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Los Angeles

Proyecto Jardín Community Garden:

Traditional Medicine and Health Among Latinx in Boyle Heights

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in

Culture and Performance

by

Claudia Hernández Romero

2019

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Proyecto Jardín Community Garden:

Traditional Medicine and Health Among Latinxs in Boyle Heights

by

Claudia Hernández Romero

Doctor of Philosophy in Culture and Performance

University of California, Los Angeles, 2019

Professor Allen Fraleigh Roberts, Co-Chair

Professor Vickie M. Mays, Co-Chair

The National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH) reports that Latinx continue to rely on folk or traditional medicine, but the information is not conclusive and medical researchers still call for studies that identify medicinal practices people rely on as well as the beliefs or explanatory systems that guide their choices. This area of concern reflects a need for studies that provide insight into people's reasons for choosing traditional medicine. In 2003 I collaborated with Dr. Robert Krochmal to develop a medicinal garden on the site of Proyecto Jardín community garden.

My dissertation takes an ethnographic approach to the documentation of the process of making the medicinal garden, the selection of design elements and herbal remedy workshops that were held after the completion of the medical garden. I rely on personal observations as well as conversations with gardeners who provided me insight into their health experiences and reasons why they choose herbal remedies. I argue that Latinxs at Proyecto Jardín show a preference for herbal modalities not simply as alternatives to primary care in the face of a prejudiced and inaccessible medical system, but also to determine self-reliance and/or to recuperate medicinal traditions and rituals perceived lost through the process of colonization and migration.

Although my study is based on the experiences of a select few participants involved with Proyecto Jardín Community Garden, it provides a glimpse of the complexity involved in defining the role of traditional medicine among Latinxs. Culture plays a role in determining which modalities a person might choose, but as my research shows, socio-economic factors and politics of identity do too. Moreover, the community garden also influences choice as well as serves as a type of informal health education setting where people can grow medicinal herbs and well as exchange remedies and recipes with other gardeners. The research of community gardens has increased, however, studies on ways people organize activities and educational projects to address health are minimal. This dissertation highlights the importance of further research into these areas if we are to consider the ways community gardens serve as sites of health and healing.

The dissertation of Claudia Hernández Romero is approved.

Patrick Polk

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2019

To my mother who has always believed in me.

Gracias. Te quiero mucho.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract …………………………………………………………………………………...ii

Table of Contents …………………………………………………………….…..vi

Acknowledgements ……………………………………………………………...…....vii

Vita ………………………………………………………………………………….ix

CHAPTER 1…..……………………………………………………………………...1

Introduction: Traditional Medicine in the Latinx Community of Los Angeles

CHAPTER 2 ………………………………………………………………………….34

Health and Community Gardens in the U.S.

CHAPTER 3 ………………………………………………………………………….67

Proyecto Jardín Case Study: Part I

CHAPTER 4 ……………………………………………………………………...116

Proyecto Jardín Case Study: Part II

CHAPTER 5……………………...…………………………………………………….156

Conclusion: Traditional Medicine in the Garden

REFERENCES………………………………………………………………………161

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Traditional Medicine in the Latinx Community of Los Angeles

This dissertation is an ethnographic account of the role of traditional medicine among Latinxs in a community garden in Boyle Heights. The study was based primarily on participant-observation of the steps taken to create a medicinal garden to serve the neighborhood. This chapter provides background to the study, states the problem of the study, discusses the significance, addresses terminology and methodology, describes the community and lastly reflects on limitations and the relevance of this study.

Background

Latinx traditional medicine, also known as Latinx folk medicine, has occupied the interest of American researchers in multiple fields (Sociology, Folklore, Anthropology and Medical Research) since the late 1800s.[1] The focus has largely been ethnographic with attention to documentation of beliefs and practices that characterize a specifically Latinx traditional medical system.[2] The emphasis on the role of culture in defining health has served to establish an

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[1] The term Latinx emerged began appearing in Queer circles as early as 2011. It reflects a challenge to gender binaries and patriarchy. I discuss my use of the term in detail in subsequent sections.

[2] In medical literature, folk or traditional medical systems are "often defined as containing the following characteristics: primarily oral transmission of knowledge coupled with unofficial status; health as harmony or balance; interrelation of body, mind, spirit; vitalism; magical or supernatural elements; thoughts and emotions as etiologic factors; concern with underlying causes; positive/negative energies; transference of energies; moral tone; and meaning of illness experience" (Holliday 2008, 400). However, various lay practitioners (e.g., Santeros, Curanderos and Espiritistas) I interviewed in Los Angeles, do not generally regard what they do as folk medicine, but rather as traditional, Indigenous or sacred. Among the explanations given for this choice in terminology is that a) it was knowledge passed down to them and thus becoming customary or traditional to them, b) it gives them a sense of continuity with applications associated with their home countries and/or with their ancestors (i.e., Aztec, Mayan or other Mesoamerican Indigenous group). In turn, I use the term traditional to refer to the lay practices of people I interacted with and interviewed at Proyecto Jardín.

educational platform for biomedical doctors who have a growing concern with the safety and efficacy of plant-based medicine and/or with potential contraindications with over-the-counter and prescribed medications. Additionally, the understanding of the home-based, plant remedies that Latinxs use has helped inform culturally competent care at the doctor-patient level.[3]

However, there are now different conversations regarding Latinx traditional medicine in health care. The first is the question of whether Latinxs still rely on traditional medicine. The National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH) reports that Latinxs continue to rely on folk or traditional medicine, but the 2007 and 2012 National Health Interview Surveys (NHI) find a decline in the use of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) among Latinxs; this apparent contradiction suggests the need for further research. The second concern raises questions regarding the role of culture in which traditional medicine and foodways play central roles. Recent studies report that despite social and economic barriers such as low income, minimal education, and lack of access to health care, Latinxs "as a group generally experience better mental and physical health with greater life expectancy than non-Hispanic Whites, an epidemiological phenomenon commonly referred to as the Hispanic or Latino health paradox" (Ruiz, Campos and Garcia 2016, 61).

The Latinx health paradox reflects a life expectancy advantage in the face of some diseases, in particular for those of advanced age and among the foreign-born. These advantages "appear to erode with increasing acculturation or duration of U.S. residence" (Ruiz, Campos and Garcia 2016, 62). Given the attention placed on the Latinx health paradox, some researchers

---

[3] According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "*cultural competence* is 'a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals that enables effective work in cross-cultural situations' (Definitions 2014). In practice, cultural competence implies that health care providers should have knowledge of their patients' beliefs, values and attitudes regarding health and wellbeing (Constantinou et. al., 2017; Kessler 2015). Mexicans and Latinxs have been found to use both traditional medicine and biomedicine sometimes combining the two (Padilla et. al., 2007). Therefore, it has been particularly useful to doctors to become educated on Latinx traditional medicine in order to provide patients with the best care possible.

have begun to question whether it can explain the growing rates of obesity among Latinxs. While there are studies linking the Latinx health paradox and obesity, findings are inconsistent, in some cases showing that acculturation plays a greater role than lifestyle choice and in other cases they do not reflect connections (Ai, Appel and Lee, 2018).

What the CAM studies and the Latinx health paradox do is highlight a need for studies that problematize common lines of inquiry that guide research studies. Moreover, CAM studies emphasize the importance of going beyond mere documentation of beliefs and practices and instead support research that seeks to identify points of interplay between culture and social barriers. In turn, researchers recommend the application of ethnographic approaches to the development of qualitative studies that can be used to construct fuller views of "health seeking experiences" that reflect how Latinxs construct "their own world of healthcare utilization" (Ransford, Carrillo, Rivera 2010, 865). This approach not only serves the medical profession in advancing culturally sensitive health care efforts, but more importantly, it also has what I consider, the power to inform policies that can create greater access to healthcare for immigrant and native-born Latinxs.

Problem for Research

My interest in learning whether Latinxs maintained adherence to traditional medical practices along with trying to understand how this adherence fits into their health-seeking experiences led me to carry out research at Proyecto Jardín Community Garden in Boyle Heights from 2003 to 2008. My study involved collaborating with founding members and gardeners to apply for a grant that would enable the development of a medicinal garden. What my work revealed was that both immigrant and native-born Latinxs do indeed continue to use traditional

medicine, but that the interplay between culture and social barriers has redefined: (1) what plants and remedies are considered part of the traditional medicine cabinet; (2) how plant-based remedies are learned and passed down; and, (3) the reasons for using specifically Latinx traditional medicine.

My interviews with garden members at Proyecto Jardín taught me that health choice is much more nuanced than what is generally reflected in the literature.[4] While some studies have found that acculturation and education can influence the degree to which Latinxs will use traditional medicine, they are not in agreement whether this is due to cultural preference or "cultural distrust of conventional, non-natural medicine"—I do not see these reasons as mutually dependent (Malika, Desai and Belliard 2014; Livingston et. al., 2012). Moreover, studies have yet to consider the influence that socio-political concerns have in influencing Latinxs preference for traditional medicine. As I learned at Proyecto Jardín, traditional medicine plays a role in determining self-reliance as well as decolonization of Self, land and community. If community gardens are to serve as resources through which to address health or other social concerns, it is imperative that particular ways in which these places are organized be documented so that concerned parties can better prepare for the issues that arise as well as to identify the social circumstances in which they may occur.

Significance of Study

Proyecto Jardín is important, not simply because it serves as a community resource where people can garden, escape from everyday stresses, and relax, but more importantly, because it is

[4] Fortier et. al.,'s Attitudes Toward and Use of Complementary and Alternative Medicine Among Hispanic and White Mothers (2014) is among the exceptions. The authors problematize ideas of Latinx as a collective whole by noting differences in adherence to traditional medicine between people in Mexico and the United States as well as between "various Hispanic groups" in the United States (14).

a rare example of a community garden proposed with an integrative medicine perspective as intervention for health. More specifically, this garden was characterized by one physician's involvement in turning hospital owned land into a community resource for the neighborhood. This foreshadowed the interest in hospital gardens—though typically the latter are not public in that anyone can visit and they also prioritize landscape design to encourage calmness and stress relief as opposed to growing vegetables to address nutrition or food insecurity in the neighborhood. As such, a description and analysis of who formed the garden and why, provides valuable insights into ways its founders and members negotiated values, beliefs, and cultural practices to develop health-promotion events and workshops for the surrounding community. My work will show, not how biomedical and traditional medicine are different, or how they are similar—I have no interest in demarcating the boundaries between these modalities, lay vs. expert or official vs. unofficial—but rather, the extent to which they are intertwined.

My interest is in showing the ways medical knowledge is produced, circulated, and received, and also ways in which lay persons or non-specialists are active participants in the production of medical knowledge. My hope is that biomedical practitioners will recognize the need to determine more holistic definitions of health and medical systems in order to delineate more respectful means of interacting with patients and would-be patients. As Bonnie Blair O'Connor explains, "it is becoming clear that patients often assess their own situations and make important decisions about their care on the basis of their own priorities and beliefs, and on the authority of their own experience" and this, along with the recognition that traditional medical practices are valuable sources that offer something biomedicine does not, "suggest that conventional health professionals would do well to be aware of parallel healing traditions and to

develop ways to interact with them in providing patient care" (Connor 1995, 77).[5]

While I give attention to Proyecto Jardín Community Garden as a whole—its beginnings, its founders and earliest events and funding—my focus is primarily on the medicinal garden. My understanding of the central role that Latinx traditional medicine played in the development of this garden and accompanying events is guided by theories and concerns that have shaped the scholarship on folk medicine. Of the various disciplines that have contributed to current understanding of the latter, Latina and Chicana Feminist Theories, Applied Folklore, Space and Place Theories and Medical Anthropology provide the foundational framework that I draw upon to make sense of observations and experiences. As an interdisciplinary scholar, I have learned to pull from one field and another to define a clear understanding of the subjects with which I am concerned. The section that follows provides discussion of my choices in terminology as well as the theoretical perspectives that guide me.

Terminology & Theoretical Approaches

Latinx is About More than Inclusion

My use of the term Latinx traditional medicine requires some explanation. To begin, the term Latinx is "new" and it has yet to be taken up by medical researchers. The terms in vogue are Hispanic, and variations of Latino (e.g., Latina, Latin@, Latino/a, Latina/o); these are used by researchers in the humanities, social sciences, in medical research fields as well as in clinical practice and public health. These terms persist as David-Hayes Batista shows in *La Nueva California: Latinos in the Golden State* (2005), because they are rooted in long standing political and geographic relations between the U.S. and Latin America.

Considerations as to which terms to use require reflection on this historical connection,

[5] For more on patient preference in healthcare (Delaney 2018; Epstein and Street 2011; Rosas et. al., 2018).

further conversations and debates occurring in social spaces are necessary to determining which terms to use. The question for me has been whether to adopt an operational term as Fernando M. Treviño proposed in his call for the use of Hispanic as a standardized term in public health or to use a term that is more socially respected.[6] In social discourse, the term Hispanic was rejected on the basis of its Nixon era origins that reflected attempt from government to classify people on the basis of their ties to Spanish ancestry (See Hayes-Bautista 2005; Hayes-Bautista and Chapa, 1987). On the heels of the Civil Rights movement of the 50s and 60s, nationalist parties influenced the development of counter-culture perspectives that deconstructed terminology as it was applied to marginalized communities and their identities.

In Los Angeles some people of Mexican-American descent adopted the term Chicano to define themselves. This term was chosen to encompass the political nature of identity formation. Chicano was originally a derisive term that was turned upside-down and given new meaning. To claim Chicano in the 70s and 80s meant that one identified with their indigenous roots as opposed to their European ancestry. To be Chicano was to also claim mestizaje as theorized by the late Gloria Anzaldúa in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (2012) a seminal book that rewrites history from a Queer and female perspective. Anzaldúa makes space for a position along the border not in a subjective way, but rather an empowered manner. To live in the border is to recognize subjectivity, but also empowerment that comes from owning the identity that is forged in the place of the in-between.

For me it is important to recognize that Chicana Feminism was born at the center of struggle, out in the field where one is confronted with issues and the necessity to respond

[6] Treviños's exploration of terminology reflects a 1987 call from the *American Journal of Public Health* to define the best approach to addressing the collective Latinx. His "Standardized Terminology for Hispanic Populations" (1987) is in conversation with the proposal by David Hayes-Bautista and Jorge Chapa who propose the standardization of the term Latino on the basis that it is the preferred term. Hayes-Bautista and Chapa's conversation is documented in "Latino Terminology: Conceptual Bases for Standardized Terminology" (1987).

effectively and immediately because it resonates with my personal experience and consequently influences my interest in creating work that can be read easily and that is not simply about thought and analysis, but about direct involvement with the intention to shift awareness. I am no different than the women I met at Proyecto Jardín, I am an immigrant woman of color, I speak Spanish as my first language and I experience racism based on the color of my skin and my ethnic and cultural heritage. It is as Ana Nieto-Gomez explains in her "La Feminista" (1974), "the Chicana's socio-economic class as a non-Anglo Spanish-speaking, low-income Chicana woman determines her need and therefore her political position" (39).

While I identify strongly with Chicana feminist politics, I do not claim the term Chicana. My experience with the usage of that term began when I enrolled in community college. It was there that I fist heard the terms Chicano and Chicana and while theoretical works such as Anzaldúa's and her contemporaries create an invitation for their readers to claim those terms, in my day-to-day lived experience I found this to be challenging. To begin, no one in my family or among my circle of friends, thought of themselves as Chicana/o—most of them, even college educated ones, still do not. My experience and observations found home in Alicia Arrizón's *Latina Performance: Traversing the Stage* (1999) in which she both makes a case of a revision of the "masculine gender inflection" Latino and replaces it with the split between the a/o (xvi). Moreover, Arrizón space for a politics that emphasizes the decentering of the "'dominant' culture" while also insisting on the importance of coalition building "not only *among* ourselves, but also *between* ourselves and other women of color. Latinas, who identify as and *with* women of color, must attempt to extend their allegiances beyond the privileged—and related—discourses of colonialism, homophobia, and patriarchy" (ibid, 21).

Taking my lead from Arrizón, I began using the term Latina/o because it allowed me a way to position myself in a space where I could consciously maintain an openness to seeing and speaking about the experiences of women. The use of the term Latina/o also made it possible for me to connect my personal form of identification with the larger discussion of how to discuss the collective of Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Central Americans and other groups when it is called for. However, the use of the term Latina/o has been challenged in recent years for its erasure of gendered forms of identification. This conversation returned me to the question, "how do I talk about my research?" The term required me to revise how my use of terminology might produce the kinds of differences and exclusionary practices that I seek to work against.

According to Juana Rodriguez's *Queer Latinidad: Identity Practices, Discursive Spaces* (2003), the term Latinx emerged in Queer circles. Other sources explain that the term found popular usage in social media in 2016 (See Salinas Jr., Cristobal and Adele Lozano, 2017; deOnín, Catalina (Kathleen) M., 2017). Since then, scholars in various fields have adopted the term, notwithstanding criticism. While some see the benefit of the suffix "x" as one that creates inclusivity and acceptance beginning with language, others consider that "Nothing is to be gained from using "Latinx" on the basis that the term is grammatically "incorrect" and it is also initiated by English speaking Latinxs who have to considered the power interplays between them and recent immigrants. As Folklorist Eric Cesar Morales explains "there is something incredibly condescending for an English speaker to tell recent immigrants that Spanish is a gendered and patriarchal language but not to worry, because they can fix it with a term that does not conform to Spanish grammar (Morales in deOnín 2017).

While Morales brings up a good point, it does not adequately address the negotiations of power between immigrant and native-born Latinxs. Ethnic studies scholar Roy Peréz says people

in Spanish speaking circles in Lima DF are using the term in earnest (Morales in deOnín 2017). Perez asks that care be given to "recognize the nature of contemporary transnational immigrant flows, both physical and virtual" to avoid "obstructing the empowerment of US-based Latinx subjects, in favor of Latin American, international interests (that aren't always so very disenfranchised), in the name of preserving some idea of proper Spanish" (Perez in deOnín 2017).

I find that the use of the term Latinx does more than challenge gender binaries and make a case for inclusion, it also reinforces the emphasis on coalition and community building that Chicana and Latina theorists have been challenged to do.[7] In turn, I adopt Latinx in this dissertation with the purpose of making space for all of the different positionalities that make up the experiences of people whom I met and spoke with at Proyecto Jardín community garden. In that space people identified using terms that prioritized their positions in society. Some people identified geographically with the places they were born in—for example Graciela who always told people she was from Puebla—while others chose to identify as indigenous or Chicana/o thus evoking the political stance of resistance to colonization. Still, others identified as both Mexican, for instance, and lesbian or queer. To adopt the "x" as a suffix therefore allows me to reflect the complexity of what it means to be Latinx in Los Angeles. Moreover, articulations of this new term has the capacity of generating self-reflection of one's own biases as well as to engender conversation that undermines heteronormativity.

[7] For a collection of essays that include Chicanas, Black and Asian women's voices see This Bridge Called My Back, eds. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (1983).

Traditional Medicine as the Preferred Term

The critical perspective that drives me to consider the term Latinx, is enforced by studies in medical folklore and medical anthropology that have historically challenged researchers to consider the effects that naming has as well as the specific ways it impacts people, which in my case is the Latinx community. In some fields, such as anthropology, the term traditional medicine is favored over the term "folk medicine," which is championed by folklorists and sociologists. As an interdisciplinary scholar I am not aligning with one discipline or another, all three of the mentioned, inform me greatly. My choice in selecting the term traditional is instead shaped by my desire to center the epistemologies of people at Proyecto Jardín; there, people called their use of herbal remedies and home-based medicinal practices traditional not folk. Thus, I respect the terms people use and adhere to it throughout this dissertation. Nevertheless, the use of the term traditional begs some discussion, as it no longer means what it did decades ago. This section therefore provides a discussion of central ideas that have shaped scholarly understanding of traditional medicine.

One of the earliest mentions of folk medicine in scholarship comes from Don Yoder's, "Folk Medicine" in *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction* (1972). In his chapter, Yoder explains what folk medicine is and is not along with its relationship to "other levels or types of medicine practiced in the world" (1972, 191). He places folk medicine as the practice of the "little culture" and in direct opposition to "scientific, academic or 'modern' medicine with which it has coexisted in increasingly uneasy tension since the eighteenth century" (ibid). Furthermore, he distinguishes between "primitive" and "popular" forms of medicine. He describes primitive medicine as native practices associated with magico-religious customs that differs from popular medicine that he sees as "folk medicine gone commercial, the patent medicine and techniques of

which it consists being frequently derived from the folk-medical repertoire" (ibid). "In anthropology" explains Karen V. Holliday "the term 'traditional' is historically used to describe ethnomedical and folk healing systems" (2008, 400). The terms folk and traditional have thus been used interchangeably in the literature.

Yoder's work was a product of his time, and he maintains notions of high and low culture that went unquestioned in his era, but which medical researchers in various fields frown upon today. Still, several points become apparent in my nth re-reading of his work. One, he participates in demarcating a boundary between folk and the biomedical science. Two, in his effort to establish a "simpler, more workable definition of folk medicine for the present time" he calls for widening one's view of folk medicine so that researchers focus on what people know about sickness and health (Yoder 1972, 193). The binary oppositions between folk and scientific medicine demarcated by scholars such as Yoder who began challenging the ways folk medicine was marginalized are enduring. Despite efforts by contemporary researchers to underplay these boundaries, they remain influential concepts that guide how we think about folk medicine, its relationships to other medical systems and the people who utilize it.

Karen Holliday's exploration of the terms "folk" and "traditional" as used in the public health sector shows that lay practices of Latinxs continue to be defined in relation to biomedicine. Moreover, she shows that even when there is a national incentive to include traditional healing modalities in articulations of medicine, association of traditional and Latinx tend to illicit notions of criminality (2008, 400). Holliday's analysis reflects the socio-political air in Los Angeles and Orange Counties in 2002, in the aftermath of the death of two toddlers who had received treatment from lay practitioners. The deaths of these children prompted investigations of botánicas as well as educational imperatives in the hopes of reducing risky

practices, but they also conveyed notions of Latinx as uneducated and irresponsible. Very little account was taken to consider the ways social inequities in healthcare were/are also implicated in sometimes risky lay medical practices. Moreover current efforts to meet the needs of Latinxs populations in medical centers has led to a burgeoning of quantitative and qualitative studies that explore the insistence of traditional medicine among Latinxs as well as ways doctors can become better informed of these in order to provide appropriate care. Central to the misunderstandings of Latinxs adherence to traditional medicine is the medical field's insistence on understanding why and how people use herbs and other combinations of medicine when perhaps the answer is to take more seriously the logic or reason behind medical choice.

In "Folklore and Medicine" (1994), David J. Hufford explains, "it is not that folk medical systems have *their own logic*, as is often suggested. . . . It is differences in initial assumptions (e.g., that God can heal miraculously or that natural treatments are better than artificial ones), the selection and ordering of one's authorities (e.g., intuition or scripture as opposed to—or in addition to—scientific journals and textbooks), and criteria for evidence that set any particular folk medical system apart from official medicine" (124). The first step Hufford proposed to generate understanding of the rationality of non-Western medical systems is through application of ethnographic research to educate physicians and the entire health care team about the rationality of folk/traditional systems.

Taking Hufford's lead, my study of Latinx health care practices aims at applying ethnographic research that emphasizes the validity of a logic that has for long been misconstrued as that which only uneducated, poor, and/or irrational and so "primitive" people do, following Eurocentric hierarchies of knowledge and privilege. The use of home remedies in the treatment of common illness is based on empirical knowledge that has persisted through generations

because it works. *How* it works may be subject to inquiry, but those turning to such remedies in time of need understand that it does. The selection of lay healers who specialize in herbs in the treatment of physical, emotional and social ills is also based on a rational system of selection.[8]

As biomedicine, in practice, reiterates the dominant logic that places the highest value on scientific and written knowledge I position my research practice in line with scholars who work on decentering the centrality of biomedicine. As a strategy of de-centering the latter, I take Hufford's (1994) practice of education at the clinical setting farther, not simply by recognizing and sharing the logic underlying Latinx beliefs and practices, but by drawing upon lessons in critical medical anthropology, which call for the de-centering of the powers that be (Wallace 1990; Baer, Singer and Susser 2013).

Merill Singer's "Developing a Critical Perspective in Medical Anthropology" (1986) whose work calls for understanding health care issues at macro and micro levels influences me in particular. Not only is it important to understand the larger political and economic forces that affect people, particularly those who are relegated to the margins of affluent society, but also it is also necessary to give attention to the wide range of reactions to these forces by individuals and communities at the local level. Singer calls for the investigation of social origins of illness in addition to recognizing the relationship of a medical system to its political economy. He explains, "bourgeois medicine identifies a key feature of this health care system, namely its role in the promotion of the hegemony of capitalist society generally and the capitalist class specifically. Bourgeois medicine is not a 'thing' or a set of procedures and treatments so much as it is a particular set of social relationships and an ideology that legitimizes them" (129).

[8] Depending on the lay healer's religious practice, s/he or they receives training from elders or specialists in one or various healing modalities. These can include herbalism, prayer, card reading, massage, bone setting as well as rituals (can involve initiation into the religion) and symbolic practices such as spiritual surgery to name a few (Trotter II and Chavira, 1997 and Titus, 2013 for in-depth studies of curanderos; for spiritual surgeries in Brazil (Greenfield 2012; for in-depth ethnographies on Santeria see Brown 2003; Wedel 2004; Jones et. al., 2001)

My research recognizes the influence of social structures on the choices individuals make in caring for themselves and their families, but I also give attention to ways people deal with social ills, in particular those ailments or problems associated with the lack of health care. In addition, I focus on the power relations within medicine not simply by confronting physicians with their cultural biases, but also by challenging terminology such as "folk medicine" to show the ways such terms serve to perpetuate class distinctions and boundaries based on race and ethnicity.

Decolonizing Methodologies

> The ways in which scientific research is implicated in the worst excesses of colonialism remains a powerful remembered history for many of the world's colonized peoples. It is a history that still offends the deepest sense of our humanity. . . . It galls us that Western researchers and intellectuals can assume to know all that is possible to know of us, on the basis of their brief encounters with some of us.
>
> —Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*

The passage above reflects sensibilities of indigenous peoples which Tuhiwai Smith defines as a "network of people" who "share experiences as people who have been subjected to colonization of their lands and cultures, and the denial of their sovereignty, by a colonizing society that has come to dominate and determine the shape and quality of their lives, even after it has formally pulled out" (2012, 7). This definition finds meaning in the experiences of indigenous and women of color circles within and outside of the academy and it is one that has informed me. Originally I approached research from a critical standpoint; I chose areas of study such as critical medical anthropology as guides and I challenged the use of terminology by researchers in medical research. Additionally, I made efforts to differentiate between people's experiences so as to acknowledge their heterogeneity. I did not consider my critical stance as a

decolonizing strategy, but rather as a feminist and woman of color approach within academia. However, I have come to recognize the ways my work also contributes to the necessary decolonization of the academy.

Unlike Tuhiwai Smith who positions herself in this discussion as one of colonized indigenous person, I find myself in the margins and as *mestiza* (mixed) not simply because I am of mixed heritage which includes European, Mediterranean, Indigenous, African, and Asian genealogy, but more importantly because I live with it all.[9] I do not deny my European heritage in favor of my Indigenous "roots" because that would mean separating my self from my grandparents and great-grandparents so instead I deal with what it means to be both of the colonizer and the colonized as well as ethnographer/ researcher and community member. Thus, I deliberately chose to study the Latinx experience because it is what I consider my community and I focus on Los Angeles because it is where I live and want to serve. This pathway reflects a decolonizing framework which Tuhiwai Smith says differs from a typical research approach by directing efforts towards ways that "improve the current conditions" of people in indigenous and communities of color (2012, 3).

A decolonizing framework centers on deconstruction, which Tuhiwai Smith says "is part of a much larger intent" (2012, 3). Deconstruction involves privileging the indigenous voice and perspective, "'researching back'" and taking on a reflexive approach (Tuhiwai Smith 2012, 1-8; González 2000 and 2003).[10] To privilege the indigenous or community voice means to consciously pay attention to people's different perspectives and to use their terms for talking

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[9] My acknowledgment of mestiza subjectivity s influenced by Gloria Anzaldúa's La conciencia de la mestiza/Towards a New Consciousness, which she explains in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (2012).
[10] The concept of "'researching back'" is a play on bell hooks' "talking back" which she articulates in "Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black (1989). She says, "in the world of the southern black community I grew up in, 'back talk' and 'talking back' meant speaking as an equal to an authority figure. . . .To speak then when one was not spoken to was a courageous act—an act of risk and daring" (5).

about what they do; it is about moving away from a notion of giving voice and representing a person or community and instead to pay attention to the stories they choose to share. The task of researching back involves a revision of the tools used to study and talk about people in communities; it problematizes the insider/outsider approach through a reflexive approach.

Reflexivity is not a new practice. As James Clifford recounts in *The Predicament of Culture Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (2002), "by the late sixties the romantic mythology of fieldwork rapport had begun to resolve publicly" (80). In his writing he takes a reflexive approach to exploring every method of research (e.g., participant observation, travel studies, notions of the exotic) as well as considering different ways of displacing the colonial gaze in favor of methods that advanced understanding of experiences that included other people's narratives. Other notable approaches to the application of a reflexive stance come from feminists including Lila Abu-Lughod who in "Writing Against Culture" (1991), articulated three "modes" or strategies for a revision of ways to study culture (147).

The first of Abu-Lughod's revision involves thinking about the ways one talks about the knowledge imparted by others. She proposes and chooses to go between the use of the terms "practices" and "discourses" to "work against assumptions of boundedness" (ibid, 148). Like her, I also use the term "practices," but I also make reference to "epistemologies" to acknowledge that everyone has a way of perceiving information about the world and how things come to be. We all engage in knowledge production (Crook 2011; Toren & Pina-Cabral 2011). Abu-Lughod's second mode involves making "connections and interconnections, historical and contemporary, between community and the anthropologist" (ibid 148). Finally, she recognizes the ways anthropological work makes Others of people and suggests that

writers refocus on “ethnographies of the particular” instead; this last concept critiques making generalizations about people or homogenizing them under umbrella terms (ibid, 149). What she offers instead in a focus on “particular individuals and their changing relationships” (ibid, 150).

Space and Thirdspace

Proyecto Jardín was not only a physical location, but rather a social construction. Henri Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space* (1991) provided the theoretical perspective that enabled me to show how the construction of the garden reflected a certain kind of power to people in the neighborhood and ways they responded to that power. Although Lefebvre wrote his book in 1974, it was not until its translation into English in 1999, that scholars became aware of his thoughts on space. Lefebvre considers social space as product that reflects production as well as means of control and domination (26). His work has been of particular interest to cultural geographers, but also to researchers engaged in the study of community gardens in urban cities (Peña 2006; Mares & Peña 2010). Community gardens are imagined by many people to be utopian places where everyone gets along; they are said to be grassroots and thus convey activist social engagement. However, social hierarchies also form in community gardens and tensions between individuals occur.

Lefebvre’s conceptual triad is composed of the a) spatial practice also known as perceived space, b) representations of space or conceived space, and c) representational spaces or lived space. “Spatial practice,” as Lefebvre explains “ensures continuity and some degree of cohesion” (33). Social spaces are designed with rules that people learn and perform. Representations of space/conceived space “are tied to the relations of production and to the

'order' which those relations impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs, to codes, and to 'frontal' relations" (ibid). This space is that of the planner, scientist, social engineer and anyone who participates in development. Lastly, we have representational spaces or lived space, which is the realm of "the dominated—and hence passively experienced—space, which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate; it overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects" (ibid, 39). Although these spaces are characterized as separate realms, they are not meant to be considered apart from each other. In fact, it is through spatial practice that one navigates from one space to the next. "Spatial practice" says Lefebvre, is lived directly before it is conceptualized" (1991, 34).

Lefebvre does not deny the existence of a physical place in the sense of a geographic location, but rather he deals with the abstract concepts that give shape to that. The work of Edward Soja, conversely brings Lefebvre's triad into conversation with the ways we embed meaning into physical places. In *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real and Imagined Place* (1996), Soja expands on Lefebvre's representational spaces concept. He explains that in thirdspace "everything comes together… subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history" (57). What makes his work particularly important to this dissertation is his insistence on seeing the intertwined relationship between history and spatiality. He draws from feminist theorists like bell hooks to make a call for a reconfiguration of history by bringing the stories along the margins of space to the center. This mode of thinking influenced my approach to this dissertation. I engaged in historization of community gardens and even Boyle Heights, however, I tried to do it

purposefully with the intent to show how Boyle Heights became a place where a community garden like Proyecto Jardín would be imagined.

Methods & The Community

My involvement in the garden as ethnographer, community member, and activist came by way of my research on Latinx traditional medicine. As a first-year graduate student, I sought to understand Latinx adherence to traditional medicine generally speaking, as not all Latinxs believe in or engage in the same practices. My study began with my interest in learning more about my family's use of home remedies along with their theories about disease causation and their healing approaches. Thus, my first approach to fulfilling this concern was to conduct library investigations on Latinx traditional medicine. In addition, following my undergraduate studies in 2000, I participated in a study entitled "Invisible Hospitals: The Role of Botánicas in Ethnic Healthcare," which was designed by UCLA professors Michael Owen Jones, Patrick A. Polk and Donald Cosentino in 1999. Briefly, botánicas sell sacramental goods and herbal products as well as provide consultations and other services such as religious initiation.[11] I compiled a census of 76 botánicas and the healers associated with them, interviewed 13 practitioners, and documented their uses of numerous herbs and rituals as well as their treatment of several illnesses (Jones and Hernández 2009).

Given my research interest, in 2003, I was invited to participate in an interdisciplinary project based on collaboration between the UCLA Center for Human Nutrition (CHN) a research center in the medical school, the ethnographic orientation of the Culture and Performance MA/PhD Program of the Department of World Arts and Cultures, and Proyecto Jardín. I was

[11] For a description of botánicas in Los Angeles, see Patrick Polk's *Botánica Los Angeles: Latino Popular Religious Art in the City of Angels*, 2004.

asked to share what I had learned about the uses of traditional remedies among Latinxs at botánicas to help develop a medicinal garden along with informative workshops on the uses of the herbs to be grown there.

Of the Latinx community-based healers in Boyle Heights (East Los Angeles) that I interviewed for the botánica project, the majority were Mexican immigrant men between the ages of 35-60. These individuals had extensive knowledge of plants and their spiritual and medicinal uses. Although each person had a preference for one or another plant, they all had in common, the use of ten plants: *mansanilla* (chamomile), *romero* (rosemary), *sabila* (aloe), *epazote* (wormseed), *ruda* (rue), *salvia* (sage), *menta* (spearmint), *altamisa* (feverfew) and *artemisa* (mugwort). These plants make up the Latinx medical cabinet from which healers as well as primary care givers in the home pull from to treat colds, coughs, cuts, burns and other common ailments. The list I compiled served as the starting point for engaging neighborhood residents and other community members in dialogue about the plants we later cultivated in the medicinal garden, which was made possible with funding from a transdisciplinary grant from the UCLA Community Partnership program. This was a new grant program launched in 2003 to promote UCLA research in community settings and based on community priorities. For me, this was a welcomed opportunity to stretch my work beyond paper and words and into the community.

The second aspect of my study involved documenting reasons given by Latinx gardeners at Proyecto Jardín for using traditional medicine, which plants were favored and what modalities were preferred. Through interviews and informal conversations with four immigrant garden members (two men and two women), I learned that several garden patrons were concerned about their weight, diabetes, and treatment of their ailments by healthcare personnel who were

insensitive to their cultural traditions. Due to lack of health insurance, mistrust of doctors, dissatisfaction with the biomedical medical systems, and personal preference for natural remedies, these gardeners focused on deepening their knowledge of herbs and plants in order to avail themselves of feasible treatments that they trusted would aid in weight loss, stress relief and other discomforts caused by common ailments.

Conversely, interviews with three first generation or native-born U.S citizens in the garden, I learned of ways they stress the use of traditional medicine as a means of decolonizing the self, individually and collectively. Aztec, Mayan, and Native American wisdom are favored and cultivated along with permaculture and other Earth-friendly practices. At the garden, people make intra- and inter-cultural connections by gardening side-by-side with one another, but also from the events and workshops held there that encourage sharing recipes, remedies, and techniques for self-sustainability. Gardens like Proyecto Jardín are not utopian, however, because interactions there are like relationships anywhere, misunderstandings occurred; some people came to feel left out while others expressed distrust or dissatisfaction with the ways they were represented.

The Community: Madres, Social-Justice Activists and Academics

Perhaps the most challenging part of my field research has been identifying the people or "community" of Proyecto Jardín. To some this is not a hard question, since the garden is located in a neighborhood defined as 94.95% Hispanic by the Census. One might easily assume that it is mostly Latinxs who go to the garden, yet individuals identify in very different ways—Mexican, Mexicana/o, Mexica, Chicana/o, Latinx, Latin American, Hispanic, Indian, Indigenous, Salvadoran, Central American etc.—and they organically group themselves and each other based

on common experiences and interests. In the sections that follow I describe three groups I discerned based on ways people identified themselves or by their interests and provide as much detail as I can regarding people's birthplace, education and economic status. I also treat mention of a child with extra care, especially due to the sensitive information the child's mother shared about him; I resolved to only refer to him as "her son." Lastly, I use pseudonyms for everyone interviewed or mentioned except for Dr. Krochmal and others whose identities and association with the garden were already publicly known, for example Bridge Street School staff and WMMC doctors.

Madres Amas de Casa/Stay Home Moms

Proyecto Jardín was mostly patronized by women between the ages of 18 and 60. Half of the group consisted of self-described "*madres amas de casa*" or stay at home moms who generally cared for 3 or more children between the ages of 3 and 21 while their husbands worked low-income jobs—I'll be referring to them by the shortened term, madres, from this point forward. Most of the madres did not work for salary, but a few babysat one or more children to earn some money. The majority I spoke with identified as Mexican, and three specified being from Puebla, Mexico. Most madres did not attain formal education past high school level, but they were active in church and school groups and some availed themselves of free health care programs or workshops to expand on what they already knew and also bring them up to date with current events. None of the madres spoke English fluently.

The prime interests of madres were weight loss, nutrition education, gardening, and the use of herbs for common ailments; but they also desired greater access to public biomedical services. The latter is a reflection of the experience of lacking or only having partial health

insurance. In fact, only one woman with whom I spoke noted having partial health coverage—only her children were insured—the rest of the women relied on their personal knowledge of herbs, Medicare, free clinics and workshops offered by WMMC, Proyecto Jardín, Church, School, or other community organizations for the care of their families.

One of the more active madres was Gloria, a Mexican woman in her early forties. Upon our first meeting and introduction by Dr. Krochmal, the founder of Proyecto Jardín—I introduce him more fully in Chapter Three—she smiled back at me shyly and avoided direct eye or other contact. When we did speak, she maintained a formal approach by addressing me as señorita (miss) or using formal speech such as “usted” (you). Bertha, a fair-skinned, robust, self-described “Norteña,” (northerner; from Mexico) with a stern gaze, persuasive voice and manner, was another of the more actively engaged madres. Unlike Gloria, who eventually talked with me at length, Bertha remained reticent towards me after our introduction. Both women were residents of Boyle Heights who lived in walking distance from Proyecto Jardín. They were founding members of the garden who were introduced to it by their children who took part in mosaic workshops held there—I will discuss these workshops in Chapter Two.

Though less outwardly opinionated about Proyecto Jardín and activities held there, Rosa, from Aguas Calientes, Mexico, was a woman with a soft gaze and always ready to smile. A mother of four and a grandmother, she recalled the early days of Proyecto Jardín when she helped create the mosaic mural with her kids, picked lettuce there, and cultivated tomatoes. “I even went to UCLA with ‘the doctor’ to speak to doctors about the garden,” she said, during our first meeting (Rosa, pers. comm. 2004). Unlike the other madres, Rosa was open to sharing her experiences and discussing the garden from the start. She expressed ways it served her as place of solace and respite. She described the garden as “far away from the city” and “outside of this

world." Rosa's son was killed in a drive-by shooting in front of her home, just blocks away from the garden, the same year she and one of her youngest son's were sexually assaulted. She is one of the people whose personal experiences and described needs underscore the value and potential of Proyecto Jardín as a social resource. In her time of mourning, garden friends supported her by giving her a place to plant a fruit tree of her choice—*zapote*—as a way to remember her son and in an effort to extend themselves to her.[12]

There are no men who describe themselves in ways similar to the "madres amas de casa," but Mario, a quiet yet approachable man in his late fifties, also a local resident of Boyle Heights shared in the experiences of the madres. Mario had a strong handshake and rough hands that attested to years of intensive labor as an electrician or gardener/urban farmer. He, like Dr. Krochmal, came to Proyecto Jardín regularly to "till the soil as [he] did back home" because "it's [his] exercise"—he was a diabetic and gardening was his preferred mode of exercise (Mario 2004). It should be noted that Mario did not simply plant seeds and water, but also undertook the intensive task of turning the planting beds at the beginning and end of every harvest, seeing to the task mostly unassisted, and this after completing a regular 9-5 workday. While Mario did not stay home with kids, economic and socially, he identified closely with the madres. He was from Zacatepec de Hidalgo, a town in the state of Morelos, Mexico. Mario lacked command of English and was interested in gardening, nutrition, and access to health. He was also among the first volunteers to help create the garden.

[12] Zapote also Sapote is a tree fruit from the Sapotaceae plant family; they outer layer of the fruit is typically rough, but the inside is soft. These fruits are native to Mesoamerica (Hellmuth 2019).

Social-Justice Activists

The “new group” as they were described by madres in 2003, was even more difficult to define. Its members actively challenged and resisted representations of Latinxs that some felt were stereotypical or inaccurate delineations of their identity. Still, I was able to gauge similarities in the ways people in this category described their identities, their social experiences and their views. Most people in this group were the children of Mexican and Central American nationals—first and later generations or immigrants who had been here since childhood such as myself. They were between the ages of 18 and 45 and they spoke English fluently. Most had a high school education or higher and/or they had received vocational training in areas such as master gardening or community organizing. People in this group were bilingual and for the most part unmarried, but several had children. Women who had children did not identify as stay-at-home-moms, but rather as single mothers. Like the madres, women in this category did not describe themselves as high-income earners and most did not have full access to health insurance.

This group is strongly characterized by their more proactive focused on developing training and educational workshops at the garden on a grassroots level. In particular, they focus on social-justice topics such as self-sustainability/strengthening and building community, the use of Latinx traditional medicine as preventative care and as resistance to biomedicine, and access to food/organic produce. These members were artists and/or activists with political agendas that were at times considered extreme by visitors and other community members. Although this group was made up of mostly women, a handful of men between the ages of 18 and 60 also engaged in the development of the garden and/or its activities. Thus, for the purposes of this study I categorize the more political garden members under a gender-neutral term such as social-

justice activists. Unfortunately, my interview sample does not reflect the views of both genders. The average ratio of women to men who actively participated in gardening and projects at Proyecto Jardín was 3 to 1; there were at all times more women in the garden than men. In turn, I experienced difficulty establishing connections with men to interview as part of my research. Thus, this study is limited to analysis of only the views of women whom I was able to interview and interact with.

Xochilt, a woman of Guatemalan heritage was one of the people I spoke and interacted with the most. She was a single mother in her late twenties whom I mention in Chapter Three. Her baby, she explained on several occasions, was her inspiration for becoming involved in the garden; she desired to give him a stronger sense of connection with land, community, and Indigenous ways than what she was raised with. Xochilt was a resident of Boyle Heights who became involved in the garden after walking by and discovering its existence. She is amiable, but also reserved, and she can reveal a stern side when she disagrees with an issue. Although she was initially suspicious of my intentions and my research, she later shared her insight with me openly. As I explain in Chapter Four, Xochil regarded universities and the work of academics as sources that "steal community knowledge"; her reaction reflects discourse among indigenous and communities of color that critiques the practice of research as a colonial practice that continues to "bring with it a new wave of exploitation, discovery, exploitation and appropriation" (Tuhiwai Smith 2012, 25).

Linda, a woman born in Northern Mexico, and raised in East Los Angeles, is another member with whom I spoke at length. She was a youth mentor for Girls Today Women Tomorrow (GTWT).[13] Linda was responsible for exposing young women to gardening, as well

[13] Girls Today Women Tomorrow was founded in 1996 by four women who wanted to address the "lack of gender-specific programming for females in East Los Angeles, where teenage pregnancy and high school dropout rates are

as to social-justice issues surrounding access to land, organics, and Indigenous identity. Several of the teenage girls in her group were Zapotec, their parents spoke Spanish as a second language, and they engaged in cultural and religious activities from which the teens had tried to distance themselves. The teens undermined their Zapotec identity to fit in with the larger Mexican community. With Linda's mentoring they explored the value of their Indigenous heritage as well as the importance of seeking a higher education. Wendy was one of Linda's GTWT mentees. When I interviewed her, she had recently graduated from high school and was excited to begin taking college classes as well as pursuing a modeling career. She was a tall, thin woman whose hunched shoulders and nervous demeanor betrayed the confidence of her words and her eagerness to share her experiences with me.

Abby was a young Mexican-American mother who learned about the garden from Dr. Krochmal. She was tall and seemingly quiet, but she did not shy away from laborious work and/or conversation regarding her participation at Proyecto Jardín. I was always grateful for her kindness and genuine openness to share her experiences with me and anyone else that expressed an interest in Proyecto Jardín. Abby started coming to the garden after the birth of her daughter who was delivered by Dr. Krochmal. She attributed all she knew about gardening and vegetarianism to Dr. Krochmal whom she considered a friend, as well as her doctor.

Another active member of the garden who focused on social-justice activism was Shanna, a woman of mixed race from the Midwest; she was self-described as Asian and White. Shanna was a Catholic missionary who lived in Mexico prior to moving to Los Angeles to live at the Los Angeles Catholic Worker hospitality house in Boyle Heights. Although devoted to addressing the social ills of the city such as homelessness, hunger, racial inequality and community health,

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unacceptably high" ("Girls Today Women Tomorrow" 2019). What began as an after school club has since become a 501(c)3 non-profit that provides mentoring programs for girls and teens between the ages of 12-21 to assist them in setting and reaching their goals.

Shanna embodied cultural sensitivity. She made suggestions rather than demands, and she always deferred to local interests. She was instrumental in recruiting volunteers from The Los Angeles Catholic Worker as well from the neighborhood and the school.

Activists/Professionals

The third group I identified is that of the academics/professionals of which I am a member though I also identified with the social-justice activists—I was born in El Salvador, and raised in the San Fernando Valley since the age of seven and I have an interest in equalizing the social inequities of the Latinx community in Los Angeles. In this group are other college students—like myself—professors, doctors, medical researchers, and members of professional organizations, from corporate institutions to non-profit organizations. Unlike the previous groups, this one is racially rather than ethnically diverse. Some people self-identified as Latinx and/or Mexican; White, or of European Ancestry, Asian; mixed race, and some did not identify their race or ethnicity at all. Most of the people in this category did not live in the area nor did they have roots in Boyle Heights; they learned about the garden through college or professional networks of communication. Some of the professionals that were involved with Proyecto Jardín were in higher income brackets than the people in the previous categories, but others were not. I did not have the opportunity to conduct open-ended interviews of all people who could be categorized in this group.

I did, however, interview a couple of students who shared their insights with me. Among them was Angelina. Like Shanna, Angelina was from the Midwest and she referred to herself as White. She came to Los Angeles to earn her college degree, and moved to Boyle Heights sometime after beginning her work as a GTWT mentor. She attended planning meetings and

engaged in the hands-on activities of collecting compost, shoveling dirt and shaping the medicinal *caracoles* or spirals that I discuss in Chapter Four. Upon completion of the medicinal garden, Angelina returned to school to obtain her master's degree in Psychology at UCLA.

Ana was another woman I considered part of this group due to her academic inclination. Ana was born and raised in Boyle Heights, but she was only in the area when she was on holiday or summer break from school, she was completing her master's degree in Landscape Architecture from UC Berkeley at the time. Ana was present for a few meetings, but due to her educational commitments, she did not participate in the actual development of the garden. Once the project was concluded, Ana and I met to share our experiences, but I have not seen her since.

My primary source for this group was Dr. Robert Dr. Krochmal, the founder of the garden. Dr. Krochmal earned his degree in family practice with a specialization in integrative medicine from the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA. Dr. Krochmal was completing his family practice residency at White Memorial Medical Center in 1999 when he founded Proyecto Jardín community garden. As I recount in Chapter Three, Dr. Krochmal felt concerned by the number of children and adults with obesity related health problems. He felt called to do something about this, and when he realized that WMMC owned an empty lot on Bridge Street, he came up with the idea to create a community garden. Dr. Krochmal speaks fluent Spanish and I observed that he was always welcoming to people who came to the garden.

A Note on Limitations and Relevance of Study

As stated above, I started my research of the role of traditional medicine among Latinxs at Proyecto Jardín in 2003. My initial plan was to study the development of the medicinal garden from February to September and then to turn my attention to follow-up interviews with gardeners

in 2004. I proposed my dissertation in 2006 and began writing, but I also returned to the garden to work with the community on acquiring grant funds to help improve the garden after it became overgrown due to lack of participation and funds to enable improvements of areas needing attention (e.g., the tarp over the fitness structure had holes, the water well needed repair and there was need for community outreach). I also accepted a teaching position in the Liberal Arts & Sciences Department at Otis College of Art & Design. In turn, I put my dissertation off for several years. However, when I returned to it, I realized the research I conducted between 2003 and 2006 is still relevant and applicable, particularly for medical education and clinical practice.

Latinx adherence to traditional medicine remains relevant to medical educators who continue to emphasize the importance of cultural competence at the clinical level. The concept of cultural competence emerged in the 1970s—though under different names including: culturally sensitive health care—as a response to the particular needs of ethnic and immigrant communities.[14] Since then, medical educators have worked to develop models to guide doctors on best approaches to addressing the diverse needs of their patients. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health (OMH), "culturally and linguistically appropriate services are respectful of and responsive to the health beliefs, practices and needs of diverse patients" ("Office of Minority Health" 2019).

Cultural competence is of particular importance to Integrative medicine (IM) practitioners who champion doctor-patient relationships. In "Recommended Integrative Medicine Competencies for Family Medicine Residents" (2013), Locke et. al., explain that "while IM's value of the doctor–patient relationship has been a well-respected dimension of

[14] Notable works that paved the way for cultural competence in healthcare are Ruben Barr's "Folk Nosology: When Textbook Medicine Isn't Good Enough" (1971); Melvin Delgado's "Herbal Medicine in the Puerto Rican Community" (1979) and Arthur Kleinman's *Patients and Healers in the Context of Culture: An Exploration of the Borderland between Anthropology, Medicine and Psychiatry* (1980).

medicine and primary care, the addition of CAM therapies challenged the predominant biomedical paradigm of conventionally trained clinicians" (309). The authors go on to explain that Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) information is minimal and not well integrated into the clinical teaching curriculum resulting in the perpetuation of misconceptions about the medical systems people choose. Some medical students think, "that patients seek either conventional or alternative approaches but not both" and that "there is little information about IM outside of specific CAM therapies" (ibid).

Latinx's use of CAM, in particular the use of traditional medical practices that focus on herbs and plants as treatment for common ailments, remains an area that is not fully understood by clinicians. According to Kiefer, Bradbury and Tellez-Girón's, "A pilot study of herbal medicine use in a Midwest Latino population" (2014), there is a dearth of information regarding "the source of herbal knowledge; or a complete list of plants being used in a given community" (2). Moreover, the authors' findings show that people get their medicinal herbs from various places including community gardens (ibid).

While my study of Latinxs adherence to traditional medicine at Proyecto Jardín has its limitations—my study does not reflect a complete description of plants each individual person uses, how they learned particular remedies and/or what they use them for and if they ever use them as preventive care—I did derive a list of plants cultivated at Proyecto Jardín and I observed ways the community garden served as an access point to medicinal herbs. Moreover, madres' interest in learning new modalities including the making of tinctures and using new plants reflects ways people make-do in the face of limited access to healthcare. Finally, my observations problematize the notion of a "Latinx traditional medicine *system*" in two ways:

First, transmission of knowledge regarding herbs is not necessarily passed down from

one generation to the next within the home, but rather learned in face-to-face communication with others in places like Proyecto Jardín community garden where younger generations can be the primary sources of knowledge. Second, the concerns among madres and social-justice activists to "learn" about more plants and to identify new and effective methods of self-care such as the use of tinctures already mentioned, shows that perhaps there is not a system to speak of, but instead a pluralistic medical experience characterized by picking and choosing modalities to meet one's needs. Latinxs may be marginalized in society due to immigrant status, low-income or poverty experiences, lack of education and other social factors, but they are not living in bubbles. Many people gain information from television, stores like botánicas, and as this dissertation shows, at community resources like the garden I discuss in this dissertation.

The chapters in this dissertation are developed to show the larger social and political forces that have impacted Latinxs experiences in the United States and which have in turn influenced the health of the community at large as well as the choices people make on a day-to-day basis as they care for themselves, their families and their communities. Chapter Two will situate Proyecto Jardín in the larger context of community gardens and ways these sites enable connections to health seeking experiences. In Chapter Three I discuss the concerns that led to the creation of the garden by a doctor with a focus on Integrative Medicine and the ways the community responded to his efforts. Chapter Four focuses on the development of the medicinal garden, the herbs people chose to cultivate and as the particular interests that madres and social-justice activists articulated with respect to traditional medicine. Chapter Five offers concluding remarks and considerations for future research in community gardens.

Chapter 2

Health and Community Gardens in the U.S.

> . . . gardens are life affirming, transcendent sites, with practices that sustain us and connect us, but I think it is also important to understand how gardens are bound up with the larger society, with power, inequalities, dislocations sickness, and even violence. People have depended on plant life to provide sources of food, magic, medicine, and comfort for eons, and now there is empirical evidence that gardens have the capacity to heal.
>
> —Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Paradise Transplanted*

> Community gardens create and sustain relationships between city dwellers and the soil, and can engender an ethic of urban environmentalism that neither grand central parks nor wilderness—which release and free us from the industrial city—can do.
>
> —Patricia Hynes & Genevieve Howe, "Urban Horticulture in the Contemporary United States"

In 2000, when Proyecto Jardín community garden was established, the urban agricultural movement was just beginning to take shape in Los Angeles. The impetus for gardening in both urban and suburban areas of the city varied from beautification to leisure and food politics. Currently, two of the more prominent concerns in Los Angeles include exploring sustainable agricultural models for a problematic industrial agriculture and increasing access to pesticide free and low cost produce. Whether a community garden was developed unofficially or with support from city funding, most proponents of these sites expound their health benefits. Yet, few studies explore the ways people articulate and center health in the development of community gardens. Historically, health has been regarded as an additional benefit and with a few exceptions, the focus has been on therapeutic aspects of being in nature and/or gardening activities. This chapter therefore provides a brief historical timeline of community gardens in the United States followed

by an exploration of the specific ways health was connected to community garden projects throughout history. My aim is to provide the larger context for understanding the importance of Proyecto Jardín as place of health and healing.

Researchers have contributed greatly to the scholarship of community gardens in the last twenty years. Historians, in particular, have chartered the earliest manifestations of gardens in cities, and note their episodic nature by recording ways municipal governments have financially supported and promoted gardening during eras of economic struggle. However, gardens are not simply resources to ameliorate difficulties during times of crisis, but rather they serve as "means to *other* ends" (author emphasis, Lawson 2005, 288). Community gardens help advance social agendas that, in the case of Proyecto Jardín, reflect the hospital industry's desire to better meet the needs of immigrant populations. In turn, this chapter offers a brief history of the movements that have a) influenced use of community gardens to address needs of immigrants and b) connections made between these sites and health.

Beginnings: Relief Gardens to Grassroots Guerilla Actions

According to Lawson's City Bountiful: A Century of Community Gardening in America (2005), in the United States, "people have organized to create places for people to garden in American cities since the 1890s" (1).[15] The government has promoted community gardens as viable solutions to ameliorate morale during times when unemployment was high, and later to address food security during the Great Depression and War times when food was needed here and abroad. Community gardens have also been supported as beautification projects and outdoor learning centers for children and adults alike. Although the government has always played a role

[15] My discussion of community gardens in the United States relies on the work of several historians, but on Laura Lawson's work in particular. Lawson's book represents, in my estimation, one of the most complete accounts of the history of community gardens.

in determining community gardens, there is a general perception that they are grassroots projects created by and managed through organizing principles and tactics that emphasize community building and empowerment.

The idea of community gardens as grassroots incentives is shaped by historical connections to use communal lands for food subsidy and employment that go back to the "English allotment tradition" (Irvine et. al 1999, 36). Allotment gardens were used by the English to ameliorate the effects of "the double movements of enclosure and industrialization" (Ibid). With the advent of large-scale agriculture, landowners evicted peasants from their lands and with that went the use of "common land" for the cultivation of food and wood for fuel. Many peasants were forced to accept wage labor on private farms or to move to cities in search of work at industrial plants (ibid). Small pieces of urban land were therefore made available to the poor to aid in food production for personal consumption, giving way to the European precursor to community gardens (ibid, 3).

In the United States, use of communal land is traced to access to New England town commons and the plazas and missions of the Southwest (Lawson 2005, 2). "These were practical and necessary spaces for subsistence," says Lawson, but she separates them from her discussion of community gardens on the basis that today's use of land is different and most community gardens "appear after initial development" (ibid). In other words, community gardens are not usually part of the planning and development process, and they have not evolved into public spaces. Instead, today's community gardens are built on vacant lots with very few resources and the promise that owners will reclaim their land at some point.

The concept of community gardens in the United States is associated with the rise of industrial expansion and economic depressions of the 1800s. Vacant lots were redefined as

"garden-based poverty relief *programs*, either in the form of family garden plots or as cooperative farms in which workers were paid hourly or received a percentage of the sales" (author emphasis; Lawson 2004, 154). Lawson perceives government funding and organizational support as a central defining element of these sites. She stresses, "while the idea of allotting land for gardening may seem straightforward, in fact much organization and program development is necessary" (Lawson 2005, 3). One can add that any such initiatives, as seemingly well meaning as they may have been and be, are intertwined with larger top-down municipal political-economic purposes.

While I agree with Lawson that community gardens are not only defined by grassroots efforts—the government has supported and during some eras even mandated the use of gardens—I believe that it has always been "the people" who have initiated and maintained communal gardening as a solution to local food insecurity long after government funds and support subside. After all it was vacant-lot associations—not government—that formed at local levels to address food security and unemployment during the Panic of 1893.

The Panic of 1893 was the result of business recession as well as declines in farming, slowing railroad investments, and European recession ("The Depression of 1893" 2019). As Lawson reminds, "workers took the brunt of economic turmoil in the form of pay cuts, reduced hours, and lay offs" that left many people in poverty and which caused the municipal government to respond by establishing and in some cases enforcing the use of "poorhouses" and charity organizations (Lawson 2005, 23). However, when growing demands for assistance could not be met, relief groups and city officials began considering garden programs.

One of the first garden programs to be funded during the Panic of 1893 is Detroit's "Potato Patch Farms"—also known as the Detroit experiment or Pingree's Potato Patches. The

city's Mayor Hazen Pingree, established the farms as a way to help provide relief to citizens, many of whom were Polish immigrants. Wealthy citizens did not initially support Pingree's idea, but he pressed on and is even said to have sold his prized horse to generate funds to develop a farm. By 1894 Pingree raised enough funds to provide plots for 975 people who in the first year "grew $14,000 worth of produce" (Loomis and Klein 2016, 94). Although little information is offered about the experiences of Potato Patch gardeners of Pingree's day, we do know that materials were prepared in three different languages to accommodate and assist them in planting various crops (Lawson 2005, 25).[16] In the second year of the program, more people applied to take part and "Pingree became a national hero" who was invited to speak in New York and whose program was copied and adopted in other major cities including New York, Boston, Chicago, Minneapolis, Seattle, and Denver (Loomis and Klein 2016, 94).

It is significant that despite such apparent interest, more generally the nation resisted Pingree's early community garden program. Late-19th-century America – as throughout U.S. history – was characterized by values of self-reliance manifest in attitudes and beliefs regarding help, how it should be offered and to whom. In turn, Americans supported offering charity to women and children, but not necessarily to "able bodied men." There was, as there still is, stigma associated with receiving assistance, which is why community gardens continue to be a popular tool for addressing food insecurity in low-income communities. On the one hand, they provide a space for growing food to help feed those in need through distribution of vegetables to food banks, but, more importantly, these sites provide individuals a food option without having to ask for or to supplement their government relief funds and/or other forms of assistance.

[16] According to Keep Growing Detroit, there are 1,400 community gardens in Detroit. In Growing Pains for Detroit's Urban Farms (2016), journalist Jessica Leigh Hester provides conversation on ways different municipalities and inter-agency advisory committees such as the Detroit Food Policy council are working to improve people's access to land for growing food.

The eventual success of Pingree's Potato Patches led to the establishment of vacant-lot associations to help poor people in communities across the nation. Vacant-lot gardening were developed as temporary solutions to poverty and hunger due to unemployment during economic downturn. These gardens were in a sense, a tool of social management, in that they were promoted as transitional sites where people could acquire "agricultural training" (Lawson 2005, 30). The idea was that people would go on to find employment in farms and/or to they would be inspired to move to the country and start their own farms or at least to have the know-how to maintain gardens of their own. People were encouraged and in some cases required to participate. Lawson notes that in Detroit, "any family that had received aid from the city's Poor Commission for two years had to participate in the vacant-lot program or their names would be removed from the commission's list as undeserving of aid for the following winter" (ibid, 33-34). However, the vacant-lot, charity-based, gardening model had its shortcomings. Although it served the immediate goals of offering relief to the poor and unemployed, participation in gardening programs declined as the economy improved. Reasons cited include distrust of charity, limited access to land, and lack of managerial experience (ibid, 49).

While charitable action has influenced the development of various community gardens such as the Pingree Potato Patches and vacant-lot associations, it has not come without its challenges. Distrust of charity remains. I have spoken with various gardeners and social-justice activists who make a distinction between the giving of goods or assistance and the sharing of education and skills that empower individuals, many of whom tend to be recent immigrants. As the saying goes, "give a man a fish, feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and feed him for a lifetime." Social class and in some cases, racial divides, were even apparent in the early days of community gardening that Lawson describes (2005, 31-33).

In the late 1800s, a certain language was used to justify assistance efforts that carried tones of paternalism, indifference, and class division. Examples include the 1898 New York AICP report on vacant-lot cultivation with harsh wording like "any who are able but not willing to work should not be helped at all" and "in one form or another the idle man is a dangerous one, and the more intelligent and willing to exert himself he is, the more terrible he becomes" (Lawson 2005, 29). Additionally, those who participated in vacant-lot relief programs were immigrants while the decision-makers, whose ethnicity or race is not generally mentioned, but whom readers can infer were deemed "truly American."

Nevertheless, charity remains an influential theme that continues to shape the establishment of gardens throughout the United States. A notable example in Los Angeles is that of Holy Nativity Community Garden in Westchester, where the Catholic rector, Peter Rood, and neighborhood residents organized to develop a garden on church property. They were guided by three main goals: 1) to expand their definition of community so that the Church could represent the religious as well as the non-religious community, 2) to challenge the value Americans have come to attach to front lawns, and 3) to consider the food needs of the surrounding community. In turn, they ripped the lawn out to create a vegetable garden where they grow leafy greens, squash, tomatoes, and other vegetables and fruits that they donate in totality to their local Food Pantry LAX.[17]

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[17] The front lawn is a feature of the suburban ideal; it conveys notions of style that connect to social class and other markers of identity. Environmentalists and food justice activists alike have begun to challenge Americans to reconsider the function of the lawn. In *Edible Estates: Attack on the Front Lawn* (2010) Will Allen and Fritz Haeg document Haeg's project, which involved converting front lawns into edible food gardens in several homes across the United States. In Los Angeles, Master Gardener Ron Finley took on the city by planting vegetables in the parkway—the strip between home and street—in front of his home; he was cited by the city, but food activists stepped up to help him avoid the $400 citation as well as to ask the city to reconsider regulations related to the use of the parkway (Finley). In 2013 the Los Angeles City Council voted to allow "Angelenos to plant fruits and vegetables in these spaces" (Ly 2013).

Though community gardens in the late 19th century were associated with food production and employment support, they also supported progressive and reformist interests in promoting nationalism, appreciation of nature as well as instilling "traditional producer values in an urban populace" (Hayden-Smith 2014, 72). Thus, the school garden was born as an extension of community garden efforts where activists could explore ways to "correct a wide range of perceived social, moral and educational agendas" (ibid, 76). The 1891 installment of a garden at the George Putnam School in Boston gave way to a "School Garden Movement that would continue through WWI" (Lawson 2004, 155). Early school gardens, which were small and only had enough room for demonstration, were often located outside school walls, contrary to what the name "school garden" might imply.

Not unlike today's school gardens, these sites provided "observational learning and hands-on experimentation" (Flammagan 2009, 282) as well as a way to socialize and "Americanize" immigrant populations. The aim was to provide children with a love of nature while imparting "a sense of responsibility to others" and teaching them practical agricultural skills (Hayden-Smith 2014, 75). It was thought by educators, government officials and social reformers that school gardening, along with nature education, could "ameliorate the ills of urban life" (Hayden-Smith 2014, 128; also see Marx 2000).

Educators in the early 1900s were concerned with both student retention and child development. On the one hand, they had to respond to criticism from parents who felt that schools did not provide their children with the education, or rather skills, needed to contribute income to their household. Many of New York's poor, for instance, were former farmers who fled the country and their agricultural trades in search of factory work during the Depression of 1893 (Klein Miller 1908, 68-69). On the other hand, the classroom environment was seen as

“inhibiting children’s natural inquisitiveness by making them sit all day in the artificial environment of a classroom” (Lawson 2005, 57). School gardens were therefore perceived as potential training grounds where children could learn to value work and the earning of money as well develop a connection and appreciation to “natural processes as growth and decay, nutrient cycles, and the interrelationship of plants and animals,” even in big cities where children lacked direct connections to agriculture and country life (ibid). For educators and social reformers, creation of school gardens was a win-win situation because children and high-school-aged youth could receive “entrepreneurial training under the auspices of education without the risk of exploitation,” and they could also reap developmental benefits from direct contact with plants through play and agricultural training (ibid).

Although school gardens focused on children’s education, proponents of nature-study recognized the potential of educational programs to extend the boundaries of the school to include the home. The prospect of influencing parents, immigrants, and society at large was well understood and expressed by Louise Klein Miller *in Children’s Gardens for School & Home: A Manual of Cooperative Gardening* (1908) when she said, “a school garden to accomplish its purpose must be broad in its influence” (68-69). All plans, operations and instructions must take into consideration the home of every child." Klein Miller’s idea was to engender skills and children’s desire to grow something at a small scale at home, with the support of parents.

Klein Miller was joined in making connections between nature and child development. At the time of her publications, *The Nature-Study Review: Devoted to All Phases of Nature-Study in Schools* (1916), was a journal dedicated to presenting studies that explored why nature was important in schools as well as practical approaches for implementing nature studies in the classroom. Additionally, scholars such as biologist M.A. Bigelow, a champion of nature studies,

reported on the encouraging ways in which children could communicate the benefits of nature to their families. As he explained, “bulletins are sent forth and read with interest and pleasure and the parents themselves become interested” (Bigelow 1906, 90). Other proponents of nature-study did not simply rely on appealing to parents through information sent home. As Mary C. Dickerson reported in “Nature-Study in Primary Schools,” some teachers included home observation assignments that were hoped would influence other children in the home and “obtain the cooperation of the parents in the work” (1906, 106).

The nature and agriculture-based goals of reformers was put to the test when WWI began and the government called everyone, including American youth, to do their part in local food production. Historian Rose Hayden-Smith writes, “the school garden movement received a boost during World War I when the Federal Bureau of Education introduced the United States School Garden Army” (USSGA) (2015). The USSGA built on previous efforts of the nature-study proponents and developed manuals to cover horticultural instructions, including how to prepare soil, sow seeds, and harvest crops. In addition, children were trained to function much like soldiers. In her blog entry entitled, “The School Garden Army in the First World War” for the Library of Congress, Constance Carter tells that the manuals described the order of operations using military language and referring to children as soldiers who were reminded that “a good gardener kept his/her tools clean and in top-notch condition just like a good soldier” does his weapons (Carter 2017).

After WWI, the educational imperative of school gardens lost out to general food production campaigns (Lawson 2005, 91). Some gardens became neglected after the food crisis had been averted, while proponents were challenged to agree about the purpose of such gardens. School gardens had been able to meet multiple social interests, and therefore proponents lacked

the desire to define them strictly for educational reasons. In order for such initiatives to continue, people needed to keep their definitions and purposes loosely defined (ibid, 92). Nevertheless, Lawson reports that "while the school garden movement of the 1890s to 1920s failed in its national mission to integrate gardens into the schools, the idea of the school garden has withstood the passage of time" (ibid).

The school garden movement was followed by the City Beautiful movement, which lasted from the late 1800s to 1910. This period in American history was fueled by "environmental determinism," that is, the view that the physical environment had the potential to influence the social behavior of citizens (Lawson 2005, 94). According to Thomas S. Hines, "many observers of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century America—residents, visitors, and expatriates alike—believed that its cities were ugly" (Hines 2004). As population in cities increased, the architecture around them deteriorated and so did sanitation. Many people of the wealthy and middle classes migrated to urban outskirts and sometimes on into the countryside. Some who held progressive views, however, stayed and worked with architects, designers, and politicians to transform cities into beautiful and livable spaces.

Architect Daniel Hudson Burnham is among the architects that invested in the development of a new vision for American cities. Burnham is considered the Father of the City Beautiful movement that he proposed while serving as the director of the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. Burnham's impetus to develop a plan to improve American cities was based on ideas of the time, which maintained that American cities were "ugly" (Hines 2004). Burnham's plans emphasized the transformation of cities through physical changes that would improve both visual and sanitation conditions, but which would also celebrate America's connection to the world. Historian Thomas S. Hines explains that while other architects such as

Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright sought to represent a “uniquely ‘American’ culture” Burnham and his associates “saw the United States as a rightful heir to the traditions of Western culture and chose thus to recall, celebrate, and use those traditions themselves (ibid).

Following the World’s Fair Burnham collaborated with fellow architect Edward Bennett to produce The Plan of Chicago in which he asserts virtues of neoclassic architectural elements as well as the role that parks would have on civic renewal (Hines 2004). Perhaps a reflection of his friendship with Frederick Law Olmstead, the architect who designed New York’s Central Park in 1853, Burnham began to think of parks central to the re-envisioning of the city; they provided a connection to nature through landscaping, use of trees and flowers which were not only aesthetically pleasing, but also served as places for recreation (ibid). Burnham, saw parks as central to civic harmony. He felt that “before population had become dense in certain parts of the city, people could live without parks, but we of today cannot” (ibid).

Urban gardens were also considered central solutions to the concerns raised by congested cities. Vacant lots were perceived as eyesores and “potentially hazardous to health and safety” (Lawson 2005, 97). The need to improve neighborhoods led civic groups to focus on ways to motivate people to adopt vacant lots. Although the beautification aspects were of most importance, these gardens were also considered to benefit the poor. School gardens led to home gardens and anyone who maintained their own plot was “a better person” for doing so because it meant that s/he or they were doing their part for their environment and in turn were contributing to conditions of “the masses.”

The emphasis on beautification changed to patriotic obligation with the start of WWI. Historian Rose Hayden-Smith recounts, “progressives, led by a wealthy forester, made local food production via school, home, community and workplace gardens a national imperative” (2014,

36). At the start of WWI in 1914, Americans were mobilized to help European allies by supplying them with food. When the United States joined the war, the federal government established the National War Garden Commission (NWGC) to motivate the nation to participate in Liberty/Victory Garden programs. The NWGC promoted patriotism as duty for the "common good," often using coercive language. NWGC bulletins warned, "If We Do Not Feed Ourselves We Will Have Food Cards Decorated With a German Eagle at the Top That Will Tell Us What We Can Eat" (ibid, 37). Such messages generated attention from everyone in society, but in particular, women and children who were not permitted to serve war efforts more directly. "College educated women," writes Hayden-Smith, "left their studies to help the nation produce and harvest food" (ibid, 35), and children, as previously mentioned, were enlisted in the School Garden Army.

The idea of the commons that had been carried over by early European American settlement was reinvented during wartime to encourage the use of "slacker land"—that is, unused land including parks, vacant city lots, and even private property owned by railroads—for the purposes of growing food (Hayden-Smith 2014; Lawson 2005). The notion of slacker land also extended to the home, for people were encouraged to use their backyards for growing produce as a contribution to war efforts. Additionally, homemakers were encouraged to make do without common household ingredients such as white flour and meat and also to avoid wasting food, predating the issuing of nationwide government rations during WW II, when such scarcities were mandated.

It was during the era of Liberty Gardens of WWI that meatless and wheatless days were introduced. People were not simply urged to ration their use of foods in order to provide for soldiers abroad, they were also given recipes to substitute legumes for meat, to cook with less

sugar, and to eat more fish and corn instead. During this time media was seen as the perfect vehicle for reaching the public with messages regarding nutrition as well as ways to contribute to the war efforts; propaganda in the media continues to find use in today's society. Meatless[18] days, for instance, have gained new meaning not simply to improve our health—meat consumption is connected to heart disease and other preventable ailments—but also to save the planet from climate change due to complexities of deforestation of the Amazon by cattle ranchers who supply U.S. fast-food "needs," for example. In 2015, the John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health launched the Global Meatless Monday campaign, not simply for health, but also to meet the call for action set by the United Nations 2015 Climate Change Conference (COP21) (Global Meatless Monday—For the Environment 2019).

The Liberty/Victory Garden campaign proved successful even after the war ended in 1918. Following the war leaders of the campaign, focused on expounding the enjoyable aspects of gardening and the virtues of growing one's own fresh vegetables. Eventually government funding for programs decreased even though the United States began to enter an agricultural depression. American farmers had become used to high production, but with the end of the war the demand decreased—European soldiers returned to the fields—and in the States, Americans in rural areas became displaced by modern farming technologies such as tractors that no longer depended on use of animals. The hardships experienced in rural areas of the nation contributed to the Great Depression that is typically attributed to the stock market crash of 1929 (Hayden-Smith 2014, 182).

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[18] Various celebrated chefs in our time are proponents of a reduced meat diet if not a vegetarian diet. Among the most notable of these chef-activists is Mark Bittman who connects the obesity epidemic in America with global warming to promote eating less meat for the betterment of all. For more on this topic see his Food Matters: A Guide to Conscious Eating (2008).

Two types of gardening programs emerged during the Great Depression: relief gardens and subsistence gardens. Some forms of charity such as soup kitchens and bread lines were seen as “degrading or reactionary” and therefore, work-relief was viewed as a better approach by some (Lawson 2005, 147). In turn, work-relief programs developed agencies to oversee large-scale gardening programs. Participants in work-relief gardens worked side-by-side with others in similar circumstances. What they grew and harvested was turned over to the overseeing agency, which then dispersed crops to those in need. Work-relief gardens were run more like agricultural operations; the focus was on maximum yields for distribution as opposed to ways to benefit the individuals growing the food.

Subsistence gardens had different goals than relief gardens. Participants were given their own “plot, seeds, technical assistance and occasionally tools and fertilizer so households could grow their own food” (Lawson 2005, 148). Benefits listed in support of subsistence gardens reflect the value placed on social human interactions; they were seen as giving “a sense of personal responsibility, positive competition with fellow gardeners, and healthy family recreation” (ibid). Gardens of the sort were ultimately considered the better of the two types of programs and so they benefitted from more funding. By 1939, however, the federal government revised its relief programs and many urban gardens lost their funding as a consequence (ibid, 115). The end of federal support for relief gardens did not end recognition of the benefits that community gardens provided. Perceptions of what could be accomplished through gardening programs did change however.

When the United States entered WWII in 1941 after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, liberty/victory gardeners mobilized to show their support through gardening. Yet, the government was not sure that “small-scale urban gardens” could contribute much to food

production (Lawson 2005, 170). By this time several mechanized agricultural advancements had been made, and farmers were producing more than enough food. Moreover, federal experts worried that inexperienced gardeners would misuse seeds and fertilizers and therefore turned their focus to supporting food production in rural farms (ibid). However, representatives of garden clubs were not discouraged by this and instead worked with American citizens to prove to the government that they could indeed contribute to war efforts as their predecessors had done during WWI.

During the National Defense Gardening Conference held in response to the United States' entry into the war, professionals involved in urban gardening—horticulturalists, educators, gardening club members, and so on—revived a Liberty/Victory gardening program from earlier war efforts. Experts showed how gardens helped maintain morale, ways they served recreational purposes and more importantly, connections between gardening and health. As during WWI, Victory gardens tapped into overall national concerns about food supply. However, this time around, urban gardening efforts were "justified as a way to satisfy household tastes while also putting less demand on resources needed for the war effort" (Lawson 2005, 174). Between the wars, farming technologies had improved production, but in order to make the best use of resources the federal government implemented policies that included price controls and rationing, which affected citizen's access to foods. Wealthier people could afford to pay higher prices for their food, but others could not. The victory garden program that developed therefore addressed the specific concerns of citizens, which involved growing food that appealed to tastes.

WWII Victory gardens involved men, women and children as they did before, but such initiatives were not simply about growing and conserving food, but rather about maintaining morale and for health. Experienced gardeners from the previous war and relief eras stepped up to

teach the new generation of gardeners. As they had before, women played a central role in both gardens and the domestic sphere where home canning could save tin for ammunition, waste fats were for gunpowder, and scraps could feed farm animals. Despite the health benefits connected with community gardens, many were discontinued after the war. Gardens were not seen as having a role during peacetime, and gardening was seen as a benefit already gained that could be continued as a hobby in the home garden. Class implications of such senses are evident.

Following the war, the United States sought to address social concerns through housing developments and suburbanization. In 1945, many people were still living in multi-family situations and veterans returned home to high rents; new housing was at a low (Nicolaides & Wiese 2017). Thus, planners returned to suburban projects that included lush landscapes and roomy homes with yards where people could cultivate their own home gardens. However, such housing was not affordable or even accessible to everyone. As Becky Nicolaides and Andrew Weise explain "suburbia beckoned with opportunity for millions of Whites, but it remained rigidly segregated and broadly exclusive throughout the postwar decades" (ibid).

Segregation was methodically built into municipal land-use practices that maintained division between White and Americans of color. Cities upheld zoning restrictions that disallowed the development of tall, multi-family buildings in suburban neighborhoods, and real estate agents practiced redlining as a rating system. Letters A-D and color-coded maps distinguished living areas "desirable" to Euro-Americans as A/green and B/blue from C/yellow, while D/red communities were considered to be in decline or hazardous (Reft 2017). In addition, the government's New Deal programs—instated after the Great Depression—including the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC), provided low-interest home loan opportunities, but only for Whites and European immigrant groups newly

admitted to the category of "White" -- that is, Polish, Italians, Irish, Greeks and European Jews, among others (Avila 2004; Reft 2017; Nicolaides and Weise 2017). By 1960, only two percent of African Americans had received FHA mortgages across the United States. As a result, communities of color fell in a cycle of disrepair that kept them in red categories and which also led to divestment from businesses.

In the 1970's the emphasis of gardens as sites that strengthened "civic mindedness" and "better social behavior," which had been core principles definitive of previous years, switched to reflect "neighborhood resistance to urban disinvestments while also satisfying new ideals of urban ecology and social activism" (Langegger 2017, 73). Influenced by Civil Rights and related social-justice movements, city planners developed "advocacy planning," giving special attention to the "concerns of certain social groups and neighborhoods" (Lawson, 2005 169). In addition, interest was placed on "user-initiated recreational [open]-spaces for which community gardens served as models" (ibid). Unlike parks, community gardens were seen to address larger socio-economic and cultural issues, among them food security, community development (i.e., city supported neighborhood clean-up and/or beautification projects) and "cultural continuity" (Saldivar-Tanaka and Krasny 2004, 410). Notable examples of ways people are continuing longstanding traditions include the construction of "casitas" or little houses by Puerto Ricans in New York.

With urban cities in decline in the early 1970s "some activists and gardeners used their energy and their faith in gardening as a healing activity to counteract the failing conditions of the city" (Lawson 2005, 218). Historian Warren James Belasco describes the establishment of People's Park as one of the oldest known grassroots efforts to seize land for community use. On April 20, 1969, a group known as the Robin Hood's Commission gathered in the Southside

neighborhood of Berkeley on vacant land owned by the University of California and "planted vegetable seeds, trees and sod, erected a striped swing set, picnic tables and benches, launched balloons, shared fruit, marijuana, and wine, danced to the country rock band Joy of Cooking and cheered the new sign: People's Park: Power to the People" (Belasco 2007, 19-20). The Commission did not ask for anyone's permission, nor did they seek funding for the supplies they used. People simply showed up, each with something to offer through what came to be known as "guerilla gardening."

The Robin Hood's Park Commission's guerilla tactics grew from multiple issues of concern. On the one hand, some of the Bay Area's progressives sought to cultivate their own "free" food as a means to redefine the food system in place, but they also sought to challenge capitalism and offered cooperative forms of production instead. The Commissions' goals dovetailed with frustrations people held with the way the land in question had been acquired and mismanaged. According to historical accounts, the University of Calfornia/Berkeley's acquisition of that land through eminent domain caused dislocation of 200 or so residents ("People's Park" 2019). To make matters worse, homes were demolished but debris was left on the lot and construction was discontinued, leaving the land idle and "ugly" (ibid).

The Commission' s call to action, which even spoke of taking over the entire city of Berkeley, made officials fearful. In response, conservative Republican Governor Ronald Reagan sent the National Guard to Berkeley where they stayed for two weeks (Belasco 2007, 20). Following initial tensions, UCB allowed the Park to remain, but because land is a valuable asset for development, the University has made several attempts throughout the years to take the land

back to develop it for parking or student housing. Activists have met these attempts with resistance, and sometimes these confrontations have led to violence.[19]

All guerilla garden projects, however, have not been defined by confrontations and battles Liz Christy's Bowery-Houston Garden in New York is one example. As a member of the Green Guerillas, Christy engaged in various activities to beautify the neighborhood where she and others lived: planting sunflowers in the medians, seed bombing vacant lots, and planting in window boxes. In 1973, the Green Guerillas found an empty lot and asked who owned it and if they could start a garden. One year later, they were granted permission by the City's Housing Preservation and Development, and with contributions of labor, tools, and seeds, they created what is now regarded as the oldest community garden in New York City.

Another example of a community garden constructed with minimal funding is Cliffside Park (now Oakledge) in Burlington, Vermont (Flint 2007). B.H. Thompson, a retiree, is considered to be the initiator of this garden, remembered as having "campaigned to establish a forty plot community garden" (Lawson 2005, 214). One year later, the garden grew to contain 540 family plots, and advocates created the Gardens for All organization to help manage gardening activities as well as acquire funds. These, along with other people-led-garden projects, drew the attention of the federal government, and in 1976, support programs were established through the USDA Cooperative Extension Urban Garden Program (ibid, 215). Funding made it possible for people to gain gardening education and establish non-profits to create gardens in neighborhoods across the country. A notable organization is the American Community Garden Association (ACGA), established in 1978. To this day, the ACGA holds a yearly conference,

[19] For a detailed discussion of the Bloody Thursday riot that took place at the People's Park on May 15, 1969, see "From the Archives: When Berkeley Residents Rioted to Protect People's Park" (2018).

maintains a website that provides information of gardening programs across the country as well as basic guidelines to help individuals start community gardens in their neighborhoods (ACGA).

In Los Angeles, the University of California Cooperative Extension used funds to establish the Common Ground Program (CGP) to serve low-income communities. The CGP helped to create over one hundred gardens throughout Los Angeles, Long Beach, Lynwood, Compton, and Inglewood (Lawson 2005, 228). Additionally, the CGP is responsible for establishing some programs still running today, including the Master Gardener Program, Grow LA Victory Garden Initiative, School Gardens. They also produced educational materials in multiple languages with instructions on the basics of growing food, whether in containers or in people's home yards.

Programs such as the CGP helped support the establishment and maintenance of community gardens, but like advocates during previous eras, they also served to establish and convey core values, among them, community cohesion and cooperation. The Master Gardener program, for instance, requires people who complete training to do fifty hours of volunteer service during their first year of practice. This condition is intended to ensure that the trainee gain confidence and practice, but it also ensures that participants gain insight into the types of social dilemmas experienced by gardeners so that they can speak both to plant cultivation and as well as community building. The 1970s taught planners and community gardeners that neighborhood residents had to be part of the planning if a garden was to persist and serve the community. People who have a sense of ownership are more likely to work to keep community gardens open and available for the common good.

The spirit of resistance and ingenuity that characterized 1970s gardening has remained throughout the nation. Gardening has proven useful to address various issues, and although

guerilla tactics are no longer central to the allocation of vacant lots, efforts to address socio-economic concerns remains central to reasons for starting community gardens. Thus, the community garden movement as of this writing in 2019 is one typified by a variety of themes and programs. Laura Lawson identifies four roles that gardens play today: “neighborhood garden, community food security source, job training and entrepreneurial garden, and school garden” (2005, 264). Community building, economics and producing food remain central goals. However, environmental consciousness and health are increasingly significant to many community gardeners. In turn, ways that health has been connected to gardening and gardens throughout history may be considered to understand the importance of Proyecto Jardín as a health-focused community garden.

From Health Returns to Health Promotion

While addressing concerns with food insecurity, unemployment, and social injustice, community gardens have historically been connected to seeking better health. In the late 1800s, when vacant-lot gardens were built to address poverty and unemployment, philanthropists and charity associations made a case for these sites by emphasizing their “health returns.” Gardening was considered a source of “better-quality food,” but also as physical exercise (Lawson 2005, 29). Additionally, community gardens were thought to be natural settings that stood in contrast with urban centers where sanitation needs and overcrowding contributed to health problems. In some cities, people were encouraged to pitch over-night tents on their plots to gain a taste of “country life,” and as a way to escape congested city neighborhoods where poor ventilation in low-income housing tenements and insufficient waste disposal were understood as closely tied to diseases such as typhoid and consumption, as tuberculosis was know in the 19th century (ibid).

Senses of health benefits derived from community gardening shifted during WWII. Americans were encouraged to take part in the war effort by growing food, not simply for sending abroad, but also to improve their physical and mental wellbeing. During WWI people had been motivated to grow food in cities as a form of patriotic duty, but war gardening efforts left some with a "bad taste for gardening" (Lawson 2005, 187) and days of scarcity also left a good percentage of Americans in poor health. Thus, promoters of WWII Victory Gardens changed their campaign to emphasize the value that working in a garden could have for their personal health. From this point on, community-garden activists began to talk more about benefits of a well balanced diet as well the therapeutic aspects of gardening.

At the beginning of WWII, the government also realized that perhaps American citizens were not physically prepared to fight in a war. Children and adults alike were malnourished and a high percentage of young men were rejected from Selective Service calls due to evidence of "poor teeth" and other signs of inadequate sustenance endured during the lean years of the Great Depression (Hayden-Smith 2014, 183-184). Nutritional concerns were therefore met with initiatives that encouraged eating a "balanced diet" to build "energy," and gardens became ideal places to disseminate information that supported the governments "nutritional defense" efforts (ibid, 183).

Mental health was also a concern during WWII, but was connected to community gardens in different ways than physical health. Whereas food was recommended to build energy, blood, muscles, and bones to ensure that Americans "'keep in top-notch condition all the time,'" being in nature and engaging in gardening work were perceived as benefits to one's emotional and mental wellness (M.L. Wilson in Hayden Smith 2014, 184). Gardening was promoted as both a coping method and as "a way to improve employee morale and performance" (Lawson

2005, 185). Families with loved ones fighting in the war were encouraged to take up gardening as a restorative hobby that put them in close proximity to nature in a way that could both provide solace as well as relieve stress (ibid, 186). Companies even added gardens to their work place to create an outlet for employees who occasionally "lost their nerves." A solution was to provide distressed workers with options to step off the assembly line and into a garden where working with soil and plants was thought to reduce stress levels (ibid, 185). Soldiers returning from war with mental and physical disabilities were also encouraged to garden because the natural environment coupled with gardening activities were felt to create an atmosphere that encouraged them to "talk about their problems" (ibid, 186).

The turn towards gardening as a therapeutic activity not only served the purpose of attracting individuals to community gardens during the Victory Garden era, but such efforts approached good health through connections with self and community. Thus, in the years following WW II, the emphasis turned to developing studies to measure just how community gardens and the activities within them shape neighborhoods into healthier places. Medical researchers remind us that gardens as healing sites and gardening as therapy have been valued since the beginning of time; however, despite such conventional wisdom, studies that inform us of the benefits that proximity to nature has on physiological and mental health did not take place until the early 1970s.

Community gardens as nature sites are a benefit to individual and community health in and of themselves. My understanding is influenced in great part by the work of Rachel and Stephen Kaplan, whose earliest research identified the importance that both new and experienced gardeners place on what they term "nature fascination" (Kaplan & Kaplan 1990, 240). Through surveys administered to members of the American Horticultural Society and *Organic and*

Farming Magazine readers, Kaplan and Kaplan were able to identify what constitutes "nature fascination" they suggest how high this category ranked in importance to participants. As they learned, nature fascination covered multiple areas including active involvement (working in soil), passive involvement (checking on plants), and cognitive descriptions (from planning a garden to forgetting one's stressful problems in the act of gardening) (ibid). Moreover, nature fascination was the second highest-ranking source of gardening satisfaction cited after tranquility, but it should be noted that these two themes are closely related. "Nature fascination" describes how one achieves a sense of tranquility, and reciprocally, tranquility can make a person more likely to become drawn to plants, animals, and other qualities of the natural environment.

Nature fascination is of particular importance because it enabled Stephen Kaplan to develop what he calls Attention Restoration Theory, a framework useful in identifying the qualities by which a restorative experience can be comprehended as well as ways it could encourage understanding of the value/benefit of non-wilderness nature sites such as community gardens (Kaplan 1995, 169).[20] A later study by Rachel Kaplan involved use of verbal and visual surveys of low-rise apartment dwellers to learn their perceptions of views from their windows. The study revealed that even the most everyday experiences such as "having natural elements or settings in the view from the window contributes substantially to residents' satisfaction with their neighborhood and with diverse aspects of their sense of well-being" (Kaplan 2001, 507).

Charles A. Lewis ' "Gardening as Healing Process" (1990, 245) applies Kaplan and Kaplan's attention restoration theory to urban gardening, not simply to offer recommendations for garden designers, but to account for the various ways that people gain access to urban gardens. He addresses social ills, including those of a social nature, which, he suggests, "inner

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[20] For an in-depth discussion of the Attention Restorative Theory, see Stephen Kaplan's "The Restorative Benefits of Nature: Toward an Integrative Framework," *Journal of Environmental Psychology* (1995).

city children" might experience on a daily basis "in their home turf" (ibid). Urban gardens, as Lewis explains, provide multiple benefits for children and adults alike, including modes of experiencing plants, observational opportunities—whether by walking through a garden or merely sitting in one to view the surroundings—the plants themselves, and participating in gardening through horticulture therapy programs.

While medical researchers seldom cite Lewis' work these days, it is one of the earliest works to make connections between social conditions, wellness, and urban gardens. A review of gardener responses in his study allowed Lewis to identify the benefits of participation in gardens and gardening activities. Caring for plants reflected a personal commitment and responsibility for the plant, but it also provided "a basis for socializing, talking with other gardeners about successes and problems" (Lewis 1990, 247). Lewis observed that differences of all kinds are dissolved when "the person who grows the best tomatoes and cucumbers is besieged with requests for information on his secrets" (ibid). These friendships lead to "neighborliness" that generates an "enriched sense of community" that we now understand plays a role in determining individual and community health (ibid) not to mention overall social capital.[21]

With all we have learned about the benefits that community gardening can offer people and their neighborhoods, public health and medical practitioners have recognized have begun to see the potential to use these sites for health promotion as well as interventions (Twiss et. al 2003; Armstrong 2000; Al-Delaimy 2017; Porter 2018). It is of no surprise that a search using the key words "community garden & health promotion" will generate a list of 16,809 scholarly and peer reviewed sources that discuss experiences from around the world. When the search is

[21] While Lewis presents a celebratory image of social interactions between people of different racial, educational and social classes, it should be noted that conflicts also arise at community gardens. See Jesse Hirsch's "Thievery, Fraud, Fistfights and Weed: The Other Side of Community Gardens" (2014) for a discussion of the social issues that arise in community gardens.

narrowed further, we find that a central focus among medical researchers is the use of community gardens to promote and/or improve health through access to fresh food and open spaces in low-income neighborhoods (Pastor and Morello-Frosch 2014).

While some focus on identifying aspects of community gardens and related activities that serve as models for health promotion (McIlvaine-Newsad & Porter 2013; Egli et. al., 2016), a significant number of researchers investigate health experiences of ethnic communities, whether U.S. born or immigrant, refugee or undocumented. Of these, 400 or so focus on Latinxs in the United States and pay closest attention to nutritional health and community gardening as obesity and diabetes prevention (Grier et. al., 2015; Davis et. al., 2016). However, because there is long-standing interest among medical practitioners, anthropologists, and folklorists in understanding roles that Latinx traditional foodways and medicinal practices play in the lives of immigrants and non-immigrants alike, scholars have begun to explore the extent to which people are using community gardens to cultivate medicinal herbs and plants that play a central role in self-determining the wellbeing of their families and their communities.

This growing body of work reflects a largely social science focus that emphasizes the role of culture in determining the aesthetics of community gardens and in turn the role that Latinxs play in community development and urban agriculture more generally. Laura Saldivar-Tanaka and Marianne Krasny's "Culturing Community Development, Neighborhood Open Space, and Civic Agriculture: The Case of Latino Community Gardens in New York City" (2004) provides a detailed discussion of a largely Puerto Rican community garden experience. Part of their research involved observation of garden structures and the types of plants grown. The authors discuss the use of *casitas* or little houses as communal centers where people can gather daily or for events, as well as the types of plants they grow that distinguish them from other Latinxs. For

example, Puerto Ricans tend to grow sweet peppers, potatoes, and okra, while Mexicans choose spicy peppers, amaranth, tomatillos, *epazote* (wormseed), *pipicha* (pigweed) and *papalo* (summer cilantro). However, the authors do not provide a concise list of plants or a detailed discussion of how these and other herbs grown by their interviewees play roles in the care of common ailments such as colds, flus, and digestive problems.

Other studies that do give attention to plants grown in community gardens by Latinxs are characterized by plant inventories as well as discussion of the potential benefits of cultivating crops indigenous to the home countries of gardeners (Cousins & Witkowski 2015; Pearsall et. al., 2016). Pearsall et. al.,'s "Urban Community Garden Agrodiversity and Cultural Identity in Philadelphia, Pennsylvana, U.S." (2016), is a notable study that explored the kinds of plants grown in eight of Philadelphia's community gardens. Through interviews and development of a plant inventory, the authors determine links between cultural identity and choices of particular plants. One hundred thirty-two different crops are identified, representing one hundred four species. Most of these plants are "staple vegetables for consumption" grown by all demographic groups (ibid, 489). However, only Latinx or Asian immigrants grew non-native species—callaloo, yam bean, rozelle bitter melon, and black beans (ibid, 490). Additionally, some plants and herbs identified were grown for medicinal or spiritual purposes, but in-depth exploration of how these were used was not explored in any detail. Nevertheless, cultivation of plants was found to correlate with cultural identity. Interviewees stated this explicitly as well as exemplified it through the design of their gardens and plant selection. Not surprisingly, such relationships were characteristic of mostly Latinx "gardeners [who] indicated that their primary motivation for gardening was to maintain their cultural heritage" (ibid, 486).

While studies of agrodiversity can reveal much about the ways plants in gardens indicate

cultural identity and/or place-making, they leave questions unanswered, namely, how these plants are incorporated into daily life in ways that serve individual and communal health goals or needs. And to what extent is one demographic group more concerned with the cultivation of medicinal herbs than others? For those of us engaged in public health and alternative medicine research, the details of everyday use of medicinal plants are essential. Understanding the ways culture influences people's choices in traditional medicine helps practitioners to meet community needs.

Latinx Community Gardens in the City of Angeles

Although there exist few studies that give specific attention to Latinx cultivation and uses of medicinal plants in community gardens, three researchers provide direction: Devon G. Peña, Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, and Sarah Portnoy. Peña, a sociologist with a specialization in anthropology and environmental justice, provides an informative study of the South Central Farm prior to its destruction in 2006 (2006; also see Mares and Peña 2010). Briefly, The South Central Farm was established on a 14-acre lot off 41st Street and Alameda in South Central Los Angeles. The land was parceled to 350 indigenous Mexican immigrant families by the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank following the Rodney King Riots. From 2004 and 2006, the gardeners became embroiled in a land struggle with the former owner. Despite protests and support from actors and activists, the city ruled to return the land back to the owner. The gardeners tried to buy the land from the owner, but he denied their offer and the farm was bulldozed. Some gardeners accepted land in a different area of South Central where they created the Stanford-Avalon Community Garden while others purchased farmland in Bakersfield and formed The South Central Farmers' Cooperative.

Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, a sociologist, offers case studies of two Latinx community gardens in Los Angeles (2014). Portnoy, a language scholar with a specialty in Latinx food culture, wrote a chapter on Proyecto Jardín that documents gardeners' commitments to food justice, while drawing clear connections to the importance that gardening has for Latinx immigrants in their quest to maintain cultural "roots" (2017). These studies are central to my work because they constitute the only qualitative approaches to Latinx gardening experiences available, and in the case of Hondagneu-Sotelo, the only research giving specific attention to Latinx community gardens in Los Angeles where people cultivate medicinal plants. My dissertation will add to this developing area.

Devon G. Peña's pilot study of plant diversity at the South Central Farm focuses on plant identification, but it also recognizes the importance of medicinal plants as central to place-making and affirming identity. Peña documented thirty-five species of plants, "each with a multitude of medicinal or nutritional uses," (2006, 2) grown by people of Mexican-indigenous heritage including Mixtec, Tojolobal, Triqui, Tzeltal Yaqui, and Zapotec people who, when asked why they plant a garden, often say that doing so "reminds me of home" (ibid, 8) and they will describe the ways these plants are central to recreating the "*huerto familiar* or hometown kitchen garden that they had in Mexico" (ibid, 8). To cultivate as they did back home is a way to make this new country their own, but also a way to express identity through reference to lived practices that continue to contribute to senses of self and community as Mexicano or Latinx. Unfortunately, Peña's work does not go into detail regarding the plants that are used solely as medicine, by whom or for what. However, the opportunity to continue his initiatives remains. Several families who established Stanford-Avalon community garden continue to cultivate herbs and plants used in home remedies for common ailments.

A second study that pays close attention to the role of medicinal plants in Latinx place-making and identity expression is Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo's Paradise Transplanted: Migration and the making of California Gardens (2014). In her book, Hondagneu-Sotelo discusses Franklin garden, a public and open-to-all site, and Dolores Huerta garden as a semi-private space. She interviewed people and participated in routine activities and events of each place. These gardens are located in inner-city Los Angeles where most people are immigrants from southern Mexico and Central America.

Both gardens serve their communities in multiple ways, but the central theme is restoration, which "encompasses both recreation and the re-creation of homeland practices and culture" (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2014, 120). The immigration experience is full of challenges—difficulties finding work, low-paying and stressful jobs, discrimination, surrounding gang violence and loneliness—that affect each person differently. For some, a community garden provides respite at the end of a work-day, and for others, it is a place of gathering where kids can play while adults talk, swap recipes, or discuss what ails them and consider remedies that would be appropriate. The aesthetics of a garden—what plants are grown, how they are arranged, the types of sitting and communal areas created and the activities conducted—plays a key role in transporting people back home in a way that helps them soothe their loneliness in this new country. Gustava, a regular gardener at Franklin garden, said the place was like a second home that even looked like the house she had lived in back in Guatemala. She said, "I see the dirt [floor] in the *casita* [or little house]. I see the flowers at the entrance and it seems like I could just be siting back there in the pathway" (ibid, 135). Gustava's ability to feel at home, however, was only part of the therapeutic benefits she gained from gardening there. When Gustava came to Los Angeles, she left four children in Guatemala with her relatives, and being away from them

for ten years has caused her to become depressed and to experienced *nervios* (the equivalent to what in the U.S we characterize as anxiety). It was both coming to the garden and meeting and talking to people that helped her cope and ultimately heal (ibid, 143).

The Franklin and Dolores Huerta garden also serves as what Hondagneu-Sotelo calls "neighborhood homeland pharmacies" where people not only grow medicinal herbs familiar to them, but where they also exchange remedies with other gardeners as well as invent new forms of self-care or memorialize remedies no longer relevant (2014, 139). The four plants that everyone in the garden recognized, regardless of what country they were from, are *hierba buena* (mint), *albahaca* (basil), *rude* (rue), and *ximpachuli* (marigolds). These were all used to treat common ailments including "tummy aches or ear infections or to calm colicky infants" as well as folk illnesses such as *susto* (fright) (ibid). One plant the women in the garden told stories about is *chichicastre* or nettle; it was planted by a Oaxacan woman who said it was good for *susto*, but no one currently used it (ibid, 140-141). Nevertheless, the plant was kept in case anyone ever needed it. As a neighborhood pharmacy, people at the Franklin garden shared herbs with anyone from the neighborhood who needed them. Whether they helped in the garden or not, all they had to do was to ask for what they needed and someone would provide them with a cutting.

While Sarah Portnoy's research does not emphasize the use of traditional plants in community gardens, she considers why Latinx immigrants engage in community gardening and finds that having a place to garden gives people a "sense of community by connecting gardeners to one another and to the traditions and practices of their native lands" (2016, 149). Moreover, she explains that for Latinxs, gardening has a spiritual and cultural value essential to people's desire to connect to their heritage. Portnoy's observations help to explain the reasons why some people at Proyecto Jardín choose to cultivate herbs in the garden as a way to connect to pre-

Colonial knowledge. Portnoy's research conveys the spirit of resistance and desire to maintain cultural sovereignty that was characteristic of Proyecto Jardín from 2009 to 2016. During those years, food sovereignty—community based right to define food production, distribution and consumption—played a stronger role than the use of medicinal herbs, but it also redefined food as a central element in shaping individual and community health.[22]

Community gardens have the potential to reveal much about social experience of all who engage in day-to-day activities there, but also of the communities' needs in general. The image of passersby asking for plant and herb cuttings described by Hondagneu-Sotelo comes to mind here. The studies we currently have for Los Angeles provide an overview with a greater focus on the role of plants in place-making. I hope to add to this conversation by close attention to medicinal practices, not simply to add details to how Latinxs engage in place-making, but more specifically to investigate ways that place-making is layered culturally, generationally, and economically, while emphasizing how well-being and access to health care are central to feeling "at home" while decolonizing self and community.

While scholarship on Latinx community gardens is still in the process of being defined, we can identify general patterns of use. Community gardens become extensions of the home where people can maintain connection to their cultural identities as well as serve as places for communing with other Latinxs who share similar stories of struggle as well as health and food access needs. Understanding of how Latinxs make space for themselves in Boyle Heights will be explored in the following chapters.

[22] La Via Campesina introduced the concept of food sovereignty at the World Summit in 1996 ("Via Campesina - Globalizing Hope, Globalizing the Struggle !" 2019). La Via Campesina's original goal was to challenge neo-liberal trade policies that threaten farmers' ways of life in rural areas across the world, but now food justice activists in the United States use the term as well. For larger discussions of food sovereignty, see Vandana Shiva's *Seed Sovereignty, Food Security: Women in the Vanguard* (2015) and Mihesuah and Hoover's *Indigenous Food Sovereignty in the United States: Restoring Cultural Knowledge, Protecting Environments, and Regaining Health* (2019).

Chapter 3

Proyecto Jardín Case Study: Part I

Proyecto Jardín community garden was established by Dr. Robert Krochmal as an extension of his integrative medical approach to healthcare delivery. Dr. Krochmal often called Proyecto Jardín an intervention, yet he ran it as an extension of his medical practice and as a place to explore key principles of integrative medicine. Specifically, he focused on a) the relationship between practitioner and patient, b) health promotion and prevention and c) the integrative medical practitioner's commitment to self-exploration and self-development.[23] The development of the garden required negotiation of interests and needs with multiple parties: White Memorial Medical Center (WMMC); the Los Angeles Development and Relief Agency (LADRA); Bridge Elementary School and neighborhood residents. The process was multifaceted.

The conceptual triad proposed by Henri Lefebvre in *The Production of Space* (1991) an appropriate framework for describing and analyzing the ways that Proyecto Jardín was created. In turn, Lefebvre's triad can be investigated to show the interdependence of spatial practice/perceived space, representations of space/conceived space and representational space/lived and endured space (the realm of passive experience of space, but where ideas, theory and resistance to the dominant narrative arise). The first space represents the realm of daily reality and routine, routes and networks that link private life with public space; the second is the realm of graphic and physical manifestations that reflects ideals and imaginings of the nation as

[23] See Elizabeth Wang for a description of integrative medicine as practiced by the UCLA Center for East-West Medicine (2019). For discussions of the tenets of integrative medicine as well as ways they are included in the training of nurses and medical practitioners see Anath (2009) and Huner et. al., (2013).

well as capitalists' interest; it is space as it is conceived by "scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers" (1991, 38). The third space also regarded by contemporary theorists as "thirdspace" is the realm of passive experience, but also where ideas, theory and resistance to the dominant narrative arise (Soja 1996, 31-33). Spatial production involves organic flow or movement among all three of these spatial practices described by Lefebvre.

The sections that follow are organized to consider ways that interactions among people and their negotiations of power over time—creating histories, that is—shaped the infrastructure and spatial practices that characterize community dynamics in Boyle Heights. This exploration is a first step in analyzing the kind of garden Proyecto Jardín came to be as well as the social interactions and issues that arose during its creation. Analysis of spatial practice permits us to gain a deeper understanding of ways immigrant and native-born Latínxs make space for themselves in order to define their own health needs.

Barrio Boyle Heights

Proyecto Jardín is located in Boyle Heights, one of the oldest suburbs of Los Angeles. Some remember this neighborhood as a multicultural area while others define it as a dangerous place characterized by gang violence and crime. Thus, it is significant that insiders and outsiders alike consider Proyecto Jardín to be an oasis amidst a concrete jungle (Trounson 2003; Portnoy 2017). While a sanctuary seems like a good resource to have in a neighborhood, some people were originally opposed to Dr. Krochmal's efforts to create a community garden. To understand how negative rumors began to circulate in the area and in turn influence perceptions of the garden through time, we must consider the social, political and economic forces that shaped the

neighborhood. Boyle Heights became a Mexican enclave as well as the social and political experiences that both led to the neighborhood's degradation, poverty, and crime, while engendering a spirit of resistance that Dr. Krochmal met when he embarked on creating a community garden.

Mexicans were already living in the city of Los Angeles when William H. Workman established Boyle Heights in 1875. Mexican *pobladores* or settlers arrived in 1771.They built the Los Angeles Plaza using Tongva[24] labor, and they developed cattle ranches. Many people began to identify with the land and started calling themselves *Californios*. American immigrants driven by the doctrine of Manifest Destiny began migrating to California and other areas of the Southwest in the early 1800s. At first, Californios welcomed new arrivals, but when it became obvious to them that the Americans did not seek to integrate into the established culture, the Californio government began to take measures to secure their borders. "Unlike immigrants who learned Spanish, adopted Catholicism, established close ties with the population, and sought the status of naturalized citizen or legal residence" explains Hass in "War in California, 1846-1848" (1998), "later immigrants most often remained illegal settlers who resided on the margins of California's social and political life" (333). These American immigrants felt justified in their actions not simply because they thought themselves superior to Californios, but also because they were supported and encouraged to take up land by the United States government itself (ibid).

Following the Mexican-American War that lasted between 1846 and 1848, and which annexed California along with Texas and other southern states, people on the newly established

[24] Tongva is the preferred name used by descendants of the Kizh people who inhabited the Los Angeles basin prior to Spanish colonization. According to Cindi Alvitre, Gabrielino-Tongva Tribal leader and professor of American Indian Studies at California State University Long Beach, there were many Tongva villages from Santa Barbara to San Gabriel and on Catalina and several Channel Islands. Yangna, the largest village, was located in the current site of the Los Angeles State Historic Park.

U.S. border were allowed to stay.[25] Under the Treaty of Hidalgo, were given "rights of residence, property, and citizenship" (Haas 1988, 347). However, the treaty was followed by the California Land Act of 1851, which essentially overturned what was promised to Californios and Mexicans in newly annexed lands (ibid).[26] The California Land Act required that all Spanish and Mexican land grants be reviewed and approved in U.S. courts before they could receive their titles. Mexican landowners therefore, had to produce legitimate titles to maintain rights to their ranchos. Meanwhile, "California State law enabled squatters to preempt uncultivated land for which title had not yet been confirmed" (ibid). When titles were finally confirmed, Mexican landowners were required to pay lawyers, land speculators, surveyors and even "squatters for the cost of their improvements on the land" (ibid). As a result of these laws, along with an overwhelming number of newcomers who arrived to take advantage of the gold rush and land ownership opportunities, many Californios and Mexicans lost their lands.

Later, with the passing of The Homestead Act of 1862, which "restricted citizenship to Whites," Mexicans became unable to own property in the new territories of California (Menchaca 2001, 234). Elite Mexicans were able to fight laws and build cases for themselves to prove their "Whiteness" and maintain claim over their lands. David Hayes-Bautista recounts the experience of Pablo de la Guerra, a Mexican landowner in 1775 who was denied rights to "vote, hold office, testify in court against a White person, or own land" because the state declared he was not White (Hayes-Bautista 2004, 26). Fortunately, de la Guerra was wealthy and able to hire

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[25] According to the U.S. Department of State, "Texas, California, Nevada, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Washington, and Oregon, as well as portions of what would later become Oklahoma, Colorado, Kansas, Wyoming, and Montana" were annexed during the U.S. territorial expansion that led to the Mexican-American War (U.S. Dept. of State).

[26] Californios natives of California; Mexican identity developed as people began to separate themselves from Spain, but also as they intermixed trough marriage. See David E. Hayes-Bautista's *La Nueva California: Latinos in the Golden State* (2004) for an in-depth discussion of ways Latinx identity has been defines through time. Martha Menchaca also offers a discussion of racial formation in the United States in *Recovering History, Constructing Race: The Indian, Black and White Roots of Mexican Americans* (2006).

lawyers who were able to “establish that he was ‘White enough’ to be classified as a U.S. citizen” (ibid). While this was a triumph for de la Guerra, the courts maintained that the right to exclude Mexicans from citizenship who were not White. In turn, those who “looked” Mexican simply lost their homes and found themselves in marginalized *barrios* or neighborhoods.

During the early days of California and Mexican colonization, Boyle Heights was known as Paredón Blanco, and the area remained largely uncultivated or inhabited by settlers and Tongva and perhaps other Indians. The Los Angeles River acted as a natural border between this area and the growing metropolis we now know as Downtown Los Angeles. During the rainy season the river flooded the flatlands and obstructed passage between the city and the wild terrain. It was not until 1850 when California attained statehood after six months of fighting between Americans and Californios, that greater interest was given to the land east of “Sonora Town,” as Los Angeles “the largest Mexican town in the United States” was called back then (Griswold del Castillo 1982, xii; Estrada 2008).

Specific interest in Paredón Blanco followed statehood. An Irish immigrant named Andrew H. Boyle purchased land in the bluffs area to live and cultivate grapes for wine-making (Spitzzeri 2009). After he died in 1875, his son-in-law, William H. Workman, named the neighborhood after Boyle. Following the war, Mexico began to experience economic growth under President Porfirio Diaz who focused on gaining foreign investment as well as developing a railway system. This new industrialization displaced artisans, agricultural workers, and other laborers (Valadez Torrez 2005, 25). When Mexico entered into civil war, people migrated to the United States in search of work opportunities as well as safety.

In Los Angeles, the railway and agricultural industries were growing and relied on a consistent workforce. Having lost much of the labor fulfilled by Asian migration that was cut due

to racist exclusionary laws, these industries began to recruit Mexicans. Martin Valadez Torrez explains, “Southwest railways were the most important recruiters, and often the first employer, of Mexican workers” (2005, 28).[27] Once here, Mexicans ventured into other industries around Los Angeles where low skill jobs were readily available. Men found employment with construction companies, in packing and canning factories, and in agricultural fields where they worked side-by-side with women. In cities, women were able to gain work as domestics cleaning homes and caring for elite families’ children.

The railroad industry also led to the growth of migrant population in California, and in turn, to the need for housing. According to urban historian Ricardo Romo, Mexican workers lived in boxcars and later in tents and labor camps such as Latin Camp, which kept them close to work (1989, 69). As more people arrived, a greater interest in understanding Mexican living conditions arose, not simply among investigators concerned with community health, but also by developers who began to consider Mexicans as a target population for marketing. “The real estate people of Watts,” explains Romo, “made great efforts to sell to the Mexican population of Los Angeles, including offering an installment plan in 1916 of $1 down and $1 per week” (ibid, 70). Mortgages were recorded between $15-$25 and the living conditions were still modest (ibid). One worker, according to Romo, “constructed a four-room house, where he lived with his wife and six children. They cooked their meals on a wood stove, used a kerosene lamp for lighting, and maintained a small garden next to their house” (ibid). Those who could not afford to buy a home lived in boarding houses, low cost hotels, apartments and housing courts that were crowded and had minimal toilet and washing facilities.

[27] The Chinese Exclusionary Act of 1882 and the Gentlemen’s Agreement of 1907 systematically decreased Chinese migration to the United States (See Martin Valadez Torres’ Indespensable Migrants: Mexican Workers and the Making of Twentieth-Century Los Angeles in Latino L.A.: Transformations, Communities, and Activism, eds. Enrique C. Ochoa and Gilda L. Ochoa (2005).

When the stock market crashed in 1929, the Los Angeles economy fell and jobs became scarce. Americans looked to the government for relief and politicians found a scapegoat in the Mexican community. They claimed Mexicans were "taking jobs from Americans," and they enacted deportation roundups. According to David E. Hayes-Bautista, "the mere fact of being identifiably 'Mexican' was enough to place one under suspicion" (2004, 18). Families remembered the days of mass deportation even if they had been born after the 1930s when Mexican Americans were "deported or otherwise disappeared" (ibid). The Mexican population that had grown to 368,013 by 1930, became stagnant by 1940 (ibid). Los Angeles itself "lost one-third of its Mexican residents" (Valadez Torres 2005, 28). Nevertheless, the Mexicans who remained continued to participate in civil life, and their population grew to just over one million in 1950.

By the 1950s, Boyle Heights had become the neighborhood where rents remained cheap and the "unwritten rules of segregation" of Westside suburbs did not apply (Romo 1989, 85). According to historian Josh Sides, "the use of covenants to protect White areas had the effect of creating some of the most racially and ethnically diverse neighborhoods in the county" (2006, 18). In Los Angeles, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) shaped segregation by denying African Americans and other ethnic minorities low interest home loans, and by creating an image of integrated neighborhoods as hazardous simply due to their being "melting pot" areas (Sanchez 2004 637). In 1939 the HOLC undertook research of 239 cities that were surveyed, mapped and evaluated according to a rating system known as redlining. As explained above, this practice used the letters A and B with the colors green and blue to designated the most desirable neighborhoods in which to invest. Neighborhoods coded C and yellow were considered to be in disrepair, while D/red areas were

seen as hazardous. Boyle Heights was among the neighborhoods that were redlined not only because it had a high concentration of poor housing, but because of its racial heterogeneity (Sanchez 2004; Sides 2006; Estrada 2017; Reft 2017).

The California Real Estate Association along with various homeowners' associations upheld the racist practices of the HOLC and FHA at the local level. Real estate agents denied African Americans, Mexicans, and other racial minorities deeds solely on the basis of their race. They were beholden to a Realtor's Code of Ethics, which maintained, "a realtor should never be instrumental in introducing into a neighborhood a character of property or occupancy, members of any race or nationality, or any individuals whose presence will clearly be detrimental to property values in that neighborhood" (Senn in Sanchez 2004, 639). In turn, anyone who sold housing to people of color risked being expelled from the board, as was Maurice Curtis after he sold a home to a Mexican American family in 1948 (Sanchez 2004, 639).

Even though the U. S. Supreme Court found segregation laws unconstitutional, city officials, real estate agents, and housing associations continued to uphold discriminatory practices well into the 1960s (Romo 1989, 85). In California, Anglo nativist sentiments shaped racist attitudes that were openly expressed in El Segundo, for example, where civic leaders boasted that they "had no negroes or Mexicans" (ibid). Private property owners also denied Mexicans and African Americans rent. The attitude among some Whites was "to let his house stand vacant all of the time before he would rent it to a Mexican" (ibid). Homeowners' associations added to these discriminatory practices by using intimidation tactics meant to keep neighborhoods White. They used "cross burnings, threatening phone calls, property damaging, and personal physical abuse" to ensure that people of color stayed out of their areas (ibid, 639). In cases where restrictive covenants were deemed unsuccessful, the Ku Klux Klan, which

established a faction in Los Angeles in the early 20s, sometimes stepped in to assist in intimidation efforts (Sides, 2006, 18).

Ironically, attempts to keep racial minorities out of White neighborhoods had the effect of creating integrated neighborhoods in other parts of Los Angeles that led to coalition building among racial groups as opposed to separation. In turn, African Americans, Mexicans, Jews, Japanese, and other minorities came to live in Boyle Heights where children went to integrated schools, families lived next door to people of different origins, and all shopped at the same stores. In the late '40s and '50s, Boyle Heights "became something of an ideological bunker, somewhat protected by its geographic isolation, defending its residents from outside attack, while nurturing a particular brand of radical ideology and multicultural sensibility" (Sanchez 2004, 640). Although the Jewish community in Boyle Heights was decreasing as well as experiencing an identity change for they were increasingly categorized as White and therefore afforded the privileges of Whiteness. Those Jews who stayed or arrived from other parts of the country and the world did so with the specific purpose of strengthening the multicultural roots of the neighborhood.[28]

The Jewish community played important roles in shaping both radical politics and a spirit of interracial cooperation (Sanchez 2004, 640). One of the organizations that reflected openness to other races and cultures is the Soto-Michigan Jewish Community Center (SMJCC), which created a Festival of Friendship in 1949 as a way to bring the different racial groups of the city together and in a celebratory manner (ibid, 642). With the success of this festival, the SMJCC

[28] According to Deborah Dash Moore Jews proved their Americaness through participation in WWII and therefore began to cross over to the White category in the late 1940s (See Brodkin 1998; and Dash Moore 2006). Chicano historian George J. Sanchez also indicates that Jews crossed over into the White category in the 1950s, but he explains that in Los Angeles this was specifically due to the desire of Whites to maintain the distinctions and boundaries between Blacks and other people of color (2004; cf. Vorspan and Gartner 1970). For Whites of this era, it was deemed better to let lower-class whites such as Italians and Jews into their neighborhoods than it was to live side by side with Blacks, Mexicans, and Asians.

went on to host other events including “celebrations of Negro History Week and Mexican Independence Day” (ibid, 643). The Center’s commitment to interracial cooperation was such that they held town meetings to address controversial topics and they supported local politicians including Edward R. Roybal, the first Latino to be elected to the Los Angeles City Council (“About Edward R. Roybal” 2019). Roybal had been a victim of discriminatory housing practices and such experience led him to seek public office, for he hoped to address injustices suffered by Mexicans and other minority groups.

In the early 1950s, Southern California experienced a period of anti-communism that in many cases equated Judaism with left-wing political extremism. Senator Jack Tenney, a right-wing Republican, took issue with the Soto-Michigan Jewish Center; he claimed that their programing was supported with funds from the Community Chest and that they supported communist propaganda (Sanchez 2004, 647). Anti-communist legislation such as the McCarren-Walter Act of 1952 allowed denaturalization and deportation of anyone found to be a communist sympathizer (ibid, 649).

Resulting threats to immigrant communities of Boyle Heights led a multicultural group of activists to develop the Los Angeles Committee for the Protection of the Foreign Born (LACPFB) (Sanchez 2004, 650). One of the earliest LACPFB protests was directed to the deportation of fourteen Mexicans under the 1954 Operation Wetback campaign initiated by U. S. Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) in (alleged) collaboration with the Mexican government (ibid, 651). LACPFB activists protested against oppressive treatment of Mexicans in holding cells. In later years they objected injustices against Japanese Americans and engaged in events that promoted multiculturalism and unity between racial groups. Rather than emphasize melting pot ideals, they talked about every ethnic group’s particularities. LACPFB efforts

"foment[ed] a multiracial sensibility that could be used no matter what specific group was targeted in anti-immigrant measures" (Sanchez in Reft 2013).

Developers' interests in Boyle Heights tested the multicultural bonds nurtured by neighborhood activists in the early 1950s. Due to redlining, property values in the area were among the lowest of Los Angeles. Furthermore, Boyle Heights lacked adequate political representation and it therefore became targeted as a prime area for development of freeways because of little political resistance.[29] The local newspaper, *The Eastside Sun*, "spoke out against displacement efforts and derided the condemnation of 480 homes, linking the displacement of thousands of Eastsiders to the construction of the San Bernardino 10 Freeway" (Estrada 2017).

Migration, marginalization, and displacement have remained themes associated with Boyle Heights. By the 1980s, Mexican Americans moved to other suburban neighborhoods such as Hawthorne and Inglewood (Reft 2013). At the same time, people continued to migrate to Los Angeles from Mexico. However, new arrivals were often educated people, as well as Indigenous people from Oaxaca in southwestern Mexico (Valadez Torres 2005, 34). In the 1980s, Salvadorans fleeing civil war also began to arrive in Los Angeles. My mother, sisters, and I are typical Salvadoran immigrants of that era and we arrived in 1981 and we moved in with relatives living in North Hollywood. Although the majority of Central American immigrants settled in Mac Arthur Park, Pico-Union, and the San Fernando Valley, some ended up in Boyle Heights where, according to the Mapping L.A. Boyle Heights profile, they comprise 4.5% of the total foreign-born population ("Boyle Heights" 2019).

Today, a Mexican majority has grown steadily since the 1950s and now characterizes the once multicultural neighborhood of Boyle Heights, despite anti-immigrant sentiments and

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[29] See Nathan Masters' "They Moved Mountains (And People) to Build L.A.'s Freeways" (2014) and the documentary East L.A. Interchange (2016) by Betsy Kalin for a historical account of the ways the freeway interchange was developed, along with the social impact it had on the community of Boyle Heights.

episodic deportation efforts triggered by economic downturn. According to the Census of 2010, Hispanics account for 122,784 of the total population of East Los Angeles of which Boyle Heights is part; Mexicans make up the majority of that estimate, with a population of 111,441 ("The Hispanic Population: 2010 – Census" 2011). However, the demographics are changing due to gentrification efforts in the name of revitalization. In 2014, real estate companies began to promote Boyle Heights as the next urban frontier where private investors and buyers can still hope to purchase a modest single family home for a price below the Los Angeles median home price of $600,000 (Khouri 2018).

The gentrification of Boyle Heights points to two main issues, a threat to affordable housing and fear of cultural displacement. As a new people move in, they add their aesthetics and slowly chip away at Latinx visual representations. The majority of residents with whom I have spoken worry that rents will increase and they will no longer be able to afford living in the area if they are obliged to move by landlords looking for profit. Hand-drawn signs stapled onto light posts offer top cash for one's house. Additionally, more and more people are receiving "no fault eviction" notices. People living in rent controlled units or buildings older than 1978 can expect to be offered "cash for keys" relocation fees, but even when they are offered the maximum amount of $20,000 (the offer depends on how long the tenant has been in the unit as well as if they have kids) they still face challenges and stress.

While it may seem that gentrification is just arriving to Boyle Heights, it began late in the 20th century when Pico Aliso Public Housing Projects (also known as Aliso Village) were deemed to require demolition. The Pico Aliso projects were built during WWII to create affordable housing in The Flats area of the neighborhood. When the development was constructed, it became home to people of all backgrounds, but after the war it became more and

more a Latinx space. By the 1980s the Pico Aliso projects were in disrepair and home to gangs. In 1996, the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) legislated the razing of Aliso housing. Union de Vecinos formed to advocate for tenant rights as well as to protest privatization of public housing in Boyle Heights. Since then, the same activists have defended other areas including my old neighborhood of Silver Lake, where my family and I recently experienced dislocation from a rent-controlled building.

In 2016, Union de Vecinos played a central role in protesting the opening of Pssst, a non-profit art gallery that worked with underrepresented artists—women, people of color and LGBTQ-identifying people (Stromberg 2016). Anti-displacement activists questioned Pssst intentions, accusing them of using the gallery to advance personal interests and claiming they had employed "inadequate community outreach" (ibid). This claim represents a core value used to challenge outsiders. Something similar was said of Dr. Krochmal when he began Proyecto Jardín and later of me when I worked as artist liaison on a grant application to access beautification funds for Proyecto Jardín. Such social dynamics inform the present dissertation.

Boyle Heights native and muralist Ernesto de la Loza attended the Pssst protest. I In an interview, he expressed feeling that the stand against the gallery was misguided and should instead be directed at City Hall because "they're the ones selling us out" (Stromberg 2016). De la Loza believed the gallery's inclusion of Latinx artists showed their commitment to serve the community. However, activists who take issue with upscale art galleries such as Pssst and trendy coffee shops such as Weird Wave Coffee which is still vandalized by protesters nine years after its founding, do so because they feel that such institutions contribute to the rising cost of living and displacement of Latinx cultural sensibilities that typify the area. Even Latinxs who were

raised in Boyle Heights can expect to receive negative attention from some if their actions are interpreted as not having the community's best intentions.

While gentrification is often described as the displacement of people of color by upper class Whites, fingers are also pointed at some Mexicans and Latinxs, even if they grew up in the area, because they are seen as returning from education or other travels away from home with a different mindset that no longer benefits the community (Medina 2018). Those Latinxs who set up businesses in Boyle Heights that reflect hipster aesthetics and/or do not offer affordable services are considered examples of gentrification.[30] Chicana playwright, Josefina López, founder of CASA 0101 Theater on East First Street in Boyle Heights holds that "people would say that I'm an example of gente-fication" (ibid). López grew up in the neighborhood and left to go to school and work. She always thought Boyle Heights would have a renaissance and planned to return to bring theater to the community (ibid). Although her return might put her in the category of gentrifier, she never received staunch opposition as best explained by her approach. Lopez has offered youth play-writing workshops free or at low cost, and she has worked with other artists to put on plays that reflect community life and concerns. An example is "Hipsteria," a play about an activist mom who is evicted from her apartment by developers who want to create housing for dogs.

Gilbert Estrada maintains that change is inevitable and thinks "what's at stake in community planning and protests are investment dollars, necessary infrastructure and services and cultural and community preservation" (Estrada 2017). He wonders how policy makers, urban planners, and residents might collaborate. One organization that is leading the way is the East LA Community Corporation (ELACC) which "has built a model for organizing low-income

[30] Gente literally translates to people, but used in this way references Mexicans and Latinxs in a similar way that the term *raza* or race does.

renters to influence land decisions, to create new home ownership opportunities, and to mitigate displacement by preventing foreclosures and constructing affordable rental housing" (Cabildo 2014). One of their proudest accomplishments is the purchase of the Boyle Hotel because they were able to restore it and continue to offer affordable housing to community members. This example, among others, gives many Boyle Heights residents some sense of hope as change continues to threaten not only people's ability to afford living there, but also the identity of the neighborhood as a Latinx enclave.

A look at the history of Boyle Heights through the lens of Lefebvre's conceptual triad shows the ways Boyle Heights was formed, first by spatial practices, that is, interactions and negotiations of power among people. Early exchanges took place among Indigenous people, Mexicans, Californios, and Anglos. When the Southwest became part of the United States in the 1840s and '50s, the power that Californios once held diminished and the interests of a new society were formed. As Lefebvre explains, "social space contains—and assigns (more or less) appropriate places to the *social relations of reproduction* . . . and *the relations of production*, i.e., the division of labor and its organization in the form of hierarchical social functions" (2009 32). Thus, those participating in the representation of space/conceived space—real estate agents, officers of the law, city officials and even members of housing associations—invented and upheld laws, policies and practices that created division between Whites who occupied the top of the socio-economic hierarchy and everyone else below them. Divisive practices had the effect of pushing people of different races together in Boyle Heights. The routes of daily life reflected coalition-building and actions of resistance to inadequate housing and dislocation. The spirit of resistance has been passed down through the years and is summoned again by residents and

activists currently struggling to keep Boyle Heights a Latinx enclave where they can afford to live.

Representations of Space: From Empty Lot to Garden Project

While community gardens are generally perceived as thresholds of resistance, and Proyecto Jardín became such a space, it did not begin as such. As Lefebvre has shown, representation of space/conceived space is a realm of ideas and manifestations of physical places that reflect the status quo. At issue is a realm operated by those in professional and elite classes in the interest of power or. However, in the case of Proyecto Jardín, the interest was to represent those who lack power. Although Dr. Krochmal's interest in addressing the needs of the community surrounding the garden was genuine and well intentioned, his position as a biomedical doctor put him in the realm of representations of space/conceived space. This section explores what Dr. Krochmal's process has entailed and to what effects. The goal is to shed light on the nuances of what it is to inhabit representation of space/conceived, and to see the kinds of challenges that can arise.

The lot that became Proyecto Jardín sat empty for years, with the exception of two dilapidated homes on the site, until Dr. Krochmal and the Los Angeles Development and Relief Agency (LADRA), as a local affiliate of Adventist Community Services, partnered to turn the property into a community garden. Although LADRA gained permission to do something on the lot for the community before Dr. Krochmal proposed his idea, they did not have a clear concept for developing the site but hoped to offer youth empowerment programs. In contrast, Dr. Krochmal had a strong perception of health needs in the Latinx community, and he knew that he wanted to create a community garden in which to address such issues.

Dr. Krochmal has been speaking formally and informally of Proyecto Jardín since 2000. Depending on the audience, he recalls his frustration with ongoing commodification of the biomedical system in which, because of what lawyers call "billable hours," he can only spend fifteen minutes or less with each patient and never get to know anyone well. He also resents lack of park space and health education available to people, which he believes strongly, contribute to growing rates of obesity and diabetes among Latinxs in the United States. However, if one asks him to tell the garden's story from the beginning, he smiles and takes an audience back to the very moment he had the vision to create a garden. He recalls,

> Okay so I was here at [White Memorial Medical Center] doing my family practice residency and as you know, [I was] in the hospital 24-36 hours at a time and every now and when I'd pass by a window, a crack of light would come through into my eyes. One time I passed by and I saw this empty lot out here, there were a couple of old houses on it and [I] sort of flashed on the idea of having a community garden here (R. Krochmal, pers. comm. 2006).

"But why gardening, why did gardening come to mind?" I continued to ask, and Dr. Krochmal responded by telling me more about connections he made between lack of green spaces and health.

> I was just starting my residency and treating a lot of kids and families in my clinic that came in with problems related to nutrition and lack of physical activity and especially in this area, in a city like Los Angeles which has very little park space and difficulties and access to healthy foods and vegetables and as we know problems in school with healthy food, I felt that a way to address this problem was to go outside of the clinic and create a community project where we could address these issues in a more global way (R. Krochmal, pers. comm. 2006).

Indeed, in The Trust for Public Land (TPL)'s ParkScores 2018 review of the country's 100 top cities and their efforts to meet the need for green spaces, Los Angeles scores 66th (City Rankings 2018). Despite efforts to revitalize river pathways and promote bike riding throughout the city

through cicLAvia[31], our rankings have not improved and have mostly gone down through the years. In 2012, we ranked 25th, in 2014 we were 45th, and in 2017 we fell to 75th out of 100. A review of the full ranking data shows that only 16% of the city's population is within walking distance of a park. Even more troubling is the fact that Los Angeles only has one park per 10,000 residents that has a permanent playground ("City Rankings" 2018).

The city of Boyle Heights claims only seven parks. While an increase of ten new community gardens occurred in Los Angeles in 2003 through The Trust for Public Land's Parks for People-LA[32] incentive, only three were located in Boyle Heights: Proyecto Jardín, Mothers of East LA Community Garden, and Mott Street Urban Farm. In 2016, Proyecto Jardín was forced to close. As I discuss in Chapter Five, White Memorial Medical Center refused to renew the garden collective's lease and with that the garden count in the area has decreased by one.

Dr. Krochmal tapped into discussions about the lack of green spaces in greater Los Angeles at a time when organizations like the TPL began mobilizing to develop initiatives for improvement and when people were discussing the viability of community gardens to solve pressing social issues such as community health and well being. During one of our unrecorded conversations, he noted that talk of community gardens seemed to be everywhere in the late '90's. Although he did not make the connection between the "local buzz" and his vision to create a community garden in the empty lot behind WMMC, such discussions may have influenced him to focus on a garden as opposed to any other type of intervention to connect him with his patients

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[31]cicLAvia was started in 2008 to address public health, transportation, and land use; it was inspired by ciclovía events in Bogotá (www.ciclavia.org).

[32]The Trust for Public Lands is a non-profit organization established in 1972 to protect lands and develop more green spaces. In 2003 they established Parks for People-LA to address the lack of green spaces such as parks in low-income communities ("TPL Unveils Los Angeles Parks Initiative," 2004). One might add that middle-class and more upscale neighborhoods are no better served.

and the surrounding Latinx community more generally. In any case, when he began pursuing the idea of founding a community garden, he was unsure of how to get the project started.

According to the American Community Gardening Association (ACGA), the first step in beginning a community garden is to form a planning committee given the following tasks:

- Organize a meeting of interested people
- Identify all your resources
- Approach a sponsor
- Choose a site
- Prepare and develop the site
- Organize the garden
- Plan for children
- Determine rules and put them in writing
- Help members keep in touch with each other

However, for Dr. Krochmal, the first step was simply to ask who the owner of the abandoned lot was and continue from there, learning as he went along. A planning committee was established organically and members did not understand themselves as a formal "planning committee." Instead, they simply came together with the common interest to develop a community garden.

When Dr. Krochmal inquired about the lot, he learned from Al Denninger, a WMMC administrator, that Archie Tupas from LADRA who was running a youth reading program, had also asked to use the site. Moreover, Mr. Tupas had already discussed a lease agreement for $1 a year. Dr. Krochmal recalls, "and so I talked with Archie and let him know my idea of starting a community garden and he was very supportive of it and very open to the idea and so we decided to do it as a partnership and that's how, uh, how it all started" (R. Krochmal, pers. comm. 2006).

Mr. Tupas had inquired about the land, but he had not proposed a project, so he welcomed Dr. Krochmal's idea of a garden wholeheartedly, as long as young people from the neighborhood would be involved. This is one of the first negotiations Dr. Krochmal had to make because in his original plan, he did not think of working specifically with youngsters but rather

the Latinx community in general. After agreeing on the project, Dr. Krochmal and Mr. Tupas approached the WMMC's Board of Directors and its CEO's with their plan, and they sat down to discuss a formal lease agreement. WMMC was as Dr. Krochmal recalls, "supportive," but they also had practical thoughts on how to use the land for storage or as a parking lot. They agreed to lease the space for $1/year, but with the condition that Dr. Krochmal and friends only develop the west side of the space and not the east side, which WMMC planned to use for storage.

While the partial use of the lot was limiting and impermanent, Dr. Krochmal and Tupas were pleased to have access to it. Dr. Krochmal said,

> It took a little while before we actually signed the lease and a few months of planning, starting initial meetings. I was new to the area, although I was starting to meet people pretty quickly out here and Archie already knew about the community groups so we invited people from Bridge Street Elementary school, that's right across the street from the garden and hospital. There was a community group here, I think it was around Prospect Park which is nearby as well and they were trying to improve Prospect Park so we invited some of those people, we invited some people from the hospital [too] (R. Krochmal, pers. comm. 2006).

Thus, for Dr. Krochmal and Mr. Tupas, the third step involved what ACGA considers two first steps: they began reaching out to local organizations to gain support and start the process of planning. Two of the key organizations contacted were the Prospect Park Committee and Bridge Street Elementary School, located directly across the street from the vacant lot. The Prospect Park Committee seemed like an ideal ally given their focus on neighborhood safety through the development of recreational and art activities for children and teenagers. Their efforts touched on both community health and youth outreach, as areas also championed by Dr. Krochmal and Mr. Tupas.

While they considered ways of gaining support, Dr. Krochmal and Mr. Tupas also thought about sponsorship and resources. Some community gardens can sustain themselves

through fundraising, membership fees and private donations, but for others a garden sponsor plays an essential role in acquiring the funds and things vital to garden survival such as tools, seeds, compost, and volunteers ("10 Steps to Starting a Community Garden" 2018). WMMC did not simply give permission to use the lot at a low fee, but they also sponsored the garden by providing the first funds to help get the project underway. Dr. Krochmal and Mr. Tupas's interest in reaching out to the school and park committee was to try to gain additional support, less for sponsorship and more for communal support. They would need to spread the word about their intentions to start a garden in the area as well as to gain volunteers with whom to actually create the garden.

Additional efforts to spread the word or engage in outreach included printing fliers with a brief message regarding the upcoming Proyecto Jardín community garden. These were distributed by foot to neighborhood residents as well as posted at local community centers, the school, churches and other local organizations and businesses that volunteers knew about. The fliers invited people to get involved by attending meetings and/or "work days" for starting a community garden.

Because he had minimal funds, Dr. Krochmal did not seek guidance from a professional gardener. Instead, he relied on his experience growing tomatoes and greens and on the idea that others who grew vegetables in their homes would step forward to share their knowledge. Since the proposed garden site was once a residential lot, there were some water pipes but irrigation still had to be established for specific plots. The Department of Water and Power (DWP) was contacted and learning that this was a grassroots organization, they offered their services free of charge.

Despite active distribution of fliers to area residents by Dr. Krochmal, his colleague and friend Tony and his wife Veronica, and by Mr. Tupas, only eight people were present at the first meeting. Among them, were Bridge Street School principal Emily Rosas, science teacher Doug Smith, and a representative of WMMC's cafeteria. Dr. Krochmal recalls,

> I walked around and gave out some fliers around the neighborhood. We sent out emails and put up fliers around the hospital and you know, I had never really done anything like this before so I was almost trying not to put too many fliers out cuz, you know when you have a vision like that you think that everyone that sees the flier is going to come (laughs). . . . I was thinking hundreds of people were gonna come, and you know, maybe fifteen to twenty people—which in hindsight is really great—came. . . . Yeah and that included Archie's friends and my friends and people that actually saw the flier. So people that actually saw the flier were like maybe five people, but even that is pretty good. So we just all had a lot of, a lot of energy, to get the word out there. Yeah it was maybe six or nine months we continued to have those workdays (R. Krochmal, pers. comm. 2006).

However small, the turnout of people seemed well-balanced to Dr. Krochmal, who recalls, "[we were] just a small group and we talked about what our ideas were and so it was pretty much evenly balanced between the hospital, the school, and community" (R. Krochmal, 2006). The group only met a few times starting in the fall of 1999. They decided on a ground-breaking day and began passing out fliers to inform and invite more people to join them on March 1, 2000. At this first meeting, they discussed what they would do with the trash, what to name the garden, and any other details that came up. Dr. Krochmal recalled,

> We sent some fliers to the school, I went around the, I walked around the neighborhood handing out some fliers, we decided on I think it was March 1st as the date where everyone was going to meet in the garden and just start making the garden happen. There was trash, but there were also resources, which was part of our philosophy of using old kind of urban resources to make beautiful things out of, like broken concrete from old driveways and things like that, so we pretty much had everything we needed there. We got some free compost through Los Angeles Conservation Core, they delivered some compost for us so we had compost and we had shovels through them as well and we had all the old urbanite, broken concrete so we just wanted to get people together so we did, we, I walked around and gave out some fliers around the neighborhood, we sent out emails and put up fliers around the hospital (R. Krochmal pers. comm. 2006).

None of the group members knew how to start a garden and so they took things one step at a time. Dr. Krochmal reminded me, "I had never really done anything like this before" whenever we spoke of the garden's beginnings (R. Krochmal, pers. comm. 2006). The process remained organic and though they were not explicitly laying out the values that the garden would be defined by, they were doing that too. Their emphasis on communality was established from the start. The founding members recognized this was an idealistic approach, but they felt it was important to design a place that would encourage communal ownership and sharing:

> The overall theme or structure that we have is somewhat unique as far as community gardens go because we decided that it would be more in the idealistic sense of a community garden where there's not individual plots that are rented by individuals or families. So we didn't, basically we decided not to, cut it up into a grid from the start (R. Krochmal, pers. comm. 2006).

Communal gardening would, and did, give people in the immediate neighborhood a chance to meet, gather, and make friends with volunteers from surrounding areas of Los Angeles. However, it did not go without challenges and critique. Once enough volunteers were available to garden, issues came up. Neighborhood residents would sometimes enter the garden and pluck fruits or vegetables, and it had to be decided whether this would be permitted or not. Sometimes disagreements occurred between gardeners themselves, about overwatering, or someone planting something and another pulling it up because s/he thought it was a weed. A few others felt such issues could be resolved if the garden were divided into plots for lease.

This first phase of Proyecto Jardín's development exemplifies ways that representations of space/conceptual space become manifest through the bridging of values, in this case, between Dr. Krochmal and LADRA. Although Dr. Krochmal says he did not know what he was doing and expressed that things just came together in an organic way, his openness to the process reflects his concern with core principles of integrative medicine. Dr. Krochmal's willingness to

incorporate young people into his overall goal to address health at the community level reflects an integrative approach oriented toward prevention and that calls for "identifying lifestyle interventions that can lead to disease prevention, or at least to reducing the rate of progression of an established chronic condition" (UCLA Center for East-West Medicine). Additionally, he also began adopting LADRA's outreach methods such as passing out flyers and sharing decision-making in order to create a democratic space, all to realize his goal to improve relationships between practitioners and patients. After all, the garden was to serve as an outdoor lab where Dr. Dr. Krochmal build trust with patients and non-patients alike while identifying best practices for getting to know patients as whole persons. Building trust required Dr. Krochmal to acknowledge and surrender his position of power and instead to focus on communality as a core principle, and this would come to characterize the organizational structure of Proyecto Jardín.

Chismes (Rumors) as Outcome of Spatial Practice/Perceived Space

"Spatial practice," explains Lefebvre, "ensures continuity and some degree of cohesion. In terms of social space, and of each member of a given society's relationship to that space, this cohesion implies a guaranteed level of *competence* and a specific level of *performance*" (1991, 38). By this, Lefebvre means that in daily experience we interact with materialized places and we behave towards them according to established codes (e.g., rules, laws, etc).

Dr. Krochmal and Tupas established enough support to move forward with the development of the empty lot into a community garden, but they also began to experience pushback. Some saw Dr. Krochmal and Doug Smith, a Bridge Street Elementary School teacher, as outsiders. People questioned their intentions and wondered if the community garden was a private venture. They also doubted whether Dr. Krochmal and the teacher had the community's

best interests given that they were not Mexican or Latinx, nor did they live in the area. This pushback reflects the complexity of engaging in representations of space/conceived space because once ideas begins to take material form it can be perceived by anyone and people can accept or challenge with what is presented.

Looking back, Dr. Krochmal can see how people might have thought of him and Mr. Smith as gentrifiers. Both men are White and they were two of the main people who canvased the area, passing out fliers. He recalls,

> You know, also in hindsight, I think I told you before, Doug Smith and I were often out there alone or just the two of us or me alone or him alone and we were the ones that were probably out there the most and so after the fact we heard rumors that people in the community thought that we had bought the land and you know we were trying to develop it and you know I just assumed since we distributed all the flyers and that it was such a great idea, everyone knew it, but obviously, you know it was a learning experience in that way. And then there's further rumors about, one of the teachers at the school [who] was kind of a little bit more militant [and] was actually against the garden cuz' he kindda saw Doug and I as outside of the community, we're both White, and he thought we didn't really understand the community (R. Krochmal, pers. comm. 2006).

While real estate agents were not yet featuring Boyle Heights as a new residential frontier, people in the neighborhood were starting to feel suspicious of "outsiders." They were aware of the changes occurring in nearby areas such as Echo Park and Silver Lake where rents were becoming inaccessible to low income, working class Mexicans and Latinxs. Even though he was not privy to the rumor that he was out to develop the empty lot for his personal interests, Dr. Krochmal recognized the importance of bringing as many people to the table as possible, and he spoke up about doing things in a collaborative fashion. Moreover, he supported the development of communal plots because he felt it would mitigate social hierarchies that, in his experience, hindered communication and exchange between biomedical doctors and their patients. Dr. Krochmal also believed in getting his hands dirty. He spent a lot of time in the garden, preparing

the soil side-by-side with other gardeners and planting seeds with school children and their parents. Again, due to the organic development of the garden, there was no emphasis on how to organize. Instead, there were simply discussions about issues at hand and what to do about them. In turn, the garden's name was not fully thought out. Dr. Krochmal explained that "everyone thought that a clever name would simply come up," but to their amusement the provisional title, Proyecto Jardín, stuck, and it remains the name today although it no longer represents the actual place but rather an urban farmers' collective with non-profit status.

Approximately six months after the first meeting, Dr. Krochmal and the others held a second to clear weeds and turn the soil to prepare for planting. When I asked Dr. Krochmal how it was decided what to plant and where, I imagined he would tell me that people requested specific plants that perhaps reflected beliefs and practices—aloe, cactus and corn for example are highly esteemed by some people of Latinx heritage as medicinal herbs and/or as symbols of Indigenous ancestry. Instead, he explained that in the early phase of planting, few showed up to the meetings and those who did made no special requests. As a result, he cultivated an assortment of vegetables such as heirloom tomato varieties, which were familiar to him. Furthermore, Dr. Krochmal had, in his own words, an "amateur kind of knowledge about that" (R. Krochmal, pers. comm. 2006). He says,

> I was just kind of crop oriented, food oriented, not flowers or anything like that. Although that's more and more happening now, and it's certainly part of the community. So, [I] just basically [focused on] the things that grow in Southern California in the different seasons, lettuce, greens, and all the different variations in the winter too. All the blockbuster summer crops like tomatoes. Whatever seeds we could get and seemed appropriate for the time (R. Krochmal, pers. comm. 2006).

The plots he and founding members began to use for planting were formed using concrete slabs left-over from the dilapidated house. Volunteers created eight beds on the northwest side of the

garden. A second tenet of Proyecto Jardín ethos became to reduce and reuse resources like the cement fragments. In turn, when structures required updating, gardeners always considered locally available materials they could obtain for free or at low cost and which would additionally divert trash in a purposeful way. When the plots required rebuilding, for instance, gardeners sought more concrete slabs from a nearby demolition site. The practice of reusing resources or looking for free materials was a do-with-what-you've-got expression that represents conservationist ideology, but also cultural identity through what Plevoets and Sowińska-Heim (2018) call "vernacular adaptation," that is the spontaneous and informal process of taking over buildings, in this case an abandoned residential lot that was transformed into a place incorporating materials from the old site, but used with new purpose that in turn reiterates the identities of the makers.

At the same time that founding members worked on developing plots in resourceful ways, the science teacher Mr. Smith began using the garden as an outdoor classroom where he provided hands-on lessons on planting, insects, astronomy, and various Indigenous building techniques (R. Krochmal, pers. comm. 2006). Using his science curriculum stipend of about $200, Mr. Smith and his students purchased materials for the building of two structures on the west side of the garden. The first was the four-pillar wooden framework that came to be known as The Fig Structure. This structure came to serve as the shaded meeting area once the fig tree planted next to it extended its branches with dense, green foliage that served as a roof over the area.

The Fig Structure was indeed one of the coolest places to sit during hot days, so we held meetings there occasionally when I joined the Proyecto Jardín community in 2003. A year later, the site came up for discussion because some teenage boys who lived in the neighborhood began

gathering in the garden after-school, and they were suspected of dealing drugs and partying there at night. While no one was ever caught in the act of loitering, drinking, or vandalizing the garden structures, garden patrons felt as though the boys' behavior was an assault on the safety of the shared space they had been working diligently to create. Soon after this occurrence, the fig tree was cut down and the fig structure removed. Concerns over loitering were an ongoing struggle that garden patrons dealt with since the garden's inception.

A second lesson in Indigenous building techniques taught by Mr. Smith led to the creation of the adobe house in the southwest corner of the garden. Dr. Krochmal recalled,

> Before the garden had even enough money to buy a wheelbarrow, enthusiastic students were digging the richest clay soil from one end of the garden and lugging it to the other to build an adobe structure of their own. Mixing mud, straw, and water, they began, and it wasn't until a year and a half later that they were finished ("Seeds for Tomorrow").

Again using funds from his science curriculum stipend, Mr. Smith purchased paint and wood to complete the structure. He provided the students with a lesson in building with clay dirt, but he also gave them the option to decorate the *casita,* or "little house" as they dubbed it, as they wished. Like Dr. Krochmal, Mr. Smith recognized the importance of stepping back and giving the community ownership of the space if it was to attract more people and better serve the neighborhood. In turn, when kids proposed drawing Aztec images in reference to the heritage of some of them, Mr. Smith wholeheartedly supported them. Students painted the house white and decorated its eastern wall with a row of four foot-sized Aztec god figures outlined in black. The wooden door and window frame were given a bright yellow color and the roof was accentuated with dried palm leaves.

The early days of Proyecto Jardín provide a clear view of ways a community garden can be started. Moreover, we see how people who represent different levels of social production bridge their interests in order to create a physical place that represents and invites inclusion. By

doing so, such a project invites people to participate in making a place into something of their own. Dr. Krochmal, Tupas, and the other volunteers created the community garden based on their idea of what would be of interest and use to people in the neighborhood, but they also stepped back and made space for children, and later adults, to put their imprints on the garden so they could feel ownership.

Art Mediates Unconscious Resistance

In the first phase of Proyecto Jardín's development, Dr. Krochmal and the other founding members spent a lot of time in the neighborhood passing out fliers and then in the garden, shaping plots and planting seeds. However, as outsiders to the area, they were less concerned with putting their stamp on the place and more interested in making a place to which community became interested in contributing. Their task, although they did not articulate this as I do here, was to develop strategies to enable self-representation, communication, and friendships that help define community. While municipal government funds helped to expand the garden into other areas of the lot, it was the use of art that pulled people in, not only because it captured the attention of passersby, but also because the images in the gate and the mosaic murals were familiar and evocative of Latinx identity. What follows is a detailed description of the process that led Dr. Krochmal to seek grants as well as interviews with two artists who contributed their time and work to expand the use of the lot as a community garden. This section reflects the ways meaning begins to be ascribed to place in ways that seem controlled or mediated by planners, but which also include the imaginings of the inhabitants of the representational and lived, enduring place.

In 2002, Dr. Krochmal attended A Garden in Every School Conference held at North Hollywood High School, where he made several contacts with individuals who not only inspired him to expand Projecto Jardín's boundaries, but also informed and helped him acquire government funds to do so.[33] The first person who allowed Dr. Krochmal to see the possibilities of the garden was Mr. Randy Vail, the North Hollywood High School horticulture teacher, who showed him how community gardens can serve educational purposes.[34] While Dr. Krochmal had little experience teaching children, he saw the possibility of reaching them with valuable information on healthy eating which could reach their parents:

> Yeah, there was a charismatic teacher there, I forgot his name, but he had revived a very old community garden that had I guess developed maybe in the sixties or the seventies there. And I guess maybe in the seventies or eighties when everything got paved over, you know you see all the pavement in all the schools now, and the garden was like behind all the pavement and got forgotten about and he revived it in the late nineties so he was one of the more dynamic speakers there at that conference and you could see people from the community were helping out there as well. You know just kind of the way they do it is they'd use the garden as a teaching tool and as a tool of inspiration. That inspired me (R. Krochmal, pers. comm. 2006).

Dr. Krochmal also made a second influential connection with Raul Gonzalez, a representative of the Los Angeles Conservation Core (LACC), who was involved in "Gardens for Kids L.A."[35] This initiative was sponsored by Richard Riordan, former Mayor of Los Angeles (1993-2001), and was designed to implement gardens throughout the Los Angeles Unified School District. Proyecto Jardín was not on school property, but it was founded with the

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[33] A Garden in Every School was an initiative developed by the California Department of Education begun in 1995 to address nutrition at schools and to teach kids how to make healthier choices; it is no longer offered (http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/he/gardenoverview.asp)

[34] According to California Agriculture Secretary Karen Moss, "In [a] more pastoral time, North Hollywood High School had a 100-acre farm. Since then, it has seen its footprint shrink to eight acres and is now surrounded by apartment buildings and other developments" (2014). Teacher Randy Vail was instructive in reviving interest in agriculture by creating a community garden on the eight acres. Part of the garden is made available to community where neighbors can keep their own plots.

[35] Gardens for Kids was established in 2000. It was led by the Environmental Affairs Department using funds from Mayor Richard Riordan's office as well as labor and other grants from local organizations such as Los Angeles Conservation Corps (LACC) and the UC Cooperative Extension (Acuna 2000).

help of interested parties associated with Bridge Street School, so it occurred to Dr. Krochmal that this program could be useful in strengthening ties between said school and the garden. While no funds were acquired from Gardens for Kids LA, Gonzalez did share resources that helped Proyecto Jardín maintain the lot in a clean condition. Dr. Krochmal explained,

> So yeah [Raul Gonzalez], he was just very community oriented, he was very supportive of the idea and, so he met some of the smaller distributions of tools, seeds, plants and things like that. Anything else that was, he was the one that talked it out, that helped us get compost and that helped get people from Los Angeles Conservation Core on a few occasions to come help pull weeds and help till the land and things like that (R. Krochmal, pers. comm. 2006).

A third influential contact was Michael Espinoza, a representative of The Public Works Neighborhood Matching Fund[36] or CB Grant who not only introduced Dr. Krochmal to the grant, but also assisted him in applying for one. Dr. Krochmal recalls that it was "Espinoza who was representing the neighborhood matching funds—and he still is actually, he's very dedicated to that grant—was the one that specifically gave me all the forms and everything for the grant that was coming up to be written" (R. Krochmal, pers. comm. 2006). The CB Grant had three areas of focus.

> You could do three separate small grants within the one cycle so we decided it was all for the garden, but it was, one was for plumbing, getting irrigation into the garden; another one was for art in the garden; and then the other one was for general garden projects to get it all started (R. Krochmal, pers. comm. 2006).

The funds awarded to Proyecto Jardín were therefore used to remove the dilapidated house, install plumbing, and replace the chain-link fence that enclosed the garden. In addition, funds were allotted for beautification of the place through several art projects that involved participation from Bridge Street School children.

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[36] The Neighborhood Matching Fund, now called Community Beautification Grant (CB Grant), is modeled after a program in Seattle, Washington that assists beautification efforts. The CB grant was established in Los Angeles in 1988 to support projects within the Los Angeles area that are accessible to the public, are sponsored by a community-based organization, can be completed in nine months or less and has a "match[ing fund] that equals or exceeds the amount requested" ("Department of Public Works" 2019)

Having met the basic qualifications for the CB Grant—Proyecto Jardín was open to the public and sponsored by LADRA as a community-based organization. Dr. Krochmal did not find it difficult to propose a project that could be created in nine months. In addition, when representatives of WMMC saw that the garden was generating interest and participation from community organizations, they allowed Dr. Krochmal to use the other side of the garden and also contributed funds to help meet the grant's dollar-for-dollar matching requirements.

To meet the beautification requirements of the grant, Dr. Krochmal began asking people if they knew local artists or art centers where he might find someone interested in producing work for Proyecto Jardín. Dr. Krochmal did not look for artists who engaged in cultural representations of Latinx identity at this time, but focused on finding someone who was local. Later, he recognized that cultural art was necessary, not simply to attract visitors and would-be gardeners, but also to honor the identities of at least some garden members and area residents.

On one of his drives through the neighborhood, Dr. Krochmal found himself at Self-Help Graphics and Art[37] in East Los Angeles. There he met the artist Michael Amescua, who not only agreed to design the front gate of Proyecto Jardín but also offered to do so at no cost in order to match the art stipend provided by the CB Grant.

> You know I talked to everyone I met around here about the idea, but he was one of the people that as soon as I started talking about it was very supportive of it and he was able, and he did, he did the huge entrance gate for a third of the price that it should've been it was at cost or below so he really made a huge donation to the garden through that grant. The grant gave $5000.00, it's basically like a $15,000.00 gate so he did it for $5000.00 that he got from the grant and submitted all the drawings and everything. When we got that grant, that was really probably one of the bigger turning points of the garden when the gate went up, people really started to notice it, they'd see the gate and come up into the garden and ask questions. When we were there we'd be able to just talk to them and start to

[37] Self Help Graphics and Art is a non-profit center that has serviced the Mexican/Latinx community since 1973. They offer classes, workshops and studio space; Michael Amescua had a studio there in the early 2000's when Proyecto Jardín was established ("Self Help Graphics & Art." 2019).

> spontaneously organize more events, figure out, get people on the list, things like that (R. Krochmal, pers. comm. 2006).

Tasty-veg-ah-tables, as the steel gate is titled, is a two-door gate designed with images of tall stalks of corn complete with curly roots, squash and chili pepper vines, butterflies, birds and a big sun with rays arching over the vegetables. Each corner has a triangular moon and star motif, which, along with the large *papel-picado*[38]-like (perforated paper) shadow it casts on the sidewalk, adds a whimsical essence that invites curiosity and attention.

During a walk-through of the garden with Amescua, I asked about the iconography of his work. He responded that he "picked plants that grow in gardens," but towards the end of our short meeting, he added that "corn, squash and beans are traditional crops" (Amescua, 2005). Moreover, he remarked on the wisdom of "the ancestors [who] knew how to cultivate plants," and was saddened that "now we have to relearn those ways from people outside of our own culture" (Amescua, 2005). The desire to recapture ancestral wisdom plays a central part in identity formation as articulated by a segment of the Proyecto Jardín community, and this gate played a role in giving agency to such voices.

During our interview, Amescua also shared his discontentment with the current state of the gate. He opened the small door and tugged at the larger gate, testing its sturdiness while inspecting the hinges. As he continued looking over the gate, Amescua scoffed at the "security" incentive to seal all of the openings that young people and gang members were reportedly using to enter into the garden. He said,

> If I would have known someone would put that [(referring to the barbed wire between the two tall posts over the small door)] I would have filled it in, and you

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[38] Amescua made no mention of creating the gate in the likeness of papel picado during our interview, however in 2003 he created a steel sculpture for the Los Angeles Metro Gold Line called Rider's Dream, that in essence is a steel papel picado that he explains as a Pre-Columbina craft that represents Aztec mythology. According to narrative accounts, human and animal beings were cut out from tree bark to honor the gods and the Aztec emperor as well as to use in decoration of temples and palaces ("Artist: Michael Amescua," 2017).

> should have called me to do something about the gap with the rusty bar [(this is the space between the gate and the chain link fence that surrounds the garden)], that's going to drip! (Amescua, pers. comm. 2005).

Amescua's preoccupation with the state of his Tasty-Veg-Ah-Tables gate revealed his personal attachment to his work, but also reiterated the gardeners' concern with keeping people out of the garden during off-hours.

Another artist who contributed an in-kind match to the garden under the CB Grant is Manuel Hernández, who also donated his time to design and spearhead the two 50 foot mosaic murals on the walls of the garden entrance. He did not simply design and install work, he conducted a series of workshops over the course of four months that involved teaching a ceramics class to 25 children from Bridge Street Avenue School twice a week, during which time they learned to make ceramic forms.

Like Amescua, Hernández was given room for personal interpretation and expression of the garden, but he was self-conscious about his role as lead artist—he wanted the work to represent the neighborhood and did not want his views and interests to dominate the art. He therefore designed his project around interests of community children. The kids made shapes they liked, whether they had anything to do with gardening or food. They made blue strawberries, hearts, snowmen, U.S flags that look like pizza slices, four leaf clovers and Mickey Mouse.

At a later interview, Hernández, who served as a Catholic missionary and who lived at The Catholic Workers Center[39] in Boyle Heights, explained that Shanna, a fellow missionary

[39] The Catholic Workers organization is a religious-based organization. More traditional chapters of the organization refuse tax-exemption, but some take a non-profit approach in order to raise funds. The Los Angeles Catholic Worker is not a 501(c)(3), it is funded through private donations and is volunteer-led ("Catholic Worker Movement" 2019).

who volunteered as master gardener at Proyecto Jardín, was responsible for connecting him to the garden. Manuel recalls,

> I wanted to sit down and sketch, design something and then come and do it, but it didn't happen that way because we didn't have money for materials and everything so what we ended up using was a lot of broken plates . . . what I wanted to do was all hand made stuff that the kids would be working on and then I realized well we don't have enough clay and glazes and everything to make everything hand made so we're gonna have to do a lot of recycling with broken plates and ceramics. But at the end of it I thought it was very, very good because we not only did something beautiful, but it was also recycling and rescuing something that people consider trash so that was a lot of fun (M. Hernández, pers. comm. 2004).

While Dr. Krochmal was intent on recycling from the beginning, he admits that Hernández's mosaic murals really solidified the standards for the garden's environmental focus. Restaurant owners and others donated all the ceramic materials used to make the mural in the neighborhood. What began as a garden aimed at cultivating relationships with neighbors, addressing health and growing food, soon became an outdoor laboratory that emphasized conservationist practices. In fact, the leftover plates and cups from the mosaic project were kept in a storage contained in the garden. We brought out the dishes stored at the garden, used them and washed them when we were done.

I asked Hernández to tell me more about his process conceptualizing the overall design of the mural. His explanation reflected both a practical approach as well as a public-art practice that prioritizes imagery people want and/or which reflects their identities as opposed to what he liked.[40] Manuel recalled, "We'd get a section and then see like we have two boxes of broken plates of yellow so we're gonna do this and then we'd get a lot of blacks so we're gonna do that so it was kinda like a process where we didn't know exactly what was coming next" (M.

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[40] "Public art," says Judy Baca "could be *inseparable* from the daily life of the people for which it is created. Developed to live harmoniously in public space, it could have a function within the community and even provide a venue for their voices" (Baca, 1996).

Hernández, 2004). He also worked with kids to make masks based upon their faces and later to create shapes of fruits and vegetables they liked.

Hernández did, however, influence the addition of a political symbol of the United Farm Workers' flag, but he explained, he did so with the support of all parents and children who were present that day.

> There's a lot of symbols you know from the community, there's flowers, there's cactus, one of the most fun class was making the kids faces with clay so actually their face was made into a mask and then glazed and is in the wall so it's like personal, communal, pretty things, but also, I guess, political too because one of the class[es] fell on Cesar Chavez Day and sometimes—I try to not to push my ideals or what ever—but I just said, 'well this is East LA and we're just like one block away from Cesar Chavez Avenue and today is Cesar Chavez Day so I'm sorry, we have to do this thing'[breaks into laughter]! So one of the panels was the Farm Workers flag, and actually that day we [also] planted a tree, a lemon tree that's on the other side and I said to the kids you have to come and water, if it dies you don't have commitment so you have to commit to that, so I think it's kinda surviving! (M. Hernández, pers. comm. 2004).

Hernández, who is a Mexican national, shares respect for Cesar Chavez with many Mexican Americans who feel that his efforts helped improve working conditions of farmers and Latinx union workers more generally. To honor Cesar Chavez is indeed a political act, it represents a stance complete with values and beliefs regarding his work, but also the lived conditions of today's Latinxs. Hernández' political insertion was the first, but not the last. As I will show in Chapter Four, the development of the medicinal garden involved micro-negotiations regarding the symbols—cultural and/or political—that were selected to represent the community.

After the main sections were created, Hernández added geometric designs to fill in the gaps, using whatever color of broken pieces of plates he had on hand. His words are commemorated in a tile that reads:

> Cuando me pidieron participar en este Proyecto, no me di cuenta de todo el esfuerzo que iba a tomar. Ahora que esta terminado, veo que valio la pena.

> Muchas gracias a TODOS los que hicieron possible este Proyecto. Atentamente J. Manuel.
>
> When I was asked to participate in this project, I didn't know all the effort that it was going to take. Now that it's finished I see it's worth it. Thanks so much to everybody that made this pro[j]ect possible. Sincerely J. Manuel

A third artist who also shared his talents is Jose Ramirez who led a second workshop on mural-making for Bridge Street school kids. Like the other artists, he too donated his time and efforts to match the beautification grant. Ramirez, who is also an elementary school teacher, instructed Bridge Street school children in painting techniques as well as conceptualization and design. Their mural was painted on the southeast wall of Proyecto Jardín. It is a scene of a mountain chain that is illuminated by a sunset or sunrise and that is foregrounded by a diversity of colorful flowers.

According to Dr. Krochmal, the art projects really helped to establish Proyecto Jardín as a community garden because they piqued people's curiosity. Although Proyecto Jardín has moved—I explain this experience in Chapter Five—the murals remain as colorful, whimsical and celebratory as they did when Hernández, the madres and kids installed them. They are not simply good to look at, but continue to communicate culture, family and friendliness. Along with images of blue strawberries and a snowman are clay masks of children's faces and their mothers' as well. Tiles with recipes and poems in Spanish and English also catch one's eye. Indeed, when I first came to the garden, the huge mosaic murals captivated me. The images that conveyed Latinx aesthetics made me feel at home.

When the gate and murals were added, more passers-by peeked in and asked questions, and they were often invited in by gardeners like Shanna, a full-time employee of The Los Angeles Catholic Worker and a student in the UC master garden program at UCLA Extension. According to Dr. Krochmal, she "is responsible for having gotten people to come to the garden"

(R. Krochmal, pers. comm. 2006). Shanna herself found Proyecto Jardín by chance. She took a different route from The Catholic Worker Center on her way to work one day, and came across the garden. Shanna often wore baggy T-shirt and jeans-and at the time was is in her early twenties. She has a race-ambiguous appearance, and unlike the majority of people at the garden, she did not identify herself as a member of any given ethnic group. Shanna joined The Catholic Workers out of a commitment to address hunger, homelessness, and injustice in a more hands-on manner than charity-based efforts of the Catholic Church.

Originally from the Midwest, Shanna moved to Mexico where she lived and worked with farming communities to establish sustainable agriculture. From there, she moved to Los Angeles to continue exploring her commitment to social-justice and change. Proyecto Jardín served her purposes perfectly because through it, she was able to share her knowledge of agricultural methods as well as communicate with people in the neighborhood in her fluent Spanish. As Dr. Krochmal notes, "[Shanna] was really a huge link with the community, everybody loved her and I didn't realize how much of the gift that she has bringing people together that way, cuz she got all of the volunteer energy and spirit of the Catholic Worker [and] she was very close to a lot of people in this community" (R. Krochmal, pers. comm. 2006).

In addition to meeting CB Grant requirements with volunteer work and with free-to-low-cost art projects, Proyecto Jardín also received in-kind gifts from the LA Conservation Corps.[41] LACC provided shovels and other tools as well as workers who pulled weeds, picked up trash, and built a bathroom complete with a flushable toilet. The organization also established regular deliveries of "green waste" that were used as mulch to replenish the heavily depleted soil.

[41] LA Conservation Corps was established in 1986 to provide "at-risk youth" with job training in the areas of conservation and social service (http://www.lacorps.org/about.php).

Given the success he had in obtaining the first CB Grant, Dr. Krochmal reapplied to receive a second grant. WMMC continued supporting the community garden through matching of funds. Together, Dr. Krochmal, founding members, and gardeners agreed to add a 1200-square-foot. fitness surface to which they added a signature logo: a red beet with three green, human-like shapes for leaves. The fitness like the murals, remains in the garden; it is made from recycled materials such as shredded tires that provides a firm yet cushioned area with shock absorption, but also withstands outdoor weather. The mat and its logo reiterate the values that were instilled by the first gardeners during the garden's first year: reduce, reuse, recycle, and repurpose.

The fitness surface was a meaningful addition to the garden because it served as a visual and tangible connection to the health focus that motivated Dr. Krochmal to establish a garden to begin with. WMMC recognized the ways the community garden reflected positively on their institution. They featured an interview with Dr. Krochmal in their newsletter, but also provided funds for hiring an aerobics instructor to facilitate garden-based exercise classes for adults and children at no cost. The fitness area also attracted community groups who shared free yoga and Capoeira[42] classes. The only requirement was that they offer their classes for free or on a donation basis; this was considered a fair trade because they did not have to pay a rental fee of any kind. Additionally, groups were expected to contribute volunteer hours to maintain the garden clean and free of weeds.

Despite the funding, the garden continued to be managed by its users and the make-do-with-what-you-got spirit continued to influence what was added to the garden and, more importantly, how it was used. For example, the fitness area served multiple purposes as a

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[42] Capoeira is an Afro-Brazilian martial arts and dance form. See T.J. Desch-Obi's Fighting with Honor: The History of African Martial Art Traditions in the Atlantic World (2008) and Matthias Röhrig Assunção's *Capoeira: The History of an Afro-Brazilian Martial Art* (2005).

meeting spot and a place to hold workshops on nutrition and herbal remedies. The same location was used to hold gatherings, whether celebratory or as alternative economic endeavors such as Mercado Caracol (Spiral Marketplace), a monthly market started in 2005 to both strengthen the local economy and to support Latinx and indigenous artists.

Funds from the second CB Grant were also used to build a container for a solar-powered battery that "allowed a huge leap forward as it enabled the use of power tools in constructing further enhancements to the garden, such as the lettuce area and the greenhouse" ("Seeds for Tomorrow"). Although the focus of this fund was less on artistic expression and more on development, the gardeners still set funds aside for beautification. Artist Manuel Hernández was again asked to share his mosaic skills. Then, he embellished the solar battery container with a colorful tile design that featured orange poppies with dark green foliage, light green grass stalks and purple daisies set against a bright sky blue background. Hernández worked on decorating the solar battery housing alone, but as before, he donated his labor.

With the CB Grants, then, Dr. Krochmal was able to extend the garden from the west side of the lot to the entire area. Although he acquired funds without obtaining WMMC's consent, he still managed to gain their support. Additionally, by inviting local artists to lead the beautification process, Dr. Krochmal and founding members also encouraged expression of personal voices that communicated culture, ancestry and even political struggles. Art, as this development phase shows, served as the vehicle for transforming the space into a user-oriented community garden where culture and conservation themes came together to represent Latinx sensibilities and where a focus on nutrition through hands-on gardening and conversations with other gardeners and doctors was possible in ways that attempted to blur the boundaries between those with professional degrees and those without.

Representational Space/Lived and Endured Space: Sowing the Seeds of Health

How community needs are understood and represented deserves further problematizing. To begin with, the medicinal garden was a request from the madres and social-justice activists of the garden. However, it was Dr. Krochmal, UCLA Professor Michael Owen Jones (now Emeritus), and myself who wrote the successful grant proposal that would fund building the garden. During this period, gardeners did not provide input, and intentions for the medicinal garden spoke more to the medical and academic agendas of its grant authors. This section therefore reflects what Dr. Krochmal, Prof. Jones, and I perceived as needs, and foreshadows challenges to this way of designing health-centered projects that arose during creation of the medicinal garden.

Once a garden community was established, Dr. Krochmal began to focus on his goal to increase conversations regarding nutrition. Discussions of what to eat occurred informally while planting or harvesting vegetables. Madres-amas-de-casa could not help talking about the delicious dishes they planned to prepare with tomatoes or onions from their harvest, and Dr. Krochmal explored sharing nutritional information about plants discussed. As the mostly female cohort of gardeners traded recipes, they felt empowered to bring seeds of plants they used in their home recipes and of herbs they relied on for common ailments. They started feeling comfortable expressing their identities through sharing plants from their homelands as well as the stories about them—where they come from, how they are grown, and their personal connections to them.

Madres-amas-de-casa found common ground with newer gardeners who started coming to Proyecto Jardín. They were either raised in the United States since childhood or born here to

Mexican or Central American parents, but remained very interested in traditional medicinal plants. Although it did not become apparent in this early phase, newer gardeners who were also younger were well-read and in tune with social-justice causes. In turn, for the purposes of this dissertation, I dubbed them the "social-justice activists." Together, these gardeners planted medicinal herbs throughout Proyecto Jardín such as rosemary, lavender, chamomile, and aloe to name a few, but they also began entertaining the idea of a medicinal plot that would be solely dedicated to the cultivation of medicinal plants. A new grant program offered in 2003 to Proyecto Jardín by the Center for Community Partnerships[43] helped the garden community connect to health through the creation of a medicinal garden.

The Community Partnerships UCLA in LA Grant included requirements to a) "involve at least one community partner and one UCLA-affiliated partner and must take place in or be directly relevant to communities located in Los Angeles County" and b) to complete the project proposed in a timely manner (Chapman, Corante and Hampton 2004). Although he was excited about this new grant, Dr. Krochmal also felt challenged to develop a proposal without having looked at examples of previously funded projects to serve as models. Moreover, Dr. Krochmal was tasked with finding a department at UCLA with whom to propose a partnership while organizing a Proyecto Jardín advisory committee with whom to decide on a project idea.

As a first step, Krochmal held a meeting at which he informed garden members about the UCLA in LA Grant and brainstormed on creating a medicinal plot. Those who could take part in more focused meetings agreed to form the advisory committee with the promise to inform all

[43] The UCLA Center for Community Partnerships established the UCLA in LA Grant in 2003 to "create collaboration between UCLA and nonprofit organizations that address major issues of concerning the community" (Gilliam in Chapman, Corante and Hampton 2004).

other garden members as well as to create opportunities to include their voices in the decision-making process whenever possible.

The advisory committee included Shanna and two first-time mothers who were in their early to late 20's. Abby was a patient of Dr. Krochmal's—he had cared for her throughout her pregnancy, and during an appointment told her about the garden. Although Abby lived in south central Los Angeles, she became a regular gardener, and when Proyecto Jardín needed to pick up mulch or compost from city centers or private donors, Abby often enlisted the help of her father who owned a big moving truck. She also often brought her daughter to the garden with her. The other new mom, Xochilt, was a woman with whom I was acquainted through our circle of friends, though I did not know she was part of this committee until years later when I interviewed her formally for this dissertation. Xochilt had a little boy under three, and she lived in the neighborhood. She learned about the garden by chance, and the people there welcomed her curiosity and invited her to return. Given her interest in Latinx traditional medicine and healthy foodways—she was previously a co-owner of Luna Sol, a vegan Mexican food café in MacArthur Park—she found the garden an inviting place to learn more about growing and using different herbs and vegetables as both food and medicine.

2002 was a year of firsts for UCLA—and for me. The First Annual Integrative Medicine Symposium was held and I co-presented a paper entitled, "Invisible Hospitals: Botánicas in Ethnic Health Care" with my mentor at the time, World Arts and Cultures Professor Michael O. Jones. Following our talk and Q&A, Dr. Krochmal introduced himself to us and asked to meet at a later date to discuss a project he was nurturing and for which he was seeking a partner. From this point, the ball began to roll. Prof. Jones, Dr. Krochmal, and I met once at UCLA where Dr. Krochmal shared his project idea and background information on Proyecto Jardín, and after that

we communicated through emails, phone calls, and meetings in the garden. Prof. Jones agreed to work closely with Dr. Krochmal on the grant application, and I served as Research assistant, which meant I would apply for IRB exemption as well as attend the in-person meetings in the garden and begin documenting the experiences to which I was privy.

One of the first things we did with Dr. Krochmal in preparation for writing the grant application was to state our individual goals. Prof. Jones' objective was to deepen his understanding of Latinx traditional medicine, and in particular whether anyone was managing diabetes using herbal remedies or foodways. Similarly, I sought to deepen what I had already learned about adherence to Latinx traditional medicine in the United States, but I was also interested in expanding my academic boundaries and exploring applied research. I wanted to identify ways to apply my findings to the development of interventions and/or workshops and projects to address the Latinx community's needs more directly.

Dr. Krochmal's research agenda was to conduct "rigorous scientific evaluation of efficacy, safety, and mode of action of plants with medicinal value" with the immediate goal of creating "opportunities for volunteering in maintenance and development of garden" and also to initiate "educational and cultural activities for after school program[s]" (UCLA in LA Grant Application). Furthermore, he desired to create the "infrastructure of [a] medicinal herb garden [and write a] publishable report to be submitted to different medical and/or social work journals" (R. Krochmal, pers. comm. 2006). Above all, he wished to "increase the quality of life for all area residents" (R. Krochmal, pers. comm. 2006).

We entitled our grant application, "Seeds of Health and Community" and described an "interdisciplinary collaboration between the UCLA Center for Human Nutrition's Center for Dietary Supplements Research: Botanicals (CDSRB), as led by Dr. David Heber, and Michael

Owen Jones of the Department of World Arts and Cultures (WAC), in partnership with the community organization *Proyecto Jardín*" (UCLA in LA Grant Application). Our application presented this partnership as a "forum for educational exchange between UCLA and the Latino-prevalent, family-oriented community of East L.A" and it was well received by the grantors who awarded us the maximum amount of $50,000 for the medicinal garden (UCLA in LA Grant Application).

Our proposal included the development of a "research-driven curriculum taught as an eight week workshop that concerns aspects of medicinal plant cultivation and use" (UCLA in LA Application). Below is the original weekly outline of the proposed workshops:

Week 1: Background-Traditional Folk Healing & Plant Origins of Western Medicine
Week 2: How to Grow and Propagate Herbs
Weeks 3-4: Identification/Efficacy/Safety of Medicinal Plants
Weeks 5-6: How to Make Extracts/Tinctures/Infusions for:
1. Consumption
2. Cosmetic and Aromatherapy
Week 7: Culinary Uses/Traditional Recipes
Week 8: Conclusion

Other promises in the proposal included the development of a training manual that would describe "how to grow, identify, and safely consume medicinal plants" (UCLA in LA Grant Application). Following the *promotoras* (female health educator)[44] model, this workbook would

[44]According to "The Intersections of Culture, Health and Systems in California Latino Communities" by Zoe Cardoza Clayson et al. (2000), the promotora health outreach model was developed in Latin America where it has been successfully implemented (382). This system is based on a "holistic conception of health, placing personal health within an economic, cultural, and political context" (382). The promotora or health promoter who is often a woman, shares the experience of individuals and/or community members to whom she imparts health care information and education. The promotora develops her training through participation in workshops or programs

be provided to all gardeners who successfully completed the workshops. They would ideally have the confidence and the knowledge to educate community members by offering presentations at "local schools, botánicas, and health centers" (UCLA in LA Grant Application).

At the academic level, Prof. Jones proposed the design of a traditional medicine course to be taught in WAC during Winter 2003. Among the topics of discussion was a lecture entitled "Developing Culturally Sensitive and Appropriate Health Care; Benefits, Resistance, and Methods," for which he invited Dr. Krochmal and me to discuss "Seeds of Health and Community." Dr. Heber—Dr. Krochmal's mentor and sponsor for this project, designed opportunities for student involvement at Proyecto Jardín through "Physiology of Nutrition," a class that he co-taught with Susan Bowerman in UCLAs Department of Medicine in Winter 2003. Finally, our project promised the creation of a medicinal garden with projects that we expected would be of interest to scholarly and community audiences alike.

Although we used the term "intervention" to describe our project, it was not intended as an intervention in the public health sense often attributed to that term that would involve the use of education as a means of changing risk behaviors. This is not to say that we did not seek to have an influence on participants, but rather that we did not perceive their relationship to the benign medicinal herbs in question as risky. Our motivation was to find out what people knew about the uses of herbs and then to fill in the gaps so they might be "more likely to appropriately access conventional health care" (UCLA in LA Grant Application).

The "more likely to appropriately access" part of the above sentence speaks to biomedical establishments' ambiguous relationship to traditional and alternative healing methods. Some doctors respect and may encourage use of herbs along with allopathic medicine

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for which she may or may not receive official certification therefore they are often regarded as "community health workers" ("Promotres de Salud" 2019). In the U.S. this system has been effective among rural communities.

and/or related therapeutic practices; they see use of such plants as non-threatening or complementary to what they prescribe via biomedicine (Rotblatt & Ziment, 2001). Yet other doctors remain skeptical of anything that has not been subjected to scientific research and of lay healers to say the least (See Hufford et. al., 2015; Modell et. al., 2014; Mcdonald et. al., 2019). For Prof. Jones, Dr. Krochmal, and me, the goal was to increase the likelihood of patients seeking medical help and/or sharing with their doctor their reliance on herbal remedies, especially if they were being used in conjunction with or as an alternative to prescription and/or over-the-counter medications.

After we completed the UCLA in LA funded medicinal garden project, Salma, a medical student who co-facilitated medicine-making workshops with Dr. Krochmal as part of Week 3-6 activities outlined in our grant. Dr. Krochmal developed a new proposal in partnership with Salma to create a series of health workshops focused on children to emphasize healthy nutritional habits. In addition, they hoped to create a DVD in English and Spanish to address connections between food security and health disparities. The DVD and the workshops would be wrapped up into a curriculum that would be set up in a website for all schools and educators to access. The project was accepted and awarded $31,000. I did not participate in this program in any way, but I did keep in touch with gardeners and Dr. Krochmal who shared news and updates. Dr. Krochmal recalls,

> It was called "Integrating Gardens and Technology: Nutrition Education in Schools" or something like that. It was supposed to be funded in terms of creating an internet curriculum which we actually did create the basis for and, and having the hands on curriculum in the garden, having the ability to have that be portable or have that be a, a model for other schools or health care centers. So that curriculum was created and still has the potential, but they didn't actually fund the technology part cuz they thought they were gonna get money from somewhere else, but it never happened so we just created the actual curriculum with Bridge Street School and did workshops that way (R. Krochmal, pers. comm. 2006).

As Dr. Krochmal explained, the funds were not enough to set materials online, but the cohort did produce a series of workshops that emphasized theories of human ecology that described interconnections among humans, animals—including insects who do a lot of the invisible work of pollination and worms whose castings return nitrogen to the soil—and the Earth/dirt/soil. The final workshop involved 5th grade students in making salad to share others not part of the class. In her daily journal entry, Franson writes,

> [We] brought a bin of salad to the lunch area and offered salad to almost all of the students in the lunch area. One student told us that she was going to take her salad home. The remains of the salad were distributed to the parents of pre-schoolers. This type of intervention was incredibly exciting for me! We entered Bridge St. Elementary at the moment of opportunity where food intervention took place and students had to choose between healthy organic food or the hot lunch.
> Overall, the class was amazing! Students were able to engage in hands on activity, which encourage cooperation, engagement, and investment in the lunch that was prepared. It was great that the students were able to plant in the garden (Franson 2005, 32).

Based on Franson's observation, the experiential learning approach to this class was a success. One of the only experiences she might have done differently is to allow others to "have more responsibility" in the class, which for the most part was facilitated by Salma.

Franson was not the only one who voiced opinions about Salma's role. Other gardeners felt that this project, although in keeping with the garden's mission to address health in the Latinx community, relied too heavily on what "outsiders" thought was needed in the community. Moreover, some garden members expressed feeling left out. Some madres missed the days when the garden projects involved planting according to the seasons, and when they received calls informing them of upcoming events. Several members of the social-justice cohort also felt excluded; they valued working with kids to teach them about nutrition, but they felt as though the project was created by people outside of the community and based on Anglo-American recipes that to them implied that Latinxs did not have healthy foodways themselves.

Concluding Thoughts

I relied on Lefebvre's conceptual triad in this chapter because it helped me to critically look at what it means to represent or conceive the needs of the immigrant and native-born Latinx community. Community gardens are often described as grassroots spaces that represent resistance to capitalism—theoretically they reflect a culture of sharing and cooperation. However, all gardens today are not established as tactics to address social inequities, for they are established by organizations of various kinds, each with its own goals to address problems in communities. What separates one from another is the ability of each to conceive of a place that reflects the actual needs of a community as opposed to what outsiders may perceive as necessary. The challenge is to become aware of the position from which we begin place-making practices. Are we perpetuating top-down strategies? Or are we making room for the voices and embodiments of people we seek to represent?

Lefebvre's conceptualization of space helps to understand why the community or segments of it needed to eventually push Dr. Krochmal and the academic group (me included) to the margins, They had their own beliefs, values, and attitudes regarding health and how to access it, and while suggestions that representations of place/conceived place may exclude such voices, they do not. As we have seen in this chapter, people find ways to interject their stories into planning practices. What began as *chismes*, which I think of as murmurs of dissent, eventually turned into more explicit efforts by the gardeners to take center stage and self-represent their visions of place and health needs through the garden.

Chapter 4

Proyecto Jardín Case Study: Part II

This chapter continues to explore place-making practices through the lens of Henri Lefebvre's conceptual triad discussed in my Introduction and Chapter Three, but with closer attention to the representation through lived and endured spaces. Thus, I center the experiences of *madres amas de casa* (stay at home moms) and social-justice activists during the conceptualization process and the development of the medicinal garden at Proyecto Jardín, which took place in 2003. While there was a lot of excitement about this new addition to the garden, there were also tensions that began to shift the balance of power from Dr. Krochmal and the academics/professionals engaged in project coordination and grant writing to social-justice activists. At the center of this negotiation was the perception of community identity and needs, and how best they may be represented and served. This period of productivity in the garden demonstrates ways ideas create and recreate meaningful places, but more specifically, how people extend the boundaries of personal spaces of home, homeland, and ancestral ways of knowing to public places.

This section describes the process of creating the medicinal garden using the UCLA in LA Partnerships Grant. I rely on my observations, interviews and minutes to discuss the decision-making process, the construction of the medicinal garden and the concluding workshops. Each phase of the medicinal garden's development reveals considerations of traditional medicine, in particular, herbal plants, by all the groups I identified in Chapter One: madres, social-justice activists and academics/professionals.

Each phase of the garden's development also provides a glimpse of ways madres and social-justice activists laid claim to the garden. Madres insisted on being included, social-justice activists asserted their values. These experiences reflect ways people made the garden a place of their own—a thirdspace as Edward Soja would call it—and in a sense an extension of home and homeland, both geographic and ancestral (Soja 1996, 57). Social-justice activists in particular challenged the academic/professional ways of planning events and in turn made space for more radical concerns some of which I discuss in my concluding chapter. This chapter, in particular the account of the first meeting, is reflexive. It is influenced by Maria Cristina González "An Ethics for Postcolonial Ethnography" (2003, 83), who calls for a revisioning of the ethics of ethnographic accounting. González invites readers to let go of the meaning of the word accountability and instead to "begin to look at the word. Account-ability. The ability to account. To tell a story. . . . When we are accountable we are able to tell a story" (ibid, 83). González' invitation is to go beyond the ethnographic narrative and instead to tell "how we came to know the ethnographic tale" (ibid, 83). Thus, in this chapter I describe the creation of the medicinal garden as well as personal reflections that shed light on my experience engaging in ethnographic fieldwork as a Latina finding her academic voice.

Representational Space Interrupted

This section begins with a discussion of the decision-making process, because it reflects values and attitudes that shaped garden members' interest in traditional medicine. I begin with a discussion of my experience during the first planning meeting because it reflects a challenge to academic practice—a social-justice activist accused me of stealing community knowledge–that

also highlights ongoing tensions between social-justice activists and academics/professionals that I observed during my research and participation in events at Proyecto Jardín.

The First Meeting and the Core Group Members

The first meeting took place in the early evening on Thursday, July 17 at Proyecto Jardín. Five people were present at this meeting: Dr. Krochmal, Ana, Shanna, Xochilt and myself. All, except Xochilt, were academics/professional; Ana, Shanna and Xochilt were members of the garden's advisory committee. Dr. Krochmal called the first meeting to inform the advisory committee that Proyecto Jardín had received the UCLA in LA Partnerships Grant as well as to create a plan of action.

During the first meeting I arrived early to explore the garden before other gardeners arrived. Dr. Krochmal showed up twenty minutes or so later. As we talked about the garden, a woman wearing jeans and a hand-embroidered peasant top arrived. It was Xochilt, a social-justice activist, and we happened to already know each other. She had been a member of Luna Tierra Sol Café[45], a popular cooperative, employee-owned site that offered Vegetarian and Vegan Mexican dishes and served as a community hub where students, artists, and social activists shared ideas, performed (mostly dances and spoken word), and held various fund-raising events. I asked about her family and she responded kindly, but also reservedly. It was not

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[45] Although it was established as a co-operative, which was collectively run and operated by several people, Robert Lopes, also known simply as Tito, initiated the idea and plan to start Luna Tierra Sol Cafe 1996 after the closing of the Peace & Justice Center of which he was a part. Just like many who start community gardeners, none of the co-operative members had knowledge of how to run a business; they learned by doing and connecting with local organizations that helped them devise a business plan and to access improvement funds. This co-operative served Mexican vegan food (and if you knew to ask, they also offered herbal teas to soothe the nerves, ease digestion or relieve cold/flu symptoms) as well as hosted various spoken word, dance, yoga and other cultural or activist events. This café was known for its radical, some say socialist views, and after 9-11, rumors spread that it was under surveillance; many of us jokingly called it the socialist café (For a succinct write-up on the café, see Joe Hauler's Tofu and Philosophy Luna Tierra Sol Café Serves Up Food With A Message 2003).

until we began deliberating the project agenda that I realized why she was distant with me: despite our acquaintance, she was suspicious of my intentions and felt protective of her community.

Two other women, Shanna—a social justice activist I introduced in Chapter Three and Ana, an academic—arrived a little later. They obviously all knew each other and hugged and exchanged greetings before Krochmal invited us to sit and talk. Since I was the only new person, Krochmal introduced me to everyone; we shook hands and exchanged smiles. After introductions, Krochmal passed around copies of the UCLA in LA grant and we discussed the challenges of fulfilling the promises we made. The larger goal of this project was to develop communication among disciplines, in our case the Center for Nutrition, the Department of World Arts and Cultures/Folklore Specialization Program, and Proyecto Jardín.

I admit, I was excited, but perhaps more nervous about following through with all we promised than others, for it seemed like a lot of work and I was not sure how to get it started. It was a relief to be collaborating with others like Krochmal, who did know how to get things done. Krochmal recognized that we planned a lot, but was confident that we could do it, plus he had experience meeting grant demands so he was not overwhelmed. Shanna, who had worked on previous garden projects, also seemed confident.

Xochilt, expressed great concern with the ways projects in which she had been involved previously were organized. Thus, she commented on the “need to develop a strong infrastructure” based on “quality of performance” rather than “quantity of participation.” Her idea was that greater participation would organically follow quality work (Xochilt, pers. comm. 2003). She suggested that we organize recruitment in terms of "circles," all of which would be open to participation by anyone at any time, but they would be characterized by participation.

Those of us, who would gather regularly to discuss the grant and plan events, workshops, and workdays, would make up the "core group." People more involved in garden planting and maintenance would comprise the "intermediate circle," and everyone who attended events or simply wanted to know about the garden was considered part of the "wider circle." While in agreement about the importance of an organizational structure, Krochmal made sure to offer inclusiveness. He expressed the need to maintain a loose definition of membership to allow participation from newcomers at any level at all times. All present agreed with his suggestion to keep the circles as theoretical structures rather than as enforced positions (See Appendix 1).

As I learned from my involvement in the garden that year, these circles mirrored the class structure of the space. The academics and social activists in the center made all of the decisions; the madres were considered part of the intermediate circle and they served as the muses for the group the inner circle sought to represent; and finally, the "outsiders," or those who are not nearby residents, Mexican, Latinx, or who represented official organizations such as the City Council, were relegated to the very periphery of the wider circles. Two years later, the power structure shifted drastically when academics left or felt pushed out of the core group and social activists took over the center to address issues of self-sustainability, food justice, and healing. Their intended audience was intermediate and wider circles. Though they were interested in some of the topics, the madres with whom I spoke did not feel included by the social-justice activists. In passing conversations, madres often said "I was not invited," "I did not know that an event was taking place," I don't feel comfortable, and I think they probably don't speak Spanish" (Gloria, pers. comm. 2004).

In addition to voicing an interest in organizing a viable structure, Xochilt also brought up the need to generate greater community participation. First, she asked that we hold meetings on

days and times convenient to working adults; she did not feel like this had been adequately done in previous times. She also asked that we provide childcare during meetings in consideration of parents with young children. Xochilt felt that in order for this project to be a true community effort and a service to everyone, we needed as much input from as many people as possible. Given that the majority of the gardeners at Proyecto Jardín were women with children, she felt that offering childcare would encourage their participation.

Xochilt did not simply request childcare, she also offered a revision of the budget to accommodate this incentive. She proposed that we reallocate the $2900 for "graduate student work study" towards childcare. Doing so would cover recruitment, depending on cost, youth mentors from Roosevelt High School or from local community centers; cost of supplies for activities; and a minimum wage stipend for the students who would be watching the kids. By this point, Xochilt had asserted herself as lead speaker at the meeting. Krochmal made attempts to regain control of the conversation by either returning to the grant proposal or asking everyone to comment on the ideas put forth. He also noted what was said and asked Xochilt or someone else if they wanted to look into the given topic. Thus, Xochilt picked up the project of looking into daycare and creating flyers in English and Spanish, which she also volunteered to pass out door-to-door to all area residents.

Xochilt had worked on community projects before, and she knew the concerns and needs of Latinx immigrant populations. She was also familiar with strategies undertaken by public health and/or grassroots institutes to reach people with information and education. I had no problem supporting the ideas she set forth, but I did begin feeling attacked when she brought up shifting the budget to take from the graduate student funds from which I was to be paid, for I depended on this stipend to pay for my classes at UCLA. It was obvious that tension was

swelling because Xochilt spoke with agitation in her voice. Krochmal continued to try and assuage the tension by accommodating her requests and asking for input from the rest of us. Shanna and Ana limited their comments at this time and they refrained from looking at anyone directly in the eye, as if to do so might reveal their discomfort. I was shocked and did not know how to respond so I remained silent until Xochilt began attacking me more directly.

The topic of community recruitment gave way to a discussion of, what Xochilt called "traditional knowledge," which she defined as respecting what the elders know and teach as well as the enactment and preservation of ceremony and ritual in the maintenance of plants. She explained that practices could include asking plants permission to cut them, and then thanking them with a prayer or tobacco offering. Xochilt expressed great frustration and concern by saying that academics "take community knowledge, sacred knowledge" and use it for their personal gain. Without looking at me, as she tapped her grant proposal with one hand and shook her head as in disbelief, she finally asked me directly to tell her about my work, demanding to see the transcripts of interviews I had conducted with all botánica owners and healers. She exclaimed that the information was "community property" and added that "it has to stay in the community" and "I have to see it, I have to see it!"

I felt my face turning red and started to shake internally from the fear-induced adrenaline rush. I felt as if I had done something wrong or offensive. In a matter of seconds I wondered if others felt the same way towards me, and asked myself what I had done to become the enemy or victim in the 30 minutes we had been talking. I also became defensive because I considered myself part of the larger Latinx "community" of which Xochilt was protective at that moment. The mood of the meeting felt hostile.

In this moment, I did not fit Xochilt's notion of community, and she seemed motivated by protectiveness. I was unclear of who was included in her definition, residents of Boyle Heights? Or was it the larger Latinx constituency? If the latter, why was I excluded from the picture? Why did she perceive me as a threat to Latinxs? How did she decide who was in and who was out? The silence from the others present added to my self-consciousness, and I wondered if they too felt the same. Or were they afraid Xochilt would also question their legitimacy and intentions?

I did not have much time to think about my response or whether it should come from me as "insider" or "community member" or as "academic," so I responded as from both my Latinx self and my academic or "ethnographic self," perhaps more for the reasons that after three years in graduate school these parts of me had become intrinsically intertwined and could no longer be separated.[46] The academic in me kept me from questioning Xochilt's right to represent "the community" because I was there to learn and understand the social experience of Proyecto Jardín members, not to claim the space or the people or wield power over anyone. Thus, I took a deep breath and allowed the non-academic-Latina insider me to begin speaking. I explained to Xochilt that the subject of Latinx folk/traditional medicine was dear to my heart, as I had entered this study to learn more about my own family's practices. I told her that I wanted to document and preserve Latinx healing practices as well as to show the wisdom and logic of healers associated with botánicas and to validate their importance as a community and alternative health resource. I wanted her to see that I was an ally who had values similar to hers.

My fieldwork training includes a code of ethics that requires me to identify myself as researcher and to be honest about my intention to write about situations I observe, so I continued

[46] Edward Bruner concedes that there is no true separation between the work and the person and that "every ethnographer inevitably leaves traces [of their personal self] in the text" (1993, 2).

by explaining my work to Xochilt. I informed her that I served as a research assistant to now Prof. Michael Owen Jones, and that the interviews I conducted with botánica owners and healers had been translated and transcribed to be entered into a database that would be placed online for everyone to access in the future. I also invited her to visit the World Arts and Cultures Department at UCLA so she could meet my professor and spend some time looking through our files—Prof. Jones had done this with other healers and had invited me to do so as well. I tried to assure her that I conducted interviews with respect and consideration for everyone with whom I met, but I do not think that made a difference to her.

Xochilt did not say whether she would visit my department at UCLA, and after this day she never brought up seeing my transcripts again. Krochmal resolved the tension at the meeting by suggesting that we consider ways to address “the robbing of community traditional knowledge by academics” and at the second meeting, we discussed writing a collaborative paper that made “suggestions on a) how to establish communication between academia and the community and b) how to avoid such a pitfall.” The minutes of this meeting, like those of the first, were emailed to all of us who met as well as to other members of Proyecto Jardín who, despite his inclusive invitation to participate, never responded to writing or talking about this topic and consequently we just dropped the topic.

After discussing the role of academics at Proyecto Jardín, Krochmal brought the group’s attention back to the grant by asking Ana to share her schematic of the medicine garden, and she began describing possible construction phases and landscaping. Krochmal mentioned several organizations that might lend their support, either in helping to construct the medical garden or by providing supplies. We also discussed the need to engage the larger community in this project so that they too might have a say in its design.

Xochilt spoke again, bringing up ideas about "respecting Mother Earth, Pachamama," and giving "specific ideas on the design itself." Furthermore, she brought up "Writing down potential medicine garden tasks in the form of job responsibilities" which she volunteered to draft " beginning with the creation of positions for "childcare" and adding to it "lettuce green and farmer's market person." After two hours, we wrapped things up by listing short-term goals we would accomplish by the next meeting, brainstorming on "survey questions," flyer and brochure layout, imagery and contents, a schedule to engage larger "circles," and preparation of other marketing tools. Krochmal agreed to email everyone the meeting minutes and share the same materials with other Proyecto Jardín members who were on the email list.

After we said our good-byes, I left with mixed feelings about my involvement in the project. This was exactly the type of hands-on project in which I had long desired to take part as a graduate student, but I did not look forward to working with Xochilt. Her attack made me feel like an intruder or a film character in a scene in which the protagonist is left alone at a crossroads, the lights go off all around her, and a bright spot is lit from above. She stands alone and is seen by the audience, pondering how she arrived at this point of conflict and whether she was indeed at fault. If so, how could she right her wrongs? Or must she simply quit the project?

I did not quit the project. I seemed to be experiencing one of those ethnographic dilemmas encountered by early researchers who documented their experiences studying people of different cultural backgrounds.[47] It was nonetheless my "rite de passage" as a Ph.D. student in fieldwork; I had finally encountered my very own field dilemma, about which I had not read anything yet and I was interested to explore (Georges and Jones, 1980, 44). Xochilt and I are not so different, for she valued the work of Latinx lay healers as well as the use of herbs and plants

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[47] In People Studying People: The Human Element in Fieldwork (1980), Robert A. Georges and Michael O. Jones devote two chapters to discussions of "dilemmas" and "confrontations" some folklorists and anthropologists have experienced while conducting research outside of their own communities.

as medicine, and she was protective of the Latinx community as much as I have been. However, the issue was not what we had in common, but instead how to work together, how I might show her that I did not have selfish motivations and that I was genuinely interested in contributing to improving access to health among Latinxs. And then there were the other core group members. I hoped to understand their silence. Did they share Xochilt's feelings towards me? Did others who come to the garden share her views, and should I prepare to feel aggression from them too? I had encountered indifference from people at botánicas who had not taken kindly to my asking questions regarding their place of business or their religious and/or spiritual practices. However, I understood their stance as a form of self-protection in response to Health Authority Law Enforcement Task Force (HALT) raids on botánicas that took place between 1998 and the early 2000's.[48] And while I understood Xochilt's distrust of me, I was also affected by it because I did not expect it. I incorrectly assumed that my ethnicity would be an automatic point of inclusion. I assumed that my intentions were transparent and in keeping with those of others, and therefore would not be questioned. I was mistaken, and even though painful at first, I gained important lessons as an academic of color conducting fieldwork.

My experience with Xochilt allowed me to better connect to problematics of the insider/outsider binary that produces a false sense of understanding about one's own society (Narayan 1993, 678). To assume that one is an insider hinders one's ability to see diversity in the experiences of people in a given context—How could I talk about the heterogeneity of the Latinx community if I assumed to know "everything" about "my" community? To see one's *self* as also outsider "undermine[s] the notion of objectivity, because from particular locations all understanding becomes subjectively based and forged through interactions within fields of power

[48] The city of Los Angeles created the Health Authority Law Enforcement to "stop over-the-counter sales of the potentially dangerous pharmaceuticals" (Guccione 2002). These enforcements were initiated in response to deaths related to illegal use of pharmaceuticals and injections.

relations” (ibid, 679). By seeing the ways I am both inside and outside of experience I expanded the possibilities of what I could learn as well as what I could share.

Listening to the Intermediate Circle

In theory “everyone” or as Xochilt said, “the people, I mean the moms, the grandmas, the children, the babies, the grandpas, the dads” was considered part of the garden’s community. In actuality, community implied the people who came to the garden, that is the madres, as well as the largely Spanish-speaking Latinx area residents whom the inner circle wanted to reach. In meetings that by September had diversified to include a few men: a family practice resident in training and two engineers, one of whom was knowledgeable of herbal remedies. Abby, a patient of Dr. Krochmal’s and Angelina, a UCLA psychology student also attended meetings regularly.

As we approached the end of the year, some of us—Dr. Krochmal, Xochilt, Shanna, Abby and I—became concerned with the lack of input madres had in the decision-making process of the medicinal garden they had originally asked for. Xochilt and Shanna proposed reaching out to the madres and organizing an informal meeting with a few of the more involved madres in order to gain their input. Shanna took the lead on calling them and setting up the meeting date and time. The core members present at that meeting agreed on the plan proposed.

During the following meeting Shanna reported to the core group what she had discussed with madres including Gloria, Bertha and Rosa who I mentioned in Chapter One. Shanna said that madres had been supportive of creating a medicinal garden; they saw value in having access to plants they grew up with. They also expressed great desire and motivation to be more actively involved in all aspects of the garden. The problem they expressed with attending core meetings was the time of day when they were held because it conflicted with their home life

commitments—dinner, getting children ready for bed and spending time as family. They also expressed feeling left out; in the past they had been notified of important events and happening in the garden, but this time around they had remained in the dark because no one had called to tell them anything.

The outcome of the meeting Shanna held with madres reiterated and solidified the problem of creating projects for a public site where various people have opinions about how decisions should be made. Core group members reflected and considered ways to open the decision-making process to the other garden patrons by deciding to hold an intermediate circle meeting to which we would invite all "community members" so that they might share their opinions on the herbs to be planted and weigh in on how to become involved in discussions regarding planning and designing of the medicine garden. We considered whether to have the meeting in English or Spanish and whether to have a translator and who that would be. We also outlined a basic structure for the meeting—Dr. Krochmal and Xochilt would lead the conversation by asking people to share the names of herbs they wanted to see in the medicine garden.

The intermediate circle meeting was held on a sunny afternoon in late October. Bertha, Gloria, Rosa, and others whom I had not yet met attended. Mario, who had come to the garden to till the soil and do some planting after work, as usual, peeped into the circle and listened in from time-to-time. Occasionally, Mario shared a comment or two before he retreated to his gardening tasks again. I did not know it then, but Mario was a serious farmer with abundant knowledge regarding cultivation methods.

As planned, Dr. Krochmal and Xochilt led the meeting. They asked everyone to share the name of herbs they used, and in response, people called out plant names with great enthusiasm.

Moreover, some madres also volunteered information about who taught them the uses of the plants they named or of ways they use them. I took notes as best as I could and so did Dr. Krochmal. Together, we complied a list of about 40 plants. Half of the herbs requested were already growing in the garden, so people were informed that priority would be given to those species not already in the garden. When madres voiced interest in growing *epazote* (wormseed) and *ruda* (rue), some concerns arose. The main issues were whether to grow plants known to a) be toxic in high amounts or b) to be abortifacients. The madres expressed awareness of the potential dangers of those plants if misused; however they still wanted to have access to them.[49]

The conversation surrounding epazote and rue highlights two points: The first, is that madres had confidence in their knowledge of appropriate use of epazote and ruda. They knew how much to take and when to avoid their use (e.g. when pregnant). The second point pertains to Dr. Krochmal's stance; as a doctor he had to take care not to encourage the use of herbs that have questionable effects, however as an integrative medicine practitioner he was careful not to deny the madres' request or to undermine their knowledge of how to use those plants. In turn, Dr. Krochmal proposed to include more information regarding the use of these plants during the workshops that would be offered upon completion of the medicinal garden. True to his word, when the core group met again, we narrowed down the list of plants named at the meeting with madres to thirteen: *sabila* (aloe), *albahaca* (basil), *manzanilla* (chamomile), *epazote* (wormseed), *altamisa* (feverfew), *lavanda* (lavender), *estafiate* (mugwort), *oregano*, *romero* (rosemary), *ruda*,

[49] During my participation as Principal Research Assistant and Translator in a long-standing research study of Botánicas in Los Angeles in 2000, Michael Owen Jones and I interviewed a "convenience sample of 26 healers associated with these stores on 84 occasions" (Jones and Hernández 2009, 2). Of this interview sample, most healers noted that people who purchased herbs from their stores did so on their own recognizance; we were told, "they know how to use the plants" and which ones to avoid. Kiefer, Bradbury and Tellez-Girón's research of Latinx adherence to herbs in Madison, Wisconsin shows that people rely on up to 57 plants, but they were not able to determine their study participants' knowledge of contraindications of plants due to lack of patient disclosure to medical practitioners (2014). The experiences of Latinxs that are highlighted by these studies reflect an area that still requires attention from medical folklorists, anthropologists and health researches alike.

salvia (sage), *yerba buena* (spearmint) and *valerian* (valerian). These plants became the central focus of workshops the core group organized as part of the UCLA in LA Grant.

The Design: Practical & Symbolic

The design for the medicinal garden that was originally proposed by Ana was circular; it included pathways that divided its circumference into four parts for accessibility. Ana's design served as the basis onto which the core group added symbolic meaning based on Native American and Mesoamerican elements and permaculture principles. This section draws from discussions in meetings and portrayals of the garden by core group members in an unpublished book entitled "Seeds for Tomorrow" that documented the development of the medicinal garden.

The Proyecto Jardín medicine garden was named "*Nahui Atecocoli*, which in Nahuatl means 'Four Seashells', or 'Cuatro Caracoles'" ("Seeds for Tomorrow").[50] While the name referred to Mesoamerican identity, the garden structure was also inspired by Native American medicine wheel traditions described in E. Barre Kavasch's *The Medicine Wheel Garden: Creating Sacred Space for Healing, Celebration, and Tranquility* (2002), a book that Shanna shared with the core group for inspiration.[51] One of the central elements discussed by Kavash is the sacredness and universality of the circle. This perspective influenced the core group to keep the circular design that Ana had originally proposed, but it also inspired the addition of an inner circle also considered for practical purposes; it would become the place where a fountain would be installed to facilitate watering of the plants in the medicinal garden. Xochilt appreciated the suggestion of the inner circle to the design because she found parallels with the axis mundi that

[50] Caracol also refers to snail shells and spirals.
[51] E. Barre Kavash has worked for the American Museum of Natural History in New York where she has lectured on ethnobotany since 1981. Her approach to the discussion of medicinal wheels is geared towards a New Age audience and/or gardeners providing information on healing plants and making spaces for spiritual practices. Kavash speaks of Native American healing in general as opposed to particular healing modalities among tribes.

she explained represented connection between “the spirit and human realms.” Xochilt engaged in the self-study of Mayan and Aztec cosmology that served as the basis for her own recommendations.[52]

Ana’s proposal to divide the garden into four parts for easy access was also kept, but again imbued with symbolic meaning. The pathways that divided the circle into four parts were re-interpreted by Shanna and Xochilt to refer to the concept of the four directions in Mayan cosmology: north, south, east and west. Each direction was also connected to colors that were explained in the booklet as follows:

> Red is the color of the east where it is hot. In the east are born the sun, the moon, the stars.
>
> The color white descends from the north. The north is cold and is he birthplace of harmful winds. The winds from the north blow from October to December.
>
> The black direction is the west. The wind that blows from the west is the most dangerous blowing from the end of December through January. The west wind is born low from the earth and blows out to sea detoxifying the earth, it is for this reason that it can be harmful.
>
> The south corresponds to the color yellow. The infrequent rain and wind from the south are beneficial for the planting and cultivation of crops (“Seeds for Tomorrow”).

The symbolic interpretation of the four directions and colors was further emphasized by the core group’s decision to make raised planting beds in the shape of spirals, each of which would be symbolic of the four directions above. Shanna informed us of permaculture design principles that involved the use of spiral beds for cultivating herbs. Permaculture experts advise the use of spirals for growing herbs because they make it possible to cultivate a variety of plants regardless of their different needs. As explained by Jonathon Engels in a blog entry for the Permaculture Research Institute,

[52] See Michael D. and Stephen Houston’s *The Maya* (2015) and Karl Taube’s Aztec and Maya Myths (2012) for a discussion of research as well as mythologies and cultural impacts of Mayan and Aztec cosmology.

> Building a circular bed with spiraled walls creates an insane collection of microclimates, with varying degrees of sun exposure, drainage, and the opportunity to separate bad companions and neighbor friendly plants. In a tiny space, less than six square meters, it's possible to grow a variety of herbs that might otherwise have to be spread throughout a property. The herb spiral lets gardeners do it in one spot, where it is most needed, near to the kitchen (Engles 2014).

Spirals can be created with bricks or other materials; it depends on local conditions such as weather as well as materials available. In the case of Proyecto Jardín, the core group decided to use the concrete slabs left over from the dilapidated homes that once stood on the site. We also used slabs donated by the city. In the book, a core member contributed an explanation of the spirals that conveyed harmony as well as oneness.

> Permaculture (Permanent Agriculture) aims to create a space in which people and landscape harmonize to develop a pattern that benefits and sustains life in all forms. Among these patterns is the spiral, which is found over and over again in nature. Inside us, molecules of DNA—not even visible with a microscope—come together in the form of a double helix. Vast galaxies—some hardly visible with a telescope—swirl with billions of stars. The Zapatistas say 'Up there the stars form a spiral with moon as origin and destination.' Here on mother earth, embryos, flower buds, snails, and other delicate life forms find strength in the spiral, as do powerful inanimate forms like hurricanes and tornados ("Seeds for Tomorrow").

The selection of Zapatista knowledge and ideas of Earth as mother, along with the selection of Native American and Mesoamerican principles, is explained by what Lara Medina refers to as "Chicana spiritualities" in (2008, 189). Chicana spiritualities take the form of personal and collective performances that are influenced by non-Western philosophies, in particular Pre-Columbian values and customs that are meant as challenges to patriarchal authority by placing women and their concerns and interests at the center while also resisting colonized subjectivity (See Anzaldúa 1987; Medina, 2008, Alarcón 1998). Chicana spiritualities differ form one person to another—hence the plural conception of spirituality in Medina's work— and are characterized by the incorporation of herbal healing modalities, recognition of

the elements in nature, reverence for Tonantzin (the Mesoamerican mother goddess) and mother Earth (e.g., Pachamama), *danza* (Aztec dance) and ritual practice including ceremonies that involve cleansings with sage and prayer.[53] I will return to this topic following a discussion of the workshops promised in the UCLA in LA Grant proposal.

Once the core group agreed on the design and symbolic meaning of the medicinal garden, we made preparations for creating the garden. These included clearing the area where the garden would be installed, obtaining donations of concrete slabs from the city and donation of compost as well as finding someone to lead us in the building of the four spirals. Shanna's teacher, and permaculture expert Larry Santoyo, learned about Proyecto Jardín's plans to build a medicinal garden and offered his support by leading a spiral-making workshop at no cost. Santoyo also mobilized members of Eco Village, an intentional community that emphasizes community living and environmental consciousness, to attend and help create the spirals. Using funds from the grant, the core group catered food and made the spiral-making workshop an event. Although we had hoped to complete all four spirals in one day, we were only able to finish two. The others were completed one week later and then our attention turned to planning the medicinal workshops that I discuss in the following section.

The Medicinal Herbs Workshops

Following development of the medicine garden, the core group organized four herb workshops, which were to be held every two weeks beginning March 20, 2004. These were open

[53] Lara Medina explains, "the spiritual practices of many Chicanas emerge from a purposeful integration of their creative inner resources and the diverse cultural influences that feed their souls and their psyches . . . as they journey on paths previously prohibited by patriarchal religions, Chicanas redefine and decide for themselves what images, rituals, myths, and deities nourish and give expression to their deepest value" (2008, 223). Medina's definition builds on the seminal work of Chicana theorist Gloria Anzaldúa who articulates "*mestiza* consciousness" by explaining that it involves "conscious rupture with all oppressive traditions of all cultures and religions" (2012, 104)

to the public, but the GTWT organization was given a special invitation to attend the first one: Introduction to Herbal Medicine/Grow Your Own Herbs. We originally proposed to do a "Background to Traditional Healing and Plant Origins of Western Medicine" workshop but ended up combining it with the Planting workshop in order to make the experiences more eventful. Nevertheless, the Introduction to Herbal Medicine workshop was designed to give historical information about plants as well as open discussion of ways in which people already use herbs as medicine. We all picked the projects we felt comfortable doing. Given our interests in traditional medicine, Xochilt and I agreed to partner and create this workshop—Tensions between us had subsided following the meetings and spiral-making workshop. We focused on the thirteen herbs previously mentioned.[54] Given my academic inclination, I prepared a profile for each plant that included a list of common names by which each plant is known, its origin, and information on traditional uses. I tried meeting with Xochilt to discuss the particulars of the workshop, but our schedules did not allow it so on the day of I took my lead from her.

The majority of people who attended this workshop were young women under 18 who came with GTWT mentor, Linda. One group of mentees and other visitors worked with Krochmal and Mario on learning how to plant corn; they discussed the importance of spacing corn seeds at least 2 inches apart, how to water and avoid pests and companion planting options. Meanwhile, Xochilt and I sat with a group of six women with whom we discussed medicinal plants. Xochilt began with a brief introduction through which she expressed a preference for engaging with Herstory, "the ways women keep knowledge and how they pass it on" (Xochilt, pers. comm. 2004). In turn, she shared her name as well as an interest in re-connecting with the

[54] During our research of botánicas, Prof. Jones and I "obtained information regarding more than 300 plants; however, there seems to be a basic core of 40 to 50 that are grown at home for medicinal and spiritual use" (Jones and Hernández 2009). In "pilot Study of Herbal Medicine Use in Midwest Latino Population" (2014), Kiefer et. al documented use of 57 plants, which included all thirteen of the plants mentioned in this chapter.

traditional practices of her ancestors; she also noted how important it was to have a heritage to pass down to her child. Then she asked that we go around the circle saying our name and sharing our connection to a plant or remedy as a memory, recipe, or anecdote of any kind.

Each time a new plant was introduced, we went around the circle saying what we each knew about it. Xochilt followed the story-sharing by discussing common uses for each plant and then invited everyone to chime in and say how they use it. Most of the young women had little knowledge of how to prepare herb bundles or of the various uses of plants, but they did share memories of mothers or grandmothers using certain herbs in curing methods with them. The adult women present, however, had plenty to share about herbs they used and the ways they learned about them from family members including grandfathers and uncles.

One of the liveliest discussions surrounded how to make herbal tea. A GTWT mentee asked what the proper way to make tea was. Xochilt did not suggest a right or wrong way to do it, but rather shared how she makes her tea. She boils the desired amount of water, then turns the heat off, adds the herb(s), and covers the pot with a lid to let the tea steep. Then she pours the water through a strainer into a cup, adds a little bit of honey and it's ready to drink. Two other women said they added the herbs to the water and let it boil together. The GTWT mentees asked what the difference was and we began discussing ideas regarding the desired strength of tea and/or whether boiling the herbs diminished the plant's vitality and benefit.

The workshop revealed a difference in knowledge of medicinal plants and their uses based on age, which partially explains the concern held by some regarding the sustainability of practices discussed. Some of the GTWT people talked about being Zapotec. They said that as kids growing up in Los Angeles, they did not want to learn their families' language or culture, but now they regret that because they see that traditional medicinal practices are useful and

realize that their heritage is important because it represents a connection to homeland that some people struggle to recreate for themselves; traditional medicine offered them a sense of continuity with homeland, ancestry and tradition. For other women, this was an opportunity to shine and recognize just how much they knew about herbs and healing. For me, the lesson was one of pedagogy. Had I been the one to lead the workshop, we might not have heard the wonderful stories or created a space for the type of reflection that seemed to leave all the women in our circle with a sense of pride in their heritages. My workshop would have modeled a classroom, teacher-student relationship in which the teacher maintains the seat of knowledge and s/he imparts information, choosing if and when to elicit student participation. Using herstory, the conventional—and some might also say patriarchal—model, is shifted to give everyone a chance to be in the seat of the teacher.

UCLA Ethnobotanist Barry Prigge led the next workshop on Herb Safety. The workshop attracted a small group of madres and their children as well as Mario who, as usual, stepped in and out of the workshop to tend to garden tasks. Prigge brought with him a sample of plants. He gave us their Latin names, growth habits, and in some cases, interesting facts regarding health benefits. For the most part though, it was a very scientific type of class in which we dissected the plants to learn more about their anatomy.

Although, the madres were captivated by the information provided by Prigge, they expressed the least excitement about his class. They appreciated learning the names of plant parts, facts about their growth, and in some cases, interesting information regarding benefits (e.g., the chili plant is a natural pesticide); but in general, the workshop seemed to them wanting. They wanted to plant some of the flowers and plants discussed, but they were advised against doing so by Dr. Krochmal and master gardeners because the plants were exotic that required a

level of care they could not give them at the garden. In addition, the madres felt that this workshop was interesting and informative, but lacking in terms of practical engagement. None of the information shared by Prigge could be applied to the care of their families nor to the cultivation of plants at Proyecto Jardín, with the exception of chilies, which could be used as a pesticide.

During Prigge's workshop, everyone paid careful attention, especially Rosa's 9-year-old son who took detailed notes and drew pictures. This boy impressed the other mothers who commented on the attention he was paying. The boy was genuinely drawn to learning about plants and about gardening, and unlike the other kids who ran around playing tag, pulling up weeds, and/or inventing games, this child studied all about gardening. It seemed as though nothing else existed, but the plants and the lessons they imparted.

Madres, Mario and his wife, and a few other neighborhood residents attended the workshops that followed. Cooking with Herbs and Medicine Making. Of the three workshops, the two that madres said they liked best were Cooking with Herbs and Medicine Making. They really enjoyed the cooking with herbs workshop because it gave them a chance to bond with other women as they divided up to collect vegetables for a Rainbow salad. Each group, which included children, was given a color by Krochmal who asked us to find all vegetables in the garden of that color. The point of this exercise was to show everyone how easy it is to include vegetables in one's diet, but also to show an effective way of combining multiple vegetables in one's diet. As Dr. Krochmal explained, to promote good health, "our plates should be colorful and raw or lightly cooked vegetables should make up the largest portions on our plates" (R. Krochmal, pers. comm. 2006).

As I walked around collecting greens, I overheard talk among the women. I made note of recipes they were sharing with each other. One woman provided a verbal account of ways to make vegetarian lasagna that included red and yellow chard. Gloria introduced us to *quelite* (lamb's quarter), a plant she made sure to tell us, was native to her town of Puebla, Mexico. Two women, one from El Salvador and another from Venezuela, said they had never eaten quelite so they asked Gloria how to cook it and she happily shared basic ways to prepare the vegetable. She boils or sautés it with garlic or serves it raw in salads. The two women picked a bunch of the wild quelite and discussed how to incorporate it in soup or to sauté it with garlic, onion, and tomato. Dr. Krochmal also introduced everyone to agave nectar, a sugar and honey substitute with a light viscous consistency, which he included along with olive oil, a bit of salt, pepper, garlic, and balsamic vinegar to make a vinaigrette dressing.

The cooking with herbs workshop seemed well received by everyone who attended. While it was useful to hear from Dr. Krochmal, the women also learned from each other and the kids had a lot fun pulling onions, and quelite; it was self-gratifying for them to pull plants out and then to taste them. I noticed children tasting leaves as they ran around collecting more and when it came time to eat, everyone eagerly held a bowl out to receive their share. As we ate, we asked Dr. Krochmal how to make the balsamic dressing, some pressing him for details on exact measurement of ingredients while others asked about ways they might modify the recipe (e.g., someone asked if they could add lemon and/or orange juice to the recipe for a tangier dressing).

Dr. Krochmal invited a medical student, Salma, to collaborate with him in facilitating the Medicine-Making workshop. Together, they showed attendees—madres, a folklorist who lived in the area and myself—how to make glycerin-based tinctures for stress and headaches; loose leaf teas combining chamomile, mint and lemon grass for stomachaches; and a sugar-free *jarabe*

or cough syrup combining several herbs, an orange slice, and the key ingredient of the day, glycerin. This workshop was perhaps the most captivating of all. The madres know how to make teas and simple poultices, but they had never made their own tinctures and they were amazed at how easy it was to do them. The only problem was figuring out where to get glycerin and small amber glass bottles in which to contain the tincture.[55] The workshop was held on the fitness surface. Krochmal and Salma set up a table on which they placed several brown lunch bags, each filled with dried lavender, chamomile, mint, lemon grass, and a mixture of herbs for colds and coughs. They announced that they had brought enough for everyone to make at least three tinctures and one jarabe. The madres were thrilled!

First, Dr. Krochmal and Salma showed how to make a lavender tincture for headache. They took a small 1 oz. amber glass, added about a teaspoon of lavender to it, and then they filled the bottle with glycerin. They explained that one could use mint or a combination of both herbs for headaches or stress. Next, they talked about the benefits of combining herbs to address common colds and/or stomach ailments. They said that one herb was fine, but three to five was more potent. In turn, they recommended the use of chamomile, mint, and lemongrass for stomach aches. Finally, Krochmal cut the orange into thin slices and he showed us how to make a jarabe in a small jar of the sort used for canning. None of these medicinal recipes involved cooking.

During Krochmal and Salma's demonstration, the madres paid close attention and some took notes. They were pleased when they were invited to step up to the table to make their own medicine. While this was the best-received workshop, it also raised the need to consider items that are easily accessible. When asked by madres where they had obtained their materials, Krochmal and Salma said they purchased the amber glass bottles and the glycerin online, while

[55] The darker the bottle, the better, because light can filter through clear class and degrade the tincture's potency.

the herbs were obtained from Herbs of Mexico.[56] This concerned madres, who did not feel comfortable navigating the web and who had no experience making purchases online. Dr. Krochmal and Salma responded by sharing the name of a place in downtown Los Angeles where they could acquire the bottles, but they were unable to recommend a local store where they could get glycerin. In turn, the conversation led to talking about alternatives to glycerin such as alcohol. Dr. Krochmal and Salma explained that tinctures are typically prepared with vodka, and began a conversation regarding the use of liquor in medicine-making. Folklorist Ysamur Flores-Peña, who was present for this portion of the workshop, shared his insight about making tinctures. In addition to teaching at UCLA and Otis College of Art, Dr. Flores-Peña is a *Lucumí*/*Santería babalawo* (high priest) who has extensive knowledge of healing herbs. He explained his use of rum with madres, and they joked about how much more enjoyable it would make taking the tinctures if they used rum. This conversation led to a lot of laughter that added to the already festive mood of the event.

In addition, some women asked if they could re-use the amber bottles or if they could use containers of different materials and sizes. For example, someone asked if they could make jarabes in small plastic Tupperware. Another asked if it was acceptable to recycle her 2oz spice clear glass bottles to make tinctures. Some women noted that they did not drive and therefore hoped to find the amber bottles and glycerin at Herbs of Mexico. A woman asked if tinctures could be made with fresh herbs and whether that would ensure a more potent mix. Other questions that came up were, “where do we get agave nectar?” “Can we use honey instead of agave?” “What is agave nectar anyway, and why do you use that instead of honey or sugar?” Such questions reflected practical concerns that arise when people adopt new medicinal

[56] Herbs of Mexico was opened in 1960 by a man named Morris Baker, who later sold the business to George Cervilla in 1965 who in turn ran it until his retirement. Cervilla’s sons and a former employee now run the store (https://herbsofmexico.com/store/history-of-herbs-of-mexico).

practices. They may be more likely to use new knowledge if they can find ways to incorporate it into their lived experience, and this begins with ready access to the materials necessary for making and containing the mixtures.

Overall, the workshops were well received. However, questions from participants suggest that those of us involved in workshop-development should consider giving greater consideration to the socio-economic experiences of garden members. As already mentioned, the items used in healing must be easily found in local stores because not everyone is necessarily able or comfortable using the Internet for making purchases. It is not so much that madres do not have computers or access to them, but rather, it is not common practice for them to engage in online shopping. Doing so is not as straightforward as driving to a store and picking out the items from a shelf. Fortunately, we were able to refer madres to the nearby Herbs of Mexico shop for some of the items discussed. It was also helpful to hear Dr. Flores-Peña's recommendations to use rum or any distilled liquor as the base for tinctures or cough syrups.

Unfortunately, we were unable to provide madres with a local resource for purchasing agave nectar, which I myself had not heard of before the workshop. In 2019, at the time of this writing, agave is found at most supermarkets, but in 2004 when we led the workshops, it was a specialty product that was only available at natural health food stores and the more mainstream Trader Joe's or Whole Foods Market. However, the latter chains were not represented in Boyle Heights. The lack of supermarkets in low-income neighborhoods reflects a history of commercial divestment that has contributed to the reduced access to nutrition; Boyle Heights is what food activists and researchers alike consider a food desert.[57]

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[57] See Paula's "Where Are L.A.'s Food Deserts?" for a discussion of food desserts in Los Angeles (2016). Some researchers have argued that perhaps areas like Boyle Heights are misconstrued as food desserts because there is a plethora of fast food joints, in turn they have suggested the term food swamps to describe the food scape of the

The lack of knowledge of agave led to talk among the madres who seemed to have the immediate idea that agave nectar was more costly than honey. Had Dr. Krochmal and those of us in the inner circle done basic research of where these items are sold or of acceptable substitutes, we could have provided the madres with price comparisons between agave and honey. Trader Joe's and Food 4 Less offer an 11.75 oz. bottle of organic agave for$2.99, whereas a 6oz. bottle of clover honey at Food 4 Less costs $2.98. Even more important than recommending health food products would have been a discussion on how to discern what foods to eat, how to read labels and how not to fall victim to fads. According to Dr. Weil, an integrative medicine practitioner who specializes in nutrition and herbal remedies, agave "has a high content of fructose" and "Fructose is a major culprit in the rising incidence of type 2 diabetes and nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (Weil 2016).

The most compelling challenge the madres faced, however, seemed to be how to incorporate new products into their families' daily diets when they are so used to honey. "Is something wrong with honey?" asked Rosa during a later conversation, reminding me of my childhood years when my own mother would give me a teaspoon of honey everyday, "to keep your stomach clean and your skin glowing beautifully and acne free" (Rosario, 2006). While this might represent a minor concern, it suggests a larger issue faced by health practitioners and public health specialists involved in the development of community health promotion projects. The challenges seem to center around the most effective ways to convince people to change life and/or dietary habits, which for many are not simply routine practices, but rather customs that are deeply connected to our ideas of family, culture, and/or religious practices.

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neighborhood and others like it. See Ortega et. al.'s "Proyecto Mercad FRESCO" to learn about corner store conversions that are proposed as solutions to the lack of access to fresh fruits and vegetables (2015).

Lessons Learned

Following the workshops I took time to talk with madres and social-justice activists who had attended one or more of the workshops. I hoped to gain a sense of people's individual use of traditional medicine as well as their experience accessing health. The sections that follow reflect what I discerned regarding the importance of tradition and traditional medicine among gardeners. I return to the medicinal garden to explore the importance that embedding its design had for social-justice activists. I conclude with a discussion of two madres and Mario. I originally hoped to also interview social-justice activists regarding their particular uses of medicinal herbs, but few of them attended the workshops thus giving me limited opportunities to engage with them, build trust and set up time to meet and talk. Those whom I did speak with, focused less on the use of traditional medicine and talked more about the value of the symbolic meaning embedded in the medicinal garden; it referenced ancestry and heritage giving them a sense of connection and continuity with the homelands of their parents as well as their Indigenous ancestry.

Tradition as Health and Healing

The principles that guided the selection of elements for the design of the medicinal garden reflect individual notions among core group members of who the community was, that is, of their culture and ancestry. Central to each person's articulation of this was tradition; those of Krochmal, Shanna and Xochilt's views points represent the main ideas that governed discussions and which played a central role in the selection of the elements referenced in the structure of the medicine garden. As Krochmal writes in "Seeds for Tomorrow,"

> Our herb garden mirrors the community members who created it. Many of these individuals grew up in small towns in Mexico and Central America, surrounded by nature, where plant medicines for common [medical] conditions were harvested from the wild. Migration to an urban environment in Metropolitan Los Angeles, separated from connections to the land and elders, has endangered the traditional knowledge of these plants. The medicine garden at Proyecto Jardín

provides an environment to rediscover this knowledge (R. Krochmal, pers. comm. 2005).

In his view, people from Latin American towns are healthier because their diets include beans, rice, and squash that are higher in nutritional value than the processed foods consumed in cities such as Los Angeles. Thus, in his effort to address diabetes and obesity, he focused on the cultivation of vegetables, but also on re-engagement with traditional food systems and with the use of herbal remedies. This perspective reflects Dr. Krochmal's integrative medicine philosophy, in particular the principle of health promotion and prevention. Integrative medicine doctors typically determine a specialization; Dr. Krochmal focuses on approaches to weight management through nutrition and on the application of evidence-based traditional medicine.[58]

Dr. Krochmal believed that the solution to health concerns could be solved through people's reconnection with traditional foodways and medicine practices. He saw Proyecto Jardín and the medicinal garden as platforms for engaging in discussions to inspire people's return to traditional diets as well a place where he, as medical practitioner, could learn from people about the ways they used medicinal herbs; it was what he considered an opportunity for exchange of knowledge.[59] Indeed, Gloria discussed with me, that she has been influenced by Dr. Krochmal to think more about what she eats and "how to feed her family," whom she gives "what she used to eat in her town to eat healthier." Gloria, who is from Puebla, Mexico, introduced her fellow gardeners to *papalo* (summer's breath or summer cilantro), *quelite* (lamb's quarters) and *verdolaga* (purslane).

[58] Theoretically, "integrative medicine combines mainstream medical therapies and CAM therapies in a coordinated way," however all medical practitioners do not acquire the same skills; medical practitioners have the option to choose their areas of specialty. For a discussion of assessment of health services and evaluation of integrative medicine physicians' training, see Hunter et. al.,'s "Integrative Medicine Outcomes: What should we measure?" (2013).

[59] Foodways is defined as "continuities and consistencies in food-related behavior" (Jones, Giuliano & Krell 1983, x). For an elaboration on this concept see Michael Owen Jones' "Food Choice, Symbolism and Identity: Bread and Butter Issues for Folkloristics and Nutrition Studies (2005).

For Krochmal, it was important to create an environment for people to re-connect with traditional practices, which he sees as complimentary to biomedicine.[60] He lacked knowledge regarding the specific cultural traditions that defined Latinx traditional practices so he often deferred to Xochilt when such matters arose. Xochilt, who had from the start vocalized a strong urgency to preserve what she termed, "sacred traditional knowledge" that was becoming "lost to people of the community," continued to share her feelings regarding the usefulness of herbs for self-care, but she was particularly invested in recapturing those practices that define Latinx Indigenous ancestry, whether Maya or Aztec.[61]

Again, the claim to Maya or Aztec cosmology by women such as Xochilt, reflects a desire to create continuity with a pre-Colonial past. Because of the missionizing of Indigenous peoples and later racial intermixing, many Latinxs feel a sense of disconnection from their historical past. This disconnection is not seen as a loss but rather something taken from them, something that has injured and hurt and in turn something that needs healing. In *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (2012), Gloria Anzaldúa responds to this sense of loss by calling for the right to "claim my space, making a new culture—*una cultura mestiza*—with my own lumber, my own bricks and mortar and my own feminist architecture" (44). This retrieval process involves reclaiming the power of female deities. While Anzaldúa pulls from Aztec symbols, she makes space for the selection of other symbols when she explains that the *mestiza way* is the conscious rupture with all oppressive traditions followed by a reinterpretation of history and then

[60] Although Dr. Krochmal regards traditional medicine as complementary to biomedicine, also called conventional medicine, the healthcare field has yet to derive consistency in the selection of modalities that are accepted under the umbrella of CAM (See Hufford 2015; Holliday 2008; "Complementary and Alternative Medicine" 2018)

[61] Although the concept of self-care is rooted in the civil rights movement, it re-emerged sometime after 2011 as both a way to maintain good health, deal with stress and fatigue at the end of the day and as radical action or as Audre Lorde calls it in "A Burst of Light," (1988), "political warfare." For a historical account of the concept of self-care, see Nelson's *More than Medicine* (2015). At the time of the construction of the medicinal garden, the re-appropriation of self-care by feminists, organizers and activists had yet to be affirmed. Xochilt, not unlike other gardeners, Krochmal and myself used the term self-care to mean how we restore ourselves or family members to health when dealing with work related stress or common illnesses such as colds, coughs and stomach discomforts.

using new symbols to create new myths by which she becomes a *nahual*, able to transform herself into a tree, a coyote, into another person" (ibid 104-05).

Xochilt's transformational process involved reconnecting with what she regarded as traditional medicine; in phone conversation she explain that she uses traditional to describe experiences from the Latinx "ancestral past" (Xochilt, pers. comm. 2019). Xochilt focuses her attention on the use of herbal teas and other preparations, but also on the ways she engaged with the land. She talked about expressing gratitude and respect for plants by leaving tobacco at the foot of any herb that was cut, and expressed the importance of being conscious of Mama Earth by doing our part to replenish her soil and educating others on how to care for and interact with her. Xochilt's effort to "preserve our ways," and to re-connect with "the traditional sacred knowledge of our ancestors" was reflected by her suggestion to give the garden a Nahuatl name as a means of "acknowledging the presence of those who came before us" as well as by wholly supporting the idea to create a medicinal wheel garden as Shanna suggested ("Seeds for Tomorrow").

Yerbitas y El Campo/Little Herbs and the Country

By the end of the medicinal herbs workshops I had met several mothers, some of whom agreed to speak with me at length regarding their experiences at Proyecto Jardín as well as their use of traditional medicine. Although he was a man of few words, Mario also took time to talk with me. The interviews I held with the madres and Mario allowed me to see the particular ways the garden became a home away from home for this group. Additionally it provided insight into the health seeking experiences of some people. This section reflects conversations I held with Gloria, Rosa and Mario. I met with Gloria and Mario on separate occasions in the garden. My

interviews with Maria took place at her home. I asked each person to tell me how they learned about the garden, why they came, if they used traditional medicine and if so what plants and modalities they relied on, who they learned these from and whether they had health insurance and access to medical care.

Gloria and I met in the afternoon on a weekday. Her children played in the garden while she and I talked under the fig structure. I opened the conversation by asking how she liked the workshops she attended. She said she favored the cooking with herbs workshops. When I asked her why she was most interested in nutrition she said,

> Para que los niños aprecien la naturaleza y lo, y lo que tienen en casa porque la actualidada desperdician mucho y mas que nada no comen saludable.
>
> So that kids appreciate nature and, and what they have at home because in reality they waste a lot and more than anything they don't eat healthily (Gloria, pers. comm. 2004)

As we continued talking she talked about having introduced the other gardeners to papalo and quelite, "yerbitas" (little herbs) she ate back home in her town of Puebla, Mexico. She liked having a place where she could grow plants she knew and more importantly that she could come and pick them fresh for cooking at home. Gloria's mention of little herbs led us to a discussion of medicinal herbs. When I asked her if she used herbs medicinally, she said, "de ves en cuando" (here and there). The herbs she used were manzanilla, yerba buena and *gordolobo* (mullein); she gave these to her kids when they had coughs. The use of these herbs was the extent of her traditional medicine practice. She explained that her grandparents had been the ones who had the best knowledge of plants, she had learned about some like epazote, oregano, aloe and *nopal* (cactus). I concluded our talk by asking her if she had insurance and if she considered having medicinal herbs in the garden useful and she said her kids had insurance, but explained that it

was not complete. Regarding access to plants she said it was useful, but she did not seem to have a personal connection or interest in learning about them:

> Por ahorita mis hijos son los que tienen, pero que sea una aseguranza muy completa, no. Y si es algo util y mas que nada nos, este, nos ayudaria conocer mas de los beneficios de las yerbas porque como dicen, nuestros antepasados antes se curaban con pura yerba antes que apareciera todo lo industrial.
>
> Yes it's useful and more than anything it would help us learn more about the benefits of herbs, because like they say, our ancestors cured themselves solely with herbs before all the industrial appeared (Gloria, pers. comm. 2004).

We had talked for twenty minutes and I did not want to overwhelm her with questions so I thanked her for talking with me and just made a note to myself to follow up with her regarding her experience seeking care at medical establishments. I was particularly struck by a couple of things that came up in our conversation. Her knowledge of herbs seemed tied to cooking as opposed to ingesting as teas or using in other forms. It also struck me that she said "it would help us learn more about the benefit of herbs," rather than saying it would help her or her family. I was left to wonder if by "us" she meant the garden community or the Latinx community in general. Unfortunately, I did not get the chance to do a second interview with her. She and I both began frequenting the garden less and eventually, I stopped running into her at all.

My second interview was with Rosa. We originally planned to meet in the garden, however she was watching her granddaughter who had fallen asleep and invited me to go to her house instead. I obliged and did not intend to stay long, but we ended up talking for forty minutes. I used the same questionnaire with Gloria. When I asked her to talk about the workshops held in the garden that she liked best, she exclaimed, the caracoles! She also explained that she did not do much because there were a lot of people in the garden on the day of the spiral-making workshop. Instead, she hung around other sections of the garden and kept

herself busy pulling weeds. When I asked if she had thoughts regarding any of the other workshops she responded by saying that medicinal herbs talks called her attention. She also talked about wanting to see more activities for children. She noted that there was a lot of violence and that children needed their own refuge. She said,

> Pues este ya se habia hablado sobre lo de las yerbas medicinales. Eso si me llama mucho la atencion. Y otras actividades pues como algo para recreacion para, osea trabajos manuals para los ninos, como ya los estaban hacienda, verdad? Para que los niños tengan tambien su refugio en una parte pues, hermosa como es alli! Verdad que es differente a lo que ellos estan ya expuestos a ver. Ya ahorita no hay otra cosa mas de que pura violencia verdad? Este, entonces por eso. Eso y por lo que sea esta muy bien.
>
> Well there had already been talk of medicinal herbs. That really calls my attention. And other activities, like having to do with recreation, that is, manual arts for kids, like what they had been doing, right? So the children also have their refuge and a place that's well, beautiful like it is there! Isn't it different than what they are already exposed to see? Now there aren't other things except violence, right? So that's why. That and for whatever reason, it's a good thing (Rosa, pers. comm. 2004).

Rosa had attended the Herb Safety, Cooking with Herbs and Medicine Making workshops. She had been one of the most enthusiastic participants and one of her boys had impressed all of the other madres because he was so engaged in learning about plants—he attended all of the workshops and took notes, as opposed to playing with the other kids who were in the garden—so it surprised me that she did not speak about any workshop in particular. In hindsight, I think it is significant that she did not focus on anything in particular because to her, the benefit was primarily having access to enter the garden when she wanted to be in nature, or when she needed to mourn, as well as having an alternative source of activities with which to engage her children in the face of what she described as a violent surrounding.

Rosa elaborated on the violence in her surrounding and shared that she and her son had—the one that attended all of the workshops with her—been abducted, raped and left to die. This took place near the medical plaza where she walked to and from home and her children's school

on a daily basis. She and her son were traumatized and depressed. Rosa and her son received medical care to address the physical wounds, but only limited attention was provided to address the depression they both experienced in the aftermath. She recounted,

> Mi hijo ocupaba depresivos para la depression, ni el Medi-Cal le quisieron dar. Toda esas cosas, tonces no hay cosa mejor que uno mismo. Uno es mismo su propio psycologo, su propio, como te digo, para mi el jardín a sido hasta un psycologo, un consejero porque alli yo e enterrado mi dolor, alli e enterrado mi pena. Alli e estado yo, e estado sudando, alli llorando, sudando y todo pero alli mismo me a traido la tranquilidad que cosa que en ninguna parte e encontrado. Mi hijo tambien, mi hijo cuando empeso eso el tenia cuatro anos. Cuando empezo la escuela que tanto hacia que habia todo eso? Un año. Y empezo a meterse, poner sus manitas y todas cosas asi. El se empezo a borrar eso de su mente. Ahora apenas estaba acabando a acomodarse eso de nuestra mente cuando llega lo de nuestro hijo en plena casa.
>
> My son took anti-depressants for his depression, but they didn't even want to give him Medi-Cal. With all those things, there is nothing better than one's self. A person has to be one's own psychologist, one's own, how can I tell you, for me, the garden has been psychologist and counselor because there I buried my pain, buried my grief. I've been there, sweating, crying, sweating and everything, but its there that I found tranquility which is something that I did not find anywhere else. My son too, when all that started he was four years old. How long had it been since that when he started school? It was a year [later]. And he started to get in there, put his little hands in [the dirt] and all that. And he began to erase those things from his mind. Now we were just starting to get settled and have all that out of our minds when came what happened to [our eldest] son in plain sight of our house (Rosa, pers. comm. 2004).

Rosa's and her son's recovery process involved being, as she said, their own psychologist and the garden served a role in that process. Her description of sweating and crying refers to touching the soil by pulling weeds and/or doing other gardening activities even while crying. He son also gained from digging in the soil. When tragedy hit her home again—rival gang members killed her eldest son in front of their apartment building—the garden community helped her to process the loss by inviting her to plant a tree in his memory. She recalls,

> Cuando el murio me dieron la oportunidad de ponerle un arbol alli entonces eso a mi me ayudo mucho porque yo senti que todo estaba perdido.
>
> When he died, they gave me the opportunity to put a tree there [in his memory] and that helped me a lot because [at the time] I felt like all was lost (Rosa, pers. comm. 2004).

The garden and its community helped Rosa cope and heal, but it also became a place where she could relax and feel away from city life. She was born and raised in a rural area in Aguas Caliente, Mexico where there are pine trees and jungle areas. She seemed to miss that, but also to find connections between her homeland and the garden. She said:

Y para mi alli, me voy y me siento alli y me llega la aroma que parece que estoy en mi tierra alla en medio del vosque, en medio de la selva por alla. Me siento alli asi, algo tan especial que, como que, me siento alejada de aqui de la ciudad.

And for me, I go and sit there and I catch the aroma and it feels like if I'm in my land, over there in the middle of the forest, in the middle of the jungle, over there. I feel like special, like if, I feel away from the city (Rosa, pers. comm. 2004).

Like Gloria, Rosa did not have access to Medi-Cal and neither did her children so she relied on herbs when it came to caring for her family. She listed several plants including: oregano, yerba buena, gordolobo, *prodigiosa* (bricklebush), romero, epazote, perejil (parsley), hierba vibora (zornia), eucalipto (eucalyptus), *laurel* (bay leaf) and *canela* (cinnamon). She said that when her kids became sick with colds, she made them tea from eucalipto, oregano, laurel, cinnamon and lemon to help them release phlegm. She also noted giving her husband the same tea when he was recovering from a hangover.

Rosa learned the use of herbs from her grandmother who raised her. She recounted that when she was a young girl and became sick, her grandmother smothered her with Vicks and gave her strong cinnamon tea with a pill, a Contact Cold & Flue Capsule, she fell asleep and in the morning she awoke feeling better, not cured, but less sick. She said that to this day she uses her grandmother's remedies to take care of herself as well as her family. Rosa's combination of herbs with over-the-counter (OTC) medicine reflects an area for further research. While much has been learned regarding reasons people use herbal remedies, little is known regarding particular uses such as the ailments Rosa described during our talk. Part of the problem is that

people do not typically disclose their use of plants to their primary care physicians, but as we see from Rosa's example, there is also a population of people without healthcare who are combining the use of plants to care for themselves and their families. The question remains how to elicit this information from people who are undocumented and in turn weary of what they share about themselves with most people? After all it did take me a year to gain enough trust of madres in order to have the conversations with them that I share here.

Mario was the last of the madres group whom I interviewed. I met and talked to him in the garden as we turned the soil in one of the planting beds; he did not want to sit and talk. At the end of a long workday, what he desired most was to relax and imagine himself in *el campo* (the country). Mario was truly a man of few words. When I asked what he thought of the workshops held in the garden he responded by saying, "they're good." He did however, have an opinion of the installation of the medicinal garden. He said,

> No pues esta muy bien porque hay muchas plantas medicinales que no conoce uno y aqui las usa uno y ni sabe uno para que son.
>
> Well it's very good because there's many plants that one doesn't know and here some use it without even knowing what it's for (Mario, pers. comm. 2004).

Mario further explained that he did not mean that people at the garden lacked knowledge of plant use, but rather than in the United States there is exposure to more plants and some people adapt their use without complete knowledge of possible concerns. When I asked if he used herbal remedies he named prodigiosa, which he used to reduce anger or rage:

Pues la que yo mas uso se llama, la prodigiosa, es como para un coraje, un dolor o como ahora que yo estoy malo de la diabetis con eso me control como es muy amargo. Y no me la tomo seguido mas de a vez en cuando. . . . tengo tratamiento de parte de Medi-Cal, tomo pastillas pero eso no es malo porque como es este vegetal no lleva nada que digan que es de dieta.

Well the one I use most is called prodigiosa (bricklebush), its for when you are enraged or you have a pain like now that I have diabetes I control myself with that because it's bitter. And I don't take it every day, just once in a while. . . . I have treatment provided by Medi-Cal, I take

pills but that isn’t bad because its vegetable and doesn’t have anything that’s for dieting (Mario, pers. comm. 2004).

Mario’s discussion of his use of prodigiosa caught my attention because he made connections between anger and illness, which I had not come across much in the literature describing Latinxs use of traditional medicine. The second point of interest is Mario’s combination of prodigiosa in tea form with prescribed medication. He was quick to point out that it was natural and therefore safe to use in combination with his diabetes medication. When I asked if he told his doctor about his use of prodigiosa he said yes and that his doctor had approved it.

The three interviews I include here proved less useful in analyzing the impact of the workshops than on identifying reliance on traditional medicine. Perhaps, it was the way I framed my questions. Nevertheless, the information I gathered regarding Mario and the madres’ use of herbs affirms the need more in depth studies of Latinx use of medicinal herbs. The sense of continuity from one generation to the next is present, but it does not seem to be the driving force behind adherence to plants. It seemed as though medicinal plant use among these three people was particularly tied to their experience living in the United States and lacking adequate access to healthcare.

A second point of relevance were, the stated reference to being in nature, in el campo and touching soil by all three of the interviewees. The community garden seemed to serve as a way to feel connected to home, but it also provided the madres and Mario an opportunity to de-stress or in the case of Rosa, to also deal trauma, depression, and grief. These observations point to the need for further research of ways the community garden itself impacts mental health.

Concluding Thoughts

The process of making the medicinal garden highlighted the ways people negotiated the practices and symbols that would affirm their identity in the garden. While the social-justice cohort, here mostly represented by Xochilt, focused on connecting to Indigenous heritage, the madres concentrated on supporting the garden's development as a resource where they could take part in informative activities to aid their efforts in providing their families nutritious meals and healing them from common ailments.

At the center of the negotiation of power was the concept of community. Academics/professionals defined community in terms of a) ethnic group, in this case Latinxs; b) place, sometimes joining, sometimes dividing neighborhood residents and garden patrons; and c) cultures and traditions associated with differing heritages. For social-justice activists, community constituted ethnic nation, and people were perceived as bound by language, Indigenous ancestry, traditional practices, social class, as well as residence in the area. For the madres, community strongly signified overarching Latinx ethnicity, neighborhood residence, and garden patronage.

Lack of discussion regarding the core group's definitions of community and whom they meant by community led to different positions regarding representation. As a graduate student, these experiences challenged me to define what it means to undertake doctoral research. I participated in the events and the decision-making process, at times taking notes and maintaining an observer's distance, but most other times, I put down my camera and note pad and joined in events. In those moments I let go of the research and just immersed myself in the activities. I observed ways academics/professionals and social-justice activists seemed to regard the madres and Mario without considering their perceptions of themselves, since most did not think of themselves as traditionalists, but instead as lacking access to adequate health care.

That the madres were spoken for and about by academics and the social activists rather than through their own voices also raised issues regarding gender, representation, and inclusion. As one woman recounted, the creation of the medicinal garden shifted emphasis from *comestibles* (edibles) such as tomatoes and leafy greens to medicinal herbs and the marketplace. In reference to how Xochilt and her colleagues did not live in the area, one madre said, “they told us we could sell things, but we don’t sell things and we don’t have need for the things they sell. We come here to grow vegetables. Plus they did not invite us to attend meetings” (Gloria, pers. comm. 2004).

Chapter 5

Traditional Medicine in the Garden

The present study was conducted to explore Latinxs reliance on traditional medicines to identify how people conceptualize health needs while developing methods to achieve and maintain personal and communal wellness. My focus grew from a personal desire to understand my own Latinx family's changing practices. As a child, my mother, aunts, and grandmother all relied on plant-based home remedies to soothe our knee scrapes, relieve our cold and cough symptoms, and alleviate the discomforts of chicken pox with cooling chamomile compresses. Such methods were comforting, even when the teas they gave us did not taste good or when they smothered us in *vics-vaporu* (Vicks VapoRub) from head to toe. These medicinal practices were traditional to my family, and I came to expect and respect them.

By the start of graduate school, however, I noticed that my family's reliance on traditional medicine had changed. Our elders seldom offered us teas when we were sick, and they seemed to prefer over-the-counter cold and cough remedies. This observation coupled with readings that predicted the decline, if not the disappearance, of Latinx traditional medicine, led me to begin my research on the use of traditional medicine between Latinxs. Dr. Krochmal's invitation to join his efforts in developing a medicinal garden for Proyecto Jardín was not only a great opportunity for me to study roles of traditional medicine among Latinxs today, it was also a chance to work closely with people at the garden to develop workshops, events, and grant applications in hopes of improving access to healthcare. This last chapter presents research considerations, a discussion of Proyecto Jardín today and implications for future studies.

Research Considerations

Analysis of my ethnographic data reveals that Proyecto Jardín gardeners, medical practitioners, and academics engaged in constant negotiations concerning ways to create the kind of health-focused resource they needed. Access to healthcare was not perceived primarily as having insurance and so being able to seek biomedical help, but also as a means to avoid illness through improved health with particular reference to chronic ailments like obesity and diabetes that are associated with poor dietary habits. Madres did not have insurance and their kids only had minimal options. Having access to the garden provided them a resource to a) nutrition through the growing of organic vegetables, b) access to medicinal herbs to use in the making of home remedies and c) access to information whether that came from educational activities like the medicinal herbs workshops or through casual exchange of recipes and remedies while "bumping elbows" with others in the garden.

Conversely, social-justice activists focused their attention on making space for their values. The decision-making process and the design of the medicinal garden showed the need to assert their needs; they wanted to represent their connection to Indigenous heritage through the cultivation of traditional medicine as a marker of identity; their central aim was to decolonize themselves. Attempts to achieve health or healing at Proyecto Jardín reflect ways people are coping and making due in their efforts to address what Susan S. Sered and Linda L. Barnes refer to as "structural violence," that more specifically describes the individual and collective suffering "from racism, sexism, dislocation, war, or poverty" (2005, 17).

My study adds to larger conversations taking place among medical researchers working to increase understanding of Latinxs reliance on traditional medicine. While some studies insist on identifying a specifically Latinx traditional medical system, I argue that perhaps researchers

should reframe their questions and focus on understanding the influences on individual choice. Certainly, culture plays a role in determining which modalities a person might choose, but as my study shows, socio-economic factors and politics of identity do too. And while herbal remedies continue to serve as the first line of attack, it may not be accurate to assume that Latinxs learn to use medicinal herbs from family members. At Proyecto Jardín madres learned new uses of herbs from both academics/professionals and social justice-activists through the medicinal workshops as well as during casual conversation while in the garden.

My conversation with Gloria directed my attention to the need for more research on the uses of traditional medicine as preventative care. Gloria, for instance, discusses ways she included, what she called yerbitas (little herbs), in her family's diet. According to Dr. Krochmal, diet and nutrition is a form of preventative healthcare. If people eat balanced meals that include organic fruits and vegetables along with whole grains, they are more likely to avoid developing chronic ailments such as obesity, which can lead to other more serious concerns such as heart disease and diabetes.

Mario and Rosa's experiences reiterate the need to conduct further research among Latinxs to ask about the specific ways they combine herbal remedies with OTCs and prescription medicine. A possible approach might involve asking people specific questions to elicit a discussion of ways they treat common ailments. To address the possibility of distrust, researchers might consider working with key members in neighborhood settings, like a community garden, and employ the story-sharing approaches the Xochilt engaged in during the Herbal Remedies Workshop. This latter point reiterated the potential for further research at community gardens. However, researchers are advised to consider the ways such places are organized to better

prepare for the social issues that arise as well as to identify the social circumstances in which they may occur.

Proyecto Jardín: Roots & Change

Proyecto Jardín experienced various changes between the time of my research and the writing of this dissertation. During a short period, social-justice activists took over management activities and acquisition of funds to maintain the garden and provide educational workshops. Later, Dr. Krochmal collaborated with garden members and a public health professional to turn Proyecto Jardín into a non-profit; he assumed an advisory role through the non-profit and a new manager with grant writing skills took over the day-to-day operations of managing the garden. In 2016, White Memorial Medical Center evicted Proyecto Jardín for various reasons, which are beyond my understanding and ability to discuss here. The gardeners fought WMMC's decision, but ultimately lost access to the garden. However, the non-profit survived and re-established in a different area of Los Angeles where they grow food as well as offer composting workshops. I wonder what was lost and what was gained from the dislocation of one garden and the introduction of another. Moreover, do the madres go to the newer garden?

What I do know is that self-care and the use of tinctures impacted social-justice activists who took part in activities at Proyecto Jardín. Several women have developed self-care aromatherapy oil and tincture lines. Xochilt is among the first people to establish her business selling first aid balms, oils, and facial mist sprays. More recently, others have started to sell their herbal products at community events. Some of them include the sale of tinctures that can be ingested. Together these women have helped foster a culture of self-care that has grown in social justice circles in East Los Angeles.

This dissertation will be followed by research of the WMMC Community Garden. As determined by my study of Proyecto Jardín, community gardens served as important sources of herbal remedies and nutrition. There is potential for collaboration with WMMC to explore these areas in the service of the neighborhood residents who attend workshops as well as take part in growing vegetables and plants. Additionally, I expect to develop sections of this dissertation into articles one of which will explore the impact that Proyecto Jardín had on both Dr. Krochmal and his clinical practice as well as on WMMC, which as mentioned is not taking a more proactive role in maintaining the community garden where Proyecto Jardín once stood.

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