977, and 1985. These first three Encuentros are thus examples of synodality, which has become a dominant ecclesiological theme of the Francis pontificate. They give us necessary historical examples to be able to put "flesh on the bones" of what synodality means. Synodality, I contend, is a process by which the Church lives into its identity as what Karl Rahner put as "World Church" by opening it up to the wisdom of the People of God and therefore the broader social and political concerns. In this case, the Chicano Movement. This paper sits at the intersection of Chicana studies and Latine theology.

Introduction

On December 8, 1965, the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church was closed by Pope Paul VI. The Council had opened in October of 1962 and as the bishops met in Rome, writing, discussing, and voting on each document, the world of the 1960s outside the walls of the aulas raged on. The final documents, in some

important cases, were shaped by the political and social contexts of the time.¹ The walls between the Church and the world became acknowledged for their porousness. Karl Rahner, whose theological works are unparalleled in their distinct influence on Catholic Theology in the 20th century, famously declared Vatican II as a recognition by the Church itself of its status as a “World Church.”²

Vatican II Studies, a discipline consisting mostly of historian-theologians, has used the language of post-conciliar French theologian Yves Congar in using the word “reception” to describe the way the Council was appropriated by local churches. For Congar, the possibility to study this reception “derives from a theology of communion, itself associated with a theology of local churches, a pneumatology and a theology of tradition and a sense of the profound conciliarity of the Church.”³ Reception of every Council, including Vatican II is synonymous with its efficacy because the true impact of the Council does not depend solely on its promulgations, but rather on how those promulgations are lived out by local churches. Without a reception, the final documents are ineffective, and the experiences of the bishops are not overly or particularly interesting to either the historian or the theologian. Reception, then, is a key hermeneutic for understanding the Council. Joe Komonchak says something similar when he says that the Council can be viewed as an “event” or “episode in a series.” The Council did not happen in a vacuum and what happened before and after the Council tells the story of that series to make sense of that episode.⁴ The Council only makes sense within the context of the one Church that exists at both the local and the universal level. It brings novelty to the Church, but it does not break the Church apart or shatter its existence. The Encuentros, as receptions of the Council, are carried out in the wake of this Church event and are thus here understood within that context.

Pope Francis’ pontificate has represented a new stage in the reception of Vatican II. His pontificate, it can be said, is another episode in the series on the Council. His concept of “synodality” flows from this new reception and comprehensive understanding of the Council. In 2020, he called for the Synod on Synodality and has thus triggered processes of writing, thinking, and living out synodality in the life of the Church. In many of the official documents of the synod, *Lumen Gentium* plays a prominent role. Synodality, in the document released by the International Theological Commission, was defined as, “the specific *modus vivendi et operandi* of the Church, the People of God, which reveals and gives substance to her being as communion when all her members journey together, gather in assembly and take an active part in her evangelizing mission.”⁵ The Holy Spirit moving through the People of God takes on the role of protagonist in a synodal Church.

¹ For example, *Nostra Aetate*, the decree on non-Christian religions, started off as a document only about Jews, but grew substantially. It was translated and toured around to majority Muslim countries before being approved by the Council Fathers.

² Karl Rahner, “Towards a Fundamental Theological Interpretation of Vatican II,” *Theological Studies*, 40 no. 4 (1979): 716-27.

³ Yves Congar, “Reception as an Ecclesial Reality,” *Concilium* 77 (1972): 43-68.

⁴ Joseph A Komonchak, “Vatican II as an ‘Event’” in *Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?* Edited by David G Schultenover (New York, NY: Continuum, 2007), 24-51

⁵ International Theological Commission. *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*. Accessed March 6, 2023,

The Argentine theologian Rafael Tello explains that we cannot view this Spirit-led work and discernment of the People of God in the abstract. Instead, he adds, we must understand it as the concrete and particular way in which the Holy Spirit communicates. It is in the problems, concerns, and culture of the People of God where and how the Spirit manifests. In calling the Synod on Synodality, Pope Francis is taking synodality not as a thought experiment, but as a lived way of being Church. It will require conversion, creativity, and a broadening of our imagination, certainly, and might lead to the creation of new structures and entirely novel ways of being Church. It also, though, requires us to look at the history of our Church and ask ourselves what structures or events have served as synodal or proto-synodal examples for us within the Roman Catholic Church as it is. In the United States of America (the US), there is no better example of this than the first three National Encuentros of Hispanic Ministry.

In this article, I will argue that the first three National Encuentros for Hispanic Ministry⁶, were ecclesial receptions of Vatican II that were embedded in the simultaneous Chicano Movement of the time. To study the Encuentros is therefore to study the Council and the Chicano Movement simultaneously, which means that this study falls at the intersection of Chicano studies and Latine Catholic Theology.⁷ My interest in the Encuentros as processes of synodality falls into this latter category. This claim is made not to be anachronistic, but instead to discern how the Encuentros act as sources for theological reflection for the contemporary Church. The conferences were processes of synodality, and with each one, new pathways formed for the Church in the US to invite more voices to the table and create a culture in which “the whole Church is a subject and everyone in the Church is a subject.”⁸ The most important thing that these historical moments show us about synodality is that it is a process that requires the Church to open itself up to social movements. The Encuentros were receptions of the Council instigated not only by the event of the Council, but also the ongoing Chicano Movement. Therefore, the structure of the argument here attempts to isolate two (of the surely many) conflating factors, to bring them back together under a final understanding of how they relate to synodality. This last part is important in understanding how studying these gatherings is important for our contemporary Church. First, I will explain them in the context of the Chicano Movement, then in the context of the Council, to ultimately conclude that both contexts, and not just one or the other, make the Encuentros models of synodality.

https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20180302_sinodalita_en.html. §6

⁶ As a presented article at the American Academy of Religion in the Vatican II studies section, I used only the word “Hispanic,” reflecting the language of the sources I used. Upon submitting as a written manuscript, I have chosen to use the term Hispanic/Latine to describe those whom the Encuentros were by and for. I did not change any quotes or official titles that used the word “Hispanic” or “Latino,” as is seen in this instance for the names of the actual Encuentros.

⁷ The term Chicano itself is typically designated for Mexican Americans. Non-Mexican American people can have a more complex historical relationship with the term. There is more scholarly work that needs to be done to recover how non-Mexican Americans were present at the Encuentros and created space for themselves within the larger narrative of the Chicano Movement. That is, however, beyond the scope of the present study, although not beyond the scope of my inquiries.

⁸ International Theological Commission. *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, §55

The Encuentros in the Context of the Chicano Movement

The Civil Rights Movement and the now-called “second-wave” feminist movement were in full swing simultaneously in the 1960s and 70s. Social movements in the United States were causing great change in society. The Chicano Movement was part of these social movements and was growing as a national movement when the Second Vatican Council closed in 1965. Dolores Huerta and César Chávez were leading a movement that began with the migrant farmworkers in California and it was having ripple effects throughout many different sectors and communities. The Church was no exception. Of course, the Church had a presence in the movement through Catholic rituals, symbols, and through the embodied lives of the people in the movement. The Church hierarchy, as well, eventually supported the boycotts and unions (although it is still left to be debated if it was enough.) The history of the Encuentros, though, indicates that it was not only the Church present in the movement, but that the movement was also present in the Church. Timothy Matovina, a historian of the Hispanic/Latine Catholic Church in the United States, in his book *Latino Catholicism: Transformation in America's Largest Church* writes, “[t]he growing ferment for social change influenced Latino Catholic activism and directed its energies within the church itself.”⁹

By the time the First Encuentro started in 1972, Catholic religious sisters and priests had already been organizing. At the First Encuentro, Sister Clarita Trujillo, the only woman to give a talk, spoke about the group known as Las Hermanas.¹⁰ Couched in a workshop about the role of Spanish-speaking women in the Church, Trujillo explained that Las Hermanas were women interested in forming themselves to be able to serve their own communities but that their congregations were not letting them, and instead were relegating them to work with white upper middle-class children. Las Hermanas was founded a year before the First Encuentro in 1971 in Houston. Many of the group’s members were active in the Chicano Movement, joining the front lines of marches. In the only book-length work on the women so far, Lara Medina (2004) refers to the women as a “religious-political” movement.¹¹ This hyphenated way of describing them draws attention to the way that Las Hermanas were engaged both in and outside of the Church with struggles of liberation. Hermana Teresita Basso told Medina the story of the way participating in school board sit-ins led to a “lifelong commitment to the advancement of Chicano communities.”¹²

PADRES (Padres Asociados por los Derechos Religiosos, Educativos, Sociales) was the male counterpart to Las Hermanas. The group was founded in 1969, two years before Las Hermanas, and was made up of Spanish-speaking priests. Las Hermanas

⁹ Timothy Matovina, *Latino Catholicism: Transformation of the America's Largest Church* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 73

¹⁰ Mario Paredes, *The History of the National Encuentros: Hispanic Americans in the One Catholic Church* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 2014), 16.

¹¹ Lara Medina, *Las Hermanas: Chicana/Latina Religious-Political Activism in the U.S. Catholic Church* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2004.)

¹² Medina, *Las Hermanas*, 37

were admittedly more political,¹³ but that tracks well with feminist groups in general, given that feminism, at least in the way Las Hermanas understood it, was not only a religious project, but also a political one (and the reverse is true, not only a political, but also a religious). For PADRES, their main concern was the lack of representation in the hierarchy. Both groups pointed to the fact that only 17 percent of US Catholic population in 1970 were Irish and yet, 56 percent of the Catholic bishops were of Irish descent.¹⁴ The first Hispanic Bishop in the US, Bishop Patricio Flores, was named in 1970 and was a core member of this group. One of the cited reasons for the founding of the group was, “the example set by young Mexican Americans on college campuses and the barrios.”¹⁵ Matovina cited an interview with Virgilio Elizondo, a founding member of the group and a key figure for the story of Latines in the Catholic Church and Latine theology, in which Elizondo said that the movement’s direct reproaches of the Church had forced him and others to take a more critical look at the inner functioning of the Church.¹⁶

The relationship of actors in the Chicano Movement with the Catholic Church was complicated, found its ebbs and flows, and was not uniform across groups within the movement or within the Church. David Montejano follows in the footsteps of most historians of the Chicano Movement in telling the story of those in the movement who “acknowledged the Catholic Church as an oppressive institution.”¹⁷ He even makes the argument that the Church was hesitant to support the movement in part because there was a worry that the movement was not just for labor rights, but also a racial-ethnic nationalism.¹⁸ However, the narrative of PADRES and Las Hermanas tells us something true about most histories: it is more complicated. In fact, PADRES, frustrated at the slow movement of the Bishops conference, announced the possibility of a national Chicano church.¹⁹ At the First Encuentro, Bishop Flores gave a moving speech where he compared the Hispanic experience of being in the Church with that of a mother who has abandoned her children. He framed these remarks as “constructive criticism” that came from an undying love for the Church, not as a rejection to the Church all together.²⁰ Whether the term “nationalism” can be attached to Flores and those at the First Encuentro is debatable, but it is clear that the fight went beyond labor rights and was certainly intertwined with their own growing racial-ethnic identity as distinct from that of other Catholic ethnic or cultural groups. Their great love of the Church was intertwined with this growing identity. This reality did not take away from the radicality of their activism.

¹³ There are notable exceptions to this in the PADRES Movement. For more information on that, see Martínez, Richard Edward’s *PADRES: The National Chicano Priest Movement* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press) published in 2005, a year after Medina’s treatment of Las Hermanas.

¹⁴ Matovina, *Latino Catholicism*, 74.

¹⁵ Matovina, *Latino Catholicism*, 74.

¹⁶ Matovina, *Latino Catholicism*, 74.

¹⁷ David Montejano, *Quixote’s Soldiers: A Local History of the Chicano Movement, 1966-1981* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2010), 165. He is specifically talking about the gathering of Chicanas in 1971 that gathered more than 600 Chicanas.

¹⁸ Montejano, *Quixote’s Soldiers*.

¹⁹ Matovina, *Latino Catholicism*, 74.

²⁰ Matovina, *Latino Catholicism*, 74.

PADRES and Las Hermanas, with their rising social consciousness attained through the Chicano Movement had clear goals and used the Encuentros to achieve them. It is not surprising, given their presence and organization, that the conclusions of the First Encuentro make their support of the Chicano Movement clear, stating the following:

All members of the Church should lend their full support to the obtaining of justice by all oppressed persons. In particular, all members of the Church and all ecclesiastical institutions are urged to boycott buying or eating iceberg lettuce -- except union labeled -- in support of the efforts of the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee, AFL-CIO to obtain living wages for migrant agricultural workers.²¹

The conclusions of the First Encuentro do not mince words. The Church, which includes all its members, should be supporting the boycotts. Additionally, though, not only do the conclusions call for boycott, the delegates also insist that all members of the Church, including bishops and the episcopal conference, must protest and work against unjust immigration laws that result in poor working conditions and the expansion of the Cuban exception laws to members of all Latin American countries.²² It should be noted that this direct and active call to engage in immigration reform as a top priority is prophetic even for today's episcopal conference.

The Second and Third Encuentros, although already in the late 70s and early 80s, were products of this first initial push to raise the consciousness of Hispanic/Latine Catholics. Much like the Chicano Movement itself during these years, the movement was beginning to transform. The Second and Third Encuentros, however, did continue to push for more representation and open the pathways to more participation for Hispanic/Latines in the Church. In conversations with people who were either at all three or at least at two of the Encuentros, the phrase "consciousness raising" was used more for the Second Encuentro than any other. While the first was perhaps more explicitly connected to the political movement, because of its weaker showing of the average Hispanic/Latine Catholic, it was the second that truly brought Hispanic/Latine Catholics together in the same room, same place, recognizing themselves as one group. It was here, as Hermana Dominga Zapata recalls it, where many Hispanic/Latine ministers across the country realized that each other existed.²³

In this Second Encuentro, Hispanic/Latine peoples were asking to be included as full, active members of the Church. One of the lines that sticks out most in the final document is found under the heading "Unity in Plurality and Evangelization." The planning committee wrote as a proposal, "[t]hat the church at the grassroots, diocesan, regional, and national levels enforce the concept of *integration* rather than

²¹ *Conclusions of the First Encuentro*, 21.

²² As indicated in footnote 7, an expansion on this point would require a more in-depth study about the way Cuban Catholics at the Encuentros played a role in the writing of the documents.

²³ Dominga Zapata. 2021. Interviewed by author. Zoom. April 6, 2021.

assimilation.”²⁴ This language of integration over assimilation echoed much of the scholarship of the Chicano Movement, which emphasized the radical move against assimilation. Marc Simon Rodríguez, in his book *Rethinking the Chicano Movement*, explained that the Chicano Movement, even in its most radical forms, was not a full out rebellion, in so much as it was a move to “reject the outmoded view of early twentieth-century assimilation” and worked for a “maintenance of culture, language, and social practices amongst minorities.”²⁵ That’s precisely what the Second Encuentro was calling for and did within the Church—demand a recognition of a distinct way of being Hispanic/Latine and Catholic that could not be simply melted into a generic way of being Catholic in the US.

The Chicano Movement was a major splash in the water in the United States. It reached the Catholic Church by way of Hispanic/Latine priests, sisters, and lay people who were recognizing themselves in the movement. They saw resonances in the movement’s goals not only for themselves, but for those whom they served with as ministers of the Church. The Encuentros, however, were not solely a product of their increased attention and identification with the plight of Hispanic/Latine peoples in the United States. The ecclesial gatherings were also the result of the simultaneous reception of the Council in the United States, which opened the door for a more participatory Church where these concerns could be brought to the table. The Encuentros in the context of the Second Vatican Council is where I will turn my attention to next before going into how the confluence of this moment makes them sources for contemporary theological reflection for Pope Francis’s vision of synodality.

The Encuentros in the Context of the Second Vatican Council

The Encuentros were the lived experience of the Second Vatican Council for Hispanic/Latine Catholics in the United States. In this section, I argue that the Encuentros represented one fundamental way Hispanic/Latine Catholics received the Council in their local context. A theology of communion between the universal and local Church is the basis of Congar’s idea that the reception of the Council is what gives the Council meaning. In this way, the Encuentros were *separate* from the Council (necessarily, or else they could not be receptions, they would only be extensions), and they were and are *necessary* for the Council.

The Encuentros were carried out within the context of the major historical event of the Council. Komonchak explains that to answer the most basic questions about the Council, we must understand the three levels at which we can study the Council: event, experience, and the final documents.²⁶ The experience and final documents are studied through archival research of the Council itself through the diaries of those in attendance and redaction histories of the documents. The three are, of course, deeply interconnected. To study the Council as an event, though, is to study its novelty, according to Komonchak, that the Council brought to the Church. The Council’s

²⁴ Paredes, *The History of the National Encuentros*, 99.

²⁵ Marc Simon Rodríguez. *Rethinking the Chicano Movement* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), 84.

²⁶ Joseph Komonchak, “The Council as an Event”.

significance, therefore, is understood through the changes in the local communities that resulted from the appropriation of each local community.

The camp of scholars and ecclesial officials Komonchak calls "reformists" emphasized the Church pre and post Council as one and the same Church. The Council studied as an event, and its reception understood as an integral part of it, highlights the opposite, the rupture, and change. In the United States, the Encuentros were the evidence of this break and an affirmation of a Church that emerged into the modern world. Hispanic/Latine people led the charge to begin thinking about their own roles in this new way of being Church.

In the most comprehensive work written on the Encuentros, Mario Paredes connected the *Encuentros* (capital 'e') with the *encuentros* (lowercase 'e') carried out by the Episcopal Conference of Latin America (CELAM). Edgard Beltrán, who had worked at CELAM and was present in Medellín in 1968, is credited for the inception of the Encuentros when he told Fr. Robert Stern about his idea to hold a conference for Hispanic/Latine peoples in the United States so that they too might be able to discuss the implications of Vatican II in their communities.²⁷

In this gathering Hispanic/Latine Catholics in the United States became aware of their role in the Church as protagonists in its mission. The conclusions of the First Encuentro state, "Spanish speaking American Catholics, convinced of the unity of the American Church and of the values of our proper heritage, are impelled by the Spirit to share *responsibility* for the growth of the kingdom among our people and all peoples of our country."²⁸ Hispanic/Latine people became aware that not only did they deserve to be seen or listened to and represented in the hierarchy, but the Church also prevented them from fulfilling their baptismal responsibilities. In all three Encuentros, the formation of Hispanic/Latine pastoral leaders was a key consideration, including priests, religious, and lay people. Las Hermanas took formation seriously, and sent many of their members to the Instituto Pastoral Latino Americano in Quito, Ecuador.²⁹

The Church's Dogmatic Constitution in the Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, stressed the importance of all people of God as full members of the Church, with both rights and responsibilities, meaning the whole Church and not just the Bishops. The document states the "faithful are by baptism made one body with Christ and are constituted among the People of God."³⁰ By baptism, and more perfectly unified to the Church through Confirmation and the Eucharist, all members of the People of God "are in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions of Christ." This document and the document of the conclusions of the First Encuentro agree, "[the baptized] carry out for their own part the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world."³¹ Every member of the People of God,

²⁷ Paredes, *The History of the National Encuentros*, 3.

²⁸ First Encuentro Conclusions, 2. Italics mine.

²⁹ Paredes, *The History of the National Encuentros*, 12.

³⁰ *Lumen Gentium* §31.

³¹ *Lumen Gentium* §31.

“from the bishops down to the last of the lay faithful”³² have a role to play in the life and mission of the Church. *Lumen Gentium* offered the Church the possibility not only of laity in the so-called “secular” world, but also of well-formed laity leading the Church. By stressing representation and formation, Hispanic/Latine Catholics were taking up their roles in the Church as baptized members of the People of God.

The Encuentros embodied what it meant for the Church to be in the world, not apart from or above the world. Grassroots movements like Las Hermanas and PADRES were calling on the Church to be a part of the Chicano Movement, to empower Hispanic/Latine peoples and to hear the cry of the most marginalized. The Encuentros can and should be considered as a part of the Chicano Movement. The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes* states “[t]he Church recognizes that worthy elements are found in today's social movements.”³³ Carlos Schickendantz, an Argentine theologian whose work has focused on the Council, explains that through the document of *Gaudium et Spes*, the Church was inaugurating a new methodology, a new way of being in the world, a new way of doing theology. The “signs of the times” of which the Church must be attentive to each generation was a call, according to Schickendantz, for an *inductive* method.³⁴ The Church was tasked with moving from the particular to the universal, rather than the opposite. Pastoral work, working with people, rather than dogma came to be valued. The Church was therefore being called to listen. Instead, The Council, by changing the culture of the Church to be more pastoral, elevated the status of social and political movements like the Chicano Movement. The Encuentros, however, not only dealt with things that also concerned the Chicano Movement, but pastoral necessities in general, including the organization of pastoral networks. *Pastoral en conjunto*, pastoral work done in communion with other communities and with multiple members of parish communities, was a dominant theme. In the wake of the Council, the Encuentros represented a Church using this inductive method to understand itself and its own theology. The plight of the Spanish-speaking people were not problems to be solved by an all-knowing Church, but, as the Encuentros showed us, were clamors for justice and cries of the poor, to which the Church as a whole must listen.

The Encuentros were an “episode” in the series of the Council. The Council must be understood more broadly than its final documents or the historical accounts of the experience of attending. The Council was an event that changed the trajectory of the Church, from the local to the universal. By understanding this, we see the Encuentros as not simply products of the Council, a historical reception, a one-to-one or word-for-word reception. Instead, we gain perspective on both the Encuentros and on the Council. The novelty and rupture that the Council produced become more pronounced when we study the way Hispanic/Latine peoples responded to their context and took up their place in the Church in a way they had never before.

³² *Lumen Gentium* §12.

³³ *Gaudium et spes* §42.

³⁴ Carlos Schickendantz, “Una elipse con dos focos” in *Teología de los signos de los tiempos latinoamericanos*. Edited by Carlos Schickendantz, Virginia Azcuy, and Eduardo Silva (Santiago de Chile: Universidad Alberto Hurtado, 2013), 37-62.

The Encuentros as Processes of Synodality

Synodality is a word that, while it has ancient roots, has come to be the novelty that defines the papacy of Pope Francis as the first Latin American pope. His convocation of the Synod on Synodality from 2021-2024 (originally, 2020-2023, but changed because of the pandemic) was not a shock to scholars or followers of Church happenings given the Synod on Young People in 2018 and the Synod of the Pan-Amazon Region in 2019. In both cases, Pope Francis opened the Synod of the Bishops in ways that were consultative, inviting young people, religious sisters, and indigenous leaders to join the bishops. While they were not voting members, the presence of these people remains historic. The Synod on Synodality has as its stated purpose an “exercise of mutual listening, conducted at all levels of the Church and involving the entire People of God.”³⁵ It is not, therefore, a survey of the Church or ethnography, but a “listening to the Holy Spirit.”³⁶ There is a belief that, as *Lumen Gentium* teaches, the People of God have the power to determine issues of faith and that in the act of listening to one another, including the Bishop of Rome and all other bishops, as well as to the signs of the times, the Church learns from this wisdom.

The Synod’s name itself indicates that the task of the bishops here is unique in modern history—the task of the Synod is to determine what synodality is, what it means, and what it looks like in concrete ways for the Church of today’s world. Synodality is not a foreign entity to the Church, but one that must be rethought in a vocabulary contemporaries can understand. By recovering the Encuentros as processes of synodality, then, the hope is that we might add some necessary “flesh on the bones” of synodality. The Encuentros are processes of synodality because of the work they did inside of the Church as processes opening the Church to the voice of Hispanic/Latine people. Because of the work of grassroots movements, the Encuentros also became concrete contact points between the Church and the world around it.

With each of the three Encuentros, the consultation of thousands of people became more effective and systematic. The Encuentros were processes, not moments or isolated events. As processes, they created environments in which, “the whole Church is a subject and everyone in the Church is a subject.”³⁷ The Encuentros also demonstrated that conflict is inevitable and a growing pain for a transforming Church. However, the aim is not to dwell in conflict but to work together.

The First Encuentro, in 1972, included an open and honest discussion on the need “to analyze the present pastoral situation in the Hispanic American community.”³⁸ The First Encuentro was essentially a gathering of the Church hierarchy. Clerics made up about 77% of the attendants of the First Encuentro. Of the 251 people present, about 69, or less than 30% were women, less than 17% were lay women.³⁹ Despite this rather poor representation of the People of God, there were two outcomes that are important to

³⁵ Pope Francis public address September 18, 2021, Accessed April 10, 2023, <https://bit.ly/3XoYh8q>.

³⁶ Pope Francis public address September 18, 2021.

³⁷ *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church* §55.

³⁸ Matovina, *Latino Catholicism*, 76.

³⁹ Paredes, *The History of the National Encuentros*, 42.

the story we are telling here. After the First Encuentro, Bishop Flores was consequently joined by seven others Spanish-speaking bishops in the episcopate.⁴⁰ One significant outcome of the First Encuentro was the elevation of the Division for the Spanish Speaking to a National Secretariat of Hispanic Affairs, headed by laymen Pablo Sedillo.⁴¹ It was this office that paved the way towards the Second Encuentro.

The National Secretariat appointed a Planning Committee that brought the Second Encuentro to life. This Encuentro prioritized broad participation of the bases, and it took on the theme of evangelization, a theme Pope Paul VI praised in his opening message to the participants of the Encuentro.⁴² Paredes wrote that the “schema for the process of compilation is: Base—Diocese—Region—National Synthesis (the Working Document)—workshops—plenary sessions—coordinating committee—publication of Final Document—translation.”⁴³ The USCCB official numbers have about 1,200 people participating as delegates to the actual Encuentro.⁴⁴ The organizers themselves boldly exclaimed in the *Proceedings of II Encuentro*, “[t]his process may well appear in history as the major step taken up to this moment by the Hispanic/Latine sector of the Church in the United States before the country and the world.”⁴⁵

It is in this Second Encuentro where what I call the “rawness of synodality” can be seen most clearly. It is here where we can see the chaos of a Church that was only beginning to recognize the visibility of the Spirit that moved within it. Sr. Yolanda Tarango, who was a leader of Las Hermanas, and whose conversations with me over the past years have been instrumental to this project, described the scene in such vivid detail. She explained the way people came from all over the country on the back of pickup trucks. Dioceses that had signed up twenty-five people showed up with seventy-five.⁴⁶ Others described scenes of breakout sessions that erupted into chaos when the crowd overpowered the speaker’s voice. Farmworkers grabbed microphones to tell bishops what they wanted to see in the Church. Often, the farmworkers spoke in Spanish, and the bishops only knew English, so translation was required.⁴⁷ This is a beautiful image, indeed, of a universal Church whose members were actively engaged in a culture of encounter, despite real barriers such as language. It put Hispanic/Latine people— farmworkers, lay leaders, priests— squarely in front of the bishops. Moises Sandoval writes, “the encuentro became a vehicle to confront the Church.”⁴⁸ Most of

⁴⁰ Paredes, *The History of the National Encuentros*, 47.

⁴¹ Matovina, *Latino Catholicism*, 76.

⁴² “Message from Pope Paul VI to the Second National Hispano Pastoral Encounter” in *Prophets Denied Honor*. Edited by Antonio M. Stevens Arroyo (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1980), 322-323.

⁴³ Paredes, *The History of the National Encuentros*, 85.

⁴⁴ “Encuentro.” USCCB, United States Council of Catholic Bishops, accessed on April 10, 2023, <https://www.usccb.org/committees/hispaniclatino-affairs/encuentro>.

⁴⁵ *Proceedings of the II Encuentro Nacional Hispano de Pastoral*, Secretariat for Hispanic Affairs National Conference of Catholic Bishops/United States Catholic Conference §64.

⁴⁶ Yolanda Tarango. 2021. Interviewed by author. Zoom. January 14, 2021.

⁴⁷ Tarango interview with the author.

⁴⁸ Moises Sandoval, “The Organization of a Hispanic Church” in *Hispanic Catholic Culture in the US: Issues and Concerns* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 142. I want to note that this is awkward language in the context of this article and represents a view of “Church” not espoused by this article given that lay, vowed religious, and clerics are all part of “Church.” Still, the point stands that the Encuentros were used as moments of confrontation, of people hearing, listening, and speaking.

those present at the Encuentro did not seem fearful of the chaos. The Encuentro became a place where confrontation happened, conflict bubbled up, and people were allowed to speak.

The most important outcome of the Second Encuentro was the creation of a National Advisory Committee, consisting of priests and laity, that began advising the National Secretariat of Hispanic Affairs.⁴⁹ Just as with the First Encuentro, we see that the Second Encuentro created channels for the further participation of Hispanic/Latine people in the Church. It is this committee that ultimately calls for the Third Encuentro.

In December 1983, the bishops published the pastoral letter *The Hispanic Presence: Challenge and Commitment*. In it, they name some socio-political and economic realities of Hispanic/Latine people, took stock of the Second Encuentro, and called for the Third Encuentro.⁵⁰ By explicitly naming the Second Encuentro, there was again a recognition that these three Encuentros were processes building one on the other, not simply isolated events. The Encuentros were episodes in a larger story, hinting back again at the event of the Second Vatican Council.

The participants' theme was "reflecting on a model of the Church as missionary and participatory."⁵¹ Those two words—"missionary and participatory"—are two of the three themes the Vatican has chosen for the current Synod on Synodality. The Third Encuentro, revolving around this idea, created structures in which delegates were called to understand themselves within a larger structure of Church. The mission of the Church was in their hands and the participation of those whom they represent is important to that mission. Again, at the Third Encuentro, there was noticeable conflict.

Grassroots organizers criticized the Third Encuentro at the time, and continue to do so now, for its stringent procedures. In contrast to the Second Encuentro, grassroots movements did not get a formal seat at the table and their participation was based on their status as diocesan agents, not as leaders of grassroots movements. Medina wrote of the Third Encuentro, "while institutional validation might appear as advancement in the struggle for recognition and respect, for some it meant closer scrutiny that would diminish the voices of grassroots communities."⁵²

Still, Las Hermanas took on the task of holding their own conference that encouraged more women to become delegates. On a diagram describing the process of the Third Encuentro handed out at a diocesan event, one member of Las Hermanas jotted down some notes, "What will be our role?"⁵³ indicating that they were not going to shy away from participating, but only took up their role with pastoral sensitivity. Their conference *Hacia el Tercer Encuentro* (Towards the Third Encuentro) took place in the

⁴⁹ Paredes, *The History of the National Encuentros*, 109.

⁵⁰ NCCB/USCC. *The Hispanic Presence and Challenge and Commitment*. (Washington D.C.: Office of Publishing and Promotion Services, 1980) §18.

⁵¹ Paredes, *The History of the National Encuentros*, 109.

⁵² Medina, *Las Hermanas*, 104.

⁵³ *Box 13, Folder 12, Proceso del Encuentro*. Las Hermanas Collection. Our Lady of the Lake University, Center for Mexican American Studies Research Collections.

preceding days of the Third Encuentro in Washington D.C. and allowed women to reflect on what mattered to them most. By the time they got to the conference, the women knew not only what was important to them but had articulated ways to communicate it. Las Hermanas modeled a Church that did not speak for the marginalized, but rather gave the marginalized tools to speak for themselves. That is what a synodal Church invites.

This Encuentro, despite real limitations, was an impressive show of synodality. However, its story is incomplete without the story of the first two. Synodality does not forego tangible change, but it is not exclusively outcomes based. The process of coming together, of engaging and encountering one another, which takes time, in this case more than a decade, is inherently valuable. Conflict is, if not inherently good, entirely inevitable in such a process. The sheer number of people consulted and presented at each Encuentro also grew. While the First Encuentro saw a total of 250 participants and minimal consultation of the bases, the Third Encuentro had a consultation process of about 600,000 people before the conference even began.⁵⁴ The Encuentros built up a core leadership of Hispanic/Latine ministers, lay and ordained, with 11% of the delegates of the Third Encuentro having participated in the First, 13 years before. Additionally, 21% participated in both the Second and the Third.⁵⁵

The Encuentros were processes of synodality not only because of their work inside of the Church (*ad intra*), but also because of the way Hispanic/Latine Catholics worked to make the novelty of the Council dialogue with the world that surrounds the Church (*ad extra*). Grassroots movements within the Church worked to make this happen in their religious-political activism. It was not as simple as saying that they had one foot in the Church and one foot in the world because they understood that the Church was a part of the world. They understood that to have two feet firmly planted in the Church was to allow yourself to be called towards the cries of the poor and the marginalized. In doing this, they not only “opened up the windows to let in fresh air,” as the Council is often said to have done, but also opened the doors to allow the poor and marginalized to walk in. In this way, they continued the work of the Council as Pope Francis is attempting to do with his concept of synodality.

Conclusion

In a collection of essays that are written to give depth and assessment to the National Pastoral Plan that comes out of the Third Encuentro, Virgilio Elizondo explained the Encuentros as necessary moments in which Hispanics/Latinas in the United States became aware of their status as People of God. He wrote, beautifully, “the theological awareness of the Hispanics in the United States begins to spring up: we are a

⁵⁴ Moises Sandoval, “Hispanic Catholics: Encuentro Involves Hundreds of Thousands,” *National Catholic News Service* (12 July 1985): 10-11.

⁵⁵ David Blanchard, “The III Encuentro: A Theological Reflection on a Classical Church Event” in *Prophetic Vision: Pastoral Reflections on the National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry*, edited by Soledad Galeron, Rosa Maria Icaza, and Rosendo Urrabazo (San Antonio, TX: Sheed T Ward, 1992), 207.

People.”⁵⁶ The Encuentros formed a consciousness in Hispanic/Latine peoples that by their own baptism, they were members of the People of God. These gatherings, in 1972, 1977, and 1985 by and for Hispanic/Latine Catholics in the United States gave relevancy and efficacy to the Council and were also products of a new forming identity in Spanish-speaking Catholic priests, sisters, and laypeople of their own Latine identity. This identity continues to be shaped and formed today in the first quarter of the twenty-first century as a legacy of these earlier events. The Encuentros were concerned with the internal structures of the Church and the social movements that surrounded the Church, specifically the Chicano Movement. These *two* factors and not just one *or* the other make them particularly attractive candidates for fleshing out what a synodal Church might look like. The Chicano Movement and the Council worked in tandem to organize the priorities of Hispanic/Latine Catholics.

Synodality cannot exist as an ahistorical process void of any understanding of the Church as it exists in the world, a World Church. We must consider the social movements of our time and what the most oppressed are telling us, not only about themselves, but about us, about our Church structures and our theologies. To tell the narrative of the Encuentros is to remember them differently than we might if we ignore them. It is to tell the story of a people who discerned the Spirit moving through them, saw the grace before their eyes in the Chicano Movement of their times, and rose to participate more strongly, more fully, in their Church, thus fulfilling their own baptismal vows.

⁵⁶ Virgilio Elizondo, “Pilgrim People of God” in *Prophetic Vision: Pastoral Reflections on the National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry*. Edited by Soledad Galeron, Rosa Maria Icaza, and Rosendo Urrabazo (San Antonio, TX: Sheed & Ward, 1992), 225.

Marxism as Factual and Normative: Thinking About Latin America with Enrique Dussel's Material Principle and Concept of Living Labor

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- THIS ARTICLE IS ONLY AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH •
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Abstract

The tradition of Western Marxism has predominantly imagined Marxism as factual and non-normative. However, one notable interlocutor with many in the tradition of Western Marxism, Enrique Dussel, pertinently critiques those who make hard delineations between the factual and the normative. As such, this paper argues that Dussel's material principle and centering of living labor, both of which resist dichotomization of the factual and the normative, should be hallmark commitments within Marxism and the many contemporary Latinx discourses on religious studies, philosophy, and political theory. In doing as much, this paper claims that Dussel's material principle is a response to the naturalistic fallacy, declares that Dussel's reading of Marx—a reading that centers living labor and demonstrates the possibility of freedom beyond and outside of capitalism—transcends factual/normative distinctions, and culminates with the argument that sublating factual/normative distinctions should be a shared commitment of Marxism and Latinx thought.

Introduction

For more than half of a century, Enrique Dussel has been writing on history, ethics, philosophy, and theology. As Linda Alcoff quips, it is not unreasonable to speak of Dussel as the Hegel of Coyoacán—he is a systematic, self-reflective, and critical thinker who has corresponded with many of the world's leading philosophers and ethicists.¹ His work has been especially pivotal in the fields of decolonial studies, philosophy of liberation, ethics, and Marxian studies. Though many of the European

¹ This phrase was originally coined here: Linda Martín Alcoff, "The Hegel of Coyoacán," in *Decolonizing Ethics* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2021), 42–63.

thinkers Dussel references and interprets are ‘flipped on their heads’ and ‘used against themselves,’ Karl Marx stands as a notable exception. In the 1980s, Dussel published a multi-volume interpretive study of Marx.² Dussel’s volumes offered an original normative reading of Marx that stood in stark contrast to many contemporary European renditions of Marx. Indeed, one common European reading of Marx—which exists both contemporaneously and when Dussel was publishing his works on Marx—contends that Marx’s mature critique of capital is a scientific rather than a normative critique.³

As such, this paper argues that Dussel’s material principle and centering of living labor, both of which resist dichotomization of the factual and the normative, should be hallmark commitments within Marxism and the many contemporary Latinx discourses on religious studies, philosophy, and political theory. In doing as much, this paper claims that Dussel’s material principle is a response to the naturalistic fallacy, declares that Dussel’s reading of Marx—a reading that centers living labor and demonstrates the possibility of freedom beyond and outside of capitalism—transcends factual/normative distinctions, and culminates with the argument that sublating factual/normative distinctions should be a shared commitment of Marxism and Latinx thought.

Dussel and the Naturalistic Fallacy

In criticizing the standard history of philosophy and modernity, Dussel’s complex *Ethics of Liberation*, centers the victims of a totalizing, Eurocentric, capitalist, and colonialist project—victims who then go forth to provide the ground for a ‘material ethics.’ As such, Dussel offers a ‘post-anti-foundationalist’ and universal footing for ethical norms that are rooted in an unqualified affirmation of ‘life’ as the foundation of liberation.⁴ However, as this paper highlights, many have argued that if one bases an ethics in materiality and derives normative claims from that materiality, then one is making their normative commitments suspect to the naturalistic fallacy, a logical fallacy that propounds one cannot derive normative values from factual or descriptive statements. As such, this section analyzes the naturalistic fallacy and goes on to show how Dussel’s ‘material principle’ in *Ethics* does not succumb to the naturalistic fallacy but rather sublates previous debates regarding the naturalistic fallacy.

Of course, there are many arguments often subsumed within the category of the naturalistic fallacy and many analytical philosophers have written extensively on the topic.⁵ Peter Singer suggests that the naturalistic fallacy involves “defining values in

² Enrique Dussel, *La producción Teórica de Marx: Un comentario a los Grundrisse* (México City: Siglo XXI, 1985); Enrique Dussel, *Metáforas teológicas de Marx, Las* (México City: Siglo XXI, 1993); Enrique Dussel, *Towards An Unknown Marx: A Commentary on the Manuscripts of 1861-63* (London, UK: Routledge, 2002); Enrique Dussel, *El Último Marx (1863–1882) y La Liberación Latinoamericana* (México City: Siglo XXI, 2014).

³ As readers of Dussel know well, Dussel situates Louis Althusser, insofar as Althusser imagines Marx to be scientific and non-normative, as the pinnacle of European Marxism. See: Enrique Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation: In the Age of Globalization and Exclusion* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), sec. 6.1-6.3.

⁴ Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation*. Here to after referred to as *Ethics*.

⁵ This is helpfully illustrated here: Oliver Curry, “Who’s Afraid of the Naturalistic Fallacy?,” *Evolutionary Psychology* 4, no. 1 (January 1, 2006), 234-247.

terms of facts.”⁶ Daniel Dennett proposes that the fallacy consist of deriving ought from is.⁷ And G.E. Moore, who coined the term ‘naturalistic fallacy,’ propounded that good is an “object of thought;” that is, good is not an objective feature of the world, but a “simple, indefinable, unanalyzable object of thought” that is not given but intuited and inferred.⁸ Or, as Dussel himself mentions, “[David] Hume attempted... to distinguish between the descriptive “is” and the prescriptive “ought.””⁹ Meanwhile, others have suggested that a description and explanation of the world cannot lead to a justification of the world. Nonetheless, any of these renditions of the naturalistic fallacy makes for an uneasy reading of Dussel. If Dussel’s *Ethics* begins with a factual description of how billions cannot reproduce their lives and subsequently universally prescribes “the obligation to produce, reproduce, and develop the concrete human life of each ethical subject in community,” then how can Dussel’s ethics, beginning in life and materiality, go on to prescribe what people ought to do?¹⁰ Does Dussel’s normative system succumb to the naturalistic fallacy?

As one might expect, Dussel anticipated readers to associate his ethical system with naturalistic presuppositions. Hence, early on in *Ethics*, Dussel examines “the empirical studies of the biology of the brain” that allow him to develop his material ethics “without falling into reductionism or into ethical naturalism or Darwinism.”¹¹ Though many of the ethicists who use the latest developments in biology or chemistry to legitimize their claims should be viewed with suspicion, Dussel’s mentioning of cerebral functions is far from an opportunistic attempt to be scientific and empirical. Rather, Dussel makes use of cerebral studies to show how the brain categorizes data through an evaluative system. Otherwise put, innate to human biology is an evaluative function in the brain that orders criterion according to their capacity to assist in “the reproduction and development of the life of the human organic subject.”¹² Whether supporters of the naturalistic fallacy like it or not, the human brain categorizes data on the basis of value—and it is this very point that Dussel uses to ground his universally material ethics. In other words, life is never observed pre-normatively; upon the recognition of certain facts, those facts are categorized in a normative and evaluative manner. Such categorization, for Dussel and the neuroscientists he cites, attests to a convergence between factual and normative, explanation and justification. Such studies of the brain immediately complicate easy delineations between what is factual and what is normative.¹³

⁶ Peter Singer, *The Expanding Circle: Ethics, Evolution, and Moral Progress* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 74.

⁷ Daniel C. Dennett, *Darwin’s Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meaning of Life* (New York City, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2014), 467.

⁸ G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (North Chelmsford, MA: Courier Corporation, 2012), 188, 21.

⁹ Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation*, 72. Dussel is more or less in agreement with these philosophers’ attempts to define the naturalistic fallacy. However, as it is later developed, Dussel contends that these philosophers are dealing with how logical and formal reason should operate, while Dussel is more concerned with materialist principles concerning the reproduction of life.

¹⁰ Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation*, 55.

¹¹ Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation*, 57.

¹² Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation*, 62.

¹³ More can be said on Dussel, neuroscience, and the cerebral evaluative system, especially as it pertains to the development of neuroscience after Gerald Edelman, the Nobel Prize winning biologist who Dussel approvingly cites. However, it is neither the place of this author nor the journal to evaluate such evidence.

However, in order to respond to charges of the naturalistic fallacy, Dussel goes beyond biological inquiry. Dussel continually underscores, as Alcoff mentions, that “the sphere of the natural is not separable from the sphere of value.”¹⁴ By way of illustration and example, Dussel mentions poison.¹⁵ The cerebral evaluative system recognizes that the consumption of poison would result in death and therefore categorizes poison as unvaluable; one ought not to drink poison. The factual categorization of a substance as poisonous is also a normative categorization that one ought not to consume poison. The human subject can infer what ought to be done because they are situated in an evaluative system that prioritizes life and survival.¹⁶ There is no further normative criteria or process that needs to be engaged—poison threatens survival and therefore, in a normative framework, should not be consumed. Whereas those who see merits in the naturalistic fallacy suggest that the natural is separable from the sphere of value, Dussel and his example of poison discards such a binary framework.

Furthermore, this is not to say that the naturalistic fallacy is completely unmerited, but it is to say that the fallacy needs nuancing. The naturalistic fallacy rightly states that an *a priori* and uncritical passage from a material judgment of facts to a normative judgment would be reductionistic; however, Dussel’s ethics does not go from ‘is’ to ‘ought,’ or ‘explanation’ to ‘prescription,’ in an *a priori* logically abstract order. Dussel does not offer a deduction of normative judgements from descriptive statements, or he would succumb to the naturalistic fallacy; instead, Dussel proposes a dialectical-material grounding of normative judgements.¹⁷ Dussel agrees with Hume’s articulation of the naturalist fallacy in *Treatise of Human Nature*, where the fallacy exists in an abstract and formal sphere. Hence, Dussel clarifies that he is not moving from fact to value abstractly, but materially. Therefore, Dussel shows that there is not only a hastily made dichotomy between the factual and the normative that exists at the core of the naturalistic fallacy and signals for further expounding about the nature and tenets of the fallacy, but that he is not abstractly and formally passing from factual to normative but using a dialectical-material method.

Furthermore, Dussel stresses that what are constituted as factual and normative are often social constructions mediated through a pre-existent economy of norms. ‘Is’ and ‘ought’ are within a particular material culture that is always already inundated with normative orientations.¹⁸ In other words, Dussel refuses to concede that the processes in which certain phenomena come to be named either factual or normative are somehow processes that are autonomous from a culture laden with pre-existing norms impacting the determinations of what is factual and what is normative.

Similarly, I take it that Dussel’s more original and insightful comments on the naturalistic fallacy, as we later see, are derivative of his philosophical and normative thinking, rather than his neuroscientific musings.

¹⁴ Alcoff, “The Hegel of Coyoacán,” 51.

¹⁵ Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation*, 68.

¹⁶ Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation*, 69.

¹⁷ Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation*, 99.

¹⁸ Alcoff makes a similar point here: Alcoff, “The Hegel of Coyoacán,” 49.

Additionally, to materialize his ethics, Dussel maintains no abstract concept of life, but insist that his idea of life prioritizes the obvious and the apparent: ecological devastation, the poverty and starvation of billions, war, and continual degradation of cultures and traditions that are not European in form. Dussel's appeal to life is no abstract appeal that situates the essence of life behind every given appearance of life. Rather, Dussel centers life, both descriptively and normatively, as a concept that is before everyone's gaze, making ethical demands of all. From this light, *Ethics* can be seen as a sustained criticism of demarcating between factual and normative statements. The continual and obvious systematic onslaught on the primacy of life is not simply an explanation of the state of the world, but a demand that the onslaught needs to stop, a demand that we stop consuming poison. In any given descriptive and factual statement of the world—such as, billions at the periphery of capital are suffering in material poverty—there is, implicitly, the normative command to stop such suffering. Dussel's material ethics is making the implicit, explicit. Ethical normativity, grounded in a dialectical, non-abstract, and material posture, is making explicit what has always been implicit in descriptions of facts.

As aforementioned, Dussel goes through much trouble to show his readers that his ethical principles are not logical categories that are abstractedly constructed, but are ethical categories founded in a material understanding of human life—human life as threatened, vulnerable, and worthy of protection. The precariousness of human life—in the least abstract, most material sense possible—demands and obligates others to protect and preserve life. Of course, obligations are not, as Dussel mentions, “identical to the necessity of physical laws or animal instincts,” but attest to humanity's self-responsibility to preserve and cherish life.¹⁹ The possibility of persevering in life, for Dussel, is an imperative. Consider the following example:

- “2a. John, who is a responsible *human* living subject, is eating.
- 2b. To live, it is necessary to eat.
- 2c. If John ceases to eat, he would die.
- 3a. As self-responsible for his life, he ought not to stop eating, or he would be guilty of suicide.
- 3b. John ought to continue eating.”²⁰

The shift from the factual statement in 2c to the normative claim in 3a is a dialectical transition between the natural need to eat and the imperative ‘one ought to eat not to die.’ John, in this example, is situated in a concrete, historical horizon, not an abstract logically formal horizon. 3a is not cognitively deduced from 2c, but materially birthed from the need to preserve human life. Importantly, Dussel's argument does not just pertain to individuals such as ‘John,’ but to collectives, too. In fact, Dussel states as much, “the human being is a living being... and the human being is a collective being by origin... [who] by their vulnerability to death and to extinction... maintain an instinctive

¹⁹ Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation*, 101.

²⁰ Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation*, 103. Emphasis is original.

desire to remain alive.”²¹ Dussel’s grounding is *fundamentacio dialectica*; it shows how the ‘ought’ has always been implicit in the ‘is.’²²

I must make one tangential but crucial note, Dussel’s androcentrism is on display in his inability to think about reproductive justice outside of his material principle of ‘life—’ feminist and queer readings of Dussel should rightly criticize how Dussel’s otherwise helpful material principle and affirmation of life can mimic conservative and reactionary anti-abortion rallying cries, such as the cry of the fetus’ ‘right to life.’²³

Nevertheless, to factually state the eclectic requirements humans need to live is to implicitly acknowledge what is normatively demanded humans be given; indeed, this is precisely Dussel’s material principle. And his material principle lies at the heart of *Ethics*—a work that sublates both naturalistic shortcomings and hard differentiations between facts and normative claims. Indeed, Dussel’s development of living labor is an example of his larger refusal to delineate between factual and normative statements.

Dussel, Marx, and Living Labor

Unlike Dussel, some scholars argue that Marx’s mature economic works (*Capital Vol. I-III, Grundrisse*, etc.) are not making normative ethical judgments, but an immanent critique and description of capital—an immanent critique and description that takes bourgeois political economists on their own terms and displays how by their own definitions and aims, capitalism is a contradiction; an immanent critique that juxtaposes the proposed ends and ideals put forth by bourgeois economists and illustrates how those ends and ideals cannot be realized within a capitalist political economy. However, this section argues that Marx, like Dussel, does not make a hard delineation between factual and normative claims; hence, Marx’s critique of capitalism is both an immanent critique of capitalism that perceptively recognizes the contradictions inherent to capitalist political economy and a normative judgment that calls for a valuing of life over the valuing of capital accumulation.

As Michael Barber notes, Marx, like Dussel, conceived of “his work as ‘scientific,’ not in a naturalist, empiricist sense, but according to German idealism’s notion of *Wissenschaft*, which moves beyond phenomena to seek out at a different level the underlying essence, that is, the mutual connections—and thus thinks from the

²¹ Enrique Dussel, *Twenty Theses on Politics*, trans. George Ciccarriello-Maher (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 13.

²² There is more to be said on this point and Dussel’s argument for his material principle as non-comital of the naturalistic fallacy is supplemented by his formal and feasibility principles; however, such comments are beyond the scope of this paper. For a comparison of Dussel’s material and formal principles, see: James L. Marsh, “The Material Principle and the Formal Principle in Dussel’s Ethics,” in *Thinking from the Underside of History: Enrique Dussel’s Philosophy of Liberation*, ed. Linda Alcoff and Eduardo Mendieta (New York City, NY: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 51–67.

²³ Dussel’s refusal to address queerness is pertinently addressed here: Marcella Althaus-Reid, “Grandes Medidas Económicas: Big Economic Measures: Conceptualising Global Erection Processes,” in *Indecent Theology: Theological Perversions in Sex, Gender and Politics*, 1st ed. (New York City, NY: Routledge, 2000).

phenomena back to the essence.”²⁴ As such, Dussel uses Marx’s scientific analysis of capitalism to make the case that capitalism’s essence violates his material principle—a principle that human life has dignity and that there is an obligation to produce, reproduce, and develop the life of each human in community.²⁵ Crucially, Dussel’s material principle is not a ‘physical principle.’ The principle suggests that human life in all of its facets—emotional, religious, economic, political, religious, and intellectual—need to be produced, reproduced, and developed. Such a principle, for Dussel and Marx alike, is impossible to realize under a capitalist mode of production.

Dussel’s work on Marx, as Mills rightly notes, “argues that humanist and ethical concerns of the young Marx are sustained throughout Marx’s life and that some of the central themes of the ethics of liberation... are implicitly already contained in Marx’s work.”²⁶ Dussel does not see a rupture between the young Marx (who speaks of alienation, life activity, and species being) and the older, mature Marx (who writes systematic critiques of capitalist political economy). Of course, Marx’s thought developed and his basis for thinking about alienation, sublated from a singular, subjective, and humanist notion of alienation to a more objective and historical materialist basis for thinking about alienation.²⁷ Dussel posits that the normative and humanistic impulses in the early Marx are accentuated and supplemented by the later Marx—Marx did not jettison his critical-ethical posture but nuanced and developed it.

To put it otherwise, Dussel sees no distinction between factual and normative claims at play in Marx’s work. Those familiar with scholarship on Marx know that insisting Marx’s mature writings are imbued with a normative drive is not uncontroversial. Of course, Dussel is not maintaining that Marx was a moralizer who theorized various ethical actions or offered moral advice for everyday life—no honest reader of Marx would ever suggest as much. Instead, Dussel simply recognized Marx’s inheritance of the Hegelian notion of *sittlichkeit* or ethical life/order.²⁸ *Capital* can be read as Marx showing how modernity’s *sittlichkeit* is not conducive to the realization of freedom and human happiness—this, unsurprisingly, owing to capital’s property relations, measure of value as socially necessary labor time, laws of motion, and more.²⁹ Hence, one can, in a Dusselian fashion, situate Marx’s mature writings on political

²⁴ Michael D. Barber, *Ethical Hermeneutics: Rationality in Enrique Dussel’s Philosophy of Liberation* (New York City, NY: Fordham University Press, 1998), 145–46.

²⁵ Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation*, pt. 1.

²⁶ Frederick B. Mills, *Enrique Dussel’s Ethics of Liberation: An Introduction* (New York City, NY: Springer, 2018), 132.

²⁷ This point is nicely highlighted here David Harvey, “Universal Alienation,” *Journal for Cultural Research* 22, no. 2 (June 2018): 137.

²⁸ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel: The Phenomenology of Spirit*, ed. and trans. Terry Pinkard and Michael Baur (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 266.

²⁹ As seen in the latter half of *Towards An Unknown Marx*, it is important to note that Dussel’s reading of Marx is quite similar to the traditions of value-theory (*Wertkritik*) and Open Marxism, traditions epitomized by thinkers such as Moishe Postone, Martine Hägglund, John Holloway, and Werner Bonefeld. These traditions, in different though methodically similar manners, claim that Marx’s theory of capitalism is a critique of value as socially necessary labor time; and it is from the position of critiquing value as socially necessary labor time that Marx, for Dussel and others in the value-theory and Open Marxism traditions, grants us the possibility of organizing our lives together in pursuit of another form value.

economy as both a factual immanent critique of capital's laws of motion and a normative theory that suggest the possibility of organizing our lives around metrics other than the accumulation of surplus value. In other words, Marx's mature writings immanently critique how capitalist political economy makes freedom impossible. As such, noting that Marx is critiquing modernity's *sittlichkeit* helpfully contextualizes Dussel's reading of Marx; however, to fully comprehend what is at stake in Dussel's reading of Marx and to understand Marx's mature writings as a critique of modernity's *sittlichkeit*, we must turn to the concept of living labor.

Living labor is the primary regulative term and concept Dussel uses to read Marx and to show how capitalism violates Dussel's material principle.³⁰ Living labor can simultaneously be described and factually situated within a capitalist political economy and make normative demands. According to Dussel, Marx's critique of capital "was centered on the concrete modes by which capitalism institutionally negates human life" and the notion of living labor illustrates how capitalism negates human life.³¹ Marx situates this paradigm in terms of alienation and objectification of the worker. On one hand, Marx's dialectical analysis of labor observes how the laborer sells their labor power as a commodity to a capitalist who then dictates the laboring process—a moment in which the laborer becomes alienated from enjoying either the fruits of their labor (the commodity) or the profits their labor created. However, on the other hand, Marx also speaks of living labor—a labor that illustrates a different non-alienating function. As opposed to the labor that is deadened into its commodity form, living labor exists at the exterior of capitalism, it is labor that is fundamentally creative and exists apart from the wage-form.³²

For Dussel, living labor exists at the exteriority of capitalism. Living labor can be seen in Latin American indigenous communities—communities who often labor in a manner that knows little of alienation, commodification, and/or wage. Whereas the commodification of labor power and the process in which 'capacity to labor' is formally subsumed within capitalism *via* waged labor is alienating and exploitative, living labor bespeaks of a positive moment, a moment in which life is not negated, but affirmed.³³ Indeed, living labor is epitomized by the self-determination of peoples who, in absence of capital's abstract logics, are dedicated towards the affirmation and enjoyment of life together. Though dialectically related, living labor and objectified, formally subsumed labor power are qualitatively different. Or, as Dussel himself puts it, "'living labor', as human labor, actualization of subjectivity, as person, and as manifestation of his [*sic*] dignity, is placed as such outside, beyond, transcending or, as we have named it in other works in the exteriority of capital."³⁴ Living labor is capital's Other.

³⁰The concept of living labor in Marx is quite nebulous and many scholars understand the concept differently. For a thorough overview of the concept and its reception history, see: Laurent Baronian, *Marx and Living Labour* (London, UK: Routledge, 2013).

³¹ Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation*, 226.

³² Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation*, 230.

³³ For instance, see: Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, English, vol. VI (London, UK: Lawrence & Wishart, 1988), chap. Manuscript of 1861-1863.

³⁴ Dussel, *Towards An Unknown Marx*, 191.

Dussel's close reading of Marx's *Manuscripts of 1861-63* leads Dussel to see that living labor, as a positive exteriority to capital, is the place from where Marx launches his immanent critique of capital. Again, living labor ("as the creating and subsumable exteriority")³⁵ is not to be equated with labor power (living labor subsumed and consumed by capital), labor (as an abstract and transhistorical category of action in which raw materials are transformed into use values), productive labor (labor that creates surplus-value), or waged labor (labor power sold in exchange for wages).³⁶ Living labor is the creative source of capital—"value, commodity, money, etc., are modes of 'living labor,' *objectified*, materialized, 'dead,' but 'living labor' anyway, although *past*."³⁷ Otherwise put, what is capital but a brutal history of the accumulation of living labor?

Importantly, one's living labor does not cease to exist when one's labor power is sold as a commodity to a capitalist. In fact, in a classically dialectical movement, even when dignified living labor becomes objectified and materialized labor, it retains its autonomy "before, during, and after" its labor power is subsumed within capital.³⁸ Though one sells their labor power as a commodity to a capitalist and is formally subsumed within capitalist wage relations and begins to engage in a process of productive labor, their living labor maintains its autonomy and acts as a stand point of critique against alienation and exploitation. Or, as Marx put it, living labor is "an objectivity which is not separated from his or her person, but rather solely an objectivity which coincides with his or her immediate corporeality [*Leiblichkeit*]... nonobjectified labor..., labor as subjectivity [*Subjektivität*]... Since it is supposed to exist for only a fixed period, as something which is alive [*lebendig*], it can exist only as a living subject."³⁹ Hence, at the center of Marx's critique of capitalist political economy is a critical-ethical posture—a posture that sees the creative and dignified nature of living labor being obscured in a process of formal subsumption. And, for Marx, formal subsumption "is alienation itself, the most concrete negation of all, and one that is not merely ideological in character."⁴⁰

To be clear, when the worker's personhood, their living labor, is treated as a means towards to the end of capital accumulation, Dussel and Marx see this as a material normative moment *par excellence*. Living labor no longer is an expression of the worker's agency, but under the domination of a capitalist. The process of the formal subsumption of labor power is simultaneously critiqued by Marx (i.e., labor power is not freely and contractually sold to a capitalist, but coercively sold; capitalist political economy cannot account for the creation of surplus-value; equality and fraternity are foreign to the process of capital accumulation; as capital accumulates, so too does misery, brutalization, and poverty) and situated as a critical ethical moment made from

³⁵ Dussel, *Towards An Unknown Marx*, 191.

³⁶ Mills, *Enrique Dussel's Ethics of Liberation*, 138.

³⁷ Dussel, *Towards An Unknown Marx*, 196.

³⁸ Mills, *Enrique Dussel's Ethics of Liberation*, 137.

³⁹ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (New York City, NY: Penguin, 2005), 235, 183.

⁴⁰ Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation*, 229.

the exterior position of living labor.⁴¹ As such, the moment living labor and its creative capacities are negated and obscured by the process of accumulation, Dussel's material principle—a principle that regards the production and development of human life as primary—is violated. Dussel shows that Marx revealed how capitalist relations “diminish the capacity of capitalist societies to meet human needs.”⁴² And capitalism's inability to meet human needs is both a fact of life and a demand to go beyond capitalism to an egalitarian mode of production that has internal to itself the possibility of valuing life over capital accumulation.

To restate what has been said thus far: Dussel and Marx alike make no delineation between factual and normative claims or immanent critique and critical ethics; living labor is not the same as labor power, capacity to labor, abstract labor, or waged labor; living labor can both be factual described as a moment within the process of capital accumulation and normatively situated as a moment that affirms human life; capitalist political economy is inimical to Dussel's material principle of ethics. Thus, Marx's critique of political economy can be usefully incorporated into Dussel's project because it illustrates how modernity's *sittlichkeit* makes impossible the affirmation of life and the realization of freedom.

Against Capital's Logic of Death in Latin America

As stated in this paper's thesis, Dussel's reading of Marx critiques contemporary trajectories that hold factual and normative statements are mutually exclusive. Through an exposition of Dussel's material principle and Dussel's reading of Marx, it has been shown that one can view certain material facts, such as the contradictory essence of capital, as also a normative claim that denounces the laws of motion internal to capital. By pointing to instances in Latin America in which the ceaseless affirmation of life over capitalist value is demanded, this final section argues that Dussel's material principle, centering of living labor, and refusal to dichotomize the factual and the normative should be a key pillars and commitments within Marxist and Latinx thought.

With that being said, I want to begin with an insightful quote from farmers in Chiapas that illustrates how the attempt to jettison the normative from the factual is a logic (1) operative in many attempts to oppress people in Latin America and (2) foreign to those at the periphery of capitalism:

“For years and years, we harvested the death of our people in the fields of Chiapas; our children died because of a force that was unknown to us; our men and women walked in the long night of ignorance which laid a shadow over our steps. Our communities walked without truth or understanding. Our steps moved forward

⁴¹ Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation*, 232.

⁴² Alcoff, “The Hegel of Coyoacán,” 50.

without having a clear destination, we simply lived and died without more.”⁴³

Mayan workers in Chiapas, such as the ones quoted here, are deprived of labor in their own *milpas* (cornfields), disconnected from their means of subsistence, and subsequently forced into the production processes of the large agro-export corporate production. During this process the Mayans’ living labor is negated. Yet, many in the Global North still manage to imagine the process as a value-neutral and inevitable outgrowth of capitalism.⁴⁴ Indeed, these workers are subject to logics and rationalities foreign to their own. While the consulting firms and financial corporations in the Global North attempt to rationalize these processes within a value-neutral and non-normative logic—a logic unknown to the Mayans in Chiapas—it is the Dusselian task to understand these processes as explicitly normative.⁴⁵

Indeed, the fact that Mayans are formally subsumed within capital’s abstract logic, then at the will of the capitalist’s ‘voracious appetite for surplus-labor,’ and finally laboring in gulag-like settings, is neither a mere factual statement about labor conditions, as some Marxists might imagine, nor a value-free process of economic growth, as some neoliberal economists might insist, but a demand that such laboring conditions be fought against.⁴⁶ The fact that Mayans in Chiapas are deprived of the right to self-determination and the material conditions to actualize their living labor is not value-neutral, but rich with normative demands to organize life in another manner.

Analogously, the large portions of *Capital* that are made up of stories of workers and of Marx’s conclusions from pouring over inspectors’ reports on workers’ conditions in the mills is not just Marx’s necessary critique of capital’s law of motions, but the suggestion that life should be organized against such concrete exploitation.⁴⁷ Capitalism is a distinct form of social relations. And Marx’s histories of original accumulation, the expropriation of the people from the land, the genesis of the capitalist farmer, the impact of industrial capitalism on labor, the expansion of capitalism *via* colonization, the enclosure of the commons, the violence of legislation against the expropriated, and the taking of gold *via* slavery and *encomiendas* in Latin America all normatively suggest that society should be organized in such a way that affirms the principle of life.⁴⁸

⁴³ Zapatista National Liberation Army Communications, “We Have Now Reentered History,” *La Jornada*, February 22, 1994, 8. Emphasis mine. Dussel also quotes this source and uses it as a way to develop his theory of fetishism and capital’s abstract logics of domination: Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation*, 215.

⁴⁴ Many thanks to Mark Lewis Taylor for illustrating to me the labor conditions of Mayans in Chiapas.

⁴⁵ Milton Friedman, that great architect of Pinochet’s Chile, often contended that his understanding of neoliberal economics was value-free. Of course, Dussel’s material principle grants us the language to understand how Friedman’s steadfast commitment to the increase of shareholder value is a normative drive to reproduce the wealth and health of certain populations in the Global North. On this point see: Melinda Cooper, *Family Values: Between Neoliberalism and the New Social Conservatism* (New York City, NY: Zone Books, 2017), chap. 1,5.

⁴⁶ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, ed. Ernest Mandel, trans. Ben Fowkes, vol. I–III (New York City, NY: Penguin Books, 1978), 649, 345.

⁴⁷ Marx, *Capital*, chap. 15.

⁴⁸ This point is well developed here: John Holloway, *Crack Capitalism* (London, UK: Pluto Press, 2010), Part IV-V. For our purposes, Holloway especially pays attention to primitive accumulation in Latin America and how abstract labor is the ‘great enclosure’ of modernity in Chapters 13-14. Similarly, an

Furthermore, in order to better demonstrate why a commitment to not dichotomize the factual from the normative is crucial for Latinx and Marxist thought, let us dissect how Ivan Petrella incisively presents the economic logic Larry Summers. Petrella illustrates the supposedly value-neutral logic that Summers uses to justify the dumping of toxic waste on the poorest part of globe, such as Africa and South America.⁴⁹ In a memo written while he was the World Bank's Chief Economist, Summers states:

“...the measurements of the cost of health impairing pollution depends on the foregone earnings from increased morbidity and mortality. From this point of view a given amount of health impairing pollution should be done in the country with the lowest wages. I think the economic logic behind dumping a load of toxic waste in the lowest wage country is impeccable and we should face up to that.”⁵⁰

This inflexible economic logic, which assumes those who produce the most value are most worthy of care, imagines itself as exempt from normative commitments. Or, as Petrella states, “[Summers’] reasoning is simple. If one were to place toxic waste in a rich country it would lead to the illness and death of wealthy people with high life-expectancy... In economic terms, the lives of the wealthy are far more important to the working of the global economy than the lives of the poor.”⁵¹ Though Summers’ attempts to present this dumping of toxic waste as an ‘impeccable’ economic logic that is freed from normative commitments, Summers’ normative drive, characterized by his protection of value-producing people in the Global North, is readily apparent.

As harmful chemicals, which are largely used and consumed by those in the Global North, are dumped into the slums of Latin America and consequently poisoning the lungs of children and others, Dussel’s material principle is violated *tout court*.⁵² Thus, Summers’ strategy is at once inimical to the affirmation and reproduction of life, which Dussel demands, and a prerogative for Marxist and Latinx thinkers alike to fuse the factual and the normative in all facets of their writing, teaching, and organizing. In sum, it should be a crucial task of both Marxism and Latinx thought to be steadfast in

encomienda was a labor system practiced in the Spanish colonies from the early 16th century through the late 18th century. Originally designed to reduce the amount of forced labor that was utilized through earlier Spanish colonial practices, the *encomienda* quickly became another form of slavery. The system functioned through a process in which *conquistadores*, soldiers, or officials in the colonies were given a grant from the Crown to extract labor from a select allotment of the indigenous population. The system was developed to quicken the extraction of raw materials from the colonies.

⁴⁹ Ivan Petrella, *Beyond Liberation Theology: A Polemic* (London, UK: SCM Press, 2008), 16–21.

⁵⁰ William K. Tabb, *Unequal Partners: A Primer on Globalization*, 1st ed. (New York City, NY: The New Press, 2002), 44.

⁵¹ Petrella, *Beyond Liberation Theology*, 16.

⁵² For a thorough study on toxic waste and its impact on the health of children in Latin America, see: Amalia Laborde et al., “Children’s Health in Latin America: The Influence of Environmental Exposures,” *Environmental Health Perspectives* 123, no. 3 (March 2015): 201–209.

denouncing capital's logic and its apologists, like Summers, who imagine that the accumulation of capital is value-neutral.⁵³

Throughout *Ethics*, Dussel makes explicit that his epistemology, material principle, and reading of Marx begins in the oppressed Subject. Each human subject needs to have their life reproduced through food, housing, and care; indeed, Dussel's *Ethics* articulates a normative order which would make possible to flourishing of all. The face of the poor and oppressed Other, to draw on Dussel's Levinasian heritage, interpellate and make normative claims upon all—and Marx's *Capital* is a helpful “factual tool” for discovering how capitalism makes impossible the liberation of the oppressed.⁵⁴ Dussel's Latin America, which Europe has often used to symbolize non-being, is now the foundation for a truly liberatory ethics that makes explicit its normative commitments and its material epistemology.

Conclusion

As it is apparent by now, Dussel's work on Marx disrupts many popular and conventional trends in philosophy and Marxian studies. By emphasizing such disruptions, this paper argued that Dussel's material principle and centering of living labor, both of which resist dichotomization of the factual and the normative, should be hallmark commitments within Marxism and the many Latinx discourses on religious studies, philosophy, and political theory. To do as much, this paper claimed that Dussel's material principle was a response to the naturalistic fallacy, then declared that Dussel's reading of Marx— a reading that centers living labor and demonstrates the possibility of freedom beyond and outside of capitalism—transcends factual/normative distinctions, and culminated with the argument that sublating factual/normative distinctions should be a foundational commitment of both Marxists and Latinx thought. The fact that capitalism is poisonous and unable to provide what humans require to live—physically, aesthetically, emotionally, and spiritually—is a fact that intrinsic to it contains the normative demand to stop consuming capital's poison.

⁵³ Of course, there are many other principles that should characterize both of these traditions; however, I am suggesting that one such principle should be the steadfast commitment to condemning the idea that capitalism and/or Marxism, for that matter, are value-neutral.

⁵⁴ For a further exploration of both Dussel's concept of interpellation and how such a concept applies to those in positions of power, see: Mark Lewis Taylor, “Interpellated by the Mumia Abu-Jamal Movement: A Case of Dussel's Pedagogics of Liberation in Neoliberal Academe,” *LÁPIZ*, no. 7 (2022): 19–56.

Decolonization as a Theoretical Framework in Latine Studies

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• VEA LA PÁGINA 51 PARA LEER ESTE ARTÍCULO EN ESPAÑOL •

Abstract

With attention to the existing canon of Latine Studies and engaging critical scholarship on identity from my own specific social location as a Latine with both European and Indigenous ancestry, I examine the ways in which epistemological frameworks such as *nepantla* and *mestizaje* have the potential to romanticize indigeneity and, ultimately, harm Indigenous communities. By addressing a variety of Latine, Indigenous, and decolonial scholarship in partnership with my own religio-cultural experiences as a Latine-Indigenous hybrid identity, I demonstrate both the benefit and detriment of decolonial theoretical frameworks in academia, particularly in Latine Studies. Specifically, I argue if Indigenous community is left out of identity reclamation or claims of decolonization are unsupported by authentic solidarity with Indigenous peoples, Latine scholars, like myself, run the risk of essentializing Indigenous identity and decolonization for cultural capital within higher academic institutions.

Introduction

When applied to racially constructed identities in the United States of America, settler colonialism discourse lacks dialogue on decolonization. As more people of color and Indigenous people enter academia, communitarian and individualist worldviews come into conversation with each other, but do they ever intersect? As a Latine¹ with

¹ See Edwin Aponte and Miguel De La Torre, “Who are Latinx Peoples?” in *Introducing Latinx Theologies*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2020), 11-19, where they explain how common umbrella terms like “Hispanic” can overemphasize European/Spanish heritage and ignore the legacy of non-Spanish Europeans, Africans, Asians, and Indigenous peoples that impact our identities from a Spanish-speaking

colonialist European and Mexican Indigenous heritage, I have consistently wondered if higher academic vocabulary and post-structuralist frameworks of Latine identity can coexist with a collateral Indigenous worldview to form a liberating framework that creates space for hybrid identities like my own, that is, a Latine with colonialist European and Mexican Indigenous heritage.

Homi K. Bhaba's definition of hybridity as "the interstitial passage between fixed identifications [which] opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy," informs my understanding of hybridity.² Bhaba's definition of hybridity allows for two identities to co-exist and create new possibilities for those two (or three or more) identities previous "fixedness." Additionally, the legacy of European invasion of North American lands and settler colonialism of Indigenous land and identity informs my critique of hybridity. Ultimately, the impact of settler colonialism problematizes hybridity because it disrupts the idea of mutuality across cultures.

Through research primarily on decolonization as a metaphorical framework as presented by Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, and coupled with a commitment to critical engagement with the work of Lara Medina, George E. "Tink" Tinker, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Miguel A. De La Torre, J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, Emma Pérez, and Gloria Anzaldúa, I argue academic theoretical vocabulary, specifically "hybridity," on decolonization is incommensurable with a collateral Indigenous worldview. Furthermore, when Latine scholars with both European and Indigenous identities lean into their Indigenous identity, this can be a form of resistance. However, I argue that if the Indigenous community is left out of this reclamation or claims of decolonization are unsupported by authentic solidarity with Indigenous peoples, scholars run the risk of essentializing Indigenous identity and decolonization for cultural capital within higher academic institutions.

As an aspiring scholar, activist, and ethicist grappling with my Latine-Indigenous hybrid³ identity, I have an ethical obligation to call attention to the harm done to

culture. Throughout this article, I use "Latine" to describe myself. Chicana, Latina, Latino/a, Latin@, and Latinx are still used by various scholars depending on their geographical and colonial context. This linguistic shift to "Latine" honors the work of LGBTQIA+, gender non-binary, and feminist communities from Spanish-speaking countries. See Andrés Acosta (@asif.tv) "Diving into the origins of Latinx and why many people dislike it," Instagram Video, October 2, 2021, Accessed July 26, 2023, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CUigYS2oKSV/> for their work describing the difference between Latino/a, Latinx, and Latine. I do not make the linguistic change for other scholars because I also wish to demonstrate how our descriptors have continued to shift and change over time as language evolves and more of us Latine folk speak our daily lived experiences into the discourse on identity.

² Homi K. Bhaba, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 1994), 6.

³ Throughout this article, I opt for "hybridity" over *mestizaje*. See Josefina Saltaña-Portillo, "Who's the Indian in Aztlán? Re-writing Mestizaje, Indianism, and Chicanismo from the Lacandón" in *The Latin American Subaltern Studies Reader*, ed. Ileana Rodríguez (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 402-420. She argues that when the *mestizo* becomes the "Indian", the Indian has rejected any Spanish markers of identity, but is still required to give up their language, religious practices, and other forms of cultural organization. Saltaña-Portillo embraces Rigoberta Menchú's argument that Indigenous identity is not biological and any person born an Indian can become "Ladinized." Therefore, according to Saltaña-Portillo and Menchú, Indigenous identity depends not on a reclamation of identity through *mestizaje*, but

Indigenous communities beyond my own Mexican ancestral lands, specifically in systems of higher education that espouse prioritizing decolonization. In doing so, I attempt to hold myself accountable as an active member of the academy to prevent myself from participating in or benefiting from the same harm. After this acknowledgement and full understanding of the incommensurability of an Indigenous worldview with the theoretical nature of higher education, I argue that any claim to Indigenous identity, hybrid or not, causes harm if left to theory without honoring the embodied experiences of cultures interacting with each other or active tribal participation. Understanding why performative identity affiliation is harmful and how theoretical language surrounding identity, decolonization, and Indigenous worldview can serve the academy over the Indigenous community is essential.

In accordance with De La Torre's "ethics of place" which critically engages social location, presence, and praxis, my aim is to present research on settler colonialist, Latine, and Indigenous identity in a way that explores how theorizing about hybrid identities and decolonization harms Indigenous peoples. Although this harm is possible via the academic pursuit of identity deconstruction, this does not negate the lived religio-cultural, embodied experiences at the intersection of these identities. Therefore, I suggest academic systems, specifically Latine studies on decolonization, prioritize engagement with Native worldview and the sharing of our own religio-cultural narratives at the intersection of Latine, Indigenous, and European identities in any discourse concerning decolonization.

When I reference a collateral Indigenous or Native worldview, I am drawing from George E. Tinker's definitions of this worldview in distinction to a Eurochristian worldview. Tinker argues that a Eurochristian worldview operates on an "up-down cognitive image schema," which "identifies a whole social imaginary," "functions to structure the social whole around vertical hierarchies of power and authority," and "creates the hierarchic notions that dominate our eurocolonial [*sic*] world of christian [*sic*] conquest."⁴ Not only is this worldview distinct from a Native one, but Tinker argues that it has irrevocably changed and harmed North American Indigenous peoples. Whereas a Eurochristian worldview operates on a hierarchical cognitive model, Tinker argues that American Indians embody a "collateral-egalitarian image schema, which is more of a community-ist model."⁵ Tinker's distinction of these two worldviews has informed my own awareness and critique of the pervasive Eurochristian worldview in higher academia and in Latine studies. It also serves as the foundation for my understanding of the implicit Eurochristian values in the need to carve out a unique hybrid identity for myself in our current academic systems of identification.

Academic Commodification of Decolonization

on the consistent cultural, linguistic, social, and religious forms of Indigenous practice. Ultimately, I agree with Saltaña-Portillo that *mestizaje* has functioned to uplift Indigenous identity as "ornamentation and spiritual revival" over authentic community engagement.

⁴ George E. "Tink" Tinker, "Why I Do Not Believe in a Creator," in *Buffalo Shout, Salmon Cry: Conversations on Creation, Land Justice, and Life Together*, ed. Steve Heinrichs (Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 2013), 169.

⁵ Tinker, "Why I Do Not Believe in a Creator," 171-172.

To clarify the phenomenon in higher education wherein decolonizing methodologies are espoused in order to gain cultural capital, De La Torre asks critical questions about the motives behind academic publications which claim solidarity with the oppressed without any praxis to back these claims.⁶ His suggestions signal a tendency in the academy to theorize the lived experiences of socially marginalized communities for profit and reputation within the academy.⁷ These questions on cultural capital in academia harken to Linda Tuhiwai Smith's work as she demands critical consciousness from researchers when theorizing Indigenous experiences when theory itself is a product of colonial culture. She writes, "[t]he act, let alone the art and science, of theorizing our own existence and realities is not something which many indigenous people assume is possible."⁸ Through a critique of the construction of the academy and writing from her lived experiences, Smith argues that research is "inextricably linked to colonialism," thus acknowledging the incommensurability between an Indigenous worldview with identity theory and calling for decolonization beyond theory and metaphor.⁹

Because I agree with Smith, a centerpiece for my argument is Tuck and Yang's article, "Decolonization is not a Metaphor" where they call for decolonization through addressing settler colonialism and granting sovereignty and land rights to Indigenous people, thus calling attention to the detriment of theoretical frameworks in the pursuit of decolonization.¹⁰ Smith, Tuck, and Yang grapple with the ways in which knowledge systems and the academy participate in the continuation of colonization. Through Tuck and Yang, I understand that the act of colonizing in the academy is less about colonizing Indigenous lands and peoples than about gaining academic social capital. To resolve this, Tuck and Yang urge the academy to transfer material capital back to Indigenous communities - that is, granting sovereignty and land rights, which is akin to reparations.

This call is a result not only of harmful experience in colonization, but of the trend in the academy to casually apply decolonization to various social justice issues. Expanding on this critique, Tuck and Yang write on the growing ease with which the language of decolonization is employed both within higher education and about social justice.¹¹ When the language of decolonization is used frivolously, it fails to accomplish that which is inherent to its existence, namely, address the harm of cultural genocide and return land rights to Indigenous people. Without this acknowledgement, we engage in what De La Torre calls "spectator-type ethics:"

⁶ Miguel A. De La Torre, *The U.S. Immigration Crisis: Toward an Ethics of Place* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016), Introduction, Kindle.

⁷ De La Torre, *The U.S. Immigration Crisis*, Introduction, Location 100-121.

⁸ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2nd ed. (London, UK: Zed Books, 2012), 30.

⁹ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 1.

¹⁰ This resonates with De La Torre's critique that "All too often, we do ethical analyses from the comfort of our cushy armchairs" and "From the safety of our academic departments..." See his *The U.S. Immigration Crisis*, Introduction, Location 132.

¹¹ Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang. "Decolonization is not a Metaphor," *Decolonization, Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012), 2.

I have argued that in spite of how clever or creative case studies may appear to be, they are useless to those residing on the margins of society because they fail to foster concrete acts that can bring about change. A spectator-type ethics is created where debating theory, rather than transforming society, becomes the ultimate intellectual goal. Ethics devoid of praxis may be philosophical or theological; but it is not ethics.¹²

While De La Torre is addressing the undocumented immigrant community and immigration crisis at the border, his critique holds ground with Tuck and Yang's critique of decolonization functioning as a metaphor in higher education. Pushing the critique of "doing ethics" from the ivory towers of the academy into the discourse on decolonization, Tuck and Yang urge scholars to not use the term, "decolonization," lightly. When the term is used vaguely for other human rights-based issues, the unique integrity of Indigenous lived experience is compromised. In other words, using decolonization as a method in scholarship or as an empty signifier to include Indigenous people in other civil rights issues dishonors the reality of Indigenous experience in a colonial context. Decolonization requires action beyond empty inclusivity of Indigenous identity in any one social justice movement.

Academia's authentic concerns for Indigenous contexts have also been called into question by Smith. Like De La Torre, Smith calls for an awareness of scholar embodiment or social location. In other words, both mark the dangers of claiming historically excluded social locations in the academy without being present with those very same communities. Without being present or occupying the same space with socially marginalized identities, theorists risk appropriating oppression and the ideal of solidarity for academic gain. According to Smith, "many researchers simply assume that they as individuals embody this ideal and are natural representatives of it when they work with other communities."¹³ By putting Tuck and Yang in conversation with De La Torre and Smith, aspiring scholar activists with a Latine-Indigenous hybrid identity with commitments to decolonization are ethically obligated to push decolonization beyond the classroom and theoretical frameworks. Decolonization calls for immediate change, accountability, and action. Ultimately, "[w]hen metaphor invades decolonization, it kills the very possibility of decolonization; it recenters whiteness, it resettles theory, it extends innocence to the settler, it entertains a settler future."¹⁴ Therefore, Latine-Indigenous hybrid identities in the academy must be cautious of the ways in which we engage decolonization as an identity formation methodology without praxis in Indigenous communities.

Pushing the critique forward, Tuck and Yang argue that decolonization as metaphor leads to empty solidarity and even supports settler "moves to innocence" in the form of cultural appropriation.¹⁵ While in higher education, we are not dealing with the obvious red face as portrayed in popular media, the very presence of it in the media

¹² De La Torre, *The U.S. Immigration Crisis*, Introduction, Location 149.

¹³ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 2.

¹⁴ Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization is not a Metaphor," 3.

¹⁵ Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization is not a Metaphor," 9.

reveals a settler obsession with adopting Indigeneity.¹⁶ Furthermore, decolonization as metaphor used by those with false claims to Indigenous identity or lack of actual proximity to Indigenous community is a form of cultural appropriation or red face that often goes unchallenged by systems of higher education because of the cultural capital and diversity element these scholars may bring to institutions.

Latine-Indigenous Hybrid Scholars Resisting Colonization in the Academy and Beyond

Without dismissing the power of identity deconstruction and social consciousness raising which occurs in the academy, Latine-Indigenous hybrid scholars are called to resist essentializing ourselves for the benefit of the institution or offering ourselves as objective representation for entire communities. Returning to De La Torre's critique of spectator ethics, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's chapter "Can the Subaltern Speak?" cautions scholars to not claim expertise on cultures or adopt an authoritative position in translating lived experiences into theory. She explains the dangers when researchers oscillate "between theoretical catachresis and practical naive realism" as a harmful process of universalizing unique experiences of oppression.¹⁷ This practice positions subjects of social justice and ethics as far away and voiceless, which is counter-productive to the intent of the study. In Spivak's words:

This reintroduces the constitutive subject on at least two levels: the Subject of desire and power as an irreducible methodological presupposition; and the...subject of the oppressed. Further, the intellectuals, who are neither of these S/subjects, become transparent in the relay race, for they merely report on the non-represented subject and analyze (without analyzing) the workings of (the unnamed Subject irreducibly presupposed by) power and desire.¹⁸

This critical analysis of how those on the fringes of society are intellectualized is precisely what Tuck and Yang employ when critiquing decolonization as a metaphor used to soothe settler guilt. They write, "[t]he absorption of decolonization by settler social justice frameworks is one way the settler, disturbed by her own settler status, tries to escape or contain the unbearable searchlight of complicity..."¹⁹ Beyond guilt and impatient needs for reconciliation, the desire to belong fuels scholarship on decolonization. This need for belonging can find its roots in early formations of a United States identity. It is important to highlight how this identity formation is not lost on non-native people of color. As much as white settlers seek quick, guilt-free

¹⁶ Red Face in popular media is when an Indigenous person is portrayed by a non-Indigenous person. A contemporary example is Danish-American actor Viggo Mortenson's portrayal of Frank T. Hopkins in Disney's *Hidalgo* (2004).

¹⁷ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Can the Subaltern Speak: Reflections on the History of an Idea*, ed. Rosalind C. Morris (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2010), part 1, Kindle.

¹⁸ Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", part 1.

¹⁹ Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor," 9.

reconciliation, non-native people of color are quick to assimilate to the settler colonist system as it benefits them.

In his book *Playing Indian*, Philip Deloria successfully demonstrates the origins of a United States identity's obsession with authentic belonging and the colonial project behind the label "American." He credits this obsession as a response to Indigenous presence and a need to justify European presence in the so-called "Americas." An example he references is the Boston Tea Party where the Sons of Liberty, disguised as Indigenous people, protested against the taxes in the Townshend Act by throwing untaxed tea from China into the Boston Harbor.²⁰ This is an early instance of Euro-Americans "playing Indian" to assert their belonging and authority in the new (to them) world. Later in the introduction to his book, Deloria goes on to explain how although these Indigenous "performances" have changed over time, this practice finds its roots in the Revolution when establishing an authentic national identity was necessary.²¹ Beyond these origins, Deloria also argues that modernity has encouraged a new form of "playing Indian" where Euro-Americans lean into Indigenous identity "amidst the anxiety" in a "postindustrial life."²² Here, Deloria is not only addressing popular appropriation of Indigenous culture in clothing, jewelry, and spiritual practices, he is addressing the subconscious pull toward claiming or reclaiming Indigenous identity as a sense of security in a land we know is stolen.

This settler anxiety in conversation with reclaiming Indigenous identity upon educationally-induced consciousness-raising requires a closer look into the racialization of the "Native American." This racialization has two effects. First, it functions to provide space for white and non-native people (including Latine identities) to claim Indigeneity based on heritage, not community commitment and/or worldview. Second, and more devastatingly, it functions to extinguish authentic Indigenous identity and community. This is where Latine claims to Indigenous identity has the potential to cause harm, which grounds my argument that reclaiming Indigenous identity without commitment to community upholds settler colonialism.

Supporting complicated claims to Indigenous identity, U.S. governmental bodies have historically and continue to use blood quantum mechanics to erase Indigenous peoples. In considering the racialization of Indigenous peoples, especially through the use of blood quantum classification, J. Kēhualani Kauanui argues these mechanics function as a "genocidal logic of disappearance" that prioritizes claims to heritage over authentic community participation and membership.²³ In this way, blood quantum is a colonial project because it ultimately functions to disregard Indigenous land rights. Because ancestry is different from active tribal membership and blood quantum mechanics have been used to maintain current and ongoing U.S. government land

²⁰ Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 5.

²¹ Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 7.

²² Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 7.

²³ J. Kēhualani Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 25.

acquisition, questions of identity and belonging are entirely up to specific Indigenous communities.²⁴

In this light, I argue commitment to community engagement and participation is a necessary component to any form of identity deconstruction and reclamation. Depending on the context, we need to ask ourselves who is benefiting from this identity reclamation and who is not? Ultimately, when a marginalized identity is claimed for reputation or recognition instead of community participation and with no awareness of settler complicity, “even the ability to be a minority citizen in the settler nation means an option to become a brown settler.”²⁵ In a time where epistemological privileges in higher education are granted to those with specific identities, we need to be vigilant about whether identity reclamation functions to uplift the community or the individual at the expense of the community, even if that individual is a person of color.

Blood quantum also allows white people with no clear affiliation to Indigenous community or tribal membership claim Indigeneity based on distant heritage. Not only do blood quantum regulations function to elevate white settlers over Indigenous communities, but they support and uphold current settler colonialist systems of land ownership like the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act (HHCA) of 1921. This act defined native Hawaiians as “people with at least one-half blood quantum of individuals inhabiting Hawaiian islands prior to 1778.”²⁶ Through a critical historical analysis of the U.S. relationship with native Hawaiians and American Indians, Kauanui concludes that blood quantum classifications like the one present in the HHCA function to “appropriate Native lands and to promote cultural and biological assimilation to the advantage of whiteness.”²⁷ This form of identity reclamation is another way in which the critique of decolonization as a theoretical framework is worthwhile because decolonization requires specific attention to active Indigenous communities. Instead of uplifting reclamations of a romanticized Indigenous past, decolonization must address the Indigenous present.

Through examining the colonial origins of blood quantum, legal scholar David Wilkins of the Lumbee nation reveals how blood mechanics have shifted and complicated tribal enrollment, dismemberment, and sense of belonging. Ultimately, blood quantum was introduced by U.S. policymakers in partnership with tribal leaders over concerns of private property and resource allotment. In other words, organizing “Indian” territory and deciding who would be eligible for these lands was the primary concern for the construction of blood quantum mechanics.²⁸ Because of the pressures on Native communities to protect their lands and resources, blood quantum became a way of dividing themselves from non-Native people. In the early 1900s, for example, Wilkins writes on the “White Man’s Case,” which was a series of cases wherein Cherokee Indians were able to file a claim on the basis of their “blood” against 3,627 white people who

²⁴ Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,” 13.

²⁵ Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,” 18.

²⁶ Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood*, 2.

²⁷ Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood*, 11.

²⁸ David Wilkins, *Dismembered: Indigenous Confluences* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2017), 31.

desired Cherokee land.²⁹ What began as a means to advocate for Indigenous sovereignty in the face of settler colonialism has now granted non-participating community members to identify as Indigenous on the basis of having 25% Indigenous blood.

The obsession with claiming Indigeneity persists and is supported by popular culture. Tuck and Yang delve into the protagonist in the movie *The Last of the Mohicans*, as an example of a white settler being “adopted” into Indigenous community to highlight this settler cultural obsession. Beyond Daniel Day Lewis’ character, there are many more films including and not limited to *Annie Get Your Gun*,³⁰ *Peter Pan*,³¹ and Isabella Swan in *Twilight*.³² Tuck and Yang acknowledge the prevalence of the Indigenous adoption narrative in Western media and are interested in how “this narrative spins a fantasy that an individual settler can become innocent.”³³ Creating stories where non-Native people are adopted by Indigenous communities is one way that colonial guilt is managed. In this way, the United States identity becomes hybridized to both reconcile white settler guilt and establish the superiority of hybridity. This is the backdrop of hybrid identities with which Latine scholars wrestling with issues of identity need to consider in a U.S. context.

Moving beyond post-structuralist theoretical frameworks, those in the academy with justice-oriented values have ethical obligations to question in what ways we support settler colonialism. For hybrid identities, this praxis involves presence with community paired with translating these lived experiences into the academic discourse.³⁴ First, Indigenous identity reclamation and worldview involves prioritizing community, tribal participation, and tradition and is incompatible with higher academic theoretical systems because of the colonial origins of those systems. Second, relying heavily on lived experiences in *nepantla*,³⁵ informed by Gloria Anzaldúa, Mariana Ortega, Lara Medina, and Emma Pérez, I put this work in conversation with my own lived experiences. In doing this, I find the intersection of Eurochristian ideology and an Indigenous worldview exist in embodied experiences, not theoretical frameworks. Finally, I intentionally do not identify as primarily Indigenous though there are specific Indigenous ancestral influences on my affinity with *nepantla* and religio-cultural experiences in Mexican Catholicism. I do not embrace an Indigenous identity because I address the ways in which my scholarship, even scholarship embracing *nepantla*, supports systems of settler colonialism. Still, I push back on the theoretical academic discourse on identity by sharing personal religio-cultural experiences, which ultimately align me primarily with a Latine identity dedicated to decolonization.

²⁹ Wilkins, *Dismembered*, 31.

³⁰ Annie’s character is adopted by Sitting Bull in the Sioux tribe (Berkeley and Sidney, 1950).

³¹ Peter Pan’s character is adopted by the imaginary tribe in Neverland upon rescuing Tiger Lily, the daughter of the chief (Geronimi, Jackson, and Luske, 1953).

³² Bella Swan is protected by the Quileute tribe (Hardwicke, 2008).

³³ Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,” 14.

³⁴ De La Torre, *The U.S. Immigration Crisis*, Introduction, Location 101.

³⁵ Nahuatl Indigenous term for “in-betweenness” as understood in Gloria Anzaldúa, “(Un)natural Bridges, (Un)safe Spaces,” in *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation*, ed. Gloria Anzaldúa and Analouise Keating (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002), 1-5.

Indigenous, European, and Latine: Where do our Voices fit in the Discourse on Decolonization?

“The ancestors guide the living, offer protection, and renew the living. Constructing sacred space in their honor, leaving them gifts of food and drink, spending time with their spirits, and sharing in oral traditions ensures family stability and most importantly reminds the living of their historical lineage.”³⁶

Sage wafts through the brick hallways the day before *El Día de Muertos*. Tía Adriana instructs me to take a taxi downtown to buy as many *caléndulas* as I can carry. Prima Sofia is making *papel picado* at the kitchen table and La Señora Licha is dusting off the frames of our ancestors for the *ofrenda*. The bells from the Catholic church at *la Plaza de Ciudad Fernández* ring in our house and I’m anxious to share space with the dead for the first time. This annual reunion was never mentioned at the Church of Saint Benedict in northeastern Iowa that I attended as a child but was celebrated in every plaza in México. There is a balance living in these communities as we express both our cultural Catholicism and reverence for the pungent marigold that guides our ancestors back home.

“Pero Tía...” I ask, “I thought only Jesús could come back from the dead?”

She responds, “*Bueno, si mijita, es que somos católicos, pero también somos Indios.*”

Here, an unpacking of the contradictory identity dynamic occurring in my *familia* is necessary to understand how conflicting worldviews are embodied experiences. Using Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands, La Frontera*, I can provide a critical analysis of this phenomenon. Within a U.S. context, Anzaldúa writes on the embodied experience of living at the intersection of white, Mexican, and Indigenous culture.³⁷ Through poetry and critical social analysis, Anzaldúa demonstrates how freedom from this psychological turmoil is found in embracing *nepantla*, which requires excavating and releasing our inner indigeneity. To honor her artistic expression, I provide a longer excerpt here:

Caught between the sudden contraction, the breath sucked in and the endless spaces, the brown woman stands still, looks at the sky. She decides to go down, digging her way along the roots of trees. Sifting through the bones, she shakes them to see if there is any marrow in them. Then, touching the dirt to her forehead, to her tongue, she takes a few bones, leaves the rest in their burial place...Her first step is to take inventory. *Despojando, desgranando, quitando paja*. Just what did she inherit from her

³⁶ Lara Medina, “Nepantla Spirituality: An Emancipative Vision for Inclusion,” in *Wading Through Many Voices: Toward a Theology of Public Conversation*, ed. Harold J. Recinos, (Plymouth, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011), 288.

³⁷ Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books, 1987), 104.

ancestors? This weight on her back - which is the baggage from the Indian mother, which the baggage from the Spanish father, which the baggage from the Anglo?³⁸

In an attempt to reconcile all aspects of identity, *nepantla* provides a unique space for a hybrid Latine-Indigenous identity. While I strongly identify with the healing capacities in *nepantla*, I would not suggest it as a framework for all Indigenous peoples. Lara Medina and George E. Tinker's exchange in *Wading Through Many Voices: Toward a Theology of Public Conversation* informs this position. Medina writes, "[f]or Chicano/as who are products of cultural mestizaje within a legacy of colonization, reconciling the differences and discovering the similarities between Christian and Indigenous traditions offers healing."³⁹ I would argue this mode of healing does not extend to our American Indian relatives.

Medina goes on to explain how through *nepantla*, hybrid⁴⁰ Latine-Indigenous identities disrupt boundaries and create distinct worldviews that speak to the complexity of lived experiences belonging to both Indigenous and European ancestry.⁴¹ In this instance, Medina is elevating *nepantla* over *mestizaje* as an effective framework for identity deconstruction and understanding, thus pushing back on Virgilio Elizondo and Ada María Isasi-Díaz. These scholars' presentation of *mestizaje* failed to fully acknowledge and incorporate the indigeneity it sought to represent. Additionally, due to the regional origins of *mestizaje* in the United States, it functioned to universalize a specific experience of "intermixture," thus excluding other diverse mixtures of Indigenous and Afro-Latine identities.⁴² Elizondo, who wrote extensively on U.S. *mestizo* identity, heavily emphasized a Christian paradigm over an Indigenous one.⁴³ Additionally, Isasi-Díaz fails to delve into the complexities of a *mulatez* identity by not critically engaging with African culture and worldview. In *La Lucha Continues*, she spoke of *mestizaje-mulatez* as an attempt to address the Afro-Indigenous roots and influence on Latine culture.⁴⁴ However, upon further speculation and as noted by other Latine scholars,⁴⁵ throughout the entire chapter dedicated to *mestizaje-mulatez*, Isasi-Díaz does not reference or engage with a single Afro-Latine scholar.

Ultimately, Latine theologians who have heavily identified with *mestizaje* have failed to uphold Indigenous roots whereas Latine scholars embracing *nepantla* are doing

³⁸ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 104.

³⁹ Medina, "Nepantla Spirituality," 287.

⁴⁰ Medina does not use the term "hybrid" throughout her article, but she does offer a critique of *mestizaje* in her move towards embracing *nepantla* spirituality. See Medina, "Nepantla Spirituality," 281-282 for her argument that the *mestiza/o* identity can easily diminish the Indigenous worldview.

⁴¹ Medina, "Nepantla Spirituality," 287.

⁴² See Néstor Medina, *Mestizaje: (Re)mapping Race, Culture, and Faith in Latina/o Catholicism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009), 81.

⁴³ Virgilio Elizondo, "Mestizaje as a Locus of Theological Reflection," in *Mestizo Christianity: Theology from the Latino Perspective*, ed. Arturo J. Bañuelas (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 17-25.

⁴⁴ Ada María Isasi Díaz, *La Lucha Continues: Mujerista Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), ch. 5, Kindle.

⁴⁵ Miguel de la Torre, conversation with the author, October 23, 2018.

so as a choice to honor their indigeneity.⁴⁶ The key point for my argument that *nepantla* is not liberating for North American Indigenous peoples is the notion of choice to align with oneself with both their colonizer heritage and their indigeneity. For example, when engaging with Tinker's thoughts on American Indian healing, I do not witness the same self-determinant relationship with the colonized-self as the relationship expressed through Medina's understanding of *nepantla*. Consequently, I agree with Tinker's understanding that an American Indian reconciliation between the colonizer and the colonized simply is impossible because there was never a semblance of conciliation.⁴⁷ According to Tinker, American Indians do not and have never been given the choice to participate in a Christian paradigm; rather, it has consistently been enforced upon them⁴⁸.

Instead of extending liberation, this "choice" narrative has the capacity to extend further harm to North American Indigenous communities. Tinker's response to the healing capacities in a *nepantla* or "in-between" state is in the following: "[i]t has and continues to eviscerate our cultures and our systems of values, precisely by putting our cultural traditions...into diametric tension with the cultural values and habits of behavior of our colonizers."⁴⁹ The exchange between Medina and Tinker exemplifies how it is entirely up to a specific community to decide the parameters of their healing. Additionally, Tinker calls attention to the harmful impact of theoretical frameworks for identity, especially *nepantla*, in Latine studies on Indigenous peoples in the United States.

While I agree with Tinker's warning of *nepantla* as a theoretical framework, I am not asking Latine-Indigenous hybrid identities to disregard it. According to Anzaldúa, in *nepantla*, both Spanish and white European influences on identity formation are acknowledged, but the liberating work comes from unleashing the inner "*India*."⁵⁰ Loving the *India* within reconciles the imbalance which arose out of generational trauma that functioned to stifle her. In my culture, *Día de los Muertos* is an example of our Indigeneity persevering through cultural Catholicism without completely dismissing our Eurochristian heritage. This holiday is an embodied and cultural experience of *nepantla*, which cannot be understood through theoretical frameworks, but through community participation, mentorship from familial elders, and active cultural membership.

For example, sitting at a crowded cloth and glass-covered table at my great aunt's home in Mexico, passing tortillas in *talaveras*, and bringing a thumb over pointer finger to my mouth to kiss a miniature cross made from my own bones is in my spirit as much as the smell of sage, painting bracelets made of corn kernels, and believing those who have passed on continue to share physical space with us. The purpose of sharing my

⁴⁶ Medina, "Nepantla Spirituality," 275.

⁴⁷ George E. "Tink" Tinker, "Response to Lara Medina," in *Wading Through Many Voices: Toward a Theology of Public Conversation*, ed. Harold J. Recinos (Plymouth, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011), 296.

⁴⁸ Tinker, "Response to Lara Medina," 296.

⁴⁹ Tinker, "Response to Lara Medina," 296.

⁵⁰ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 104.

lived experience is not to throw out theory and methodology as academic practices. These are still needed to communicate and speak the language of academia, but the work of hybrid identities is to translate embodied experiences into academic vocabulary without causing harm via essentialization or overgeneralization to our communities and not to posit proximity to Indigeneity for cultural capital.

Not only by sharing our lived experiences, but by being critical of the theoretical background of “hybridity” as an academic concept is necessary too. When grappling with ‘hybrid’ as a label, it is important to signal how this word serves a euro-formed identity framework. The term ‘hybrid’ serves the Latine community by providing a label for those, like myself, who identify with a post-conquest culture by connecting our ancestry to both Indigenous people and Europeans. Upon further interrogation and with an American Indian collateral worldview in mind, ‘hybrid’ still operates on a purity scale or an “up-down image schema.” As Barbara Mann speaks of purity concerns as built-in assumptions of Euro-forming that include “A predisposition to monotheism, yielding a belief that “Truth” is unitary, leading to a fixation on “purity” of descent, resulting in a contempt for Native culture.”⁵¹ In response to purity concerns, hybridity can allow people with European ancestry to cloak a history of genocide and adheres to a monolithic identity framework. ‘Hybrid,’ ‘mestizo,’ or ‘mixed-race’ all feed into a Western framework of reference wherein those who are not only European or only Indigenous merit a separate term, thus enforcing conformity into the system even when they do not fit.⁵²

This critical interrogation of hybridity is not meant to dismiss identity deconstruction and mental decolonization in the academy; rather it is encouraging individual scholars with affinity to Indigeneity to engage in authentic relationships and dialogue with Indigenous communities and not flippantly declare ourselves as colonized or decolonized with no acknowledgement of settler colonialism. Tuck and Yang expand on this in the following:

Vocalizing a ‘multicultural’ approach to oppressions or remaining silent on settler colonialism while talking about colonialism or tacking on a gesture towards Indigenous people without addressing Indigenous sovereignty or rights, or forwarding a thesis on decolonization without regard to unsettling/deoccupying land, are equivocations” in that “they ambiguously avoid engaging with settler colonialism.”⁵³

As we move away from theoretical frameworks in relation to decolonization, we are forced to create new signifiers for our individual journeys toward liberation.⁵⁴ Simply put, decolonization can only refer to land ownership or, in other words, “...decolonization in the settler context must involve repatriation of land simultaneous

⁵¹ Barbara Mann, *Debating Democracy: Native American Legacy of Freedom* (Sante Fe, NM: Clear Light Publishers, 1998), 4.

⁵² Mann, *Debating Democracy*, 4.

⁵³ Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,” 19.

⁵⁴ Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,” 7.

to the recognition of how land and relations to land have always already been differently understood and enacted; that is, all of the land, and not just symbolically...”⁵⁵ The critical dialogue occurring around social justice issues, primarily by women and theorists of color, is still an important element of higher education. Tossing out the intellectual labor of scholars that have dedicated their careers to “decolonizing” various justice issues is not within the scope of my argument; rather, I am invested in calling attention to how and when theoretical frameworks for identity (specifically in a Latine-Indigenous hybrid context) have the potential to further perpetuate systems of colonization in the academy.

As I demonstrated with my own religio-cultural experiences, testimony and sharing of the day to day (*lo cotidiano*) is an example of how a Latine identity can support the academic discourse on decolonization in higher education. This practice is heavily influenced by Latine feminist scholars such as Mariana Ortega and Emma Pérez. Ortega writes on efforts to decolonize feminist theory, recognizing that this project is predominantly led by theorists from the global South and uplifting the role that Latina feminists have played.⁵⁶ While I agree Latine theorists have pushed the dial forward on topics of critical race theory, gender, and sexuality, we must caution ourselves when adopting “decolonization” as a method for our critical engagement with colonial contexts, especially if the voices of our American Indian and Latine-Indigenous siblings are going unheard or if the application of decolonization is not directly addressing settler colonialism.

For example, Emma Pérez defines this imaginary as intangible, which runs the risk of over-theorizing decolonization. For Pérez, the decolonial imaginary “acts much like a shadow in the dark...The shadow is the figure between the subject and the object on which it is cast, moving and breathing through an in-between space.”⁵⁷ While resonant with the poetic nature of occupying in-between spaces, this excerpt neglects the reality of what decolonization requires for Indigenous peoples in settler colonialist contexts, which is land rights and sovereignty. By maintaining decolonization as something of the imaginary world for Chicana identities, and not incorporating the reality of colonization on Indigenous peoples before Mexican migration (forced or not), Pérez’s “decolonial imaginary” remains in a theoretical framework and runs the risk of perpetuating decolonization as a metaphor.

In calling attention to this risk, I do not dismiss Pérez’s argument that Chicanas deserve to tell their own stories from the unique colonial history and context of their identities and lived experiences, thus creating a “third-space feminist consciousness.”⁵⁸ One of the many strengths of Pérez’s work is in her articulation of the geo-political complexity of the United States-Mexico borderlands and its impact on Mexican-

⁵⁵ Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,” 7.

⁵⁶ Mariana Ortega, “Preface,” in *Theories of the Flesh: Latinx and Latin American Feminisms, Transformation, and Resistance*, ed. Andrea J. Pitts, Mariana Ortega, and Jose Medina (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020).

⁵⁷ Emma Pérez, *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), 6.

⁵⁸ Pérez, *The Decolonial Imaginary*, 6.

American or Chicano identity. Specifically on Texas, she writes about a population molded and moved by Spanish colonialists, Mexicans, and Euroamericans.⁵⁹ Texas has been “named, renamed, bordered, measured, mapped, and fenced to restrict more movement.”⁶⁰ Here, Pérez is referencing how the Apaches and Comanches migrated through these ancestral Tejas tribal lands before Spanish, Mexican, or Euroamerican involvement and how movement and travel persists regardless of geo-political borders.⁶¹ At this point in her argument on the decolonial imaginary, I want to see more engagement of the colonial connection between Mexicans and Texas natives because this would address the impact of settler colonialism on Mexican migrants and Indigenous peoples.

In addition to this engagement, I want to see more incorporation of Chicana and Indigenous voices on the impact of settler colonialism in Texas. Sharing lived cultural experiences would only strengthen her argument on “third-space feminist consciousness.” In her conclusion, she cites Karl Marx and Michel Foucault as inspirations for this Chicana consciousness where I would rather see more lived experiences and how the Chicana identity interacts with Native worldview.⁶² Moving forward, although I find resonance in Pérez’s argument in carving out space for Chicanas in the historical narrative of the United States, I would suggest prioritizing lived experience over European theoretical frameworks in the construction of a decolonial imaginary.

Similarly, upon engaging with Ortega’s thesis on “Decolonizing Feminist Theory,” I find resonance because she is speaking to my intersecting identities in an academic vocabulary, but there are similar issues around applying decolonization to Western theories such as feminism. To clarify, Tuck and Yang write that decolonization “is not converting Indigenous politics to a Western doctrine of liberation; it is not a generic term for struggle against oppressive conditions and outcomes. The broad umbrella of social justice may have room underneath for all these efforts. By contrast, decolonization specifically requires the repatriation of Indigenous land and life. Decolonization is not a metonym for social justice.”⁶³ This is the missing piece from the theories arising from my affinity communities that have propelled me along my academic journey. It is with the utmost respect that I turn to my academic pillars in Latine Studies and Transformative Feminism and ask what Ortega asks herself, “What of our concepts and categories carry an implicit legacy of their colonial genealogy?”⁶⁴ And, as a follow up, before we adopt decolonization, have we addressed the settler colonizer in ourselves?

Still embedded in the *nepantla* and *lo cotidiano* as theoretical concepts for communicating the specific lived experiences of my identity and affinity community in

⁵⁹ Emma Pérez, *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999) ch. 4, Kindle.

⁶⁰ Pérez, *The Decolonial Imaginary*, ch. 4.

⁶¹ Pérez, *The Decolonial Imaginary*, ch. 4.

⁶² Pérez, *The Decolonial Imaginary*, Conclusion.

⁶³ Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,” 21.

⁶⁴ Pitts, Ortega, and Medina, *Theories of the Flesh*, 18.

the United States, I wonder why I am so invested in critically engaging with decolonization. At times, I embrace it as a methodology. At other times, I reject it as a harmful signifier, functioning to equivocate and avoid settler colonialism. While I'm pushing for us to move beyond broad applications of decolonization in higher academic theory, I rely on these very same theories to identify myself within the academy. Ultimately, "to be Latino/a is to be aware that colonialism is a central feature of the contemporary world, not a relic of the past."⁶⁵ For us, colonialism is not only an embodied reality in *nepantla* and expressed through *lo cotidiano*, but also embedded in our very understanding of place, land, and geography. Because of this, I am confident we can continue to function as productive conversation partners with the academy by moving decolonization away from theoretical frameworks in addressing settler colonialism and demanding land sovereignty for Indigenous peoples.

By now, I have engaged with Native, Latine, and decolonial scholars with various intersections of all or two of the three. By engaging with the varying voices in this article in partnership with sharing my own religio-cultural experiences as a Latine-Indigenous hybrid identity, I exemplified the benefit and detriment of decolonial theoretical frameworks in academia, particularly in Latine Studies. From an ethics of place, I have called attention to my various identities in the context of both higher education and my argument to be critical of my own complicity in maintaining settler colonialist systems in academia. In dialogue with Native worldview, I have pointed out the potential harm Latine Studies engages when leaning into theoretical identity frameworks like "hybridity" or relying on decolonization as a metaphor without authentic solidarity with Indigenous communities and their land rights. Ultimately, I have highlighted the complex duality of a Latine-Indigenous hybrid experience, which both benefits and suffers from theoretical frameworks of identity. My hope is that the future of Latine Studies embraces more conversations of internal critique in partnership with our Native siblings in the academy and continues to push the dial on actualizing decolonization beyond theory and methodology.

⁶⁵ Pitts, Ortega, and Medina, *Theories of the Flesh*, 13.

La Descolonización como Marco Teórico en los Estudios Latines

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Resumen

Con atención al canon existente de estudios latinos y estudios académicos críticos sobre la identidad de mi propia ubicación social específica como latino con ascendencia tanto europea como indígena, examino las formas en que los marcos epistemológicos como nepantla y el mestizaje tienen el potencial de romantizar la indigeneidad. y, en última instancia, dañar a las comunidades indígenas. Al abordar una variedad de estudios académicos latinos, indígenas y decoloniales en asociación con mis propias experiencias religioso-culturales como una identidad híbrida latino-indígena, demuestro tanto el beneficio como el detrimento de los marcos teóricos decoloniales en la academia, particularmente en los estudios latinos. Específicamente, sostengo que si la comunidad indígena queda fuera de la recuperación de la identidad o los reclamos de descolonización no están respaldados por una auténtica solidaridad con los pueblos indígenas, los académicos latinos, como yo, corremos el riesgo de esencializar la identidad indígena y la descolonización para el capital cultural dentro de las instituciones académicas superiores.

Introducción

Cuando se aplica a las identidades construidas racialmente en los Estados Unidos de América, el discurso del colonialismo de los colonos carece de diálogo sobre la descolonización. A medida que más personas de color y pueblos indígenas entran en la academia, las visiones del mundo comunitarias e individualistas entran en conversación entre sí, pero ¿alguna vez se cruzan? Como Latine¹ con herencia colonialista europea e

¹ Ver Edwin Aponte y Miguel De La Torre, "Who are Latinx Peoples??" en *Introducing Latinx Theologies*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2020), 11-19, donde explican cómo los términos genéricos comunes como "hispano" pueden enfatizar demasiado la herencia europea/española ignorando así el legado de los europeos, africanos y asiáticos no españoles, e Indígenas que impactan nuestras identidades desde una cultura hispanohablante. A lo largo de este artículo, uso "latine" para describirme. Chicana, Latina, e

indígena mexicana, me he preguntado constantemente si un vocabulario académico más alto y los marcos post-estructuralistas de la identidad Latina pueden coexistir con una cosmovisión indígena colateral para formar un marco liberador que cree espacio para identidades híbridas como la mía, es decir, una Latina con herencia colonialista europea e indígena mexicana.

La definición de hibridación de Homi K. Bhaba como “el paso intersticial entre identificaciones fijas [que] abre la posibilidad de una hibridación cultural que entretenga la diferencia sin una jerarquía asumida o impuesta,” informa mi comprensión de la hibridación.² La definición de hibridación de Bhaba permite que dos identidades coexistan y creen nuevas posibilidades para esas dos (o tres o más) identidades anteriores “fijidad.” Además, el legado de la invasión europea de las tierras norteamericanas y el colonialismo de los colonos de la tierra y la identidad indígenas informa mi crítica de la hibridación. En última instancia, el impacto del colonialismo de los colonos problematiza la hibridación porque altera la idea de reciprocidad entre culturas.

A través de la investigación principalmente sobre la descolonización como un marco metafórico presentado por Eve Tuck y K. Wayne Yang, y junto con un compromiso con el compromiso crítico con el trabajo de Lara Medina, George E. “Tink” Tinker, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Miguel A. De La Torre, J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, Emma Pérez y Gloria Anzaldúa, sostengo que el vocabulario teórico académico, específicamente la “hibrididad,” sobre la descolonización es inconmensurable con una visión del mundo indígena colateral. Además, cuando los eruditos latines con identidades europeas e indígenas se inclinan hacia su identidad indígena, esto puede ser una forma de resistencia. Sin embargo, sostengo que si la comunidad indígena queda fuera de esta reclamación o si las reclamaciones de descolonización no están respaldadas por una auténtica solidaridad con los pueblos indígenas, los académicos corren el riesgo de esencializar la identidad indígena y la descolonización para el capital cultural dentro de las instituciones académicas superiores.

Como aspirante a erudita, activista y ética que lucha con mi identidad híbrida³ Latine-Indígena, tengo la obligación ética de llamar la atención sobre el daño causado a

latine/a, Latin@ y Latinx todavía son utilizados por varios académicos según su contexto geográfico y colonial. Este cambio lingüístico a "latine" honra el trabajo de las comunidades LGBTQIA+, de género no binario y feministas de países de habla hispana. Vea Andrés Acosta (@asif.tv) "Diving into the origins of Latinx and why many people dislike it", video de Instagram, 2 de octubre de 2021, accedido 26 de julio, 2023, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CUigYS2oKSV/> para su trabajo que describe la diferencia entre latine/a, Latinx y Latine. No hago el cambio lingüístico para otros académicos porque también deseo demostrar cómo nuestros descriptores han seguido cambiando con el tiempo a medida que el lenguaje evoluciona y más latines expresamos nuestras experiencias cotidianas en el discurso sobre la identidad.

² Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Nueva York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 1994), 6.

³ A lo largo de este artículo, opto por la “hibridación” sobre el mestizaje. Véase Josefina Saltaña-Portillo, “Who’s the Indian in Aztlán? Re-writing Mestizaje, Indianism, and Chicanismo from the Lacandón” en *The Latin American Subaltern Studies Reader*, ed. Ileana Rodríguez (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 402-420. Ella argumenta que cuando el mestizo se convierte en el “indio,” el indio ha rechazado cualquier marcador de identidad español, pero aún debe renunciar a su idioma, prácticas religiosas y otras formas de organización cultural. Saltaña-Portillo acepta el argumento de Rigoberta Menchú de que la identidad indígena no es biológica y que cualquier persona nacida indígena puede “ladinizarse.” Por lo

las comunidades indígenas más allá de mis propias tierras ancestrales mexicanas, específicamente en sistemas de educación superior que defienden la prioridad de la descolonización. Al hacerlo, intento hacerme responsable como miembro activo de la academia para evitar que participe o me beneficie del mismo daño. Después de este reconocimiento y plena comprensión de la inconmensurabilidad de una cosmovisión indígena con la naturaleza teórica de la educación superior, sostengo que cualquier reclamo de identidad indígena, híbrida o no, causa daño si se deja a la teoría sin honrar las experiencias encarnadas de las culturas que interactúan entre sí o la participación activa de la tribu. Es esencial comprender por qué la afiliación a la identidad performativa es perjudicial y cómo el lenguaje teórico que rodea a la identidad, la descolonización y la visión del mundo indígena puede servir a la academia sobre la comunidad indígena.

De acuerdo con la “ética del lugar” de De La Torre, que involucra críticamente la ubicación social, la presencia y la praxis, mi objetivo es presentar la investigación sobre la identidad colonialista, Latina e Indígena de los colonos de una manera que explore cómo la teorización sobre las identidades híbridas y la descolonización perjudica a los pueblos indígenas. Aunque este daño es posible a través de la búsqueda académica de la deconstrucción de la identidad, esto no niega las experiencias religio-culturales vividas, encarnadas en la intersección de estas identidades. Por lo tanto, sugiero que los sistemas académicos, específicamente los estudios latinos sobre la descolonización, prioricen el compromiso con la cosmovisión nativa y el intercambio de nuestras propias narrativas religio-culturales en la intersección de las identidades latinas, indígenas y europeas en cualquier discurso relativo a la descolonización.

Cuando me refiero a una visión colateral del mundo indígena o nativa, estoy dibujando de las definiciones de George E. Tinker que expresan esta visión del mundo en distinción de una visión del mundo eurocristiana. Tinker argumenta que una visión del mundo eurocristiana opera en un “esquema de imagen cognitiva hacia arriba hacia abajo,” que “identifica todo un imaginario social,” “funciona para estructurar el todo social alrededor de jerarquías verticales de poder y autoridad,” y “crea las nociones jerárquicas que dominan nuestro mundo eurocolonial [sic] de conquista cristiana [sic].”⁴ Esta visión del mundo no solo es distinta de la nativa, sino que Tinker argumenta que ha cambiado y perjudicado irrevocablemente a los pueblos Indígenas Norteamericanos. Mientras que una visión eurocristiana del mundo opera sobre un modelo cognitivo jerárquico, Tinker argumenta que los Indios Americanos encarnan un “esquema de imagen colateral-egalitario, que es más bien un modelo comunitario.”⁵ La distinción de Tinker de estas dos visiones del mundo ha informado mi propia conciencia y crítica de la visión eurocristiana del mundo en la academia superior y en los estudios

tanto, según Saltaña-Portillo y Menchú, la identidad indígena no depende de una reivindicación de la identidad a través del mestizaje, sino de las formas culturales, lingüísticas, sociales y religiosas consistentes de la práctica indígena. En última instancia, estoy de acuerdo con Saltaña-Portillo en que el mestizaje ha funcionado para elevar la identidad indígena como “ornamentación y renacimiento espiritual” por encima del compromiso comunitario auténtico.

⁴ George E. “Tink” Tinker, “Why I Do Not Believe in a Creator”, en *Buffalo Shout, Salmon Cry: Conversations on Creation, Land Justice, and Life Together*, ed. Steve Heinrichs (Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 2013), 169.

⁵ Tinker, “Why I Do Not Believe in a Creator,” 171-172.

latines. También sirve como base para mi comprensión de los valores eurocristianos implícitos en la necesidad de forjar una identidad híbrida única para mí en nuestros actuales sistemas académicos de identificación.

Mercantilización Académica de la Descolonización

Para aclarar el fenómeno en la educación superior en el que se adoptan metodologías de descolonización con el fin de obtener capital cultural, De La Torre hace preguntas críticas sobre los motivos detrás de las publicaciones académicas que reclaman solidaridad con los oprimidos sin ninguna praxis que respalde estas afirmaciones.⁶ Sus sugerencias señalan una tendencia en la academia a teorizar las experiencias vividas de las comunidades socialmente marginadas para obtener ganancias y reputación dentro de la academia.⁷ Estas preguntas sobre el capital cultural en la academia se acosan en el trabajo de Linda Tuhiwai Smith, ya que exige una conciencia crítica de los investigadores al teorizar las experiencias indígenas cuando la teoría en sí misma es un producto de la cultura colonial. Ella escribe: “El acto, por no hablar del arte y la ciencia, de teorizar nuestra propia existencia y realidades no es algo que muchos indígenas asuman que es posible.”⁸ A través de una crítica de la construcción de la academia y la escritura a partir de sus experiencias vividas, Smith argumenta que la investigación está “inextricablemente vinculada al colonialismo,” reconociendo así la inconmensurabilidad entre una visión del mundo indígena con la teoría de la identidad y pidiendo la descolonización más allá de la teoría y la metáfora.⁹

Debido a que estoy de acuerdo con Smith, una pieza central de mi argumento es el artículo de Tuck y Yang, “La descolonización no es una metáfora,” donde piden la descolonización a través de abordar el colonialismo de los colonos y la concesión de soberanía y derechos a la tierra a los pueblos indígenas, llamando así la atención sobre el detrimento de los marcos teóricos en la búsqueda de Smith, Tuck y Yang lidian con las formas en que los sistemas de conocimiento y la academia participan en la continuación de la colonización.¹⁰ A través de Tuck y Yang, entiendo que el acto de colonizar en la academia no se trata tanto de colonizar las tierras y pueblos indígenas como de ganar capital social académico. Para resolver esto, Tuck y Yang instan a la academia a transferir capital material de vuelta a las comunidades indígenas, es decir, a conceder soberanía y derechos a la tierra, lo que es similar a las reparaciones.

Esta llamada es el resultado no solo de la experiencia dañina en la colonización, sino también de la tendencia en la academia a aplicar casualmente la descolonización a varios problemas de justicia social. Ampliando esta crítica, Tuck y Yang escriben sobre la creciente facilidad con la que se emplea el lenguaje de la descolonización tanto en la

⁶ Miguel A. De La Torre, *The U.S. Immigration Crisis: Toward an Ethics of Place* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016), Introduction, Kindle.

⁷ De La Torre, *The U.S. Immigration Crisis*, Introduction, Location 100-121.

⁸ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2nd ed. (London, UK: Zed Books, 2012), 30.

⁹ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 1.

¹⁰ Esto resuena con la crítica de De La Torre de que “Con demasiada frecuencia, hacemos análisis éticos desde la comodidad de nuestros cómodos sillones” y “Desde la seguridad de nuestros departamentos académicos...” Ver su *The U.S. Immigration Crisis*, Introducción, Ubicación 132.

educación superior como en la justicia social.¹¹ Cuando el lenguaje de la descolonización se usa de manera frívola, no logra lo que es inherente a su existencia, a saber, abordar el daño del genocidio cultural y devolver los derechos a la tierra a los pueblos indígenas. Sin este reconocimiento, nos involucramos en lo que De La Torre llama “ética de tipo espectador:”

He argumentado que, a pesar de lo inteligentes o creativos que pueden parecer los estudios de casos, son inútiles para aquellos que residen en los márgenes de la sociedad porque no fomentan actos concretos que pueden provocar un cambio. Se crea una ética de tipo espectador en la que debatir la teoría, en lugar de transformar la sociedad, se convierte en el objetivo intelectual final. La ética carente de praxis puede ser filosófica o teológica; pero no es ética.¹²

Mientras De La Torre está abordando la comunidad de inmigrantes indocumentados y la crisis de inmigración en la frontera, su crítica se mantiene firme con la crítica de Tuck y Yang de que la descolonización funciona como una metáfora en la educación superior. Empujando la crítica de “hacer la ética” desde las torres de marfil de la academia hacia el discurso sobre la descolonización, Tuck y Yang instan a los académicos a no usar el término “descolonización” a la ligera. Cuando el término se usa vagamente para otros problemas basados en los derechos humanos, la integridad única de la experiencia vivida de los indígenas se ve comprometida. En otras palabras, el uso de la descolonización como un método en la erudición o como un significante vacío para incluir a los pueblos indígenas en otras cuestiones de derechos civiles deshonra la realidad de la experiencia indígena en un contexto colonial. La descolonización requiere una acción más allá de la inclusión vacía de la identidad indígena en cualquier movimiento de justicia social.

Smith también ha cuestionado las auténticas preocupaciones de la academia por los contextos indígenas. Al igual que De La Torre, Smith pide una conciencia de la encarnación académica o la ubicación social. En otras palabras, ambos marcan los peligros de reclamar lugares sociales históricamente excluidos en la academia sin estar presentes en esas mismas comunidades. Sin estar presente u ocupar el mismo espacio con identidades socialmente marginadas, los teóricos se arriesgan a apropiarse de la opresión y del ideal de solidaridad para obtener ganancias académicas. Según Smith, “muchos investigadores simplemente asumen que ellos, como individuos, encarnan este ideal y son representantes naturales de él cuando trabajan con otras comunidades.”¹³ Al poner a Tuck y Yang en conversación con De La Torre y Smith, los aspirantes a activistas académicos con una identidad híbrida Latine-Indígena con compromisos de descolonización están éticamente obligados a impulsar la descolonización más allá del aula y los marcos teóricos. La descolonización requiere un cambio, rendición de cuentas y acción inmediata. En última instancia, “una metáfora invade la descolonización, mata la posibilidad misma de descolonización; recientemente la blancura, resuelve la teoría,

¹¹ Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang. “Decolonization is not a Metaphor,” *Decolonization, Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012), 2.

¹² De La Torre, *The U.S. Immigration Crisis*, Introduction, Location 149.

¹³ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 2.

extiende la inocencia al colono, entretiene el futuro de un colono.”¹⁴ Por lo tanto, las identidades híbridas Latine-Indígenas en la academia deben tener cuidado con las formas en que involucramos la descolonización como una metodología de formación de identidades sin praxis en las comunidades indígenas.

Impulsando la crítica, Tuck y Yang argumentan que la descolonización como metáfora conduce a la solidaridad vacía e incluso apoya que el colono “se mueve a la inocencia” en forma de apropiación cultural.¹⁵ Si bien en la educación superior, no estamos lidiando con la cara roja obvia como se muestra en los medios de comunicación populares, su propia presencia en los medios de comunicación revela una obsesión de los colonos por adoptar la indigeneidad.¹⁶ Además, la descolonización como metáfora utilizada por aquellos con falsas afirmaciones de identidad indígena o falta de proximidad real a la comunidad indígena es una forma de apropiación cultural o cara roja que a menudo no es desafiada por los sistemas de educación superior debido al elemento de capital cultural y diversidad que estos académicos pueden aportar a las instituciones.

Eruditos Híbridos Latine-Indígenas que se resisten a la Colonización en la Academia y Más Allá

Sin descartar el poder de la deconstrucción de la identidad y el aumento de la conciencia social que ocurre en la academia, los eruditos híbridos Latine-Indígenas están llamados a resistirse a esencializarnos en beneficio de la institución o a ofrecernos a nosotros mismos como representación objetiva para comunidades enteras. Volviendo a la crítica de De La Torre a la ética del espectador, el capítulo de Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “¿Puede hablar el subalterno?” advierte a los académicos que no reclamen experiencia en culturas o adopten una posición autorizada en la traducción de experiencias vividas a la teoría. Ella explica los peligros cuando los investigadores oscilan “entre la cataclisis teórica y el realismo ingenuo práctico” como un proceso dañino de universalización de experiencias únicas de opresión.¹⁷ Esta práctica posiciona a los sujetos de justicia social y ética como lejanos y sin voz, lo que es contraproducente para la intención del estudio. En las palabras de Spivak:

Esto reintroduce el sujeto constitutivo en al menos dos niveles: el sujeto del deseo y el poder como un presupuesto metodológico irreducible; y el...sujeto de los oprimidos. Además, los intelectuales, que no son ninguno de estos S/sujetos, se vuelven transparentes en la carrera de relevos, ya que simplemente informan sobre el sujeto no representado y analizan (sin analizar) el funcionamiento de (el

¹⁴ Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization is not a Metaphor,” 3.

¹⁵ Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization is not a Metaphor,” 9.

¹⁶ “Red Face” en los medios populares es cuando una persona indígena es representada por una persona no indígena. Un ejemplo contemporáneo es la interpretación del actor danés-estadounidense Viggo Mortenson de Frank T. Hopkins en *Hidalgo* (2004) de Disney.

¹⁷ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in *Can the Subaltern Speak: Reflections on the History of an Idea*, ed. Rosalind C. Morris (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2010), part 1, Kindle.

sujeto sin nombre irreductiblemente supuesto por) el poder y el deseo.¹⁸

Este análisis crítico de cómo se intelectualizan los que están al margen de la sociedad es precisamente lo que Tuck y Yang emplean al criticar la descolonización como una metáfora utilizada para calmar la culpa de los colonos. Escriben: "La absorción de la descolonización por los marcos de justicia social de los colonos es una forma en que el colono, perturbado por su propio estatus de colono, trata de escapar o contener el insoportable reflector de la complicidad..."¹⁹ Más allá de la culpa y las necesidades impacientes de reconciliación, el deseo de pertenecer alimenta la erudición sobre esta necesidad de pertenencia puede tener sus raíces en las primeras formaciones de una identidad de los Estados Unidos. Es importante destacar cómo esta formación de identidad no se pierde en las personas de color no nativas. Por mucho que los colonos blancos busquen una reconciliación rápida y libre de culpa, las personas de color no nativas se apresuran a asimilarse al sistema de colonos colonos, ya que les beneficia.

En su libro *Playing Indian*, Philip Deloria demuestra con éxito los orígenes de la obsesión de una identidad de los Estados Unidos con la pertenencia auténtica y el proyecto colonial detrás de la etiqueta "American." Él atribuye esta obsesión como una respuesta a la presencia indígena y la necesidad de justificar la presencia europea en las llamadas "Américas." Un ejemplo al que hace referencia es el Boston Tea Party, donde los Hijos de la Libertad, disfrazados de indígenas, protestaron contra los impuestos en la Ley Townshend lanzando té sin impuestos de China al puerto de Boston.²⁰ Este es uno de los primeros casos en los euroamericanos "jugando a ser indios" para afirmar su pertenencia y autoridad en el nuevo mundo (para ellos). Más adelante, en la introducción de su libro, Deloria continúa explicando cómo, aunque estas "actuaciones" indígenas han cambiado con el tiempo, esta práctica encuentra sus raíces en la Revolución cuando era necesario establecer una identidad nacional auténtica.²¹ Más allá de estos orígenes, Deloria también argumenta que la modernidad ha alentado una nueva forma de "jugar al indio" en la que los euroamericanos se inclinan hacia la identidad indígena "a la ansiedad" en una "vida postindustrial."²² Aquí, Deloria no solo está abordando la apropiación popular de la cultura indígena en ropa, joyas y prácticas espirituales, sino que también está abordando la atracción subconsciente hacia reclamar o reclamar la identidad indígena como una sensación de seguridad en una tierra que sabemos que es robada.

Esta ansiedad de los colonos en la conversación con la recuperación de la identidad indígena sobre el aumento de la conciencia inducido por la educación requiere una mirada más cercana a la racialización de los "nativos americanos." Esta racialización tiene dos efectos. En primer lugar, funciona para proporcionar espacio para que las personas blancas y no nativas (incluidas las identidades latinas) reclamen la indigeneidad basada en el patrimonio, no en el compromiso de la comunidad y/o la

¹⁸ Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", part 1.

¹⁹ Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor," 9.

²⁰ Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 5.

²¹ Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 7.

²² Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 7.

visión del mundo. En segundo lugar, y de manera más devastadora, funciona para extinguir la auténtica identidad y comunidad indígena. Aquí es donde Latine afirma que la identidad indígena tiene el potencial de causar daño, lo que fundamenta mi argumento de que reclamar la identidad indígena sin compromiso con la comunidad defiende el colonialismo de los colonos.

Apoyando reclamos complicados sobre la identidad indígena, los organismos gubernamentales de EE. UU. históricamente han utilizado y continúan utilizando la mecánica cuántica de la sangre para borrar a los pueblos indígenas. Al considerar la racialización de los pueblos indígenas, especialmente a través del uso de la clasificación cuántica de la sangre, J. Kēhualani Kauanui argumenta que estas mecánicas funcionan como una “lógica genocida de desaparición” que prioriza las reclamaciones de herencia sobre la participación y membresía auténtica de la comunidad.²³ De esta manera, la sangre cuántica es un proyecto colonial porque, en última instancia, funciona para ignorar los derechos de la tierra indígena. Debido a que la ascendencia es diferente de la membresía tribal activa y la mecánica cuántica de la sangre se ha utilizado para mantener la adquisición de tierras actual y en curso del gobierno de los Estados Unidos, las cuestiones de identidad y pertenencia dependen completamente de comunidades indígenas específicas.²⁴

En este sentido, sostengo que el compromiso con el compromiso y la participación de la comunidad es un componente necesario para cualquier forma de deconstrucción y recuperación de la identidad. Dependiendo del contexto, tenemos que preguntarnos quién se está beneficiando de esta reclamación de identidad y quién no. En última instancia, cuando se reclama una identidad marginada por reputación o reconocimiento en lugar de la participación de la comunidad y sin conciencia de la complicidad de los colonos, “incluso la capacidad de ser un ciudadano minoritario en la nación de los colonos significa una opción para convertirse en un colono pardo.”²⁵ En un momento en que los privilegios epistemológicos en la educación superior se otorgan a aquellos con identidades específicas, debemos estar atentos a si la recuperación de la identidad funciona para elevar a la comunidad o al individuo a expensas de la comunidad, incluso si ese individuo es una persona de color.

Blood quantum también permite que los blancos sin una afiliación clara a la comunidad indígena o a los miembros tribales reclamen la indigeneidad basada en la herencia distante. Las regulaciones cuánticas de sangre no solo funcionan para elevar a los colonos blancos por encima de las comunidades indígenas, sino que apoyan y mantienen los actuales sistemas colonialistas de propiedad de la tierra de los colonos, como la Ley de la Comisión de Hogares de Hawai (HHCA) de 1921. Este acto definió a los hawaianos nativos como “personas con al menos la mitad de la cantidad de sangre de individuos que habitan en las islas hawaianas antes de 1778.”²⁶ A través de un análisis histórico crítico de la relación de los Estados Unidos con los hawaianos nativos y los

²³ J. Kēhualani Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 25.

²⁴ Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,” 13.

²⁵ Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,” 18.

²⁶ Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood*, 2.

indios americanos, Kauanui concluye que las clasificaciones cuánticas de la sangre como la presente en el HHCA funcionan para “apropiarse de las tierras nativas y promover la asimilación cultural y biológica en beneficio de la blancura.”²⁷ Esta forma de recuperación de identidad es otra forma en la que la crítica de la descolonización como marco teórico vale la pena porque la descolonización requiere una atención específica a las comunidades indígenas activas. En lugar de reposiciones edificantes de un pasado indígena romántico, la descolonización debe abordar el presente indígena.

A través del examen de los orígenes coloniales de la cantidad de sangre, el jurista David Wilkins de la nación Lumbee revela cómo la mecánica de la sangre ha cambiado y ha complicado la inscripción tribal, el desmembramiento y el sentido de pertenencia. En última instancia, la cantidad de sangre fue introducida por los responsables políticos de EE. UU. en asociación con líderes tribales sobre las preocupaciones de propiedad privada y asignación de recursos. En otras palabras, organizar el territorio “indio” y decidir quién sería elegible para estas tierras era la principal preocupación para la construcción de la mecánica cuántica de la sangre.²⁸ Debido a las presiones sobre las comunidades nativas para proteger sus tierras y recursos, la cantidad de sangre se convirtió en una forma de dividirse de las personas no nativas. A principios de la década de 1900, por ejemplo, Wilkins escribe sobre el “Caso del Hombre Blanco,” que fue una serie de casos en los que los indios cheroqui pudieron presentar una reclamación sobre la base de su “sangre” contra 3.627 personas blancas que deseaban tierras Cherokee.²⁹ Lo que comenzó como un medio para abogar por la soberanía indígena frente al colonialismo de los colonos ahora ha concedido a los miembros de la comunidad no participantes que se identifiquen como indígenas sobre la base de tener un 25% de sangre indígena.

La obsesión por reclamar la indigeneidad persiste y está respaldada por la cultura popular. Tuck y Yang profundizan en el protagonista de la película *The Last of the Mohicans*, como un ejemplo de un colono blanco que está siendo “adoptado” en la comunidad indígena para resaltar esta obsesión cultural de los colonos. Más allá del personaje de Daniel Day Lewis, hay muchas más películas que incluyen, entre otras, *Annie Get Your Gun*,³⁰ *Peter Pan*,³¹ e *Isabella Swan en Crepúsculo*.³² Tuck y Yang reconocen la prevalencia de la narrativa de adopción indígena en los medios de comunicación occidentales y están interesados en cómo “esta narrativa hace girar la fantasía de que un colono individual puede volverse inocente.”³³ Crear historias en las que las personas no nativas son adoptadas por las comunidades indígenas es una forma de gestionar la culpa colonial. De esta manera, la identidad de los Estados Unidos se hibrida para reconciliar la culpa de los colonos blancos y establecer la superioridad de la hibridación. Este es el telón de fondo de las identidades híbridas con las que los

²⁷ Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood*, 11.

²⁸ David Wilkins, *Dismembered: Indigenous Confluences* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2017), 31.

²⁹ Wilkins, *Dismembered*, 31.

³⁰ El personaje de Annie es adoptado por Toro Sentado en la tribu Sioux (Berkeley y Sidney, 1950).

³¹ El personaje de Peter Pan es adoptado por la tribu imaginaria de Neverland al rescatar a Tiger Lily, la hija del jefe (Geronimi, Jackson y Luske, 1953).

³² Bella Swan queda protegida por la tribu Quileute (Hardwicke, 2008).

³³ Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,” 14.

académicos latines que luchan con cuestiones de identidad deben considerar en un contexto estadounidense.

Más allá de los marcos teóricos postestructuralistas, aquellos en la academia con valores orientados a la justicia tienen obligaciones éticas de cuestionar de qué manera apoyamos el colonialismo de los colonos. Para las identidades híbridas, esta praxis implica la presencia con la comunidad junto con la traducción de estas experiencias vividas en el discurso académico.³⁴ En primer lugar, la recuperación de la identidad indígena y la visión del mundo implica priorizar la comunidad, la participación tribal y la tradición, y es incompatible con los sistemas teóricos académicos superiores debido a los orígenes coloniales de esos sistemas. En segundo lugar, confiando en gran medida en las experiencias vividas en nepantla,³⁵ informadas por Gloria Anzaldúa, Mariana Ortega, Lara Medina y Emma Pérez, puse este trabajo en conversación con mis propias experiencias vividas. Al hacer esto, encuentro que la intersección de la ideología eurocristiana y una visión del mundo indígena existen en experiencias encarnadas, no en marcos teóricos. Finalmente, no me identifiqué intencionalmente como principalmente indígena, aunque hay influencias ancestrales indígenas específicas en mi afinidad con la nepantla y las experiencias religiosas y culturales en el catolicismo mexicano. No acepto una identidad indígena porque me refiero a las formas en que mi beca, incluso la beca que abraza nepantla, apoya los sistemas de colonialismo de los colonos. Aún así, rechazo el discurso académico teórico sobre la identidad compartiendo experiencias religiosas y culturales personales, que en última instancia me alinean principalmente con una identidad latina dedicada a la descolonización.

Indígenas, europeos y latines: ¿Dónde encajan nuestras voces en el Discurso sobre la Descolonización?

“Los antepasados guían a los vivos, ofrecen protección y renuevan a los vivos. Construir un espacio sagrado en su honor, dejarles regalos de comida y bebida, pasar tiempo con sus espíritus y compartir las tradiciones orales asegura la estabilidad de la familia y, lo que es más importante, recuerda a los vivos su linaje histórico.”³⁶

Olor a salvia se esparce por los pasillos de ladrillo el día antes de El Día de Muertos. Tía Adriana me ordena que tome un taxi en el centro para comprar tantas caléndulas como pueda llevar. Prima Sofía está haciendo papel picado en la mesa de la cocina y La Señora Licha está desempolvando los marcos de nuestros antepasados para la ofrenda. Las campanas de la iglesia católica en la Plaza de Ciudad Fernández suenan en nuestra casa y estoy ansioso por compartir espacio con los muertos por primera vez.

³⁴ De La Torre, *The U.S. Immigration Crisis*, Introduction, Location 101.

³⁵ Término indígena náhuatl para "intermediación" como se entiende en Gloria Anzaldúa, "(Un)natural Bridges, (Un)safe Spaces," in *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation*, ed. Gloria Anzaldúa and Analouse Keating (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002), 1-5.

³⁶ Lara Medina, "Nepantla Spirituality: An Emancipative Vision for Inclusion," in *Wading Through Many Voices: Toward a Theology of Public Conversation*, ed. Harold J. Recinos, (Plymouth, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011), 288.

Esta reunión anual nunca se mencionó en la Iglesia de San Benito en el noreste de Iowa, a la que asistí cuando era niño, pero se celebró en todas las plazas de México. Hay un equilibrio viviendo en estas comunidades a medida que expresamos tanto nuestro catolicismo cultural como nuestra reverencia por la caléndula picante que guía a nuestros antepasados de vuelta a casa.

“Pero Tía...” Pregunto: “¿Pensé que solo Jesús podría volver de entre los muertos?”

Ella responde: “Bueno, si mijita, es que somos católicos, pero también somos Indios.”

Aquí, es necesario desempaquetar la dinámica de identidad contradictoria que ocurre en mi familia para entender cómo las visiones del mundo conflictivas son experiencias encarnadas. Usando *Borderlands de Gloria Anzaldúa, La Frontera*, puedo proporcionar un análisis crítico de este fenómeno. Dentro de un contexto estadounidense, Anzaldúa escribe sobre la experiencia encarnada de vivir en la intersección de la cultura blanca, mexicana e indígena.³⁷ A través de la poesía y el análisis social crítico, Anzaldúa demuestra cómo la libertad de esta agitación psicológica se encuentra en abrazar la nepantla, que requiere excavar y liberar nuestra indigencia interior. Para honrar su expresión artística, proporciono un extracto más largo aquí:

Atrapada entre la contracción repentina, el aliento aspirado y los infinitos espacios, la mujer morena se queda quieta, mira al cielo. Ella decide bajar, cavando a lo largo de las raíces de los árboles. Tamizando a través de los huesos, los sacude para ver si hay algo de médula en ellos. Luego, tocando la suciedad en su frente, en su lengua, toma algunos huesos, deja el resto en su lugar de entierro... Su primer paso es hacer un inventario. Despojando, desgranando, quitando paja. ¿Qué heredó de sus antepasados? Este peso en su espalda, ¿cuál es el equipaje de la madre india, cuál es el equipaje del padre español, cuál es el equipaje del anglo?³⁸

En un intento de reconciliar todos los aspectos de la identidad, nepantla proporciona un espacio único para una identidad híbrida Latine-Indígena. Si bien me identifico fuertemente con las capacidades de curación en nepantla, no lo sugeriría como un marco para todos los pueblos indígenas. Lara Medina y George E. El intercambio de Tinker en *Wading Through Many Voices: Toward a Theology of Public Conversation* informa esta posición. Medina escribe: “[f]or Chicano/as que son productos de mestizaje cultural dentro de un legado de colonización, reconciliar las diferencias y descubrir las similitudes entre las tradiciones cristianas e indígenas ofrece

³⁷ Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books, 1987), 104.

³⁸ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 104.

sanación.”³⁹ Yo diría que este modo de curación no se extiende a nuestros parientes indios americanos.

Medina continúa explicando cómo, a través de la nepantla, las identidades híbridas⁴⁰ Latine-Indígenas alteran los límites y crean visiones del mundo distintas que hablan de la complejidad de las experiencias vividas que pertenecen tanto a la ascendencia indígena como a la europea.⁴¹ En este caso, Medina está elevando la nepantla sobre el mestizaje como un marco eficaz para la deconstrucción y comprensión de la identidad, empujando así hacia atrás a Virgilio Elizondo y Ada María Isasi-Díaz. La presentación de mestizaje por parte de estos académicos no reconoció e incorporó plenamente la indigeneidad que buscaba representar. Además, debido a los orígenes regionales de la mestizaje en los Estados Unidos, funcionó para universalizar una experiencia específica de “mezcla,” excluyendo así otras mezclas diversas de identidades indígenas y afrolatinas.⁴² Elizondo, que escribió extensamente sobre la identidad mestizo de los Estados Unidos, hizo mucho hincapié en un paradigma cristiano sobre uno indígena.⁴³ Además, Isasi-Díaz no profundiza en las complejidades de una identidad mulata al no involucrarse críticamente con la cultura y la visión del mundo africanas. En *La Lucha Continues*, habló de mestizaje-mulatez como un intento de abordar las raíces afro-indígenas y la influencia en la cultura latina.⁴⁴ Sin embargo, tras una mayor especulación y como señalaron otros eruditos latines, a lo largo de todo el capítulo dedicado a mestizaje-mulatez, Isasi-Díaz no hace referencia ni se relaciona con un solo erudito Afrolatine.⁴⁵

En última instancia, los teólogos latines que se han identificado fuertemente con el mestizaje no han logrado defender las raíces indígenas, mientras que los eruditos latines que abrazan la nepantla lo están haciendo como una opción para honrar su indigeneidad.⁴⁶ El punto clave de mi argumento de que la nepantla no es liberadora para los pueblos indígenas de América del Norte es la noción de la opción de alinearse con uno mismo tanto con su herencia colonizadora como con su indigencia. Por ejemplo, cuando me relaciono con los pensamientos de Tinker sobre la curación de los indios americanos, no soy testigo de la misma relación autodeterminante con el yo colonizado que la relación expresada a través de la comprensión de Medina de nepantla. En consecuencia, estoy de acuerdo con el entendimiento de Tinker de que una reconciliación india americana entre el colonizador y el colonizado es simplemente

³⁹ Medina, “Nepantla Spirituality,” 287.

⁴⁰ Medina no usa el término “híbrido” a lo largo de su artículo, pero ofrece una crítica del mestizaje en su movimiento hacia la adopción de la espiritualidad nepantla. Ver Medina, “Nepantla Spirituality,” 281-282 para su argumento de que la identidad mestiza/o puede disminuir fácilmente la cosmovisión indígena.

⁴¹ Medina, “Nepantla Spirituality,” 287.

⁴² Ver Néstor Medina, *Mestizaje: (Re)mapping Race, Culture, and Faith in Latina/o Catholicism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009), 81.

⁴³ Virgilio Elizondo, “Mestizaje as a Locus of Theological Reflection,” in *Mestizo Christianity: Theology from the Latino Perspective*, ed. Arturo J. Bañuelas (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 17-25.

⁴⁴ Ada María Isasi Díaz, *La Lucha Continues: Mujerista Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), ch. 5, Kindle.

⁴⁵ Miguel de la Torre, conversación con el autor, October 23, 2018.

⁴⁶ Medina, “Nepantla Spirituality,” 275.

imposible porque nunca hubo una apariencia de conciliación.⁴⁷ Según Tinker, los indios americanos no tienen y nunca se les ha dado la opción de participar en un paradigma cristiano; más bien, se les ha impuesto constantemente.⁴⁸

En lugar de extender la liberación, esta narrativa de “elección” tiene la capacidad de hacer más daño a las comunidades indígenas de América del Norte. La respuesta de Tinker a las capacidades de curación en un estado nepantla o “intermedio” es la siguiente: “ha eviscerado y continúa de nuestras culturas y nuestros sistemas de valores, precisamente poniendo nuestras tradiciones culturales... en tensión diametral con los valores culturales y los hábitos de comportamiento de nuestros colonizadores.”⁴⁹ El intercambio entre Medina y Tinker ejemplifica cómo depende totalmente de una comunidad específica decidir los parámetros de su curación. Además, Tinker llama la atención sobre el impacto dañino de los marcos teóricos para la identidad, especialmente la nepantla, en los estudios latines sobre los pueblos indígenas en los Estados Unidos.

Si bien estoy de acuerdo con la advertencia de Tinker sobre la nepantla como marco teórico, no estoy pidiendo a las identidades híbridas Latine-Indígenas que lo ignoren. Según Anzaldúa, en nepantla, se reconocen las influencias tanto españolas como las europeas blancas en la formación de la identidad, pero el trabajo liberador proviene de la liberación de la “India” interior.⁵⁰ Amar a la India interior reconcilia el desequilibrio que surgió del trauma generacional que funcionó para sofocarla. En mi cultura, el Día de los Muertos es un ejemplo de nuestra indigeneidad que persevera a través del catolicismo cultural sin descartar por completo nuestra herencia eurocristiana. Esta fiesta es una experiencia encarnada y cultural de nepantla, que no se puede entender a través de marcos teóricos, sino a través de la participación de la comunidad, la tutoría de ancianos de la familia y la membresía cultural activa.

Por ejemplo, sentarme en una mesa llena de tela llena de gente y vidrio en la casa de mi tía abuela en México, pasar tortillas en talaveras y llevar un pulgar sobre el dedo índice a mi boca para besar una cruz en miniatura hecha de mis propios huesos está en mi espíritu tanto como el olor a salvia, pintar pulseras hechas de granos de maíz y creer que los que han muerto aún comparten el espacio físico con nosotros. El propósito de compartir mi experiencia vivida no es descartar la teoría y la metodología como prácticas académicas. Estos todavía son necesarios para comunicarse y hablar el idioma de la academia, pero el trabajo de las identidades híbridas es traducir las experiencias encarnadas al vocabulario académico sin causar daño a través de la esencialización o la

⁴⁷ George E. “Tink” Tinker, “Response to Lara Medina,” in *Wading Through Many Voices: Toward a Theology of Public Conversation*, ed. Harold J. Recinos (Plymouth, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011), 296.

⁴⁸ Tinker, “Response to Lara Medina,” 296.

⁴⁹ Tinker, “Response to Lara Medina,” 296.

⁵⁰ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 104.

sobregeneralización a nuestras comunidades y no plantear la proximidad a la indigeneidad para el capital cultural.

No solo compartiendo nuestras experiencias vividas, sino también siendo críticos con los antecedentes teóricos de la “hibridación” como concepto académico. Cuando se trata de “híbrido” como etiqueta, es importante señalar cómo esta palabra sirve a un marco de identidad formado en euros. El término “híbrido” sirve a la comunidad Latina al proporcionar una etiqueta para aquellos, como yo, que se identifican con una cultura posterior a la conquista al conectar nuestra ascendencia tanto con los pueblos indígenas como con los europeos. Tras un interrogatorio adicional y con una visión del mundo colateral de los indios americanos en mente, el “híbrido” todavía opera en una escala de pureza o un “esquema de imagen hacia arriba hacia abajo.” Como Barbara Mann habla de las preocupaciones por la pureza como supuestos incorporados de la formación europea que incluyen “Una predisposición al monoteísmo, que produce una creencia de que la verdad es unitaria, lo que lleva a una fijación en la pureza de la ascendencia, lo que resulta en un desprecio por la cultura nativa.”⁵¹ En respuesta a las preocupaciones por la pureza, la hibridación puede permitir que las personas con ascendencia europea encubrimiento una historia de genocidio y se adhieran a un marco de identidad monolítico. “Híbrido,” “mestizo” o “raza mixta” se alimentan de un marco de referencia occidental en el que aquellos que no son solo europeos o solo indígenas merecen un término separado, lo que hace cumplir la conformidad en el sistema incluso cuando no encajan.⁵²

Este interrogatorio crítico de la hibridación no está destinado a descartar la deconstrucción de la identidad y la descolonización mental en la academia; más bien, está alentando a los académicos individuales con afinidad por la indigeneidad a participar en relaciones auténticas y diálogo con las comunidades indígenas y no declararnos frívolamente como colonizados o descolonizados sin reconocimiento del colonialismo Tuck y Yang amplían esto de la siguiente forma:

Vocalizar un enfoque “multicultural” de las opresiones o permanecer en silencio sobre el colonialismo de los colonos mientras se habla sobre el colonialismo o hacer un gesto hacia los pueblos indígenas sin abordar la soberanía o los derechos indígenas, o enviar una tesis sobre la descolonización sin respecto a las tierras inquietantes/ocupantes, son equívocos, en el sentido de que evitan ambiguamente comprometerse con el colonialismo de los colonos.⁵³

A medida que nos alejamos de los marcos teóricos en relación con la descolonización, nos vemos obligados a crear nuevos significantes para nuestros viajes individuales hacia la liberación.⁵⁴ En pocas palabras, la descolonización solo puede

⁵¹ Barbara Mann, *Debating Democracy: Native American Legacy of Freedom* (Sante Fe, NM: Clear Light Publishers, 1998), 4.

⁵² Mann, *Debating Democracy*, 4.

⁵³ Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,” 19.

⁵⁴ Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,” 7.

referirse a la propiedad de la tierra o, en otras palabras, “... la descolonización en el contexto de los colonos debe implicar la repatriación de la tierra simultánea al reconocimiento de cómo la tierra y las relaciones con la tierra siempre se han entendido y promulgado de manera diferente; es decir, toda la tierra, y no solo simbólicamente...”⁵⁵ Tirar el trabajo intelectual de los académicos que han dedicado sus carreras a “descolonizar” varios temas de justicia no está dentro del alcance de mi argumento; más bien, estoy invertido en llamar la atención sobre cómo y cuándo los marcos teóricos para la identidad (específicamente en un contexto híbrido Latine-Indígena) tienen el potencial de perpetuar aún más los sistemas de colonización en la academia.

Como demostré con mis propias experiencias religio-culturales, el testimonio y el intercambio del día a día (lo cotidiano) es un ejemplo de cómo una identidad latina puede apoyar el discurso académico sobre la descolonización en la educación superior. Esta práctica está fuertemente influenciada por eruditas feministas latinas como Mariana Ortega y Emma Pérez. Ortega escribe sobre los esfuerzos para descolonizar la teoría feminista, reconociendo que este proyecto está dirigido predominantemente por teóricos del Sur global y elevando el papel que las feministas latinas han desempeñado.⁵⁶ Si bien estoy de acuerdo en que los teóricos latines han impulsado el dial hacia adelante en temas de teoría crítica de la raza, género y sexualidad, debemos advertirnos al adoptar la “descolonización” como un método para nuestro compromiso crítico con los contextos coloniales, especialmente si las voces de nuestros hermanos indios americanos e indígenas latines no se escuchan o si la aplicación de la descolonización.

Por ejemplo, Emma Pérez define este imaginario como intangible, que corre el riesgo de teorizar demasiado la descolonización. Para Pérez, el imaginario decolonial “acciona como una sombra en la oscuridad... La sombra es la figura entre el sujeto y el objeto sobre el que está proyectado, moviéndose y respirando a través de un espacio intermedio.”⁵⁷ Si bien resuena con la naturaleza poética de ocupar espacios intermedios, este extracto descuida la realidad de lo que la descolonización requiere para los pueblos indígenas en contextos colonialistas de los colonos, que son los derechos a la tierra y la soberanía. Al mantener la descolonización como algo del mundo imaginario para las identidades chicanas, y no incorporar la realidad de la colonización de los pueblos indígenas antes de la migración mexicana (forzada o no), el “imaginario decolonial” de Pérez permanece en un marco teórico y corre el riesgo de perpetuar la descolonización como metáfora.

Al llamar la atención sobre este riesgo, no descarto el argumento de Pérez de que las chicanas merecen contar sus propias historias desde la historia colonial única y el contexto de sus identidades y experiencias vividas, creando así una “conciencia

⁵⁵ Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,” 7.

⁵⁶ Mariana Ortega, “Preface,” in *Theories of the Flesh: Latinx and Latin American Feminisms, Transformation, and Resistance*, ed. Andrea J. Pitts, Mariana Ortega, and Jose Medina (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020).

⁵⁷ Emma Pérez, *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), 6.

feminista del tercer espacio.”⁵⁸ Uno de los muchos puntos fuertes del trabajo de Pérez está en su articulación de la complejidad geopolítica de las tierras fronterizas entre Estados Unidos y México y su impacto en la identidad mexicano-estadounidense o chicana. Específicamente sobre Texas, escribe sobre una población moldeada y movida por colonialistas españoles, mexicanos y euroamericanos.⁵⁹ Texas ha sido “nombrada, renombrada, bordeada, medida, mapeada y vallada para restringir más el movimiento.”⁶⁰ Aquí, Pérez hace referencia a cómo los apaches y comanches emigraron a través de estas tierras tribales ancestrales de Tejas antes de la participación española, mexicana o euroamericana y cómo el movimiento y los viajes persisten independientemente de las fronteras geopolíticas.⁶¹ En este punto de su argumento sobre el imaginario decolonial, quiero ver más compromiso de la conexión colonial entre los mexicanos y los nativos de Texas porque esto abordaría el impacto del colonialismo de los colonos en los migrantes mexicanos y los pueblos indígenas.

Además de este compromiso, quiero ver una mayor incorporación de voces chicanas e indígenas sobre el impacto del colonialismo de los colonos en Texas. Compartir experiencias culturales vividas solo fortalecería su argumento sobre la “conciencia feminista del tercer espacio.” En su conclusión, cita a Karl Marx y Michel Foucault como inspiraciones para esta conciencia chicana, donde preferiría ver más experiencias vividas y cómo la identidad chicana interactúa con la visión del mundo nativo.⁶² En el futuro, aunque encuentro resonancia en el argumento de Pérez en la búsqueda de espacio para las chicanas en la narrativa histórica de los Estados Unidos, sugeriría priorizar la experiencia vivida sobre los marcos teóricos europeos en la construcción de un imaginario decolonial.

Del mismo modo, al involucrarme con la tesis de Ortega sobre “La descolonización de la teoría feminista,” encuentro resonancia porque está hablando de mis identidades que se cruzan en un vocabulario académico, pero hay problemas similares en torno a la aplicación de la descolonización a teorías occidentales como el feminismo. Para aclarar, Tuck y Yang escriben que la descolonización “no está convirtiendo la política indígena en una doctrina occidental de liberación; no es un término genérico para la lucha contra las condiciones y los resultados opresivos. El amplio paraguas de la justicia social puede tener espacio para todos estos esfuerzos. Por el contrario, la descolonización requiere específicamente la repatriación de la tierra y la vida indígenas. La descolonización no es un metónimo de la justicia social.”⁶³ Esta es la pieza que falta de las teorías que surgen de las comunidades de afinidad que me han impulsado a lo largo de mi viaje académico. Es con el máximo respeto que me devoto a mis pilares académicos en Estudios Latines y Feminismo Transformador y me pregunto lo que Ortega se pregunta: “¿Qué de nuestros conceptos y categorías llevan un legado

⁵⁸ Emma Pérez, *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), 6.

⁵⁹ Emma Pérez, *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999) ch. 4, Kindle.

⁶⁰ Pérez, *The Decolonial Imaginary*, ch. 4.

⁶¹ Pérez, *The Decolonial Imaginary*, ch. 4.

⁶² Pérez, *The Decolonial Imaginary*, Conclusion.

⁶³ Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,” 21.

implícito de su genealogía colonial?”⁶⁴ Y, como seguimiento, antes de adoptar la descolonización, ¿nos hemos dirigido al colonizador de los colonos en nosotros mismos?

Todavía incrustado en el nepantla y lo cotidiano como conceptos teóricos para comunicar las experiencias vividas específicas de mi comunidad de identidad y afinidad en los Estados Unidos, me pregunto por qué estoy tan involucrado en participar críticamente con la descolonización. A veces, lo abrazo como una metodología. En otras ocasiones, lo rechazo como un significante dañino, que funciona para equivocar y evitar el colonialismo de los colonos. Si bien estoy presionando para que vayamos más allá de las amplias aplicaciones de la descolonización en la teoría académica superior, confío en estas mismas teorías para identificarme dentro de la academia. En última instancia, “ser latine es ser consciente de que el colonialismo es una característica central del mundo contemporáneo, no una reliquia del pasado.”⁶⁵ Para nosotros, el colonialismo no solo es una realidad encarnada en nepantla y expresada a través de lo cotidiano, sino que también está incrustada en nuestra propia comprensión del lugar, la tierra y la geografía. Debido a esto, estoy seguro de que podemos seguir funcionando como socios de conversación productivos con la academia alejando la descolonización de los marcos teóricos para abordar el colonialismo de los colonos y exigir la soberanía de la tierra para los pueblos indígenas.

A estas alturas, me he comprometido con eruditos nativos, latines y decoloniales con varias intersecciones de todos o dos de los tres. Al comprometerme con las diferentes voces de este artículo en asociación con el intercambio de mis propias experiencias religio-culturales como una identidad híbrida Latine-Indígena, ejemplifiqué el beneficio y el detrimento de los marcos teóricos decoloniales en el mundo académico, particularmente en los estudios latines. Desde una ética de lugar, he llamado la atención sobre mis diversas identidades en el contexto tanto de la educación superior como sobre mi argumento de ser crítico con mi propia complicidad en el mantenimiento de los sistemas colonialistas de los colonos en el mundo académico. En diálogo con la cosmovisión nativa, he señalado el daño potencial que causan los estudios latines al apoyarse en marcos de identidad teóricos como la “hibrididad” o confiar en la descolonización como metáfora sin una solidaridad auténtica con las comunidades indígenas y sus derechos a la tierra. En última instancia, he destacado la compleja dualidad de una experiencia híbrida Latine-Indígena, que beneficia y sufre de marcos teóricos de identidad. Mi esperanza es que el futuro de los Estudios latines abarque más conversaciones de crítica interna en asociación con nuestros hermanos nativos en la academia y continúe presionando la actualización de la descolonización más allá de la teoría y la metodología.

[Nota: Este artículo fue traducido por la autora]

⁶⁴ Pitts, Ortega, and Medina, *Theories of the Flesh*, 18.

⁶⁵ Pitts, Ortega, and Medina, *Theories of the Flesh*, 13.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transexual (LGBTQIA+) U.S. Latinx Catholics and the U.S. Catholic Church: A Critique of Certain Aspects of Roman Catholic Moral Teaching in light of a Latinx Theological Anthropology

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• THIS ARTICLE IS ONLY AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH •

Abstract

This paper aims to address certain aspects of Roman Catholic moral teaching that are relevant to the lived experience of LGBTQIA+ Latinx Catholics in the United States. I argue that the Catholic moral doctrine concerning LGBTQIA+ persons is morally corrupt. In the first section, I provide an overview of Catholic teaching relevant to LGBTQIA+ persons by taking up past statements published by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith specifically *Persona Humana* (1975) and the Letter to the Bishops on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons (1986). In the second section, I focus on the lived experience of the Latinx LGBTQIA+ community in the United States to demonstrate the fundamental flaws in the Catholic moral tradition. I place a special emphasis on the Latinx LGBTQIA+ community in Florida as I ground my argument on the tragic attack against LGBTQIA+ people at Pulse Nightclub. I rely on the insights of a social scientific study conducted among LGBTQIA+ youth in Florida to achieve this aim. In the third and final section, I engage with the theological anthropologies of M. Shawn Copeland and Ada María Isasi-Díaz to create a liberative framework from which LGBTQIA+ persons and allies can pick up the pieces of a morally corrupt moral teaching and remedy the harm done to countless persons and families.

Introduction

The Roman Catholic Church and its moral doctrine on sexual orientation, human sexuality, and gender are built on the foundations of scripture and nearly two thousand years of tradition. Over the course of two millennia, Catholic moral thought has been built on interpretations of the philosophical and theological works like Saint Augustine's

Confessions and other writings, as well as Thomas Aquinas' natural law theory as articulated in the *Summa Theologica* and other of his writings. These writings have shaped the way in which the Catholic Church has developed its moral teaching on issues of sex and sexuality. Yet, when it comes to the lives, sexualities, and lived experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, and Queer (LGBTQIA+) persons there is no moral equivalent in the Catholic moral tradition. The LGBTQIA+ community is left without adequate representation in the Catholic tradition's moral doctrine because homosexual acts have been deemed immoral by the ethical and moral frameworks of the Roman Catholic moral tradition. Further there have been few, if any considerations of LGBTQIA+ persons and relations in the theological and moral discernment of the church whereas heterosexual individuals have benefited from a robust theoretical and moral discernment. Instead, the Roman Catholic Tradition has built up a moral doctrine where being LGBTQIA+ has been equated with acting in a way contrary to natural law, order, and the plan God has for humanity.¹ In the language of official Catholic doctrine, it has been described as "intrinsically disordered" and "sinful."²

This paper aims to demonstrate that the Catholic moral tradition has not developed a full understanding of the human person insofar as it has failed to consider the developments in contemporary science regarding the vast spectrum of human sexuality and sexual orientations of non-hetero normative individuals, couples, and families. In effect what I will be arguing is that by refusing to engage contemporary developments in the natural and social sciences, the church is content with having an incomplete and inconsistent moral doctrine. By settling with a moral teaching that is isolated from new insights of the human condition the Catholic tradition has erred in its teaching and has harmed individuals and communities by continuing to uphold a moral teaching that is not only incomplete and incorrect but also deeply morally corrupt.

Throughout this paper I will advance this argument by first, articulating the long-standing teaching of the Roman Catholic Church on sexual morality as it relates to LGBTQIA+ persons by providing an overview of the corpus of foundational theological works. Second, I will provide key insights from contemporary natural and social sciences and juxtapose the findings of these fields with the Catholic moral doctrine. Third, I will draw on the theological anthropologies of Shawn M. Copeland and Ada María Isasi-Díaz. These two theologians do not write from an LGBTQIA+ perspective. Nevertheless, I propose that by creating a parallel between the experiences of women and the experiences of members of LGBTQIA+ communities, their theological proposal can prove valuable in the articulation of a liberative framework from which the LGBTQIA+ communities can pick up the pieces of a corrupt moral teaching, and find a way to have full, conscious, and active participation in the life of the church.

¹ For an overview of the natural law in the Roman Catholic tradition see, International Theological Commission, "In Search of a Universal Ethic: A New Look at the Natural Law" Accessed July 21, 2022. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20090520_legge-naturale_en.html.

² Catholic Church, ed. *Catechism of the Catholic Church: Revised in Accordance with the Official Latin Text Promulgated by Pope John Paul II*. 2nd ed. Vatican City: Washington, DC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana; United States Catholic Conference, 1997, nos. 2357 – 2359.

While this task may seem daunting but necessary to some, to others the project may seem unnecessary. Indeed, there are theologians and others who may believe that because there are parishes and pastoral organizations that minister to LGBTQIA+ persons, a critique on certain aspects of the Catholic moral tradition is not necessary. It is true that parishes and pastoral organizations that minister to the LGBTQIA+ persons do exist and the work they do is truly the sacred work of God. However, they are exceptions to the norm. If one sets foot outside those safe and sacred spaces, one is again ensnared by the harmful reality of a corrupt moral doctrine in Roman Catholic thought. This issue is not just a pastoral dilemma, it is also a theological dilemma that must be addressed. LGBTQIA+ persons, their loved ones, their families, ought to be welcomed in all churches and congregations that call themselves Catholic, not out of so-called tolerance often dubbed as “hate the sin not the sinner” mentality, but welcomed in the way in which Jesus welcomed all who encountered him in good faith. Therefore, while pastoral centers and parishes do form a part of the issue I intend to address here, the purpose of this article is intentionally focused on the theological dimension as I argue that the source of the problem is a corrupt moral teaching in its capacity to exclude and dehumanize members of the LGBTQIA+ communities.

A 2019 analysis of suicides in the LGBTQIA+ community conducted by Bridget H. Lyons, Mikel L. Walters, Shane P.D. Jack, Emiko Petrosky, Janet M. Blair, and Asha Z. Ivey-Stephenson found that LGBTQIA+ persons are twice as likely to consider taking their own life in comparison to their heterosexual peers.³ Their study also found that gay men who commit suicide had been diagnosed with mental health problems, and twice as many gay men were twice as likely to commit suicide after the death of a loved one.⁴ This last detail is particularly striking as it demonstrates that amid grief, the compounding pain and pressure they experience in their daily life, and the loss of someone whom they love, is often too much to handle that suicide is seen as the only recourse they have left.

Suicide attempts and suicide rates are not the only tragedies that disproportionately affect LGBTQIA+ persons compared to their heterosexual peers in other cities in the world. LGBTQIA+ youth are often targeted, attacked, and killed in hate crimes. For example, a 24-year-old gay man in Spain was outside a bar in Galicia. He was facetiming a friend when three men assumed he was recording them, they proceeded to beat him, call him homophobic slurs, and ultimately killed him.⁵ Two months later in Spain, a 20-year-old man was attacked by a group of men. They attacked him with a knife and carved the word “Maricon” (the homophobic slur translates in

³ Bridget H. Lyons, Mikel L. Walters, Shane P.D. Jack, Emiko Petrosky, Janet M. Blair, and Asha Z. Ivey-Stephenson. “Suicides Among Lesbian and Gay Male Individuals: Findings from the National Violent Death Reporting System.” *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 56, no. 4 (April 2019): 512–21. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2018.11.012>, 513 – 515.

⁴ Lyons et. al., “Suicides Among Lesbian and Gay Male Individuals.” 515 – 517.

⁵ Caridad Berme Pinedo and Elisa Lois Marta. “LGBTQ+ Groups Protest across Spain after 24-Year-Old Beaten to Death.” *EL PAÍS English Edition*, July 6, 2021. Accessed June 25, 2023, <https://english.elpais.com/society/2021-07-06/lgbtq-groups-protest-across-spain-after-24-year-old-beaten-to-death.html>.

English to Faggot).⁶ While some may concede that this hate fueled attacks are borne out of ignorance and homophobia, they may still feel that this line of inquiry is not needed. I respond by pointing to the fact that queer spaces are often vilified and attacked violently by people who would rather have LGBTQIA+ people dead than leave them be in their Queer and Sacred spaces. The attack on Pulse Nightclub in Florida is one other example in the USA. While the attack was carried out by a radicalized Islamic fundamentalist, the silence of many faith leaders in the Catholic community in the aftermath of this attack was deafening. Church leaders could not bring themselves to utter a word of sympathy, compassion, or basic respect or to demonstrate solidarity with the LGBTQIA+ community as other Christian faith leaders lamented that “many more had not died.”⁷

I would be remiss if I failed to point out that countless youth are forced into the streets by their parents when they find out that their son, daughter, child is LGBTQIA+. In September of 2014, Jason Welle of the Jesuit Post published a story that provided the narratives of youth who were left homeless by their parents after they came out as LGBTQIA+. Welle’s article cited a 2010 study conducted by the University of San Francisco where ninety percent of parents who kicked their child out of the home after they found out they were part of the LGBTQIA+ community cited their religious belief as the reason for doing so.⁸

This theological inquiry is justified by the countless lives that have been harmed, destroyed, and taken away from our LGBTQIA+ communities. The social, economic, cultural, and political components that compound this issue are all important. However, I firmly believe a critical part of the problems confronted by members of the LGBTQIA+ is the moral teaching of Roman Catholicism. These teachings have influenced the way in which society and family units perceive the members of these communities. This theological inquiry therefore will seek to demonstrate how and why the Catholic moral teaching concerning persons, sex, and human sexualities is harmful and wrong. I now turn to the Magisterium’s longstanding teaching on this subject.

Official Catholic Moral Doctrine

In the revised Catechism of the Catholic Church of 1985, the official teaching of the church, LGBTQIA+ persons are described as “*intrinsically disordered*.” Furthermore, the word used to describe LGBTQIA+ persons in official church documents is “homosexual.”⁹ However, that same document calls on all persons to not discriminate against the “homosexual person.” It also calls on the Church and its

⁶ P. Nagovitch Torres, P. Segura, and C. A. Brascia, V. “Police Investigate Homophobic Assault at Knifepoint in the Center of Madrid.” *EL PAÍS English Edition*, September 7, 2021. <https://english.elpais.com/spain/2021-09-07/police-investigate-homophobic-assault-at-knifepoint-in-the-center-of-madrid.html>.

⁷ Eddie A. Rosa Fuentes, “Pulse and the Closet: Frameworks for an Eschatological Discourse.” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 48, no. 3 (June 16, 2021). <https://currentsjournal.org/index.php/currents/article/view/314>.

⁸ Jason Welle, “The Shame of Religious Families: Homeless LGBT Youth.” *The Jesuit Post*, September 17, 2014. Accessed May 14, 2023. <https://thejesuitpost.org/2014/09/the-shame-of-religious-families-homeless-lgbt-youth/>.

⁹ Catholic Church, ed. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2357 – 2359.

members to approach the person “suffering from these tendencies” to be treated with respect and compassion.¹⁰ The use of the language of “intrinsically disordered” implies that there is something wrong or defective or lacking in the LGBTQIA+ person. The use of the word homosexual erases the vast diversity within the LGBTQIA+ communities and ignores the vast spectrum of human sexualities and sexual orientations. Again, this so-called revised Catechism perpetuates the outdated and harmful understanding of the human person and human sexualities. In this section, I focus on articulating the Catholic Church’s teaching to elucidate why that is.

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has in its history issued two letters addressing the doctrinal aspects germane to LGBTQIA+ persons. These are entitled “*Persona Humana - Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics*”¹¹ and the “*Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*.”¹² These two declarations have articulated the moral teaching of Roman Catholic thought during the pontificates of Paul VI and John Paul II, and they reveal how the teaching of the church has (under)developed over time.

In *Persona Humana*, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith led by Cardinal Franjo Seper as its Prefect opens its statement by acknowledging the “contemporary scientific research” of the time on the topic of sexuality in relation to the “biological, psychological, and spiritual” dimensions.¹³ Yet in the entirety of the letter beyond the opening paragraph, what follows is not an assessment of the developments of the contemporary scientific research of the time. Instead, what follows is an airing of grievances on the moral erosion brought about by the “unbridled exaltation of sex.”¹⁴ The result of unregulated sex has according to this doctrinal declaration led to the confusion of morals, the spread of sexual perversion, and has caused a loss of truth.¹⁵

According to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the rise of sexual immorality and the decaying moral values of society weighs heavily on the conscience of the bishops, and demonstrates the need for a wholesome moral teaching. The congregation notes that a need for wholesome moral teaching and the lack of attention to the voices of the national episcopal conferences led to the writing of this declaration. The Congregation points the accusatory finger to the LGBTQIA+ communities claiming that the moral erosion lies in the destruction of the “essential natural order of man” and the breakdown of the family unit.¹⁶ It is in section eight of the declaration *Persona Humana* where the congregation addresses its LGBTQIA+ concerns directly. There is a

¹⁰ Catholic Church, ed. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2357 – 2359.

¹¹ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “*Persona Humana - Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics*.”

https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19751229_persona-humana_en.html.

¹² Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “*Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*.”

https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19861001_homosexual-persons_en.html.

¹³ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “*Persona Humana*,” no. 1.

¹⁴ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “*Persona Humana*,” no. 1.

¹⁵ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “*Persona Humana*,” no. 2.

¹⁶ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “*Persona Humana*,” nos. 3, 8-9.

criticism of the psychological developments made in relation to whether the LGBTQIA+ person is born that way or if they are socially conditioned into being that way. This point is demonstrated as the congregation writes:

A distinction is drawn, and it seems with some reason, between homosexuals whose tendency comes from a false education, from a lack of normal sexual development, from habit, from bad example, or from other similar causes, and is transitory or at least not incurable; and homosexuals who are definitively such because of some kind of innate instinct or a pathological constitution judged to be incurable.¹⁷

Instead of engaging with contemporary scientific research, the Congregation is content to appeal to their own authority and make the unfounded claim that LGBTQIA+ persons are misled and uneducated on who they are. For them, we are uneducated to understand and know what and how we feel, or that it is a “transitory” thing, a phase we go through. Additionally, the Congregation clearly states that possibly our sexuality and sexual orientation is a result from unnatural development. Once again, we see the harmful, derogatory, dehumanizing aspect of the failed Catholic moral doctrine. In this declaration, written in the year 1975 by the Congregation’s Prefect Cardinal Franjo Seper, the Catholic Church reiterated its longstanding understanding on morality by focusing almost exclusively on the “sexual act”, and in a very limited context in human sexuality, especially the sexual orientation of LGBTQIA+ persons. It is evident in both the body of this declaration and in its foundations – the footnotes – that this document did not at any point address the “contemporary scientific developments.”¹⁸ Instead, the Congregation repeated the same statements of old in a new document with a different name. In its forty-five citations, not once did it cite a scientific study, even a dubious one that would have supported their poor understanding of human sexuality. Instead, there are references to a few documents from the Second Vatican Council. For example, addresses given by previous popes, prior encyclical letters, other ecclesial documents, and scriptural passages in the Gospel of Matthew and Luke and some New Testament Epistles, with an excessive citing of Paul.¹⁹ In the only times the fields of sociology and psychology were engaged in this document, the Congregation refused to acknowledge that the advancements made in those areas could inform the moral teaching of the church by constituting a criteria of objective truths.²⁰

In a more critical and close reading of this declaration, one finds the understanding of LGBTQIA+ persons underwhelming; we are labelled as naïve and uneducated persons that are easily deceived and used as pawns to promote an unnatural and immoral lifestyle.²¹ The dehumanization of LGBTQIA+ people is not only present in the written word but in the context in which this letter was promulgated. Further, theological arguments ought to be based on facts and should be informed by the best of the natural and social sciences. Yet, the hierarchy of the Catholic Church seems to base

¹⁷ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Persona Humana,” nos. 8.

¹⁸ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Persona Humana,” no. 1.

¹⁹ See the footnotes in Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Persona Humana,”

²⁰ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Persona Humana,” no. 9.

²¹ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Persona Humana,” nos. 8-11.

their moral teaching on their own authority without consulting the best of contemporary scientific evidence.

In the “*Letter to the Bishops on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*” written by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith under Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger as its Prefect, reiterated the same teaching concerning LGBTQIA+ persons in *Persona Humana*.²² In the decades that followed the 1975 document, the Catholic Church had once again failed to listen to the scientific advancements of the time, especially the advancements made in the field of psychology, sociology, and biology. First, it opens by acknowledging that human sexuality and sexual orientations are a growing part in the conversations in the pastoral setting.²³ However, the congregation immediately goes on an aggressive approach to the debate on LGBTQIA+ issues and identity as they write:

“Since this debate often advances arguments and makes assertions inconsistent with the teaching of the Catholic Church, it is quite rightly a cause for concern to all engaged in the pastoral ministry, and this Congregation has judged it to be of sufficiently grave and widespread importance to address to the Bishops of the Catholic Church this *Letter on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*.”²⁴

Second, the Congregation ignores the advancements made in scientific research that demonstrates the reality the LGBTQIA+ persons have a natural behavior. Sexual orientations differ from their heterosexual counterparts and the heteronormative behaviors because human sexuality is in fact a broad spectrum rather than a mere binary. The congregation ignored these developments and once again described LGBTQIA+ persons as “*intrinsically disordered*” and again defined LGBTQIA+ persons strictly as “homosexual.”²⁵ Moreover, the Congregation continued to perpetuate the unfounded claim that LGBTQIA+ people “suffer” from this inclination.²⁶ Again, like in *Persona Humana* the congregation laments a decay in the moral foundations of society. The Congregation again cites prior declarations from the Vatican, the statements from pontiffs of old, and some loosely interpreted parts of Scripture. In this document, the same harmful teaching and rhetoric concerning LGBTQIA+ persons are reiterated. LGBTQIA+ persons are again called “*intrinsically disordered*,” and the congregation

²² Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons.” No. 1.

²³ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons.” No. 1.

²⁴ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons.” No. 1.

²⁵ This term “homosexual” is used throughout the entire document. See generally, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons.”

²⁶ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons.” No. 12.

goes as far as to state that LGBTQIA+ persons lack their “indispensable essential finality” because of their human nature.²⁷

Thus, the congregation declares the humanity of the LGBTQIA+ person as deficient. The congregation writes: “As in every moral disorder, homosexual activity prevents one's own fulfillment and happiness by acting contrary to the creative wisdom of God. The Church, in rejecting erroneous opinions regarding homosexuality, does not limit but rather defends personal freedom and dignity realistically and authentically understood.”²⁸ The claim that the humanity of the LGBTQIA+ person is deficient is perhaps the most harmful component in this “Letter to the Bishops.” It stigmatizes an entire group by setting this harmful preaching as a part of the magisterium of the church.

It is evident that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith views LGBTQIA+ persons as a form of subhuman individuals. This declaration creates this stigmatization of LGBTQIA+ persons not only in a theological sense but in a pastoral sense as well. This letter is addressed to the Bishops of the Latin Rite. The erroneous theological errors in this moral doctrine spills over in the parish setting wherein the actual harm to LGBTQIA+ persons takes place. The Congregation asks the bishops:

“to provide pastoral care in full accord with the teaching of the Church for homosexual persons of their dioceses. No authentic pastoral programme will include organizations in which homosexual persons associate with each other without clearly stating that homosexual activity is immoral. A truly pastoral approach will appreciate the need for homosexual persons to avoid the near occasions of sin.”²⁹

In effect this theological error is given a framework to be applied in every Roman Catholic diocese. The congregation states this explicitly as they say: “In a particular way, we would ask the bishops to support, with the means at their disposal, the development of appropriate forms of pastoral care for homosexual persons. These would include the assistance of the psychological, sociological and medical sciences, in full accord with the teaching of the Church.”³⁰ It is worth noting, that in this brief excerpt the Doctrine seems to support some kind of conversion/reparative therapy. Needless to say, the congregation would rather have a moral doctrine that dehumanizes rather than accompany and journey with LGBTQIA+ persons. It fails to admit that possibly the Catholic moral tradition has got it wrong. Indeed, the congregation would rather bar so-called dissenting theologians away from LGBTQIA+ persons in the name of their ideological pursuit for so-called purity. More to the point, as it appears to me, the

²⁷ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons.” No. 3.

²⁸ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons.” No. 7.

²⁹ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons.” No. 17.

³⁰ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons.” No 17.

congregation would rather see programs like the gay conversion therapy “Courage”³¹ propagate everywhere. Meanwhile, organizations like “New Ways Ministries,”³² which has been censured by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, seem not to exist in the eyes of the USCCB and the Holy See. Indeed, the parishes, pastoral centers, and other sacred spaces that allow for an inclusive ecclesial participation for LGBTQIA+ persons are seen by the Congregation as harmful locales that will spread confusion, immorality, and misinformation.³³ This mentality in the United States Catholic Church has caused LGBTQIA+ Catholics great harm. The only officially recognized ministry for LGBTQIA+ persons is the gay conversion therapy group known as “Courage.”³⁴ This organization has since launched a separate program “EnCourage” for family, siblings, and friends of persons who are LGBTQIA+.³⁵

The “Courage” gay conversion therapy organization is run by members who claim that they at one point identified as “homosexual” but after prayer, discernment, and finding the truth—whatever that may mean, they were no longer homosexual.³⁶ This is precisely why the moral doctrine of the church must acknowledge it is incorrect, harmful, and unrepresentative of who or what God is. That is, if being Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, Trans, gender non-conforming, non-binary, etc. is something that can be allegedly prayed away or cured through a radical self-denial.

Insights from Social Scientific Studies

Recent insights and developments in the field of psychology demonstrate that there are compounding factors that adversely impact LGBTQIA+ persons of color. For example, Kevin L. Nadal, Tanya Erazo, Julia Schulman, Heather Han, and Tamara Deutsch demonstrate that ethnic minorities face macroaggressions in relation to their racial demographic and if they are LGBTQIA+.³⁷ They may also suffer compounding microaggressions based on their sexual identity and orientation. It is therefore safe to presume that LGBTQIA+ Latino Catholics face similar compounding stressors that aggravate their own lives as they relate to their cultural, religious, and social

³¹ Courage International, Inc. “EnCourage.” Accessed May 25, 2022. <https://couragerc.org/encourage/>.

³² Since 1984 the Catholic Bishops of the United States have condemned inclusive ministries to the LGBTQIA+ communities. In 2010, then Cardinal Francis George of Chicago reiterated the longstanding condemnation of New Ways Ministries. See “USCCB President Clarifies Status of New Ways Ministry | USCCB.” Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://www.usccb.org/news/2010/usccb-president-clarifies-status-new-ways-ministry>.

³³ By so-called truth, I mean that it holds no truth. It is just another ideology that has been accepted as true and unchanging. It is nothing more than a false idol that has contributed to the deaths of many LGBTQIA+ persons.

³⁴ The official website of the USCCB provides a direct link to the “Courage” gay conversion therapy program under the page dedicated to church teaching on “Homosexuality.” More troubling is that the link itself is placed under the category of pastoral care. See “Homosexuality | USCCB.” Accessed August 1, 2022. <https://www.usccb.org/committees/laity-marriage-family-life-youth/homosexuality>.

³⁵ See generally, Courage International, Inc. “EnCourage.” Accessed May 25, 2022. <https://couragerc.org/encourage/>.

³⁶ See generally, Courage International, Inc. “Courage.” Accessed May 25, 2022. <https://couragerc.org/>.

³⁷ Kevin L. Nadal, Tanya Erazo, Julia Schulman, Heather Han, and Tamara Deutsch “Caught at the Intersections: Microaggressions toward Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer People of Color,” in *LGBT+ Psychology and Mental Health: Emerging Research and Advances*, edited by Richard Ruth, and Erik Santacruz (Santa Barbara: PRAGER, 2017), 137-148.

circumstances. Indeed, the macroaggression for LGBTQIA+ Latin would be their sexual identity and the compounding aggravating microaggression would be their ethnic background and Catholic identity. Indeed, for many LGBTQIA+ Latino Catholics, their various identities are called into question because of their sexual identity and orientation. Many Latinx LGBTQIA+ Catholics are not considered authentically Latino and may even have their masculinity called into question by their families, friends, and social groups. In addition to this LGBTQIA+ Latinx Catholics have their Catholic identity and belonging in the Roman Catholic Church called into question to the point of facing outright hostility from fellow Roman Catholics.

The contempt with which many LGBTQIA+ Latino Catholics are received with and the outright hostility they are confronted with has led many away from the Roman Catholic Church and has pushed a significant portion of LGBTQIA+ Latinx Catholics into other harmful arenas. According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), LGBTQIA+ persons in general are considered being in a “group engaged in risky behaviors” which range from sexual promiscuity and the use of alcohol and schedule 1 drugs.³⁸ While the behaviors that some members of the LGBTQIA+ community engage in are dangerous and detrimental to the integrity of their bodies, I want to focus the attention on the root causes of these behaviors. I argue that these behaviors are responses to the rejection and desolation many LGBTQIA+ folks experience. Now, let me be equally clear, in no way am I arguing that the use of alcohol and schedule 1 drugs are a legitimate response to relieve the pain and suffering that many in the community experience. I am simply making the point that there is a correlation between the rejection and pain that LGBTQIA+ persons experience from their social, ethnic, and religious groups and the risky behaviors that they are led to engage in.

According to Karina Gattamorta and Narciso Quidley-Rodríguez, seventy-five percent of the participants in their study identified as Catholic.³⁹ Moreover, their study identified three cultural factors within the Hispanic (Latino) community that keep LGBTQIA+ Latinx persons in the closet and force them to self-censor their lives. Gattamorta and Quidley-Rodríguez identify concepts like *familism* and *machismo* as key cultural attitudes that shape and govern the ways in which Latinos and their families navigate their identity as LGBTQIA+ persons and as family related to an LGBTQIA+ son, daughter, brother, or sister.⁴⁰ In their study, they define *familism* as the attitude and approach of placing the best interest of the family over the individual person.⁴¹ This of course means that the LGBTQIA+ Latino is more likely to self-censor their life and stay in the closet instead of coming out. As Gattamorta and Quidley-Rodríguez note, for many LGBTQIA+ Latinos, coming out to their families about their sexual identity is

³⁸ Warren JC Smalley KB, Barefoot KN, “Differences in health risk behaviors across understudied LGBT subgroups,” *Health Psychol* 2016 Feb;35(2):103-14. doi:10.1037/hea000231. Epub 2015 Aug 10. PMID: 26375040.

³⁹ Karina Gattamorta and Narciso Quidley-Rodríguez, “Coming Out Experiences of Hispanic Sexual Minority Young Adults in South Florida,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 65, no. 6 (May 12, 2018): 741–65, doi:10.1080/00918369.2017.1364111, 1 – 7.

⁴⁰ Gattamorta and Quidley-Rodríguez, “Coming Out Experiences of Hispanic Sexual Minority Young Adults in South Florida,” 13 – 16.

⁴¹ Gattamorta and Quidley-Rodríguez, “Coming Out Experiences of Hispanic Sexual Minority Young Adults in South Florida,” 3, 14 – 16.

seen as an offense to the family name and is seen as bringing shame to the family in the broader communities like their church and social groups.⁴²

In their study that governs the gendered expectations of how men should act and be perceived as by family, the community, and their social groups, Gattamorta and Quidley-Rodríguez define *machismo* as a cultural component prevalent in the Hispanic/Latino communities.⁴³ They highlight the fact that *machismo* and the *machista* attitude prevalent in the Hispanic/Latino community is linked to harsh and unfounded judgmental attitudes towards LGBTQIA+ persons. They also argue that these attitudes are also linked to “internalized homophobia” and other psycho-social ailments that include suicidal tendencies.⁴⁴

Coupled together, *machismo* and *familism* create a harmful cultural stressor which aggravates the lived reality of LGBTQIA+ Latinos. On one hand, LGBTQIA+ Latinos are forced to make an impossible choice between being who they are, how they were born, and ultimately how God made them or choose to be conditionally loved by their family, friends, social and faith community. In choosing to be conditionally loved by their various social groups and families, LGBTQIA+ Latinos make the difficult decision to live in the closet and engage in the harmful and unnecessary practice of self-censorship to satisfy cultural expectations that seep into the religious beliefs and values held by many Latinx parents and community members.

Gattamorta and Quidley-Rodríguez found that of those LGBTQIA+ Latinos that did “come out” to their relatives, friends, and other social groups, the ways in which they come out of the closet vary. For some, their coming out experience was stating that they identified as LGBTQIA+. For others, their coming out experience was less direct as they may have not explicitly acknowledged their identity and orientation but rather implicitly. That is, their coming out experience was more discreet as it could be an action like inviting LGBTQIA+ friend(s) or a same-sex plus one to a family gathering. Still for others it may simply mean living a discreet–closeted double life. In this situation one may have a partner but will not explicitly acknowledge their partner with the label of “boyfriend,” “novio,” “girlfriend,” or “novia.”⁴⁵ To some this may seem like a livable compromise but like Gattamorta and Quidley-Rodríguez point out, it serves only as a faux toleration because familism and *machismo* still govern the way in which the LGBTQIA+ Latinx person lives their life.⁴⁶

For those Latinx persons that do come out publicly, the odds of being fully accepted and loved by their families, friends, and others depends in part on the level of progressivism. In other words, each LGBTQIA+ Latinx may face a different response or

⁴² Gattamorta and Quidley-Rodríguez, “Coming Out Experiences of Hispanic Sexual Minority Young Adults in South Florida,” 3, 13 - 15, 17.

⁴³ Gattamorta and Quidley-Rodríguez, “Coming Out Experiences of Hispanic Sexual Minority Young Adults in South Florida,” 13 - 15.

⁴⁴ Gattamorta and Quidley-Rodríguez, “Coming Out Experiences of Hispanic Sexual Minority Young Adults in South Florida,” 3, 13 - 15.

⁴⁵ Gattamorta and Quidley-Rodríguez, “Coming Out Experiences of Hispanic Sexual Minority Young Adults in South Florida,” 7 - 15.

⁴⁶ Gattamorta and Quidley-Rodríguez, “Coming Out Experiences of Hispanic Sexual Minority Young Adults in South Florida,” 7 - 15.

level of acceptance as it is dependent on the openness of each family unit. Gattamorta and Quidley-Rodríguez note that some of the participants in their study reported being kicked out of their homes by their parents. Others reported losing friends after they came out to them. Indeed, as Gattamorta and Quidley-Rodríguez note, in the United States twenty to forty percent of homeless youth are LGBTQIA+ who were kicked out of their homes by parents or caretakers.⁴⁷

The Liberative Anthropologies of M. Shawn Copeland and Ada María Isasi-Díaz

The field of Latinx Theology in the United States has discussed themes like “lo cotidiano” or popular religious images and devotions. Few Latinx theologians, however, write about the plights of Latinas and their resilience in the face of social and systemic injustices. Latinas face cultural challenges to behave in a certain “feminine” way, and if they stray from these sociocultural expectations, they often face criticism from within their communities and families. In consideration of these hard truths, the late Ada María Isasi-Díaz constructed a theological anthropology that includes the lived reality and experience of Latinas in the United States.

In her book *Mujerista Theology*, Isasi-Díaz argued that in many ways mujerista theological anthropology is built around the notions of “La Lucha”, “Permitanme Hablar”, and “La Comunidad/La Familia.”⁴⁸ Isasi-Díaz is also quick to note that these three categories do not constitute the entirety of mujerista theological anthropology but rather, they encompass that which she has observed in conversation with Latina women and their lived realities. I am utilizing the insights of Isasi-Díaz for the same reasons for which I use Copeland, namely, to draw a parallel between the struggle and resilience of Latina women and the LGBTQIA+ community. This becomes apparent when the themes of “La Lucha,” “La Familia/La Comunidad,” and “Permitanme Hablar” are discussed within the LGBTQIA+ community.

For Isasi-Díaz “La Lucha” is the Latina’s “ability to deal with suffering without being determined by it.”⁴⁹ In other words, she notes, although social and systemic structures exist and do wrongly oppress and marginalize Latinas in American society and in the American church, Latinas do not give in or give up in the face of these injustices. Instead, Isasi-Díaz contends, “La Lucha” is central to Latina’s self – understanding. For her, Latinas understand that suffering may be a part of their lived experience, but it is not in any way their purpose or destiny. Indeed, Isasi-Díaz herself questions such beliefs; to her, “the insistence on the value of suffering for Christians and its placement as a central element of the Christian message is questionable.”⁵⁰ She bases this claim on the notion that the narrative of “suffering as necessary” is a tool that can lead to the oppression of some by those who are in power. She goes on to argue that the lived experience of Latinas demonstrates that suffering is not their purpose or

⁴⁷ Karina Gattamorta and Narciso Quidley-Rodríguez, “Coming Out Experiences of Hispanic Sexual Minority Young Adults in South Florida,” 16.

⁴⁸ Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century* (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1996), 132 – 136.

⁴⁹ Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology*, 129.

⁵⁰ Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology*, 129.

destiny. In fact, fiestas demonstrate Latina women's resilience. According to Isasi-Díaz, fiestas are the ways through which Latinas encourage, share, and are present to themselves and others who are facing adverse situations.

The second concept on which Isasi-Díaz's *mujerista* anthropology is based is that of "Permitanme Hablar." She defines this concept as the "insistence to denounce the erasure of Latina women from the histories of communities, countries of origin, and in the United States."⁵¹ Indeed, Isasi-Díaz argues that Latinas are "not absent from history" instead they have been ignored. The concept of "Permitanme Hablar" is therefore the act of claiming one's moral status in society at large. In so doing, Latinas are both "making known their past" and "participating in making present" their current history.⁵² Latinas are claiming their rightful place in the church and society because they are in this way active co-creators of their destinies. As Isasi-Díaz puts it, Latinas are often spoken to, about, or given symbolic yet empty gestures to make them feel as if they are a part of the discussion without actually being given a seat at the table.⁵³ We see, then, that *Permitanme Hablar* empowers Latinas to boldly claim their moral status in society and to actively participate in the creation of their present and future.

The third hinge in Isasi-Díaz's *mujerista* anthropology is the notion of *La Familia* or *La Comunidad*. She distinguishes these two as she defines *La Familia* as the "central and most important institution in life."⁵⁴ *La Familia*, for Isasi-Díaz, is central regardless of one's experience (positive or negative) with their family.⁵⁵ At the same time, she also argues that *La Comunidad* relies on interdependence. The whole cannot function coherently if one of its members is not included. Additionally, for Isasi-Díaz both *La Familia* and *La Comunidad* do not need to adhere to social or cultural conventions of the "patriarchal family structure" or emphasize the need for gendered norms and expectations.⁵⁶ The challenge that Isasi-Díaz's vision of *La Familia* and *La Comunidad* is critical as it upends the long-standing *machista* attitude prevalent in many Latinx families and communities. By challenging the patriarchy and gender-based norms, *La Familia* and *La Comunidad*, as envisioned by Ada María Isasi-Díaz, become a more inclusive and flexible people group that serves to provide support to all of its members regardless of who they are.

I move now to consider the work of Shawn Copeland. In her *Enfleshing Freedom*, Copeland proposes the idea that all human beings share a "distinct capacity" to share life in God.⁵⁷ This is based on the notion of the *Imago Dei* as it creates a separation between human beings and all other creatures. Thus, humanity can boast that it is the only aspect of God's creation that shares God's image and likeness and therefore has the distinct capacity for communion with God. Moreover, the *Imago Dei* and the "distinct capacity for communion with God" seems to imply that the human being has also the

⁵¹ Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology*, 132.

⁵² Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology*, 133.

⁵³ Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology*, 137.

⁵⁴ Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology*, 133 – 136.

⁵⁵ Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology*, 137.

⁵⁶ Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology*, 138.

⁵⁷ Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009).

capacity and perhaps moral obligation to be and share “in communion with other living beings.”⁵⁸ This last part, the obligation to be and live in communion with other living beings, Copeland argues, has been denied to black lives, specifically the lives and bodies of black women.⁵⁹ The first example is the story of the black women held in slavery who were physically abused, raped, used as breeders, and treated as less than human. The slave owners and those who participated in these atrocities sinned against God and these women and their bodies. They failed to see the image of God in these women, they failed to be in communion with their fellow human beings and ignored their place in God’s creation. They ignored the reality that those women and their bodies also belong in that same “unique place” in God’s creation.⁶⁰

Additionally, the *humanum* is a key concept in Copeland’s theological anthropology as it connects the notions of sin and grace to the God-Person relationship and Person-Person relationships. Copeland grounds the concept of the *Humanum* in the incarnation event and argues that it has six principles that define what it means to be a human person: First, that a person is a person because the person is a “creature made by God.”⁶¹ Second, that a person is always a “person in community, living in flexible, resilient, [and] just relationships with others.”⁶² Third, that a person is “an incarnate spirit” in terms of “race, gender, sex and sexuality, and culture.”⁶³ Fourth, that a person is called to “working out essential freedom through personal responsibility in time and space.”⁶⁴ Fifth, that a person is required to be a “social being” with God and with fellow persons. And sixth, that a person is called to live in the existential tension that is a part of life and the struggles of life.

The concept of the *humanum* connects the initial constructive approach on which Copeland bases her theological anthropology. Earlier in this paper, I articulated Copeland’s definition of theological anthropology as the attempt to “understand the meaning and purpose of existence within the context of divine revelation.” Her theological anthropology is then based and grounded on the notion that each person is made in the image and likeness of God and shares a “distinct capacity” for communion with God. Additionally, she believes humanity holds a “unique place” in creation and that this “unique place” enables us and even requires us to be in communion with other living beings. It becomes evident that Copeland’s theological anthropology flows from below rather than from above. Humans, therefore, experience themselves and God in a real and physical manner that does not detach from their bodies and present realities. The point of departure for Copeland is, then, the physical body in relation to the metaphysical God.

As I see it, Isasi-Diaz’s notions of La Lucha, Permitanme Hablar, and La Familia/La Comunidad are congruent with Copeland’s six principles of the *humanum*. Principles four, five, and six are consistent with the themes of La Lucha. They call for the

⁵⁸ Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 24.

⁵⁹ Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 24.

⁶⁰ Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 29 – 38.

⁶¹ Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 92.

⁶² Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 92.

⁶³ Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 92.

⁶⁴ Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 92.

person to actively claim themselves, their space in their communities, and reclaim control over their lives and destiny. As Isasi-Díaz pointed out, La Lucha demands that suffering not define who Latinas are. This idea coincides with the content of the sixth principle of the *humanum*, that exhorts one to live in the tension that exists and is a part of the struggles of life.⁶⁵ La Lucha and living in the tension of life's struggles both demands of the person and people group a commitment to perseverance and resilience. We can see how these distinct theological anthropologies pair well in how Isasi-Díaz's notion of Permitanme Hablar corresponds with Copeland's principles one, two, and three. Isasi-Díaz notes that Permitanme Hablar is about claiming one's rightful place in the history-telling and history-making processes of their lived reality.⁶⁶ Principle one of the *humanum* echoes this idea by bringing forth the reality that all peoples are created by God and fashioned in God's image. This principle reminds us that each person is endowed by God with a moral worth and is given a space in the church and society. Indeed, we see this when one seeks to speak up for themselves and their community to claim their place at the table in the church and society. Permitanme Hablar implicitly embraces the theme in principle one, as the individual is empowered to speak up by their God-given dignity. Moreover, the second principle is also present in the concept of Permitanme Hablar, as the person and people group are called to live in and be in communion with one another. Permitanme Hablar calls for persons and people groups to be in communion with one another in such a way that it makes any act of exclusion unacceptable. In this manner, when one speaks on their own behalf or on behalf of an entire group, a sense of communion emerges. That is to say, that the bond of communion is formed between an individual and a group or between people groups when solidarity is built by acts of advocacy and compassion.

Lastly, the notion of La Familia/La Comunidad connects with the fifth principle of the *humanum*. As I mentioned, for Isasi-Díaz La Familia/La Comunidad is an integral part of Latinx culture. Meanwhile, the fifth principle of the *humanum* in Copeland's articulation is always to remain connected to the broader community and social groups.⁶⁷ In this way, both notions found in the theological anthropologies of Copeland and Isasi-Díaz correspond with each other. These theological anthropologies—hailing from the perspectives of Mujerista and African American theologies and informed by the lived reality of Latina women and Black women's bodies—demonstrate that community and family units are critical components that have a real and present effect on how individuals and groups are included or marginalized in a community or society.

Coupled together, the insights of the theological anthropologies of M. Shawn Copeland and Ada María Isasi-Díaz provide the LGBTQIA+ Latino communities with helpful and practical theological grounding. For many LGBTQIA+ Latinos simply being who they are is simply not possible because of social, cultural, and religious factors. As mentioned in the first section of this paper, the study by Gattamorta and Quidley-Rodríguez showed that demonstrated that LGBTQIA+ Latinos in Florida confront social and cultural factors that aggravate their lived reality which include concepts like

⁶⁵ Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology*, 132 – 136.

⁶⁶ Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology*, 132 – 136.

⁶⁷ Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology*, 137 – 143; Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 92.

familism and machismo. One may object that familism is a traditional and patriarchal interpretation of Ada María Isasi-Díaz's notion of La Familia/La Comunidad. Certainly, familism considers the needs of the family group and broader society as more important than the needs and reality of the individual. But as Gattamorta and Quidley-Rodríguez note, many Latinx families and communities will willingly and unwillingly force their LGBTQIA+ loved ones to choose between living out who they are in a public manner or being shunned out of fear of what others in the family and community will say or think. Others may force their LGBTQIA+ loved ones to choose an alternative that is in many ways worse than the first. The choice would be for LGBTQIA+ loved ones to continue to “live in the closet” and self-censor all aspects of their life, so they can avoid talking about it and avoid the judgment of their family and social group.

For these reasons, the theological anthropologies of M. Shawn Copeland and Ada María Isasi-Díaz provide a framework for the inclusion of LGBTQIA+ Latinos in the United States. These distinct and very different theological anthropologies can serve to articulate the lived experiences of communities that are marginalized, maligned, and mocked by many in the Church and society. Here in the United States, we have a similar trend. The attack on Pulse Night Club in Florida is a tragic example of this reality. The victims of the attack were largely Latinx.⁶⁸ The response of the Christian community in Florida left a painful reminder of how bigoted and hateful Christians can be. One pastor lamented that the attacker did not kill more of the LGBTQIA+ persons.⁶⁹ The response by Catholic faith leaders to the attack itself or certain responses of their colleagues in faith service was equally deafening. In my view, the silence, the deafening silence of Catholic leaders—those ordained and those in lay ministries—is a sign of contempt for the LGBTQIA+ community and a failure for Catholic moral teaching to see LGBTQIA+ Latinx Catholics as fully human beings.

Conclusion

In the overview provided of both Copeland's and Isasi-Díaz's theological anthropologies, I set the foundations to demonstrate the relevant lessons their insights have for the LGBTQIA+ Latinx Catholics in the United States. Copeland's six principles of the *humanum* invite us to consider the physical body and the more abstract and often elusive social body. For her part, Isasi-Díaz notions of La Lucha, Permitanme Hablar, and La Familia/Comunidad offer critical language for the LGBTQIA+ communities to chart a roadmap of their own for fruitful engagement with the U.S. Catholic Church. The theological anthropological proposal of these two scholars offer to us useful tools for LGBTQIA+ Latinx to rethink their own engagement of the Catholic tradition.

⁶⁸ Fuentes, “Pulse and the Closet: Frameworks for an Eschatological Discourse.”

⁶⁹ Fuentes, “Pulse and the Closet: Frameworks for an Eschatological Discourse.”