UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

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Strolling and Straddling Academic Boundaries:

Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous Motherscholars in the Academy

A dissertation in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Education

by

Christine Vega

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Professor Daniel Solórzano, Chair

My research study reveals the racial, gender, and maternal experiences among nine first-generation Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous Motherscholars enrolled in Ph.D. programs in U.S. Southwest Universities. Nationally Latina, Chicana, and Indigenous women are less likely to complete post-secondary degrees. Further, academic mothers with children under five years of age, pursuing professorate positions, are less likely to receive tenure. Through an ethnographic research approach and in-depth interviews, my research agenda captured the following: (a) Educational trajectories and the interventions of femtors/mentors and Ethnic and Gender studies; (b) Negotiations in navigating higher education and family formation as everyday *movidas*, or hustles; (c) Naming and addressing marginality and microaggressions as Maternal Microaggressions; and (d) Spiritual activism(s)—in multiple manifestations—as resilience, resistance, and survivance in the home and academia. Although my findings reiterate painful

stories of "push-out" culture grounded in gender-racial discrimination, the narratives are challenged by Motherscholar resilience, survivance, and resistance. I draw from Critical Race Theory in Educational Methodology (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), Chicana Feminist Theories (Delgado Bernal, Elenes, Godínez, & Villenas, 2006), and Critical Maternal Theories to identify and analyze the social condition and oppression of doctoral Motherscholars at the complex intersections of identity, education, and family. To honor the complex intersections of race, class, gender, and motherhood (amongst others) in the liminal spaces of education and motherhood, I offer a Critical *Maternalista* Matrix as theoretical and methodological approach.

The dissertation of Christine Vega is approved.

Teresa L. McCarty

Cecilia Rios-Aguílar

Dolores Delgado Bernal

Daniel G. Solórzano, Committee Chair

DEDICATION

Para mi familia, en especial, mi mamá que sacrifico su propia educación para que yo tuviera la mía.

Para mi comunidad activista y espiritual, ustedes son mis raíces.

Para mi hijo Janitzio y compañero, Alfredo, los amo.

¡Y para todas las mamas en la lucha, I see you!

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deep into our souls. We are *familia*, you are our siblings, our spirit kin, our "babies." Thank you to my soul sister and *comadre*, Marlen Kihuitl, I love you dearly, thank you for always listening and even in distance and separation, when we join together, it's as if separation never occurred.

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VITA

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EDUCATION

2019 **Postdoctoral Fellow:** School of Education, Colorado State University, Fort Collins. Center for Educator Preparation (CEP) and Los Caminos Program.

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Chicana/o and Latina/o Studies in Education | Gender & Sexuality, Race and Ethnicity in Education | Intersectionality | Women and Gender Studies | LGTBQ Studies | Critical Race Theory | Chicana Feminist Theory and Epistemologies | Testimonio and Feminist Pedagogies | Motherwork | Motherhood | Gender Studies | Indigenous Studies | Decolonial Methodologies | Spirituality | Spiritual Activism | Community Based-Research | Youth Participatory Action Research | Microaggressions | Epistemology | Borderlands.

PUBLICATIONS

Caballero, C., Martinez-Vú, Y., Perez, J., Telléz, M., & **Vega, C** (2019). Challenging academic inequities within collective resistance. National Center for Institutional Diversity [Blog]. *Medium.com*.

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In Progress

Vega, C., & Caballero, C. (in preparation) Theorizing a maternal microaggression framework: Naming racial and gendered marginalization of Motherscholars of Color.

Vega, C. (in progress). Parenting-Student attrition and retention: Equitable educational policy assessment of student services at the intersections of race, class, gender & parenting.

Vega, C. (in progress). Gender and sexual identity of parenting: Queer parenthood and family formations.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

> "Talk to the pregnant girl," and I'm all, "Well, who's the pregnant girl?" "Oh, she's in our cohort, she already has a baby, she was pregnant, that's why she's not here." And I'm like, "Oh," and at first, I didn't know how to like [to] unpack that, but then I started to realize that's kind of fucked up, like that pregnant girl, quote unquote pregnant girl has a name. And that pregnant girl has a value, so why are we devaluing her as the pregnant girl and not giving her like her place, you know? (Mayahuel, personal communication, November 13, 2013)

Straddling and Strolling Academia

The Mayahuel, a Motherscholars' account above, was an advanced doctoral student enrolled at a university in Southern California with a 4-year-old child at the time I met with her for coffee at her university library. I was having an informal conversation with her sharing my own pregnancy status when she shared this fierce reflection with me. I was only a few months pregnant, and I was nervous and scared. When Mayahuel became pregnant, she too sought out Motherscholars in her academic community. She asked students in her department about other mothers, seeking resources, support, and ways to navigate her next years in the program. What she confronted has become a "norm," addressing Motherscholars as "the pregnant girl," made nameless and invisible by peers and at times by faculty and staff. In the above quote, not only does Mayahuel experience secondhand what I call *Maternal Microaggressions* expressed by another Woman of Color in her program and cohort, she understands the painful impact of becoming pregnant while enrolled in her doctoral studies. She bore witness to deficit expressions about another colleague who was a Motherscholar of Color. I was shocked to hear this and saddened by the reality engulfing my changing status as a Motherscholar in the academy. Realizing this was an issue of access, equity, and retention, I began to seek resources, literatures, and write about these experiences that later became my dissertation study.

My dissertation study is an intervention. I illustrate the painful instances Motherscholars experience on the everyday in academia. Through an ethnographic qualitative research approach, my dissertation captures narratives via *pláticas* (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016) approach of in-depth interviews and participant observations as they straddle, challenge, and navigate in-between the public and private spheres. For this study, public and private spheres encompass the public as institutions of higher learning and in the community, and the private in the home as parents, mothers, and caretakers. The academic mother role is an identity that does not know borders or distinguish the public/private sphere. Rather, Motherscholar identity disrupts normative and dichotomous ideals, values, and presumptions of what is expected through her everyday acts and hustles, or *movidas*.

I address these *movidas* as hustles for everyday navigating or navigation. It's the act of navigating the in-between states of *Nepantla*, working within the third space. Theoretically and politically, a *movida*, or *movidas*, movement(s), *movimientos* is a concept first introduced by Chela Sandoval in *Methodology of the Oppressed* (2000) identifying *movidas* as "revolutionary maneuvers," ". . . transforming and moving it on both sides . . . a political site for the third meaning, that obtuse shimmering of signification that glances through every binary opposition" (p. 182). Espinoza, Cotera, and Blackwell (2018) apply Sandoval's definition of *movidas*, to their anthology on the untold historical narratives of activisms and the feminist movement in the time of *El Movimiento Chicano* and marginalized experience of the backbone of the Chicano Movement by centering the untold stories of the Chicanas of the Chicano Movement, and calling it *Chicana Movidas*. Like the co-madres in my study, their everyday acts of *rebeldía* are *movidas*, intentionally reshaping their own lived experiences as Motherscholars at the margins. Espinoza et al. conceptualize Chicana *movidas*, as moving within and between sites of struggle,

challenging conventional subjectivities as sites of struggle, creating their own Chicana Praxis of resistance (p. 1). Situating Motherscholars of color within these *movidas* include enacting a political stance within the intersections of race, class, gender, and motherhood.

In my study (and across the nation), I believe these Motherscholars are reshaping an emergent movement in discourse, mobilization, and activism through "strategic" and "tactical" movements of resistance, resilience, and survivance. Espinoza et al. (2018) remind us that movidas "often carries with it connotations of not only the strategic and tactical but also the undercover, the dissident, the illicit—that which is not part of approved and publicly acknowledged political strategies, histories, and economic and social relations" (p. 2). Therefore, throughout my study, we see how *movidas* take shape applied to the strategic and tactical hustles Motherscholars as they move in-between spaces. This study debunks, recentralizes, and refuses deficit stereotypes of Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous Motherscholars enrolled in doctoral programs. It celebrates and uplifts the academic success of this critical student community and their everyday *movidas* to resist these deficit notions. In this study, I document the lives of nine first-generation Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous Motherscholars enrolled in doctoral programs in California, New Mexico, and Utah; my academic-mother network took me to these locations. Several of the mothers interviewed have now completed their doctoral studies within the year this study took place, less than half remain enrolled. After collecting my data, several Motherscholars were not willing to participate further because of fear of being reprimanded if they became identifiable.

The Motherscholar role is a versatile navigation between two worlds, in a third space; as the late Gloria Anzaldúa teaches us, much like motherhood, *Nepantla* state "is the site of transformation . . . the zone between changes where you struggle to find equilibrium . . . [a] point

of contact where the 'mundane' and the 'numinous' converge, where you're in full awareness of the present moment" (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 128). It is the navigation of the private and public spheres as Motherscholars of Color that enter in-between states with a "double vision," a *facultad*,[1] and *conocimiento*,[2] introduced by the ceremonial birth of our children and the *movidas* in multiples spaces at multiple times in our roles as *mujeres, madres, academicas.*

Statement of the Problem

Chicanas, Latinas, and Indigenous women Ph.D. attainment remains the lowest among other racial and ethnic counterparts. As of 2010, 50% of women will receive a degree of higher education, compared with 10% since the 1970s (Kupenberg, 2009; Mason, 2012). Chicana and Latina women represent less than one out of every 100 Ph.D. recipients (Perez-Huber et. al, 2015). From 100 Chicana who start their schooling as elementary school students, 63 will graduate with a high school diploma. Additionally, 13 out of 100 will receive a bachelor's degree, 4 out of 100 will receive a graduate degree, and 0.3 out of 100 will receive a Ph.D. For 100 Latinas, 60 will receive a high school diploma, 11 will receive a bachelor's degree, 3 will receive a graduate degree, and 0.2 will receive a Ph.D. (Perez-Huber et al., 2015).

A limited, though growing body of research focuses on the experiences of parenting students, in particular, mother graduate Students of Color. In *Making Space for Graduate Student Parents Practice and Politics* (Springer et al., 2009), research is heavily fixed at the post-graduate level, where policies "are primarily designed to aid scholars who have already attained academic jobs" (p. 31). Although critically important to support post-graduates who parent, my intent is to bring focus to the doctoral student experience. Scholarship exploring the

[1] *Facultad*, according to Anzaldúa, is an inner knowing induced by agency.

[2] *Conocimiento*, means consciousness, driven by *facultad*, intuition, and awareness.

lived experiences of Motherscholars of Color is limited, in particular for advanced doctoral students. From the limited research exploring Motherscholars of Color, most significant are the lack of resources, support systems, and respect of private life choices that impact the educational attainment, in particular for low-income Motherscholars. Jamella Brooks unravels the complex roles of Motherscholars on a featured blog in Ideas on Fire titled, *Dissertating While Parenting: Not Such a Contradiction* (2018).

> Those of us who parent while in graduate school are often in survival mode. The challenges can feel overwhelming because they derive from systemic problems. Even before I became a parent, as a graduate student, I felt overworked, underpaid, and overextended. Adding kids to the mix meant it felt like I had negative time.

For Brooks, blogs and articles online written about and by parenting students reach a larger audience. The Chronicle of Higher Education, The Chicana M(other)work Podcast and Blog, and very importantly, academic literature (Springer et al., 2009) voice the complex experiences of graduate students at the crux of intersectionality aiming for visibility.

My findings highlight difficult circumstances for single mothers. For parent Students of Color, graduate school becomes an alienating experience, impacting them as a community. The graduate school experience affects Women of Color scholars who are parents, largely due to limited resources, plus impactful social ideals of productivity based on their status, race, and parenting status. Also, single parenting adds an additional layer of difficulty to navigate life generally, making it much more difficult to pursue and attain degrees of higher education without a two-parent household.

Institutions of higher education maintain an analogous relationship to heteropatriarchal social structures where racism and sexism historically favor the success of White single men. Historically, the Ivory Tower's social, political, and economical fabric was intended to academically and economically advance single, White, heterosexual males. Therefore, the

residual symptoms of systemic sexism and racism affect Motherscholars of Color, who have carried, like a veil, a "presumption of incompetence" about the academic commitment and performance (Gutiérrez y Muhs, Flores Niemann, González, & Harris, 2012; Téllez, 2013) against Mothers of Color in academia. The Institute for Women's Policy Research shares national level statistics, and findings indicate Women of Color mothers are most likely to be single parents (IWPR, 2017). Indeed, this national data reflects the importance of providing support services of access and retention for Motherscholars of Color who are single and require additional support to complete a degree of higher education. Universities are not equipped with the resources to receive parenting students, and thus this dissertation can guide institutions, student groups, and on-campus constituents to restructure systemic programing for parenting students to address the need.

Rationale

My study focuses on Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous Motherscholars because they remain the lowest in enrollment for degrees in higher education such as B.A.s, M.A.s, professional degrees, and Ph.D.s. Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous Motherscholars have received far less attention in investigating the life experiences during their time in doctoral studies. Straddling throughout my graduate studies while pregnant, I felt I carried a stigma for my changing positionality and status as a pregnant Chicana to a mother at the university. To be a Motherscholar of Color in academia is a loaded politics of intersectional identities, responsibilities, and *movidas* because we carry a stigma in our bodies. I argue that Motherscholars move within the borders of academia, the home, the third shift of parenting in an unseen silence. Along with the daily *movidas* to coordinate multiple schedules, deadlines, and workflows, Motherscholars of Color confront a unique layer of racial and gendered

microaggressions I call Maternal Microaggression, where the identity of a Motherscholars is encountered with deficit stereotypes regarding their identity as a parent, as a woman, as a Person of Color in the academy. These stereotypes and deficit notions do not begin in the academic setting. They are unjustly reinforced in that setting. Maternal Microaggressions often are carried over into academia from our own communities, from our homes, from family members and heteropatriarchal society. We internalize these deficit stereotypes and feed our internal imposter syndrome. Maternal Microaggressions follow us throughout academic spaces, where learning takes place. Unpacking the messy layers of gender, race, education, and motherhood allows us to take a glance into the lives of a small population of academics rarely researched, Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous Motherscholars in doctoral programs and the stories they share to transform themselves and the system.

Therefore, the purpose of this research consists of the weaving of Chicana Feminist, Critical Race Theories, and Critical Maternal Theories to: (a) centralize race, ethnicity and gender, and motherhood experiences of Motherscholars enrolled in doctoral programs; (b) illuminate the lived experiences of first-generation Motherscholars; (c) debunk deficit stereotypes of pregnant and/or parenting Chicanas Latinas in doctoral programs; (d) highlight the missing data in the educational pipeline of where pregnant and or parenting Chicanas Latinas are leaked/left out; and (e) acknowledge the often-erased narratives of Chicana Latina doctoral mothers who *sobresalen* (thrive) in the academy.

Maternal Microaggressions

Maternal Microaggressions are verbal, non-verbal, overt and covert, and they impact Motherscholars on the basis of their intersecting identities of race, ethnicity, gender, parenting status, immigration status, or others. Predominant in my data is what I coin (with the assistance

of my colleague Cecilia Caballero as we discussed her *pláticas* as microaggressions, and the students from East Los Angeles Community College where I presented the workshop) as Maternal Microaggressions (Vega & Caballero, forthcoming) and how these intersecting identities and being pregnant, "showing" or identifying as a "mother" or "parent" also impact how Motherscholars experience marginalizing treatment. Examples include inappropriate and unwelcome comments, gazes, and assumptions of academic performance. Likewise, racial and gendered intersecting identities become prominent markers where Motherscholars identify their racial, ethnic, and gendered identities to go hand in hand with deficit stereotypes such as a pregnant belly, a child in tow, tattoos, accents, and makeup. Maternal Microaggressions can work in two ways: The Motherscholars can be the direct receiver of the impact, and / or they can be a bystander of the impact. For instance, when Motherscholars are questioned about their pregnancy, the questions may feel like "questioning" and are centered around whether the pregnancy was planned. The second way it can impact Motherscholars is to overhear others express negative comments about parenting students, and also "questioning" their commitments to their studies. We will see in the finding chapters how these racial, ethnic, and gendered markers feel like "invitations" for prejudice.

Research Questions

By focusing on the experiences of Motherscholars straddling doctoral studies while they give birth, raise the children, and complete their studies, I focus on the following research questions:

1) What educational experiences and factors impact first-generation Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous Motherscholars in their educational pursuits toward a higher education?

2) How do the intersecting identities of race, class, gender, and motherhood impact first-generation Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous Motherscholars enrolled in doctoral degrees programs in social science and humanities in the U.S. Southwest?

3) How does motherhood inform and impact the intellectual, spiritual, and physical (*bodymindspirit*) experiences of first-generation Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous Motherscholars in doctoral programs in their respective institutions?

Mother Tongue: Terms, Language, and Definitions

In order to make the context of my work accessible, I am defining terms that will be used throughout my dissertation to help the reader understand the context of these terms. This intent is to define terms in what seems to be a growing area of critical maternal studies across multidisciplinary fields with a focus on maternal studies or theory. Rich genealogical evolutions of language, definitions, and terms have emerged from the different works of literature, activism, and community formations that identify a mother and her multiple roles of labor and shifts. For example, terms such as "othermother," first used by Stanlie M. James in 1993 and then by Patricia Hill Collins in 1994, have been borrowed and currently used with a play in words by scholar-activist groups such as the Chicana M(other)work Collective (Caballero et al., 2017), centralizing the Chicana experience, mother, work, and labor. In the Chicana M(other)work Collective article "Our Labor Is Our Prayer, Our Mothering Is Our Offering" (2017), Chicana M(other)work modifies the definition of "motherwork" offered by Patricia Hill Collins "by embracing the term "other" through the use of parentheses in Chicana M(other)work as this calls attention to our layered care work from five words into one—Chicana, Mother, Other, Work, Motherwork. Chicana M(other) work is a collective of Mother-Scholars involved in collaborative projects that is inclusive to Women of Color (trans and cis), gender nonconforming people, other-mothers, and allies" (p. 45). This framework offers an understanding weaved between Chicana mothering, academic labor, and varying positionalities.

Below are a few important key terms used throughout this study. *Parenting student:* A student at any educational level who parents or caretakes for dependents or family members. *Mother-Scholar:* Cheryl Matias introduced the term at AERA in 2011, coalescing the identity of mothers, scholars, and activists. *Mother-Scholar-Activist:* Mothers influenced by enrollment in higher education who take action to address injustices by actively engaging in systemic change at their college or university. *Mothers of Color:* Women who mother and identify as a Person of Color. This term centralizes the mother and the racial and ethnic identity as a person from an underserviced community. Mothers of Color is capitalized to honor and situate Women of Color Mothers subjectivities as a location of power and agency. (Please see Chapter Two, Patricia Hill Collins on mother as a "Social Construction.") *Co-Madres:* A methodological identity linked to my approach in collecting data and a bond of motherhood between the research and collaborative participants as *co-madres*. I use the term *Motherscholar* throughout the study, removing the hyphen to highlight the impact of the combined identity of mother and scholar in unison. What this study has taught me is that one is not without the other. It is a complicated fusion, and refusal to untangle each is a form of resistance. It is a form of reclaiming a politic and identity that is forever part of our lived experience.

Positionality

My own positionality as a doctoral Chicana-*Indigena* Motherscholar activist has significantly informed, shaped, and academically influenced my work inside and outside the academy. My drive to investigate maternal studies and theorization came during my pregnancy and the birth of my son, which coincided with the release of *Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women of Color in Academia* (2012), and Michelle Telléz's (2013) "Lectures, Evaluations, and Diapers: Navigating the terrains of Chicana Single

Motherhood in the Academy." Reading such work and reflecting through my experiences and encounters heavily fixated in racial and gendered microaggressions made the remainder of my time at the university while pregnant difficult. However, my spiritual and academic community uplifted, supported, and listened to my critiques and elevated my stance in pursuing this work. Systemically, my university provided perspective to conceptualize the difficulty for Women of Color in the academy, and generally the toxicity experience for Mothers of Color. I was not directly attacked or spoken to aggressively, but I felt the gazes as my pregnant and expanding body wallowed on campus. Once my son was born, my status changed again, as a parenting scholar, angry and frustrated at the limited resources (if any) available for parenting students on campus.

Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012) chapters resonated by highlighting the exclusion and marginalization experienced by professional and academic Women of Color across the nation. I began to understand how my pregnancy and body politics became a veil of sorts (Du Bois, 1920), draped over what my Chicana brown body represented. Reading, writing, and analyzing experiences similar to mine in chapters of *Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia* (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012), and *testimonios* about pregnancy, academia, and motherhood, provided insight to understand my transforming role as a Motherscholar and a prospective faculty member. Academic writings such as Cindy Cruz's *Toward an Epistemology of a Brown Body* (2006) resonated as a form of resistance tell my/our stories from locations of our own bodies as mothers, grandmothers, aunties, or daughters. These corporal scripts unlock knowledges that liberate, bringing us as marginalized peoples, to the center. Cruz elaborates:

> [O]ur production of knowledge begins in the bodies of our mothers and grandmothers, in the acknowledgement of the critical practices of women of color before us. The most profound and liberating politics come from the interrogations of our own social locations, a narrative that works outward from our specific corporealities. (p. 61)

It was with the unconditional support of my advisor, newfound mothers in my program and campus, and reading critical works by senior scholars about motherhood in academia, that I started to unravel. I became an active on-campus activist, fighting and organizing for parenting student access to resources, support, and visibility in my response to ensure parenting students, specifically Motherscholars can complete degrees. Within the politics of my corporal memory, the birth of my child, and with *corraje,* rage, my dissertation study took shape. Not only was I able to analyze the slow emergence of collective organizing, I was part of an on- and off-campus movement to speak truth to power through my leadership and scholarship.

I became one of the founding mothers of two collectives: Mothers of Color in Academia (MOCA) de UCLA (founded in 2015) and the Chicana M(other)work Collective (founded in 2014). Multiple actions on campus, organizing alongside my *co-madres* and founding mothers Dr. Nora Cisneros, Dr. LeighAnna Hidalgo, Dr. Yvette Martinez-Vú, and Dr. JoAnna Reyes Walton with MOCA, demanded the ways universities respond to parenting student needs to succeed academically through policies and research. We have co-written,[3] published, and changed *herstory* for ourselves, for our children, and the next generation of parenting students and Motherscholars. Shaping how I understand motherhood, academia, and how to shift the

[3] Please see Cisneros, N., Hidalgo, L., Vega, C., & Martinez-Vú, Y. (2019). Mothers of Color in academia: Fierce mothering challenging spatial exclusion through a Chicana feminist praxis. In *The Chicana M(other)work anthology: Porque sin madres no hay revolución*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press; Hidalgo, L., Vega, C., & Cisneros, N. (2019, forthcoming). *Fierce Mothering: The chords that bind us to our sisters, children, and community*. Demeter Press.

narrative, my *co-madres* from Chicana M(other)work have shaped my place in this world with the unwavering support of Dr. Judith Perez-Torres, Dr. Cecilia Caballero, Dr. Yvette Martinez-Vú, and Dr. Michelle Téllez. These and other fierce mothers have held me, supported me, loved and fed me, and have become my chosen family in resistance and contributed to the limited literatures by writing ourselves to existence (Anzaldúa, 1999) by contributing to the bodies of literature, social media, and the larger Women of Color academic mothering community.

Overview of Theory and Theoretical Frameworks

My dissertation draws from Critical Race Theory in Education (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) and Chicana Feminist Theory (CFT) and Critical Maternal Theory to identify and analyze the social condition of doctoral Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous Motherscholars (Delgado Bernal, Elenes, Godínez, & Villenas, 2006). In Chapter Three, "Theory," I expand on Critical Race Theory in Education centering the experiential knowledge to illustrate the intersectionality of race and racism. Similarly, a Chicana Feminist Theory privileges a political and social justice stance to speak from locations of marginalization and oppression. I summarize three main elements that inform the connections of *bodymindspirit* represented by *Coyolxauhqui* as a maternal body of knowledge and theory. The three elements are: (a) The Epistemology of a Brown Body and Theories of the Flesh, which addresses the ***body***; (b) *Nepantla,* which addresses the imaginary and in-betweenness representing the ***mind***; and (c) Activisms mainly informed by Spiritual Activisms (Anzaldúa, 2005), representing the ***spirit***. These three theoretical elements surfaced from my data collection and interviews, or *pláticas*, with Motherscholars who position their Chicana, Latina, and/or Indigenous identities at the center of their lived experience. I selected these three elements to weave together their significant function in the wholeness of Motherscholars in academia (Lara, 2003; Vega, 2016) as complete and whole.

Drawing from current works on Chicana Feminist Epistemologies, I employed Critical Maternal Theories to expand, analyze, and understand mothering, Motherwork, and motherhood from the perspective of Motherscholars in academia. Therefore, my contribution to this research consists of the weaving of Critical Race Theories in Education, Chicana Feminist Theories, and Critical Maternal Theories and birth what I call a Critical *Maternalista* Matrix informed these theories, the data collected, and my years in the field as a community-based researcher ethnographer. The following is a refresher of the tenets I developed over time that I used as theory, a method, or a methodology.

1. Centralize race, ethnicity and gender, and motherhood experiences of Chicanas, Latinas, and Indigenous Motherscholars enrolled in doctoral programs;

2. Illuminate the lived experiences of first-generation Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous doctoral mothers;

3. Debunk deficit stereotypes of pregnant and or parenting Chicanas, Latinas, and Indigenous Motherscholars in doctoral programs;

4. Highlight the missing data in the educational pipeline of where pregnant and or parenting Chicanas, Latinas, and Indigenous Motherscholars are leaked/left out; and

5. Acknowledge the often-erased narratives of Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous doctoral mothers who *sobresalen* (thrive) in the academy.

Overview of Methods and Methodology

I approached my interviews with mothers through a *co-madre* methodology, which I thoroughly expand in Chapter Four. My collaboration with mothers consisted of speaking Spanish as a default language and codeswitching, makes the conversation more comfortable. Speaking in both languages comes organically in the interviews but I also a sentiment in dialogue sharing openly as sisters, kin, mothers, or godmothers. A *co-madre* is a mother who (a) collaborates with the researcher, (b) is also a *madre* (a mother), and (c) shares similar or different experiences in the home, community, and university as a parent. The *co-madre* methodology

transcends beyond language, it includes the sharing of intimate space like the private sphere, in homes, or in public locations as in institutions, conferences, and parks while watching our children play. Often times, the *co-madre* methodology included the breaking of bread or "sharing *comida*", a cultural but motherly intuitive approach of honoring time and appetite for both the mother-researcher and the mother-collaborator. My methods included the process to member-check with my *co-madres* and having honest and hard conversations about the work. Based on this, I had two mothers withdraw their interviews because of the fear of being identified and affecting their job market prospects. This in fact was a raw reality of the ways in which academic violence, racism, and sexism continue to exist despite our educational advancement. In addition, these collaborative efforts led to working together and presenting at conferences, co-authoring publications, and joining forces on campus to change policies on and off the university setting.

Overview of Study

Chapter One, "Introduction," serves as an introduction and roadmap to the study. I introduce the research study, literature review, theory, methods and methodology. I provide general definitions of terms and language read throughout the dissertation. Chapter Two, "The Literature Review," focuses on chosen bodies of work drawing from scholarship addressing institutional barriers faced by Motherscholars in the U.S., analyzing Women of Color motherhood and academia responding to the majoritarian analysis of White motherhood. I re-center the Woman of Color experience. I include current works in Critical Maternal Theories and research as a growing movement for and by Motherscholars in the academy and in the community. Chapter Three outlines the major theories and theoretical implementation of Critical Race Theory, Chicana Feminist Theory, and Critical Maternal Theories supporting my research

study. I engage in my own theorization of a concept I call a Critical *Maternalista* Matrix, as a weaving of theory that centralize marginal communities like Motherscholars. Chapter Four, "Methods and Methodologies," focuses on the research methods, methodologies, and protocols used for my data collection processes. This includes methods outlining criterion sampling, interview protocols, timeline, narrative profiles, and analysis. Chapter Five, "Visibility/Invisibility," highlights the findings of early educational erasures for Women of Color. The erasures highlight visibility/invisibility dichotomy engaging the importance of critical pedagogies as Ethnic and Gender studies that inform consciousness and choices to attain a higher education. It highlights the significance of femtors and mentors as important actors to support the academic journeys of Motherscholars in pursuits to Ph.D.s. Chapter Six, "Maternal Microaggressions," focuses on the painful moments of marginalization such as microaggressions, introducing Maternal Microaggressions as a concept derived from the narratives of Motherscholars and the physiological, emotional, and spiritual impacts. Chapter Seven, "Resistance, Survivance, and Resilience," centralizes the forms of activisms, resistance, and survivance in the everyday lives of Motherscholars. These forms of refusals manifest in ways in which Motherscholars prepare curriculum, teach in the classroom, mother, organize, and produce critical research. Last, my last *ofrenda* is Chapter Eight, "The Conclusion," highlights the recommendations, the implications, and a call to action to the learning community. It closes with a reflection on behalf of my Motherscholars, and to my child as a moment of In Lak'ech Ala K'in.[4]

[4] In Lak'ech Ala K'in is a Mayan philosophical term used most current as a chant of encouragement, respect, and reciprocity in social movements. It means "tu eres mi otro yo," or you are another me, I am another you.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of the Review of Literature

The books *Do Babies Matter*? *Gender and Family in the Ivory Tower*, by Mary Mason et al. (2013), and *Presumed Incompetent*: *The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia*, by Gutiérrez y Muhs et al. (2012) critically informed my research and passion for this topic. Mason's book outlines discrepancies between men and women and family planning choices post-graduate level completion. A full 30% of women—three in every ten—enrolled in graduate studies will move away from academic opportunities towards non-academic fields to have a family. Noting that most students enrolled in Ph.D. programs are not People of Color, most participants in Mason et al.'s study centralize the White narrative. With less than 1 out of 100 Chicanas and Latinas earning Ph.D.s, the odds of completion are lower for Motherscholars. Delving deeper into intersecting factors, attaining a Ph.D. as a first-generation Motherscholar critically impacts parenting students who are single mothers, queer, trans, and low-income parents. Although not many studies have investigated these impacts specifically for Women of Color in higher education, a signifier from the findings from the national level research institute, Institute Women's Policy Research, highlights single parenting or motherhood impacting mothers of color at higher rates than their counterparts. Moving forward, more studies need to address the critical factors of economic disadvantage, daycare insecurity, and intense time demanding signify a disadvantage for single Women of Color college completion rates at 2-year colleges nationwide (IWPR, 2018).

Introduction to the Field of Maternal Literatures

In this literature review, I provide several genealogies of the evolving works informed by "mother," "motherhood," and "othermotherwork" scholarship since the 1990s. It can be argued

that these epistemologies existed before these published works, often times as conversations between "*mujeres*" or "*comadres*." My literature review reaches back approximately 40 years, addressing several of the prominent pieces that spoke to my work. Since 2013, more and more literature has surfaced that addresses Motherscholar research, including *Mothering while Black* (2019), *The Chicana M(other)work Anthology* (2019), and *Mothering from the Field: The Impact of Motherhood on Site-Based Research* (2019). Podcasts have emerged such as the *Chicana M(other)work Podcast*, *Dem Black Mamas*, and *Chicana Moms,* which are easily accessible via iTunes and SoundCloud as Motherscholars address their experiences in academia. These literatures and airwave forms of knowledge of motherhood studies have sat within the body, labor, and knowledge formations of Women of Color Feminist Theorist Motherscholars for centuries and now are becoming accessible with a click on a podcast app. We carry within the untold stories of our own mothers and those before us in our bones and *bodymindspirit* (Lara, 2003) memory. In a time when social media is booming and accessible, othermothers, activists, and organizers in written form are shedding light to their everyday epistemologies of family formations. Such acts of digital *rebeldía*, challenges the silence[5] and invisibility we as mothers have experienced in pursuit to a higher education, tenure-track jobs, alternative academic jobs, or other endeavors to "*correr la voz*," to run the voice and inform, and feel seen and validated.

It is an exciting time (although tumultuous) to mother in the academy, when more and more women and self-identified mothers are having these conversations by writing, publishing, and submitting book proposals to engage and often times speak back to the academy and the cannon on Motherscholar discourse. In my research approaches, I conducted general searches on

[5] For a dissertation challenging silence redefined please see dissertation by Magali Campos titled *Nos/otras Redefining the Silences: Women of Color Exploring Silence as a Tool to Navigate Doctoral Programs.*

Motherscholar research and came across the foundation literatures from the 1990s through library system searches. As my colleagues learned about my research topic, I was forwarded articles released or forthcoming on Motherscholars of Color. And most recently, searches on mothering has led me to an abundance of works. While there is a wealth of literature on Women of Color Motherscholar research after what appears to be a boom in literatures since 2013, I had to be selective for the most relevant pieces for my study and to help me answer my research questions. Therefore, focusing on African American, Chicana Feminist motherhood studies, and Critical Maternal Theories sustains my research on first-generation Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous Mothers in doctoral programs. As seen Chapter One, "Introduction," I define the different "mothering," "motherhood," or "othermotherwork" definitions in the various ways used as expressions based on the literatures and my data. However, as identity formations shift and with the change in time, so does the definition of mothering, motherhood or othermotherwork. I see what I offer in this study as a working definition that I am aware will mean something different for others. I am highly influenced by Patricia Hill Collins and Stanlie M. James's work because they both provide foundational analysis on how we can situate mothering through an intersectional lens. Importantly, is the published work by James (1993) in a Black feminist journal hidden in the archives of the art library at UCLA, where I uncovered, *Mothering: A possible Black Feminist Link to Social Transformation?* This piece further expanded on the body of the literature review providing historical genesis on "othermotherwork."

A close reading of an affirming collection of stories in *Presumed Incompetent*: *The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia* (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012) while I was pregnant and preparing for the delivery of my child in late 2013, gave me a glance at the experiences of professors and faculty at the intersections of race, class, gender, faculty status,

and motherhood. This anthology was recommended to me by my advisor, who heard my concern about the multiple microaggressions I was experiencing as a "pregnant while Chicana" instances at the university. In my desperation to name these oppressions, he handed me the book and I read feverishly. A short time after, Michelle Téllez's (2013) article, "Lectures, Evaluations, and Diapers: Navigating the Terrains of Chicana Single Motherhood in the Academy," landed on my desktop as it circulated through Facebook. An emerging Motherscholar activist, Téllez shared her truth as a single Motherscholar in a tenure-track faculty position. Her pieces impacted my desire to pursue research on the experiences of doctoral students and freshly minted professors through a similar analysis of intersectionality per the aforementioned literatures. It allowed me to see myself within the literatures, and it empowered me as a situating force resisting dismissive erasures of the ivory tower toward mothers in academia. These literatures felt like affirmations, and I felt seen.

Lastly, nine months after my return from maternity leave, I enrolled in a Chicana Feminist Methodologies course with Dr. Dolores Delgado Bernal, where I closely read through current literatures engaging research methods, theory, and methodologies. I desired to see more on Motherscholars and decided with the encouragement of Dr. Delgado Bernal to pursue this work and dig deeper to uncover these literatures, write my own, and bring forth these conversations with a dissertation focused on these topics. It was fundamental to my development as an early scholar engaging Motherscholar research to engage in conversation with others on this topic and submerge myself in these fruitful topics and participate in the scholarship production.

Roadmap of Literature Review

In this chapter, I organize the literature in three sections: (a) Intersectional Mothering, (b) Chicana Latina Mother Scholarship, and (c) Queer Mothering. I begin the literature review with the longitudinal study from Mary Ann Mason's (2013) quantitative and qualitative 12-year study, *Do Babies Matter? Gender and Family in the Ivory Tower*. Although this book does not address the inequities specifically for Women of Color, the literature review is in conversation responding to these gaps. I mainly focus the experiences of graduate students on the tenure-track route (and those who leave academia). I believe that the Women of Color literatures following this study are in conversation with this piece. This is then followed by two main works from the '90s that critically impacted the definitions of mothering and Motherwork on "othermotherwork" written by Stanlie M. James (1993). James writes about the genealogical association of Motherwork related to the ways other mothers support recent mothers after giving birth, but also the labor of other mothers in raising other women's children. I then follow with Patricia Hill Collins's (1994) foundational piece and definition of Motherwork, where she argues that mothering and motherhood is a social constructions and intersectional identity shifting attention from the dichotomous male private and public spheres centralizing Mothers of Color experiences to the center. I include Larissa M. Mercado-López's *Con el Palote en Una Mano y el Libro en la Otra* (2008), where she introduces the *Third-Space Chicana Theoretical Matrix* to challenge the dichotomous split of motherhood and academia by theorizing a maternal intersectional identity. I further use this concept in my theoretical framework in Chapter Three, offering my own theorization and contribution to the field. Integrating the analysis of intersectional identity formation as presented by Collins is Reyna Anaya's (2011) article on the intersectional experiences of Graduate Student Mothers of Color (GSMC). Anaya critically engages an analysis of the graduate student parenting experience through a Woman of Color, graduate

student, and administrative lens. In the closing of this section, I bring into conversation several articles that mention the Aztec symbology Coyolxauhqui, therefore introducing Irene Lara's (2003) work *Decolonizing Latina Spiritualities and Sexualities: Healing Practices in the Americas.* Her dissertation engages representations of the maternal invisibility and visibility of Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous Motherscholars, when considering symbols of cultural influence in research inquiry such as *La Llorrona* (Anaya, 2011; Mercado-López, 2008), La Virgen (Mercado-López, 2008), and Coyolxauhqui.

In the second section, I centralize Chicana and Latina Motherscholarship. I discuss the introduction and a chapter in *Mothers in Academia* (2013), an anthology edited by Mari Castañeda and Kristen Isgo. I draw from contributor J. Estrella Torrez's chapter "*Sobreviviendo* (and Thriving) in the Academy: My *Tías' Counterconsejos* and Advise," as an overall response to the experiences of Women of Color by focusing the intersectional identities of Mothers of Color, including Motherscholar activists. I bring into conversation Chicana M(other)work Collective's, *Our Labor is Our Prayer, our Mothering is our Offering: A Chicana M(other)work Framework for Collective Resistance* (2016), a call to action in imagining what transforming the institution and healing can look like through collective action as mothers in the ivory tower.

In the last section, I begin with Audre Lorde's (2017) poem "Lesbian Parenting 1986" in *A Burst of Light and Other Essays*. These works stand on the shoulders of literary works by Cherríe Moraga's *Waiting on the Wings: Portrait of a Queer Motherhood* (1997) and Karleen Pendleton Jimenez's[6] (2011) critical work on Lesbian and Queer pregnancy and motherhood, in particular *How to Get a Girl Pregnant: A Memoir*. Both literary contributions were mainly as

[6] For more on Chicana Lesbian or queer parenting, please see more works on Karleen Pendleton Jimenez (2006).

reflexiones, reflections, that shed light to the intersections of race, class, sexual identity, and motherhood. They both address heartbreak, disappointment, desire, and family kin. With Moraga and Jimenez, I bring into conversation most recent literatures to address findings of my study, which includes sexuality and resistance. I selected the introduction from the anthology *Revolutionary Mothering: Love on the Front Lines* (2016) and Mothering while Queer from editor and contributor Alexis Pauline Gumbs's "m/other ourselves: A Black queer feminist genealogy for radical mothering." The selection of a few chapters on queer parenting and mothering support the ways in which Motherscholars are not only challenging patriarchy, but rather, heteropatriarchy and social constructions of who mothers, when and why, by reclaiming motherhood as a form of liberation, activism, and healing alongside our Children of Color.

Do Babies Matter? Gender and Family in the Ivory Tower (2013)

Through a longitudinal study of 12 years at UC Berkeley, this book discussed the perceptions and experiences of faculty who are considering children and / or have children. In this book, Dr. Mason, Dr. Wolfinger, and Dr. Goulden (2013) provide a comprehensive examination about family formation and academic career paths for men and women. The study begins during the graduate career period of students, following them into tenure and retirement. Findings show there is a difference between genders, where women face difficulty in their career paths in the academic fast track in comparison to men. Students and faculty were surveyed at several moments of their paths, responding to questions of family formations and economic stability. As mentioned above, the major gaps between genders are startling, indicating that even when 50% of women are pursuing a Ph.D., only 23% are tenure-track professors (p. 2).

An important attribute to this study is a special analysis of the STEM fields as male dominated and where women who desire to have children are heavily shamed. At UC Berkeley,

28% of Ph.D. recipients were women. The study highlights the median age of men in STEM has been 32; the corresponding age for women is 33. After completing their degrees, STEM-trained graduate students will remain in a post-doctoral fellowship before acquiring their first job. At this point, women are at the end of their childbearing age (p. 10). Through the National Science Foundation survey of 2006–2007, 8,000 University of California students were surveyed about their academic and family planning goals. Furthermore, 84% of women and 74% of men indicated they were concerned about a family-friendly campus. Two out of three of these students hoped to pursue their dream of becoming professors at Research 1 institutions. However, 30% of women and 20% of men move away from the professorate to pursue nonacademic careers. Both men and women were concerned about unrelenting work hours and the "expectation" to not have children while in academia.

Of current doctoral students in the UC system, 14% of women and 12% of men are parents. The study also shows both men and women hold off from having children during graduate school because the workload takes precedence. Women reported they had avoided having children because they "fear[ed] that they will not be taken seriously and that their professors and future employers will disapprove" (pp. 11–12). Likewise, a student reported the attitude toward pregnant students as pervasive: "Female graduate student in question [pregnant] must now prove to the faculty that she is capable of completing her degree, even when prior to the pregnancy there were absolutely no doubts about her capabilities and ambition" (p. 13). Attitudes are reflective when 63% of female tenured faculty members are married, and 45% are childless. For men, 85% are married. Female students reflect in the observations they have made as they see their female scholar faculty members challenged in balancing family and their

academic careers. Graduate student women express the lack of faculty mother role models. The following statement indicates that example:

> For other women graduate students, the issue is not so much whether to have children, as when. This dilemma, exacerbated by the absence of role model mothers, plays out at different times in women's professional lives, most commonly when they go on the academic job market or when the tenure clock runs up against the biological clock later in their careers. (p. 15)

This statement is critical for female graduate students who want families but do not have the information as to when they should have children. That information passed on to female graduate students will heavily influence the decisions the student will make about if and when they to have children. In conclusion, this comprehensive study is foundational and groundbreaking for women who plan and or desire to start a family. However, this large study lacks in centering race, class, and gender onto the lives of graduate students. The positioning of a Critical Race analysis of mothering assists in analyzing the complex identities of Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous doctoral mothers.

Section I: Intersectional Analysis of Race, Ethnicity, and Motherhood

Stanlie M. James (1993) describes in *Othermotherwork as Social Transformation* *othermotherwork* as other work provided mainly by women to care for each other after giving birth, or as guidance and support thereafter, often to adopt children who are not blood kin. This institutional practice of *othermothers* was a response to the slave trade, when children were brutally taken from their mothers, and other mothers became responsible to *othermother* despite the blood kinship but as an overall responsibility to the children. James reminds us that this labor is performed by the elders or grandmothers in such care work. Historically contextualizing such work, she reminds us that the work of *othermothers* is to accept the responsibility "for the welfare of non-blood related children in their community" (p. 44). Adopting this concept of

othermotherwork allows us to recognize the intergeneration act of care work performed mainly by women or generational exchange to engage in the act of love and survival of Children of Color. It also gives fruition to challenge the normative dichotomous idea of the nuclear family. Non-traditional families have existed, specifically during times of slave trade and colonization. This notion heavily informs the critical analysis of intersectional identities of race and ethnicity Collins invites us to understand.

Patricia Hill Collins's (2007) chapter, "Shifting the Center: Race, Class, and Feminist Theorizing about Motherhood" in *Mothering: Ideology, Experience, and Agency*, established groundbreaking scholarship and the importance of intersectional analysis of Motherwork and mothering. Although not providing a concrete definition of Motherwork, Collins gestures on the tactics of labor and the drive of survival that shift and decentralizes the dichotomous belief of the public and private spheres. Therefore, Motherwork means decentralizing heteropatriarchal understandings of private and public spheres. Collins reminds us that labor is inclusive of physical, emotional, and spiritual labor women and other women engage among each other, their children, and their own racial and ethnic communities. Labor, or mothering empowers the agency to choose and not choose to bring children into this world. Collins places the racial and ethnic women's experience of Motherwork back in the center instead of in the margin to re-contextualize how these experiences unfold at the different intersections of race, ethnicity, and mothering.

For Collins (1994), feminism not only excluded the analysis of race, class, and gender in motherhood. Collins argues that feminist theories enforced dichotomous notions of the political economy and the private household—in short, men go out to work while women stay home to raise the children. Analyzing a Motherwork framework of intersectionality challenges the White

heteronormative theorization of what motherhood and motherwork "look like" in a nuclear analysis. Therefore, she invites us to challenge the dichotomous splits of gendered roles for women and Women of Color and to be more inclusive of alternative family formations, such as queer families, single mothering, and a grandmother raising her grandchildren. "Since work and family have rarely functioned as dichotomous spheres for women of color, examining racial ethnic women's experiences reveal how these spheres actually are interwoven" (p. 46). She warns that to decontextualizing the experiences of mothers and their other intersectional identities can dangerously contribute to marginalizing motherhood by implying gender roles and stereotypes.

Feminist theory and thought is to serves as a catalyst to dismantle marginalization of mothering. By acknowledging Motherwork as a feminist approach of critical identity, she argues that by not acknowledging Motherwork or motherhood as a social construction can perpetuate Western ideology in placing Women of Color in dichotomous roles and categories. As feminists, we can also participate in shaming and reprimanding Women of Color for having children while they are in academia, crudely insinuating that to engage in child bearing is to end the liberation of women.

Larissa Mercado-López (2007) introduces a Chicana mother-scholar subjectivity positionality as a scholar-mother-activist reflecting on the negotiation of her identity and a call to action to pursue theoretical knowledge productions in *Con el Palote en Una Mano y el Libro en la Otra*. Mercado-López is in conversation with the intersectionality analysis of Collins (1994) and the unique experiences of Graduate Mothers of Color (Anaya, 2011). However, I chose this piece because Mercado-López makes it clear how mothering and motherhood inform theory and not the other way around. "Theory informs my mothering, but my mothering/maternity has the

potential to challenge theory. As a Chicana mother-scholar I am an embodiment of discursive and cultural contradiction; nothing is stable" (p. 824). Mercado-López work is a call to action centralizing the Motherscholar identity and its continuous development in keeping this identity intact as a whole versus a fragmenting identity that occurs in academic settings. We as Motherscholars, are complete and whole and the existence is a refusal of fragmentation. Lastly, Mercado-López identifies as a Motherscholar activist, and although her form of activism is not explicit in this chapter, her chapter in itself is a form of activism. Her narrative in theorizing *nuevas teorias* is theory in action where other Motherscholars can imagine what it means according to our own unique needs as Chicanas, Latinas, Activist, Motherscholars to imagine and theorize collectively. Mercado-López identifies *La Llorona* in her piece as a complicated identity in the relationship of the self of mother scholars. Perhaps where guilt plagues us when we leave our children behind when we leave our children at home while mommy works, completes assignments, or has to travel to conferences. La Llorona cries through the halls of the ivory tower because of those who have complicated her existence and refused her the space where she would have to negotiate her multiple intersectional identities. Mercado-López reminds us:

> As a Chicana mother-scholar I am an embodiment of discursive and cultural contradiction: nothing is stable. I continue to carve out ways to be a feminist that I am by confronting these contradictions, by acknowledging my maternal, brown body not as an organ for patriarchy but as a body of knowledge(s). (p. 825)

She acknowledges the limited scholarship produced by Chicana mothers in the academy. Mercado-López brings forth a politics of motherhood in a dichotomous society when mothers are forced at times to choose between scholarship or motherhood and are expected to attain both. She introduces a Third-Space Chicana Maternal Praxis, where maternity challenges and informs theory, and within its tensions, creates new *teorias* (Anzaldúa, 1999).

> The absence of Chicana mothers from this scene [Academia], obscures the cultural and social difference between Chicana motherhood and the dominant perception of (Anglo) motherhood, necessitating that Chicana mothers take up the pen to write their way back into literature, into the social fabric, into motherhood. (p. 827)

The above quote, in essence, is her call to action to carve ourselves into existence as a form of activism. Indeed, as a form of survival is writing and seeing ourselves reflected through the pages of literatures written for and by Chicana, Latina, Indigenous and Women of Color mothers who are the bearers of their own unique truth. It is a call to action as in a third-space created to exist, to be creative, to survive, and to thrive.

In *Graduate Student Mothers of Color: The Intersectionality between Graduate Student, Motherhood and Women of Color in Higher Education*, Reyna Anaya (2011) offers an analysis of Mothers of Color in graduate study experience in higher education through an administrative lens. She employs intersectionality theories by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1994) and Patricia Hill Collins (1994) to address the multiple experiences of Mothers of Color graduate students. She indicates that once a graduate student becomes a parent during graduate school, access and support are less available for this vulnerable community. "Access and support are not the same for all women. Women of Color experiences (i.e., Graduate Student Mothers of Color) are stifled on university and college campuses by the dominant, White culture's socially constructed ideals of gender roles and ethnic/race assumptions" (Anaya, 2011, p. 14; Souto-Manning & Ray, 2010). Many universities are not up to par in supporting parenting needs, especially when most enrolled in college campuses are not People of Color nor parenting students. For example, Anaya claims that maternal invisibility is less explored specifically when the intersections of race and ethnicity are tied to stereotypes causing the invisibility of a Motherscholar of Color. "Defined in previous generations as uneducated and housebound, Chicana women fought to

eliminate traditional ethnic attitudes associated with gendered roles such as housewife and mother as means to shift stereotypical thinking. The Chicana mother, as a result; changed, however issues of privilege continue to affect her choice to disclose her GSM [Graduate Student Mother] identity" (Jiron-King in Anaya, 2011). Supporting Anaya's argument of the importance to critically understand the intersectionality of educational experiences of Graduate Student Mothers in higher education. The needs are significantly different for college students in graduate school when they are Women or People of Color and parents.

She agrees and continues to urge an intersectional tool to understand the unique dimensions when parenting students in graduate school are not given the choice (instead reprimanded) between being a parent, a Parent of Color, or a single parent of in graduate studies among other complex identities. "Understanding intersectionality, therefore, validates and creates visibility of individual, Women of Color experiences beyond the mainstream culture" (p. 15). Acknowledging intersectionality to parenting experiences provides agency and empowerment to assert one's existence and the importance of challenging ongoing marginalization of institutions of higher learning. Anaya applies intersectionality and the relationships between the personal and social in constructions of power in four critical theoretical interventions in the following way by using Dill and Zambrana's (2009) work on *Emerging Intersections: Race, Class, and Gender in Theory, Policy, and Practice*: (a) centralizing the lived experiences and the struggles of People of Color and other marginalized communities; (b) exploring complex identities of individuals but also of groups, which may often be ignored and essentialized; (c) revealing the structural and inequitable power dynamics; and (d) promoting social justice, social change, research, and practice as a holistic response to eradicate disparities.

These tenets offer the different approaches student services on their campus as considerations to work for and serve students and Women of Color in graduate school.

Like Collins (1994), Anaya deconstructs dichotomous language behind the good mother and the good student. Anaya challenges the misconception and the often times harmful ways culture and power dynamics impact expectations of performance academically and in the role of mother. Culturally, there are the interpretations of the "good mother" as we have seen in Chicana Latina literature as self-sacrificing, super mother, omnipotent, like *La Virgen de Guadalupe* or *La Llorrona*, engaging conversations with Mercado-Lopez's analysis of *La Llorona.* Both sacrificing themselves for others, setting aside their own agency and dreams. Examining the strengths of all mothers who attempt to balance the different roles of parenting and academia, she challenges those perceptions and expectations built on heteropatriarchy and performativity of what is a "good mother" or a "bad mother" categories. This includes an analysis of "good student" identity in problematizing a social construction based on gender performativity and expectations. She explains:

> [T]he socially-constructed definition of good student and good mother stratifies the identity intersectionality of graduate student mothers (GSM) in today's higher education system (Lynch, 2008). Unable to separate the two identities (i.e., mother and student), some GSM default to maternal invisibility (Lynch, 2008) in order to convince their peers and advisors they are serious and committed scholars. Maternal invisibility, non-disclosure of motherhood identity, allows GSM to appear as committed students, and remove maternal bias from interfering with their academic careers. (p. 19)

Anaya argues that invisibility goes beyond the physical in academic spaces, but also in the ways in which motherhood is written about, specifically when the experiences of Women of Color are uniquely different. Additionally, Anaya suggests the importance of community to fill the gaps for the marginalization GSM's experience. In conclusion, Graduate Student Mothers of Color (GSMOC) "have emerged as a visible population within higher education. Literature on

motherhood, GSMs, and Women of Color experiences in higher education, however, must merge to reflect ways in which privilege and oppression influence cognitive, emotional, and physical spaces" (p. 24). Anaya recommends inclusive practices on campus to eliminate marginalization, which include on-campus daycare, lactation rooms, changing stations, and family-centered restrooms. However, this is narrowly addressing the needs for GSMs.

Lara (2003) solidifies the connection of the body to the mind and to the spirit as one complete entity in her dissertation, *Decolonizing Latina Spiritualities and Sexualities: Healing Practices in the Americas*. Lara reminds us that as women, we carry generational information in our genetic makeup that informs our everyday lives. To resist the systemic and westernized separation of the body, the mind, and the spirit, she collapses these three terms into one word to reinforce cohesiveness: *bodymindspirit*. The separation of the *bodymindspirit* can be encountered in the *cuento* of Coyolxauhqui. Lara argues that her survival in the academy as a scholar, Chicana, and a woman connected to spirituality depends on all three elements of her body, mind, and spirit working together as one. She notes:

> I slowly began to heal my fragmented self and move toward wholeness and balance. I think and feel at once. Unlearning the western mind/body split and learning to listen to the wisdom of my whole self, my bodymindspirit is a perpetual process. (p. 435)

The following is the *cuento* (story) as it has been retold and referred to by many in academic and non-academic circles, through the work of poets, literary texts, Chicana and *Indigena teoristas,* anthropologists, archeologists, in danza Azteca and activist circles. Coatlicue, the mother of Coyolxauhqui, found eagle-down feathers as she swept. Keeping them safe, Coatlicue tucked them inside her breast and later became pregnant (Moraga, 1993). When Coyolxauhqui learned of her mother's "illegitimate" pregnancy, she became furious. Coatlicue would later give birth to Huitzilopochtli, the god of civil unrest and war. Fearing this unrest,

Coyolxauhqui plotted to kill her mother and brother to prevent chaos in the world. However, Coyolxauhqui was not able to carry out her plan as Huitzilopochtli emerged from Coatlicue's womb only to decapitate and dismember Coyolxauhqui, throwing her body off the mountain and heaving her head toward the heavens.

Coyolxauhqui's story is the first historical femicide on record (Gaspar de Alba, 2014) capturing the conception of patriarchy and marginalization as experienced by women (Lara, 2003) across the world. Coyolxauhqui's story reminds us of the fragmentation we experience through misogyny wherein physical, spiritual, and intellectual identities represent the severing of the everyday experiences of Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous doctoral mothers. Physically, women's bodies are policed to not have children during their academic careers—more so, monitored during this current political climate on abortion bans nationwide. Spiritually, women's emotional and creative pathways for creating knowledge are not validated. And intellectually, their academic knowledge is "required" to produce "good" knowledge, negligent of emotion, creativity, and feeling. It allows a space to for women to make sense of their positionality and provide a location to theorize and build on "creation" stories.

The images provided in Appendix A represent a graph of the unearthed Coyolxauhqui stone found on February 21, 1978, in Tenochtitlan, México. Although many scholars center their work around theorizing Coyolxauhqui's fragmented story, I theorize around her pregnancy story. According to many anthropologists and art historians (Boskovic, 1992; Nicholson, 1985), Coyolxauhqui's body reveals stretched breasts and stomach, as evidence that she has carried life, given birth, and produced milk (breast fed). As early as 1985, anthropologist Nicholson identified "[t]he large, pendulous breasts are boldly displayed on the bare upper body, as well as two creases in the belly area just above" (p. 78). Like Nicholson, scholars argue that not much

attention has focused on the pregnancy or mothering story of Coyolxauhqui. I choose to focus on this symbol, in connection to other symbols Chicana scholars mentioned in the aforementioned reviews of literatures such as *La Llorrona* and *La Virgen de Guadalupe,* because perhaps Coyolxauhqui is a third-space representation of the invisible experiences of the Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous identity of erasure, invisibility of motherhood and pregnancy currently experienced in a heteropatriarchal social structure. Untold "birth stories" such as Coyolxauhqui's provide us with tools as Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous women to theorize and contribute to knowledge production, from our everyday lived epistemologies, as a way to fill in the "blank spots" that Chicana *teoristas* such as Gloria Anzaldúa have left open for many of us to fill in. Doing so unsettles dominant narratives that often leave out the raw and real stories of pregnancy, birth, and post-partum mutually experienced by women, transmothers, adoptive mothers, and othermothers globally.

Section II: Chicana Latina Mother Scholarship

J. Estrella Torrez's piece, "*Sobreviviendo* (and Thriving) in the Academy: My Tías' *Counterconsejos*" in *Mothers in Academia* (2013), reflects back to what Collins (1994), Mercado-López (2008), and Anaya (2011) are arguing—feminism derived from the earlier movement of White centric and family formations can critically hurt and continuously erase the multiple identities of Women of Color parents. She argues that early feminists, and at times elder Chicanas, provide unsolicited advice or *consejos* to "not get pregnant while in college" and to mainly focus on academic success. However, Torrez asserts her argument that she should not be the exception to the rule. A Black feminist analysis on intersectional motherhood derived from Collins (1994) and Chicana Feminisms from Dolores Delgado Bernal (1998) served to help her position herself as a "Chicana scholar-mother-activist." Torrez refused to see her position as

pernicious: ". . . although I was fortunate to be in an amazingly encouraging graduate program with brown, Black, and Native *mujeres* who saw my children as assets and not a detriment" (p. 124). Torrez argues that her identities as a mother and a scholar allows her to navigate and challenge the academy and its rigid hierarchy. Likewise, the importance of her identity stands firm as a Chicana *feminista* grounded in the unique life experiences and lived realities of Chicanas by calling in historical legacies of resistance, including the *mujeres* in our lineage. Torrez uses these tools to approach research and community engagement that acknowledges collective resistance, support among each other, and to pull through the constant systemic pressure of academia that push us out.

As such, she brings forth *sobrevivencia*, translated as beyond survival and thriving (Trinidad-Gálvan, 2001) and also related to what Vizenor (2008) defines as survivance; to survive and resist. Both are transcended in our own family's survival stories, carried onto our own genetic makeup, which in turn informs the ways in which we raise our children. I am interested in this approach between how *sobrevivencia* and survivance inform the ways in which Motherscholars in my study adapt to their everyday struggles of negotiating the academy and motherhood as assets. Especially when they carry within the genetic makeup of survival their own ancestors, and often times women in their life withhold. The Chicana feminist epistemologies mentioned here, the genetic information while one approaches the academy, become information passed onto their children.

In conversation with Collins (1994), Anaya (2011), and Torrez (2013) is the Chicana M(other)work Collective's " (2017) article "Our Labor is Our Prayer, our Mothering is our Offering: A Chicana M(other)work Framework for Collective Resistance," which featured a call to action to build toward collective resistance to change the ways in which mothers are written

about and how they should be supported. This article takes on an intragenerational and intergenerational approach analyzing and acknowledging the intersectional identity formations of first-generation Chicana Mother Scholars in academia. In this piece, the authors acknowledge labor as visible and the importance of intersectional identities analysis of all Women of Color. They apply a Chicana feminist framework in *testimonio* and method in sharing their own Motherscholar experiences as an offering to the next generation of Motherscholars, but also to their children. Chicana M(other)work states the importance of testimonio and the approach of our braided experiences: "We use the rebozo as a metaphor, our article similarly interweaves our five testimonios throughout that addresses themes such as intergenerational mothering, carving space, self-healing, creating imaginaries, and making labor visible" (p. 48). Applying this approach to my study compels me to remember how multiple experiences are similar yet different among first-generation Chicana Motherscholars. In particular, as seen throughout the literature review, this approach makes feminized labor visible while acknowledging the unique experiences of Mothers of Color.

Section III: Queer Mothering

In the essay "Turning the Beat Around: Lesbian Parenting 1986" in *A Burst of Light: and Other Essays* (2017), Audre Lorde argues the ways in which having Children of Color is a form of survival for Lesbian, Gay, Queer, or Trans People of Color in a time of racisms, homophobia, and systemic oppression. All of which continue to be relevant today. She reminds us that Lesbian, Gay, Queer, or Trans People of Color "knows deep down inside that the question of children is not merely an academic one, nor do our children represent a theoretical hold upon some vague immortality" (p. 33). Lorde believed that to have children as gay, lesbian, or queer People of Color is a way to participate in the future of social change. Our children serve as

teachers and pose the daily questions of survival. Our hope from our children is to learn how to use their power and make a difference in the world. Raising Children of Color at the intersections of motherhood and mothering in difference is teaching our children about the creative force for change and that the struggle and survival for the future is not theoretical (p. 37). Our children are sacrificed at the forefront of our vision for human dignity while providing them the space to feel anger, joy, and fear. I chose this essay because it speaks to ways in which Motherscholars in my study describe the struggle of balancing both academia and raising Children of Color as mothers and Women of Color.

In the preface of *Revolutionary Mothering: Love on the Front Lines*, Loretta Ross (2016) reminds us of how motherhood and to mother in the current political state reinforces Black and Brown feminist analysis of survival. This anthology continues to participate in the discourse of the importance of intersectionality, mothering while being a Person of Color, centralizing and challenging the nuclear family, and most importantly, mothering ourselves, as a brave and self-preserving act of revolutionary love any woman or Woman of Color can perform. The inspiring works of *This Bridge Called my Back* (1981) on radical Queer feminisms by Women of Color of the 1970s and '80s as a response to mothering critically birthed this anthology. Ross explains in the preface, "Radical mothering does not seek to deny the critical role biological mothers play in sustaining humanity" (xvii). She continues to invite us in disrupting what and how we know of mothering as an act of love. "Revolutionary Mothering makes mothering theory both lyrical and lucid in the tradition of Black feminist analysis rather than the insular and specialized post-modern writing style that postures as original and radical theorizing today" (xvii). It is a confrontation of Reproductive Justice as a concept that is less gendered; rather, it seeks to transform a liberating practice in where history is rigidly deterministic (xviii). Ross echoes and

reinforces the possibility of healing and transformation as Audre Lorde (1983) reminds us to disrupt heterosexuality and offers an invitation to mother ourselves.

Advancing the concept of mothering ourselves from a Queer and Black feminist standpoint is Alexis Pauline Gumbs's (2016) chapter in *Revolutionary Mothering* titled, "m/other ourselves: a Black queer feminist genealogy for radical mothering." Gumbs posits that a site of queer potential of mothering derived from June Jordan's 1992 essay "A New Politics of Sexuality," where June's bisexual interventions is not based on sexual practice, rather it challenges existing sexual and social norms (p. 20). Gumbs reminds us that we, as women, and as mothers are something else by reiterating the word that comes after the "m," we as "other," as in "we are something else." Gumbs's definition of "m/other" emphasizes how we walk this world to make life possible, to exist, and to have our own children exist. In queering mothering, she challenges us to consider how we create an "other" or create ourselves growing past the norms of what is expected of us. This can include not dominating our children, building on extended family and friends, radical childcare collective "all of us breaking cycles of abuse by deciding what we want to replicate from the past and what we need urgently to transform, are m/othering ourselves" (p. 22). Gumbs continues to argue that to mother is a Queer act of survival, a communal responsibility to each other. Gumbs highlights Audre Lorde's speech at the National Third World Lesbian and Gay Conference in 1979, stating, "All children of lesbians are ours . . . children are not individual property but rather reminders of the context through which community exists" (p. 23). This means, that as People of Color, we were not meant to survive, and the collective vision to build bridges amongst each other and through the care work for our children. These acts of radical love and mothering have been informed by the historical attack on poor Mothers of Color. The call to action was driven by Lorde's keynote as a

responsibility to Youth of Color. In this collective community model, Gumbs reminds us of the importance of building support with each other as a queer act of survival for those who are most threatened in the community.

Conecciones/Connections

This chapter outlined the works of scholars such as Patricia Hill Collins (1994) and Reyna Anaya (2011) to assist in the conversations about motherhood and Motherwork as Women of Color. I centralize *Do Babies Matter?* (2013) to illustrate the main concentration of such literature. Mason et al. (2013) provides a foundation examination of the academic and parenting experience at the UC level. Therefore, I engage the voices and narratives of Women of Color and doctoral mothers centralizing the intersections of race, ethnicity, and motherhood. As argued the literatures in this review, it highlights the importance of bringing the voices and experiences of Women of Color back to the center (Collins, 1994). To bring back to the center assists in challenging the ways feminism can perpetuate dichotomous and heteropatriarchal performativity in gender roles mostly situated by the analysis of nuclear family formations of White middle-class women and men. Therefore, as we have seen in Chicana, Latina, and Black feminism, a reclaiming of identity politics is a personal one where the multiple subjectivities intersect and inform our unique experiences through an analysis of intersectionality. Lastly, through their generational discussion of parenting and academia over the last 30 years, Audre Lorde (2017) and Alexis Pauline Gumbs (2016) have shown us how to disrupt the heteropatriarchal dichotomy of gender roles, nuclear family, sexuality, and feminism at every turn.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

> Theory informs my mothering, but my mothering/maternity has the potential to challenge theory. (Mercado-López, 2007, p. 824)

Introduction to Theory and Theoretical Frameworks

In this chapter, I introduce and synchronize Chicana Feminist Theory, Critical Race Theory, and Critical Maternal Theory. I mainly focus on Critical Race Methodology in Education (CRME) as it informs *a Critical Maternalista Matrix* inspired by Larissa Mercado-López's call to action on creating *nuevas teorías* (Anzaldúa, 1999) challenged by a Chicana maternal identity. In addition, applying a Chicana M(other)work framework as analysis and giving birth to a Critical *Maternalista* Matrix allows me to centralize motherhood/mothering at the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality. I start with a substantial introduction of Chicana Feminist Theory and briefly address three main elements that inform the connections of *bodymindspirit* represented by Coyolxauhqui as a maternal body of knowledge. The three elements are: (a) The Epistemology of a Brown Body and Theories of the Flesh, which addresses the ***body***; (b) *Nepantla,* which addresses the imaginary and in-betweenness representing the ***mind***; and (c) Activisms mainly informed by Spiritual Activisms (Anzaldúa, 2005), representing the ***spirit***. These three theoretical elements surfaced from my data collection and interviews with Motherscholars who position their Chicana and Latina identities at the center of their experiences. I selected these three elements to weave together their significant function in the wholeness of Motherscholars in academia (Lara, 2003; Vega, 2016).

These three elements weave together the concept of *bodymindspirit* (Lara, 2003), which allows me to better understand the person as a whole through their everyday life experience, much like a *rebozo* and the strength and purpose these stories and experiences encompass (Caballero et al., 2017). I describe and introduce Critical Race Theory but mainly focus on the

elements of Critical Race Methodologies in Education (CRME) and the ways the five tenets inform what I theorize to be a *Critical Maternalista Matrix* as a pillar informed by Larissa M. Mercado-López's (2007) *Third-Space Chicana Theoretical Matrix* (please see literature review throughout Chapter Two) as her call to action to challenge theory. Her scholarly contributions call to action the creation of new theories to include the unique experiences of Motherscholars of Color, in particular Chicanas and Latinas. Although Mercado-López does not provide a flushed out theoretical analysis of framework, I incorporate a Chicana M(other)work framework informing theoretical tenets for analysis to seal this theoretical framing in progress as informed by my study and the stories it holds and values.

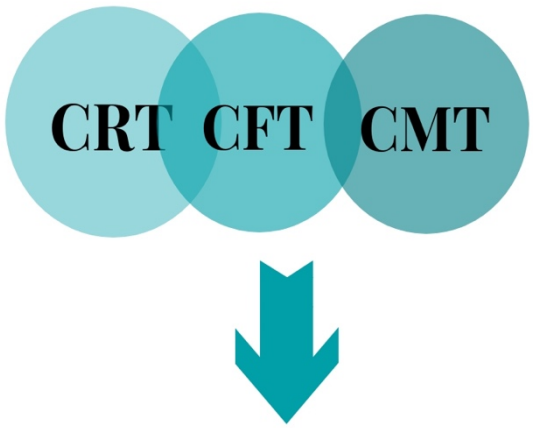

Figure 1. Critical *Maternalista* Matrix.

Chicana Feminist Theory

Chicana Feminist Thought is rooted in the histories of third world feminist scholars such as Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga. Anzaldúa's (1999) contribution to Chicana Feminist studies is grounded in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, a historic response to the injustices and oppression faced by Chicana women during the 1960s. This work contributes to the academic dialogue in building coalitions between Women of Color across the U.S. and across transnational borders. Joining Chicana Feminist Theory and Chicana Feminist Epistemology (CFE) serves as a decolonial, political, and feminist project in methodological research by elevating the narrative by/for Chicana and Latina women. Theoretically, as a standpoint of research inquiry, CFE allows us to interrogate, develop, and enact qualitative research processes to question, analyze, and influence the way, how, and who and what ethical and political choices we make in our studies (Calderón, Delgado Bernal, Pérez Huber, Malagón, & Vélez, 2012, p. 515).

Likewise, Chicana Feminist Theory debunks stereotypes and assumptions of Chicana and Latina Motherscholars (and othermothers and maternal figures in their lives), which often are negative, deficit, and sexist stereotypes (Please see Chapter Six for case studies I conducted implementing a *Critical Maternalista Matrix*) stemming racism, sexism, and heteropatriarchy. Using a CFT centralizing the Chicana, Latina Motherscholars at the center versus maintaining them at the margin. Instead, these tools allow us to highlight Motherscholar personal goals, aspirations, and successes of Motherscholars. By employing CFT as a qualitative research tool in education, it acknowledges and decolonizes the everyday experiences of Chicanas, Latinas as "resist[ing] epistemological racism" in shedding light to lived knowledges and experiences. By unsettling dominant research inquiry and patriarchy, Chicana Feminist scholars challenge

objectivity that women face every day by bringing their stories forward from the shadows through *pláticas*, the sharing of intimate happenings.

According to Fierros and Delgado Bernal (2016), a *pláticas* research method, methodology, and epistemology are closely intertwined (please see Chapter Four for a methodological application of *pláticas*). In 1998, Dolores Delgado Bernal responded to the need of Chicana Feminist Theory and qualitative research methodologies by offering a Chicana Feminist Epistemology (CFE). CFE is defined as the "theory of knowledge" and knowledge production. They can be utilized as tools for theoretical framing, as a methodology, or as an epistemological tool for analysis. They can potentially inform each other, build from each element, or stand on their own. In this study, CFE centralizes the lived experiences of Chicanas, Latinas, and Indigenous women's knowledge as critical. As Calderón et al. (2012) note, Chicana scholars [can] draw on their ways of knowing to unsettle dominant modes of analysis, create decolonizing methodologies, and build upon what it means to utilize CFE in educational research. CFE demonstrates how such work provides new narratives that embody alternative paradigms in educational research (p. 513). These efforts were birthed from multiple concerns challenging western, racist, heterosexual knowledge constructions (Collins, 2004; Harding, 1986, 2004) that often do not address the experiences of women or Women of Color and other marginalized people and communities. Often, Western education centers intellectual production of knowledge by excluding corporal[7] and spiritual knowledge from the complete individual (Lara, 2003).

[7] In my findings in Chapters Four, Five, and Six, we see how Motherscholars are excluded from educational spaces as students. They experience an "erasure" to the education culture, and CFT allows me to bring Motherscholars to the forefront with recent works from Chicana M(other)work.

In Cindy Cruz's *Towards an Epistemology of a Brown Body* (2006), Cruz argues in locating the brown **body** as a complex centrality as a queer brown woman, she states:

> Multiple and often oppositional intersections of sociopolitical locations, [which] must be acknowledged in its centrality in creating new knowledges. For the educational researcher, understanding the brown body and the regulation of its movement is fundamental in the reclamation of narrative and the development of radical projects of transformation and liberation. (p. 657)

Cruz asserts, as a Chicana social agent, that it is not only the voice of the Chicana, Latina, Indigenous brown body histories and stories that are critical in the development of critical practice, but also a story and knowledge "propels the brown body from a neocolonial past and into the embodiments of radical subjectivities" (p. 658). Radical subjectivities include the stories of Motherscholars and the matriarchal lineage of their blood and community kin as well. Cruz and Mercado-López assert that the delegitimizing of our stories are constant reminders of Westernized knowledge and its political and social power of dominion over oppressed groups and violence to silence and erase. In terms of research inquiry and processes, the narratives of Motherscholars' physical presence disarms the source of power by elevating the voice of the storyteller. Cruz propels the histories of the women in our families and legitimizes their narratives to enact resistance, while simultaneously challenging dominant discourse in research. She argues that our stories are productions of knowledge that begin the bodies of past generations like our mothers, grandmothers, and other female relatives. As Gloria Anzaldúa (1999) states, "[F]or silence to transform into speech, sounds and words, it must first traverse through our female bodies" (xxii). Indeed, CFE is a communal effort as a political, social, gendered, and research inquiry resistance that demands visibility (intellectually and physically) in research. As such, it is vital to my efforts in centralizing the experiences of Chicana, Latina, Indigenous doctoral mothers as radical subjectivities.

Gloria Anzaldúa's (2005) "now let us shift . . . the path of *conocimiento* . . . inner work, public acts" offers seven levels of *conocimiento*. *Conocimiento* means an awakening of the consciousness, a knowing within also interpreted as intuition, awareness, and intelligence not grasped by the logical thought (p. 540). These *conocimientos* consist of levels of spiraling dialectic knowledges (Barillas Chón, 2019) or stages always shifting and interchanging depending on life experiences or instances. Anzaldúa reminds us that these shifts are attributed to "this shift to the feminization of knowledge, one beyond the subject-object divide, a way of knowing and acting on *ese saber* you call conocimiento" (p. 541). *Conocimiento* spirals and shift beyond the spiritual and is consistently a refusal to grasp it and understand it beyond a form of knowledge scientifically.

Critical Race Theory and Methodologies in Education

Critical Race Theory is a subdivision of Critical Legal Studies (1977) confronting unjust civil rights litigation, including affirmative action, campus codes, and criminal sentencing. Legal forces and distribution of power is disseminated racially, politically, economically, and by gendered lines in the U.S. and "with the support and legitimacy of the legal system which makes possible the perpetuation of the established power relationships of society" (Taylor, 2009, p. 1). Law scholars first conceptualized Critical Race Theory in the late 1980s at the first *critical race theory* workshop, where they "embark[ed] on a race-based, systematic critique of legal reasoning" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, xvii). As such, CRT centers the everyday significance of race and racism in the U.S. and asserts the need to understand the ways that racially minoritized communities have experienced a system of racial hierarchy. Derrick Bell, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Richard Delgado, Mari Matsuda, and Patricia Williams are among the multiple intellectuals who created language on Critical Race Theory by examining the prevalence of

systemic racism in the U.S. and in interdisciplinary fields like education. The following are the five tenets of Critical Race Theory in education: (a) the centrality and intersectionality of race and racism; (b) challenging dominant ideology; (c) commitment to social justice; (d) the centrality of experiential knowledge; and (e) transdisciplinary perspectives (Solórzano, 1997; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Subsequently, CRT evolved in scholarly discourse, research methodologies, and pedagogical frameworks challenging educational inequity addressing the racial achievement gap, desegregation, and the abandonment of affirmative action (Taylor, 2009). "[C]ritical race theory was a lifeline, a source of an explanatory model, and a wellspring of tools for action" (p. 9). Utilizing CRT in education as a methodological framework allows critical race scholars such as myself to unpack the complexities of White supremacy and racism by exposing the experiences of subordination in challenging dominant ideologies, neutrality, and objectivities of People of Color, in particular Motherscholars of Color. CRT in education reminds us that racism and race are permanent in our everyday lives. It is "a central rather than marginal factor in defining and explaining individual experiences of the law" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, pp. 762–763). Furthermore, it is through intersections of identities such as class and gender that inform how we face and experience race and racism.

According to Solórzano (1997), CRT methodology in education is "a framework or set of basic insights, perspectives, methods, and pedagogy that seeks to identify, analyze, and transform those structural and cultural aspects of education that maintain marginal position and subordination of Students of Color" (p. 6). CRT Methodology in Education (CRTME) is defined as a theoretically grounded approach to research. CRT (a) foregrounds race and racism, (b) challenges traditional research paradigms, theories, and texts, (c) offers transformative solutions

to racial, gender, and class subordination, (d) focuses the experiences of racialized, gendered, and classed students, and (e) applies an interdisciplinary knowledge based on gender, ethnicity, history, and humanities studies to such experiences (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 131). Therefore, CRTME allows us to examine the social condition of oppression and subordination of People of Color, grounded in the reality reflected by the distinctive experiences of marginalization.

In addition to noting the attributes of CRTME, however, it is critical to acknowledge its shortcomings. Because Critical Race Theory or CRTME do not center gender, I weave a Chicana Feminist Theory—centering Maternal Theory discourse (O'Reilly, 2007)—and illuminate Motherscholar experiences at the crossroads of theory and intersectionality as a third space and branch of Chicana *Feministas* birthing to what I call a Critical *Maternalista* Matrix theoretical framework.

Critical *Maternalista* Matrix

By combining the elements of CRT, CFT, and pulling from Critical Maternal Theory, I have created these tenets that can be used as a theoretical framework, a methodology, or a method in conducting critical research about and with Motherscholars and other marginalized communities. One such framework that is central to this work is Caballero et al.'s (2019) Chicana M(other)work framework by bridging a Chicana Feminisms to maternal epistemologies, we observe how motherhood impacts the lived experiences of Chicana, Latina, Indigenous Motherscholars in educational trajectories starting as early as middle school. Furthermore, using Chicana Feminist Theory, CRT Methodology in Education and the *Critical Maternalista Matrix* provides me a tool to analyze the entire individual experiences of the co-madres as participants as a whole individual (to the best of my ability). This act of resistance elevates the voices of

Motherscholars of Color by highlighting the ways in which Motherscholars challenge the heteropatriarchal ivory tower through their everyday acts of activism or *movidas* with their bodies, their children, in their teaching, and in their scholarship (Cisneros, Hidalgo, Martinez-Vú, & Vega, 2019). A Chicana Feminist Theory allows the use of *testimonios* as *pláticas* (please see Chapter Four; pláticas is used as a methodological tool) as a social justice stance to capture the narratives of Women of Color who speak from a location of marginalization and oppression; in this case, from a maternal brown body (Cruz, 2006). Because this study focuses on the bridging of *bodymindspirit* (Lara, 2003; Vega, 2016) I focus on three surfacing elements of *bodymindspirit* of Chicana Feminism that inform a *Critical Maternalista Matrix* representative of the body, the mind, and the spirit. Applying a more detailed Matrix to my study, we see below how I integrate these ideas in my study for analysis.

1. Centralizes race, class, gender, ethnicity, and motherhood intersectionality as valid experiences of Chicanas, Latinas, and Indigenous;

2. Illuminates the lived experiences of first-generation Chicanas, Latinas, and Indigenous doctoral mothers;

3. Debunks deficit stereotypes of pregnant, parenting, and the labor of Motherwork of Chicanas, Latinas, and Indigenous;

4. Highlights the educational pipeline instances of survivance of "push-out" culture of pregnant and or parenting Chicanas, Latinas, and Indigenous risk the "leak out"; and

5. Acknowledges the resistance of erasures of Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous doctoral mothers who *sobresalen* (thrive) in the academy

Emerging Concepts in Data

In my findings sections we will see emerging concepts and themes based on the data analysis informed by the theoretical foundations of CRT, CFT and Maternal Theory. In line with Chicana Latina *teoristas*-scholars-activists (and Motherscholars) Villenas, Godínez, Delgado Bernal, and Elenes (2006) in "Chicana Latina Building Bridges: An Introduction" to

Chicana/Latina Education in Everyday Life: Feminista Perspectives on Pedagogy and Epistemology, the emerging themes are to "uncover the methods . . . Chicana/Latinas have developed for "survival" and beyond by deriving strength through the interconnection of the spirit, mind, and body, and by drawing from the cultural resources and power of women kin in their own families" (p. 2). My hope is that these emerging concepts contribute to the theorization in the fields of education, race studies, feminist studies, and maternal studies. In order to better understand these concepts, I am briefly outlining them here to support the analysis section of the findings. As mentioned before, invisibility and visibility, often used in literature to describe a process of being seen and unseen at the same time. I connect such process to the *Nepantla* state, here and there at the same time. According to Anzaldúa (2005) Spiritual activism is a call to act or action of the self, the others, and the community to address an impeding issue. It is a responsibility and accountability to support each other and make (as mentioned above in erasures) the invisible, visible.

Spiritual Activism can be Motherscholars organizing an action on campus, or lobbying in congress, organizing a Motherscholar day at the spa (reclaiming space), collaborating in publishing and co-presenting at conferences, or their awareness of teaching critically loving in the classroom. Spiritual Activism can manifest and look very different as defined or desired by the particular individual. Spiritual Activisms is an internal call to action of the self as a whole being which can include self-care, self-healing, community healing, classroom healing and pedagogies enveloped in love, awareness, and care-work. It is a central wisdom deriving from the entirety of the *bodymindspirit*. Lastly, Spiritual Activism includes building in community and community relations which merge both academia and the community, in liminal spaces and in-between the blurriness of the private and public spheres.

To *sobresalir*, which is a major outcome of my data and findings, is translated in Spanish as to overcome or to thrive beyond. It is to reach a goal that which included adversities on the way or pathway towards that goal. We hear often in the advice of our parents, our community, or advisers to "push through" to do it for the community. I see to *sobresalir* interweaved with Spiritual Activism, as a call to action and pursue and push forward. To *sobresalir*, one needs the *ganas*, or the will to pursue a task. It is important to note the tensions of *sobresalir*, because often times to overcome, the *bodymindspirit* is taxed and challenged. It is not easy. However, when an individual remembers why they are doing such work, for example, Motherscholars who are exhausted from work, school, partners, and other tasks, often times, they think about their children and they find *ganas* or will to keep going. *Ganas*, can be defined as "ganar, vencer, truinfar, lograr, and alcanzar." These translate to win, to triumph, to accomplish and to reach. *Ganas*, is not only all of the above, but mainly taping into the central fire or passion to push forward. *Ganas*, to *sobresalir*, and as part of Spiritual Activism, is the rationale behind the push to overcome, which is partly *resistance* and *survivance*. Resistance encompasses challenging and pushing back against erasure (as in the case of my dissertation). Likewise, other concepts that emerged from this study include mention of la *facultad* as "knowing through experience and intuition" and (Villenas et al., 2006, p. 4,) to *sobrevivir* as "survival and beyond" (p. 5).

Conclusion

Multidisciplinary scholarship discussed in the preface and introduction of *Chicana/Latina Educational in Everyday Life* (2006) links the gap between Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous epistemological experience in education and asks us to question what non-traditional sites of research are and what is validated as research. Non-Western sites of research are within our bodies, our feelings, our intellectual thinking process. This forces us to re-envision "the sites of

pedagogy to include women's brown bodies and their agency articulated on the church steps, the university cafeteria, and in the intimate spaces where *mujer-to-mujer*[8] conversations are whispered" (Delgado Bernal et al., 2006, p. 3). It asks that we question when knowledge is produced and how it is validated through our voices. Is it when we meet at a coffee shop while writing and share *pláticas*[9] (Calderón et al., 2012; Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016) about our everyday experiences? Is it in ceremony or during office hours with a student? These are opportunities for knowledge production and of pedagogy where the mind, body, spirit all operates cohesively as one. By acknowledging everyday lived experience as epistemological knowledge, we honor the legacy of the everyday stories that are shared at the kitchen table making the *tamales*—learning from the silenced hands of our mothers and grandmothers of the many uses of the *maíz* [corn] or the archive-worthy stories of their experiences in the homeland as *teorías*.

[8] Woman to woman.

[9] *Pláticas* are a methodological tool occurring in spaces of *confianza* [confidential trust] where healing can take place. It is a space shared between people, in this case women, to help each other in treating ailments or traumas by sharing their experiences.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODS

Briefing the Study

In this chapter, I outline my research methods and approach in conducting my data collection and the rationale. I offer my research questions, the rationale of the study, the recruitment, *reflexiones* [reflections] as an *autohistoria* as a contributing narrative, the process of data collection for analysis and procedures, the in-depth pláticas in protocols, and the Motherscholars profile narratives. My research questions are: What educational experiences and factors impact first-generation Chicana and Latina Motherscholars in their educational pursuits toward a higher education? How do the intersecting identities of race, class, gender, and motherhood impact first-generation Chicana and Latina Motherscholars enroll in doctoral degrees programs in social science and humanities in the U.S. Southwest? How does motherhood inform and impact the intellectual, spiritual, and physical (*bodymindspirit*) experiences of first-generation Chicana and Latina Motherscholars in doctoral programs in their respective institutions?

As a reminder, I address Motherscholars as *co-madres*, Co-Mothers, particularly important in this chapter because of their active role in my data collection, findings, and observations. As a reader, you will them used interchangeably between *co-madre* and Motherscholar throughout this chapter, the data-findings chapters, and dissertation. My dissertation study concluded in four years of data collection, which included in-depth interviews and observations through ethnographical participation as a researcher-participant. In-depth interviews: I interviewed 11 Motherscholars in California, New Mexico and Utah, ranging from 100 to 120 minutes each. I included my own *autohistoria*[10] which I conducted using the same

[10] Based on the participant criteria and importance of weaving my own narrative to this study, I

research questions.

Although I do not use my own data for analysis for my finding chapters, I did however, use autohistoria vignettes of my interview to open my three findings chapter as reflections or *reflexiones*, aligned with the theme and findings. According to Espino, Vega, Rendón, Ranero, and Muñiz (2016) in *The Process of Reflexión in Bridging Testimonio Across Lived Experience*, the authors offer an innovative tool using *testimonio* from emerging scholars and *reflexiones*, reflections as a response from senior or advanced professors "enhancing the level of knowledge construction that testimonio offers in formulating a collective consciousness across generations and social identities, crafting theories about Latina scholars in academe, and demonstrating that lived experience is integral to knowledge creation" (p. 81). *Reflexiones* used in Espino et al. is similar to my own method in reflections as I am often looking inward (in full gratitude to ceremony, prayer, and meditation as self-care and awareness) is yet another reflection of what Gloria Anzaldúa (1999) and Espino et al. calls "mirrors the (un)conscious, 'the inner faces, *las caras por dentro*'" (p. 82), or what we call in danza and in the red road, the *Tezqualipocatl*, the smoking mirror, where we see ourselves reflected. In context, a reflexión entails the examination of the inner self, self-inquiry, it is the disruption with the help of another trusted person, the distortions we create due to systemic oppressions in academia (p. 82). For myself, I use *reflexiones* as facing myself in this work, generally as my drive to pursue this work and be conscious of the power of these stories.

Likewise, according to the research conducted by Andrea J. Pitts (2016) on Gloria

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conducted my own auto-interview and collected my *autohistoria*. I desire to carve space for my belonging in this work as I have searched ways to make space for myself in this institution. Gloria Anzaldúa reminds us, "I want the freedom to carve and chisel my own face . . . to fashion my own gods out of my entrails" (Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 22).

Anzaldúa's work, an autohistoria is considered an *autohistoria-teoría* which does not have a concreate definition offered by Anzaldúa. However, according to Pitts's analysis of her later works, offers a few elements to considered in defining it. Pitts argues that *autohistoria-teoría* is relational and social, and function to write about one's own meaning in sense making of the world informing the collective experience. "*Autohistoria* is a term I use to describe the genre of writing about one's personal and collective history using fictive elements, a sort of fictionalized autobiography or memoir; and *autohistoria-teoría* is a personal essay that theorizes" (Anzaldúa, 2005, p. 578). I parallel my own meaning making to the experiences of Motherscholars in the academy in conversation with my *co-madre* participants in this study.

However, I collected rich in-depth interviews from participants and had over 36 hours of data from these powerful interviews. One Motherscholar interview was incomplete, and based on the restricted schedules of Motherscholars, it was difficult to scheduled follow up questions to collect the remaining data because of giving birth. I am led to believe that the relentless shame and fear Motherscholars face in academia has made the job market unforgiving for Motherscholars; one Motherscholar opted out of the study, and this significant sacrifice is something I deeply understand and respect. My selection criteria for these mothers were based on several things. Initially I relied on my personal contacts and the interpersonal connections I made with Motherscholars who responded to my call for participants. The result was that I knew these participants in some shape or form, whether it was via social media, from taking classes together, or organizing together at some point. However, after completing half of my study, I wanted to interview Motherscholars I did not know at all. My contacts made connections for me by forwarding my call for participants, e-introducing me to the next half of Motherscholars, and I traveled to the state they lived in for graduate studies. I found that the level of comfort and

vulnerability was the same. Motherscholars were openly willing to share their stories while I held their babies, helped their little ones draw while the interview was taking place, while Motherscholars shared their life stories with me. In my findings data, I mainly focus on the interviews I conducted with the *co-madres* and address several events I observed. Through in-depth interviews I used a *plática* method (further explained in this chapter) when conducting the interviews while applying Irving Seidman's in-depth phenomenological protocols. By applying a *plática* as a method (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016), highlighting Co-Madre Methodology framework informed by the methods and theories when conducting interviews as a Motherscholar *with* and *for* other Motherscholars. These interviews were transcribed, coded, and set into categories using a codebook.

Rationale

I pursued a purposive sampling in recruitment of Motherscholars, intentionally selecting mothers to participate who mainly identified as Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous because of the following rationale: (a) Chicanas, Latinas, Indigenous Motherscholars are less studied, and when they are part of research, deficit analysis is implied about their success or lack thereof. Motherscholars of Color historically are not written about or given the space to use their voice in such research as co-participants. However, as of 2013, I have seen an evolving wave of literatures written by and for Motherscholars of Color across the nation. (b) They have the lowest attainment of degrees for M.A.s and Ph.Ds. (please see Chapter One) compared with other racial and ethnic academic counterparts. (c) This study aims to challenge sexist and racial deficit notions of Motherscholars across academic spaces and challenge us to rethink how we participate in sexist, racist, and heteronormative assumptions about Mothers of Color in the academy.

Recruitment

In my study, I employed a purposive sampling by recruiting and inviting women who identified as descendants of Mexican, South American, Central American, or Indigenous and Native American parents. Therefore mother-participants identified within the following racial and ethnic spectrum as described and identified by them: Chicana, Xicana, Latina, New Mexican, Afro-Chicana, Chicana-Indigena, Indigenous, Maya, or Gualtemateca. Most Motherscholars identified as first-generation in the U.S. or in college (as first to pursue a Ph.D.). All Motherscholars were enrolled in social science and humanities Ph.Ds. Their areas of study are: Education, Ethnic Studies, American Studies, and Sociology. I decided to focus on social science and degrees because those were the degrees my networks and recruitment efforts led me toward.

In order to participate, Motherscholars had to have been pregnant, birthed a child, or adopted a child during or before their Ph.D. degree trajectory ended. I also interviewed Motherscholars who have graduated within a year of the interview and collected their narratives during their time in doctoral studies. Lastly, I wanted to interview Motherscholars outside of California, seeking a comparative analysis of my findings to the Motherscholars in California seeking commonalities, differences, or in triangulation analysis both based on geographical location and Motherscholar politicization. From the Motherscholars out of state, three Motherscholars were born in Southern California and living, studying, and raising children in both Utah and New Mexico.

Based on my collaboration with other Motherscholars, I personally asked *co-madres* in person, provided a flyer (Appendix D) or email (Appendix B), or at times made a phone call describing the study. I circulated my flyer via email attachment to contacts at universities in

California, Arizona, Texas, New Mexico, and Utah. Also critical to address are the mothers who at the time of my study were former community college students and those who attended a four-year university after high school. From all 12 interviews conducted, four attended community college before transferring to a four-year school.[11] With the small grant support of the Chancellor's Dissertation Incentive Program (CDIP), I was able to travel out of state to collect my data in Southwest states (please see Table 2: Motherscholar Demographics). Through the support of UCLA's GSE&IS Office of the Dean, I was able to provide a stipend of $50 for the 11 mothers who participated in the interviews. I was particularly interested in the settings Motherscholars frequented as a source of data. For example, I accommodated the busy schedules of Motherscholars by meeting them at coffee shops, playgrounds, empty classrooms, or in their homes while holding their babies. Other times, Motherscholars met at my home, where I was able to provide a small meal, coffee, and a comfortable place to share.

Therefore, my methodological approaches were two-fold. When conducting interviews, I applied a *pláticas* (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016) design in my study. By inviting 11 co-mothers into this study (but completed 9 interviews), I participated in collaboration efforts with at least five Motherscholars. This includes publications, podcasts—and presenting at conferences—that address Mothering in Academia issues, and a forthcoming anthology addressing the issues of Motherscholars in the U.S. The combination of these two methods of research collection has given fruition to what I call a Co-Madre Methodology. A Co-Madre Methodology allows the expansion of research practices when interviewing and conducting research with and alongside other mothers (Collins, 1994; James, 1993; Vega, 2018) in institutions of higher education or in the community. This method includes the common social

[11] I wish to address community colleges, student services, and TRC in a future publication.

construction of motherhood and the ways it informs *how* Motherscholars consider and conduct research. For example, considering times that Motherscholars in Ph.D. programs have free time to meet with the researcher, have a meal to eat, and a safe and brave space to share. My Co-Madre Methodology is informed by Chicana Feminisms, Critical Theories of Race, and Motherhood.

Processes

In the process of completing the interviews I conducted throughout 2017 and 2018, I concluded my last interview summer of 2018 in Utah. My son, who was four at the time, traveled with me to collect this last interview before moving to Denver. I was submitting my interviews for transcription with the financial support of the CDIP mini-grant and a private scholarship. All of my interviews were being transcribed and sent back to me for hand-coding. I started to upload my transcripts into MAXQDA, however, I decided that I did not have the sufficient time to learn how to use the program and did hand coding instead (á la old-school) using highlighters, post-its, and a code book. In my codebook I organized my major findings in families. From such families, I created sub-sections as branches using the tree metaphor and subcategorizing my findings into branches. In addition, I uploaded my interviews via Dropbox and added the Dropbox app to my phone. I felt that hand coding became overwhelming with information and I required re-introductions to the data, therefore, I designated a "Dissertation Journal" (Appendix E) for notes, ideas, epiphanies and other ideas related only to my dissertation. In times while I walked to a coffee shop, drove to a workspace, or had a long-distance drive, I would listen to several of the interviews over and over again. If I was not driving, I would write down analysis, ideas, or questions. I did this constantly after having coded my data. I would then make a note to revisit that specific transcription and write an analysis. I

would record voice memos onto my phone on the developing themes of my dissertation. I did this for 6 months and had to face myself to write the findings chapters. I need to admit that writing the findings of this dissertation was very frightening for me. I feared not doing justice to the very important stories of the Motherscholars in my study.

After having identified the major themes and some nuances of the data, I began to brainstorm the major findings in big poster paper. I created 'theme clouds' and drew out the branches of the data. Because I am a very visual learner, this is how the data began to take shape and form. I decided that I needed to honor the dissertation with three findings chapters. I had to write the narrative profiles, (see below) which I sent to each Motherscholar for approval. I received feedback from only a handful of Motherscholars and made those edits. My hope is to get their approval towards the editorial process of the dissertation as a reciprocal exchange of how I am interpreting their stories. I also honor the fact that as academics, Motherscholars, and *badasses*, their schedules are very busy and limited. My hope is that I did justice to their stories—I wrote with a lot of love.

I struggled to write Chapter Five, my first findings chapter. I outlined the chapter with paper and pencil to allow direction in providing an introduction to the chapter, the major findings, and a conclusion. I decided towards the end to include my own *reflexión* (Espino et al., 2016), reflections at the opening of each findings chapter as an *auto-historia* vignettes which fit into the theme of that particular chapter. As mentioned before, I auto-interviewed but I did not want to use my own narrative for this study. I had used other venues to do so, including as an editor and contributor to the *Chicana M(other)work Anthology* (2019) and my collaborative publications with Mothers of Color in Academia. I decided to focus the work on the Motherscholars I interviewed and gave them the spotlight in this study. Moving forward, I will

use Dedoose[12] (an online data analysis tool) for another run of data analysis of this work. Now that my findings chapters have been written to further develop ideas, concepts, and analysis., I believe are the starting point to the next generation of works I desire to pursue.

Pláticas as Method

I used a *pláticas* (2016) method in my interview process, coupled with Irving Seidman's (2013) protocols. A *plática* is what I am doing, and the protocols inform my objective and structure of the interview. Applying a Chicana Feminist sentiment, awareness, and responsibility (and theory) to the ways Motherscholars share their stories was critical for me. Therefore, I approached the interview process as *pláticas* while employing protocols of the questions I asked Motherscholars. According to Fierros and Delgado Bernal (2016), *pláticas* research method, methodology, and epistemology are closely intertwined. Genealogies of *pláticas*, as a research approach method is "a practice that develops from a goal to honor researchers' and research participants' epistemological position" (p. 107). Likewise, Guajardo and Guajardo (2008) remind us that this method allows the flow and sharing of ideas, experiences, stories, and the possibility and openness to vulnerability. Fierros and Delgado Bernal articulate how and why other Chicana Feminist Scholars use *pláticas* and offer five principles.

1. **Basic Principle:** The use of Chicana/Latina Feminist Theory and Critical Theories.
2. **Relational Principle:** Honoring the participants as co-constructors of knowledge.
3. **Inclusion Principle:** Connection between everyday life and the experiences of research inquiry.
4. **Safe Space Principle:** Provides a potential space for healing.
5. **Reflexivity Principle:** Relies on relations of reciprocity, vulnerability, and research reflexivity.

In this study, applying *pláticas* principles (which I expand further below) encompass the

[12] I participated in a qualitative research training and a colleague prepped me with Dedoose. I feel like this is a tool I will use for future work.

elements critical to my goals in collecting data. For example, I employ a *basic principle* in my use of theoretical framework such of Chicana Feminist and Critical Race Theories. The relational principle honors all the participants as co-constructors of knowledge, and in my particular case, Motherscholars are *co-madres* and (*co)llaborators* to my research and motherhood studies. Applying an *inclus*ion principle and in-depth interview protocols of phenomenological approach allows me to capture the connections between everyday life of Motherscholars navigating the academy. Including a *safe* space principle allows a sharing vulnerability when a mother describes the everyday acts of resistance and survivance (Vizenor, 2008). It is a potential space for healing, in what Sandy Grande (2016) reminds us that to retell instances of oppression, allows for the potential to heal.

Lastly, *reflexivity*, which is constantly relying on the relational relationship of reciprocity with Motherscholars when in intimate spaces, organic vulnerability allows to share stories, witness each other, and be present. For example, in one interview, I assisted a Motherscholar with her new born baby as she ate a meal after a few weeks of being home in bed rest for her *cuarentena*, 40 days after birth, traditionally practiced by Mexican and Latino communities of the Americas—but also globally. Lastly, my *co-madre* approach has unfolded inexplicably. My research efforts led me to be accountable to certain access and exposure for Motherscholars to collaborative through publications, on campus organizing, and presenting at conferences together.

Protocols: In-Depth *Pláticas* as a Phenomenological Approach

With the influence of Irving Seidman's (2013) chapter, "A Structure for In-Depth, Phenomenological Interviewing" from their book *Interviewing as Qualitative Research*, I utilized a phenomenological approach for in-depth interviews for life-history, or *testimonios* as

used in Chicana Feminisms. One phenomenology approach in interviews as suggested by Seidman is "focusing on human experience and its meaning, phenomenology stresses the transitory nature of human experience" (p. 16). The main goal is for the *co-madres* interviewed is to reconstruct their experience as Motherscholars of Color in the academy. Seidman recommends three separate interviews at three separate times for 60 minutes each. Instead of conducting three separate interviews, I coupled all of the protocols into one meeting, which averaged 100 to 120 minutes per interview. The protocols are *Focused Life History*, *the Detail of Experience,* and the *Reflection on the Meaning.* The purpose is to put into context the participants' life experience and explore the meaning in their everyday lives. ***Focused life history:*** I ask the *co-madres* to put into context and share, as a *plática*, their earliest memories of their families, schooling, time with friends, or growing up, and what they learned about mothering and motherhood through everyday interactions. ***The Details of Experience:*** I asked *co-madres* to reconstruct these details, and how these details inform their ideas of motherhood and mothering in higher education. The ***Reflection of the Meaning:*** I asked *co-madres* to reflect on the meaning of the experience and how they interacted to "bring them to their present situation" (Seidman, 2013, p. 22). These three protocols bring together a "making of the meaning" by selecting events from their past, and I asked them to tell stories of these experiences with a beginning, a middle, and an end with special attention to the meaning.

I used these protocols as guidelines to not sway away from the significance and depth of the interview. The establishment of these protocols allows participants to reconstruct details and encourages participants to reflect on meaning (Seidman, 2013, p. 21). As seen in **Table 1**. **Interview Goals**, I describe the interview protocol (or guidelines) to the interviews I conducted.

Table 1.

Interview Goals

Protocol	Interview Goals
Focused Life History	**Ask Ph.D. mothers to tell me as much as possible and <u>recount:</u>** • Early experiences • Early experiences in school • Experiences as young women in their communities and in school growing up and learning about pregnancy and higher education
The Details of Experience	**Ask Ph.D. mothers to concentrate on the details of the participants' past lived experiences in the topic of area that I am studying, Ph.D. motherhood, and <u>reconstruct:</u>** • Myriad of details of collaborators' experiences once admitted to a Ph.D. program • Details about their experiences as pregnant body people on campus • Reconstruct their experiences after giving birth • Details about their experiences as parenting students on campus • Details about their experiences as parenting students off campus
Reflection on the Meaning	**Ask Ph.D. mothers to make meaning of their experiences and <u>reflect on</u>:** • Making sense of the factors in their lives that brought them to their current situation • Their present experience in detail within their current context • Addressing intellectual and emotional connections between motherhood, work, and academia

The Motherscholar Narrative Profiles

In this first part of the findings chapter, I focus on introducing the nine mothers and myself. Most mothers have a pseudonym to protect their identities, including to the name of the schools they attended, the name of their children, and other identifying details to protect their

identities. Several Motherscholars wanted to be on the record sharing their names and locations of schooling. I provide the Motherscholars demographic and upbringing informed by education and their epistemic experiences describing where they grew up, the state and city they are currently living in, and the number of children they have. I then outline their aspirations and what led them toward doctoral studies. In my *pláticas*, Motherscholars walked me through their educational trajectories focused on early years of schooling all the way through their doctoral study experiences. Addressing early education is foundational to allow us to understand how and why they decided to pursue a Ph.D., in particular as first-generation Mothers of Color. Early schooling narratives provide us with context and a critical look into the way education shapes intersectional identities of race, class, gender, and motherhood. Their stories allow us to walk with them into their lived experiences as mothers in academia.

Table 2.

Motherscholar Demographics

Motherscholar	Children	College/University	Marital-Status	First-Gen.
1. Alba	Two	CC, then 4 year	Married	U.S. & college
2. Cecilia	One	CC, then 4 year	Single mother	U.S. & college
3. Christine	One	CC, then 4 year	Partnered	U.S. & college
4. Libertad	Three	4 year from HS	Single mother	U.S. & college
5. Luna	Three	4 year from HS	Married	U.S. & college
6. Paloma	Two	CC, then 4 year	Married	U.S. & college
7. Reyna	Three	CC, then 4 year	Married	College
8. Ximena	One	4 year from HS	Partnered	U.S.
9. Xochitl	Two	4 year from HS	Married	U.S. & college

Alba

Alba is a fierce and proud first-generation college student in the U.S. and Motherscholar activist. She identifies as Mexican American and Indigenous and was born in Durango, Mexico. Her father's side is from Durango with double citizenship in New Mexico and Arizona as *Pasqua Yaqui and Mescalero Apache* in the U.S. Her mother was born in Zacatecas, Mexico. Alba attended Inglewood District schools in California, attended several community colleges while working multiple jobs and graduated from a Los Angeles Community College. Alba transferred to a public flagship university in Southern California and received her Bacherlor's in Anthropology. She pursued her Master of Education at the same institution and continued onto her Ph.D. in Education. Her work focuses on Indigenous youth and writing, mothering, and

resistance. Alba became a Motherscholar with her first baby during her M.A. program, although she was not planning to have children. She has since become a fierce advocate for parenting student rights working on collaborative publications with other mothers. She is a Dissertation Year Fellow and a cofounder of *Madres Luchando en Academia*. At the time of this interview, Alba had given birth to her second child and he was 18 months old. She has been working for the Public State University system for over two years while completing her dissertation, organizing, and working multiple jobs. She also works part time at USC for a student-led social justice initiative supporting on campus groups while continuing to raise her children and organize for parenting support services at the university level with *Madres Luchando en Academia*. Alba will complete her Ph.D. in 2019 while she pursues a tenure-track job and considering alternative academic positions.

Ceci

Cecilia is a fierce and proud Motherscholar in the U.S. and the only person in her immediate family to graduate from high school, college, and pursue a Ph.D. She identifies as a proud Afro-Chicana, creative writer, poet, activist, and *feminista*. Both of her parents were born in Michoacán, Mexico, and migrated to the U.S. before Ceci was born. While she was in high school, counselors were not available to properly guide her apply to a four-year college. However, Ceci is a proud community college transfer, having attended Los Maderos Community College in Pittsburg, California, and transferred to a four-year institution, UC Berkeley. At Cal, Ceci double majored in English literature and Chicanx studies. "I only applied to UC Davis and UC Berkeley. I was admitted to both, but UC Davis for some reason didn't offer me as much financial aid". At Cal, Ceci was accepted into the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship as a Research Fellow. She became a mother during her last year of undergraduate studies at Cal

while she completed her research. Simultaneously, Ceci applied to and was admitted to a number of Ph.D. programs, including the University of Southern California (USC) in American Studies. However, right before she began her first fall semester in the Ph.D. program, she separated from her son's father. She moved from Northern California to Los Angeles and began her Motherscholar journey as single mother in doctoral studies with a 1-year-old without daycare, without family in Southern California, or the help of her baby's father. In 2014, Ceci co-founded a Motherscholar collective named Chicana M(other)work and, over the course of the next few years, decided to transition away from academia into a new role as an independent scholar, public intellectual, and creative writer. Her experiences of marginalization have heavily impacted how she moves in the world and seeks to become active through different affirming and loving spaces. In 2019, Cecilia will graduate from USC with her Ph.D. in American Studies, side by side with Alonsito, her now 9-year-old son. These identities and epistemological experiences of her Brown Body (Cruz, 2006) have become venues for spiritual activism in the form of actively reading, writing, and teaching. She wrote a powerful piece titled "Mothering While Brown in White Space" (2017), which is about her painful experience visiting the Octavia Butler exhibit at a library in Pasadena and being surveilled and excluded as a Mother of Color while with her child. The piece went viral and led to widespread public commentary about Mothers of Color and increasing museum access to Butler's archives.

Christine (*Autohistoria*)

I am a fierce Motherscholar who identifies as a first-generation queer Chicana-Indígena in the U.S. and in higher education. I was born and raised in the Northeast San Fernando Valley in California to immigrant parents; my mother was born in Mexicali, Baja California, and my father was born in Chihuahua, Mexico. I faced what is identified as tracking while in K-12—

because of my first language, Spanish, I was often placed in remedial courses. I learned about college during the spring of my junior year when a few of my friends in Advanced Placement (AP) Spanish were becoming admitted to colleges and universities. Because I was low in academic credits due to ditching and truancy, I was required to take summer courses and enrolled in Chicana/o Studies after school. It was in this course where I first became exposed to my cultural background and the education inequities, I was facing first-hand. This consciousness awareness, or *facultad*, motivated me to get involved in student government and participate in community events. I argue that becoming a *danzante* [dancer] Azteca to be another critical aspect of my identity formation when I saw *danzantes* [Aztec dances] during a Cesar Chávez march that I was required to attend through student government. I attended Los Angeles Community College in the San Fernando Valley and transferred to UCLA, majoring in Chicana/o and Women Studies.

Additionally, I worked for a non-profit for three years before my admission to an education master's degree program in Utah. I then was admitted to a Ph.D. program in education at a public institution in Southern California. My partner and I became pregnant my first year of Ph.D. My partner was also a Ph.D. student at the time and was completing his qualifying exams at the time I went into labor. I continue my work in Motherscholar activism and will be completing my Ph.D. in 2019 alongside my 5-year-old son and my partner while pursuing post-docs and tenure-track jobs. My partner is currently a Postdoctoral fellow at Denver University. As of this spring, I will begin my post-doctorate careers as a Postdoctoral Fellow in Colorado.

Libertad

Libertad is a fierce single Motherscholar of three boys pursuing her Ph.D. in sociology at a public university in the Inland Empire, California. She is the daughter of a Mexican mother,

and her father from El Salvador, who was killed when she was two days old. She identifies as a first-generation Chicana in the U.S. and in higher education. Her mother's second husband is the "father" who raised her, and he was from Guatemala, and had a Central American upbringing. Libertad was raised in South Central Los Angeles and was involved in gangs at a young age. She attended Dolores Huerta College Preparatory Academy and she became a mother at 16, which shifted her life goals. She graduated high school, pursued leadership roles, and was admitted to a public research university in Southern California. During her time there as a freshman and young teen mother, Libertad pursued research in the nationally acclaimed Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program. Libertad had two more children as an undergraduate. By the time Libertad was completing her McNair summer institute—and her last year of study—her family faced unjust criminalization, where her children were unjustly removed. Libertad fought tirelessly to gain her children back after a traumatic experience for herself and her children as she was completing her degree, her graduate applications, and preparing for graduation. Graduating with honors, Libertad was offered admission and full funding to several doctoral programs, and she accepted admission to a sociology program. She is a young scholar fellow and works on research on young mothers who have lost their lives, many of whom have been her own friends and *comadres*. Currently, her focus is specifically on mothers who are deportees. Libertad continues to push her research and has traveled nationally and internationally to offer her research while raising her three children on her own as a single, fierce Motherscholar.

Luna

Luna is a first-generation immigrant in the U.S. and first-generation college graduate. She is a Chicana Motherscholar who was born and raised in Huntington Park, California. Luna's mom was born in Durango, Mexico, and her father was born in Juarez, Chihuahua. For most of

her life, Luna grew up between Huntington Park and Bell in Los Angeles. Her family still resides in that community, where she attended Bell High School. During her junior year at Bell High School, her neighbor's son Jerry encouraged and mentored Luna to stop at the College Center, where he could assist her review her grades, and help her apply to universities, and apply for FAFSA. She had taken Advanced Placement courses in high school, but she did not feel she was college bound. Luna knew she wanted to be a teacher, and she was a member of the Future Teachers of America (FTA), which allowed her to assist teachers in classrooms during her time in high school. When she was admitted to Bay University, she majored in liberal arts.

Two years after she had moved with her husband to seek other opportunities, Luna found her way into a master's degree program outside of California state. She earned an M.A. and a Ph.D. in social sciences at Green Pine University in Utah. During her second year of the Ph.D. program, she became a parent to her first baby. During her dissertation writing period, Luna, her husband and two children moved back to California. She continued her work as she pushed beyond the academic boundaries to complete her Ph.D. and had her third baby during the last phases of her Ph.D. program. Simultaneously, Luna became a co-founder of an all-Motherscholar collective participating in contributing to the scholarship and research on education for Motherscholars through publications and podcasts addressing mothers in academia. Luna has since earned her Ph.D. and is currently an adjunct professor at a state university in Southern California and is actively pursuing the job market.

Paloma

Paloma is a first-generation Central American (with a Chicana aesthetic) fierce Motherscholar activist born in the U.S. but partially raised in Guatemala. Her father was born in El Salvador and her mother was born in Washington State. Paloma's mother attended college

after Paloma, which makes her a first-generation college student in the U.S. Paloma is a proud mother to two children and had just given birth a week before our interview. She "dropped out" of high school in tenth grade and attended community college to make up credits. Paloma never wanted to return to high school, because she felt her K-12 was a miseducation and refused to get a GED or high school diploma. She attended Green River Community College and took courses in anthropology and sociology. She then transferred from community college to a State University in Arizona, moving her entire family where she felt she was finally learning. Paloma transferred to Southern University North (SUN) and received two bachelor's degrees in two years while maintaining three jobs. Paloma was accepted to a California University in the applied anthropology master's degree program. Paloma applied for a Ph.D. in Ethnic Studies as part of the inaugural cohort focused on street vendors in L.A., where she earned an M.A. in Ethnic Studies. Paloma had her first baby during her third year of Ph.D. and her second baby, during her fifth year of her Ph.D. program. Paloma is a fierce advocate for street vendor rights in Los Angeles and was a founding member of an on-campus parenting advocacy group called *Madres Luchando en Academia*. Paloma is a dissertation fellow through the American Association for University Women and the recipient of the Cota Robles fellowship through her department. She has since been on the job market and continues her parenting advocacy work with *Madres Luchando en Academia* at the state level, traveling across the U.S. meeting with university regents and legislators in Washington, DC.

Reyna

Reyna is a fierce Motherscholar Chicana born in Cheyenne, Wyoming, but mostly raised in Michigan. She identifies as a first-generation college student. Generations of her family lived in the U.S. as sheepherders, and she is the first in her family to pursue a higher education degree.

Because she did not have a guardian, the school district did not allow her to return to her previous high school with her peers. Therefore, during her transitions between states with her mother and then her aunt and uncle, she began to take classes at a Pineridge Community College at the age of 17 after "doing bad to doing good" during her move to Michigan. Reyna's grades improved and completed one year of courses in a different community college, Lake City community college. While taking classes at Lake City, she became a parent with her first baby and moved to Oklahoma with the baby's father. After one incident of domestic violence, she and her son left and returned to Wyoming. She settled in and continued her studies at Pineridge Community College. Reyna had her son in daycare while she took courses in criminal justice. She wanted to be a lawyer and "help her people out." However, it became difficult and she did not feel like a mother. She was a student full-time, then dropped off her son with her grandma at night so she could go to work at Red Lobster, all the while navigating school work and deadlines.

While in community college, Reyna was part of the Hispanic Organization for Progress and Education (HOPE). She received scholarship support for three years. At a HOPE banquets, Reyna was intrigued by the keynote speaker, a young Chicano professor who inspired her to take his summer course at the University of Wyoming (UW) in Chicana/o Studies. Already taking online courses at UW, Reyna enrolled into his summer course and drive 45 minutes each way to attend. Dr. Gonzalez encouraged her to be "like me," by becoming a professor and reconsidering her law degree dreams. Although she wanted to pursue her law degree, Reyna took his advice and spent some time at the law school, feeling "the vibe" of the law setting. She decided to instead to pursue a Ph.D. and declared a major in Chicana/o studies. Soon after, Reyna was accepted to the Ronald E. McNair research program. As a passionate *baile folklorico* dancer,

Reyna dedicated her undergraduate research to *folklorico*. McNair was a positive venue for amazing opportunities and the academic growth and success for Reyna. She was able to travel to the Southwest and explore research programs supported by McNair and she received tremendous support of her mentors. Reyna is currently enrolled at an R1 public university in New Mexico, Los Coyotes University, where she is currently completing her Ph.D. in humanities focusing on the New Mexican communities. She has three children and will be pursuing the professorate. Reyna will be walking this spring as a freshly minted doctor Motherscholar.

Ximena

Ximena is a fierce Motherscholar who identifies as Mexican-American. Ximena is first-generation immigrant in the U.S. with bi-cultural parents who traveled back and forth to live both in their hometown of Jalisco, Mexico, and South-Central Los Angeles. Ximena was not the first in her family to attend college, though. Her older sisters attended universities like Brown, UC Santa Barbara, and UC Santa Cruz. She was born and raised in South Central Los Angeles in what she calls a "violent neighborhood" and attended Visions Magnet Middle School in downtown Los Angeles, a legacy she identifies as "setting the trajectory" for her and her other siblings. After high school she was admitted to an R1 university, California South Bay University (CSBU). She, however, left in the middle of her first semester at CSBU in good standing to take a corporate job in Denver, Colorado. Seven years later, she returned to CSBU as a reentry student to complete her degree. Her sister, the first one who graduated from UC Santa Cruz, was admitted to The Pueblo University (TPU) M.A./Ph.D. program in Spanish. Although with some reluctance, Ximena applied and was admitted to the American studies M.A./Ph.D. program in the same institution as her sister, looking at the triangular relationships of Afro-*Latinidad* and the connections between Mexico, Cuba, and the U.S. During her studies, Ximena

received a grant to travel to Cuba and collect preliminary data on the Cuba/U.S. relations. In Cuba, she met her partner who was living and traveling between Chile and Cuba. Five months later, they became and parents to her first child. Ximena was preparing to take her exams and was completing her third year of Ph.D. studies as the mother of a 7-month-old son during the time of the interview.

Xochitl

Xochitl is a first-generation Motherscholar and is now a professor teaching at a public university in Los Angeles. She was born in Guatemala and came to the U.S. with a relative when she was two and a half years old and lived with her aunt most of her life. She lived in South Central, Los Angeles, and was bused into Venice High School in West Los Angeles as part of the magnet program. Her educational trajectory in high school was challenging as she challenged herself to take advanced placement (A.P.) courses but then failed them, which made her schooling experience difficult. However, through some advocacy and conversation with her mom and older siblings, she pursued a four-year track. She was mentored by a UCLA student in MEChA, or *Movimiento Estudiantil Chicana/o de Aztlan,* a student organization that supports the academic growth and empowerment of Chicana/os and people of the Americas, like Xochitl, through mentoring and tutoring. She learned of her own Guatemalteca identity and history through her interaction with her mentor, which she describes as "changing her life." When she was 17, she was accepted to a flagship university in Northern California for her undergraduate education through the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP). When Xochitl learned of the possibility of pursuing Latin American and Latino studies at her university, she pursued her course of studies in the area. After completing her B.A., she was admitted to a Chicana and Chicano Studies master's degree program in Southern California. Upon completing her M.A. in

Chicana/o studies, Xochitl was admitted to the Ph.D. program in American Studies at a private institution in Southern California. Xochitl received her Ph.D. and is a fierce parenting advocate for her parenting students. She has two little girls, ages 5 and 8.

Conclusion

In summary, this chapter I outlined my research methods and approach in conducting my data collection. I offer research questions as a refresher to the reader. I provided the rationale of the study providing the importance of the study and why and how I selected Motherscholars for my study. In addition, I provided the recruitment efforts for the work and the intentional efforts to recruit and interview Motherscholars I did not know. As an active participant in my own study, I provide more on my own *reflexiones* (or reflections) through an *autohistoria* method. However, as iterated above, I do not include much on my own story because my goal was to highlight the Motherscholars interviewed. I discuss the process of data collection for analysis and procedures on how I began the analysis of the study. Lastly, I offer the in-depth *pláticas* in protocols that guided my interviews with Motherscholars and end the chapter with powerful Motherscholars profile narratives.

CHAPTER FIVE: VISIBILITY AND INVISIBILITY

College Pathways, Ethnic & Gender Studies, and Fem/Mentoring

Autohistoria Vignette #1

> I remember the experiences I had here [my university] and it's how invisible I felt. The bus rides to campus was one example. While I'm pregnant and him [bus driver] shrugging his shoulders while I'm trying to catch the bus to go to campus, this is while I'm eight months pregnant. I'm going on to nine, I remember. I hated the bus too. Everyone pretended I wasn't there. Like I was visible and invisible at the same time. No one moved to offer their seat. They would just dig their faces onto their phones deeper to erase my need. And the bus fucking leaving me several times, because I couldn't get across the street fast enough. I yelled at him once telling him, "I'm pregnant just wait" and that's when he shrugged his shoulders and left. Tears were streaming down my face as I waddled across the street. I knew it was time to stop going to campus. (Christine, *reflexión*, May 25, 2018)

Introduction

In this chapter, I focus on three significant findings of this data related to the early education and college pathway experiences in high school to college of Motherscholars interviewed. These findings include the tensions and collision of being seen and unseen as hypervisibility and visibility as a brown body in the academy. The hypervisibility and visibility (as Anaya explain – please see Chapter Two, "Literature Review") include the weight of stereotypes attached to performance, competency, and intellectual capacity. I split hypervisibility via stereotypes which leads to microaggressions and prejudice. I also split the analysis as hypervisibility as erasure. Likewise, to be seen and be visible lends itself to the important interventions of femtorship and mentorship by others who may have also experience marginality. It is the In Lak'ech concept that allows others support a struggling first generation Motherscholar in the turbulent terrains of the ivory tower. I focus on these trajectories because these women faced instances in their education in high school, in community college, and at the university level where they would "stop out" and face "push out" of pursuing a higher education,

in particular pursue of a Ph.D. By using the theoretical frameworks discussed in Chapter Three, I apply a Critical *Maternalista* Matrix as theoretical framework by combining the elements of CRT, CFT, and Critical Maternal Theory. Below is a refresher of the tenets in current development.

1. Centralize race, ethnicity and gender, and motherhood experiences of Chicanas, Latinas, and Indigenous Motherscholars enrolled in doctoral programs;

2. Illuminate the lived experiences of first-generation Chicanas, Latinas, and Indigenous doctoral Motherscholars;

3. Debunk deficit stereotypes of pregnant and or parenting Chicanas, Latinas, and Indigenous Motherscholars in doctoral programs;

4. Highlight the missing data in the educational pipeline of where pregnant and/or parenting Chicanas, Latinas, and Indigenous Motherschoalrs are leaked/left out; and

5. Acknowledge the often-erased narratives of Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous doctoral Motherscholars who *sobresalen* (thrive) in the academy

In this data set, I mainly focus on Tenet 2: ***Illuminate the lived experiences of first-generation Chicana Latina doctoral Motherscholars***, and Tenet 5: ***Acknowledge the often-erased narratives of Chicana Latina doctoral Motherscholars.***

The experiences vary from woman to woman and on this chapter, I focus on five of the nine Motherscholars. Libertad was a high school student who became a mother her junior year and was admitted to UCLA as a freshman mother. Ceci attended a community college and was admitted to UC Berkeley and went straight to a Ph.D. at USC as a single mother to an infant. I then discuss Luna, Xochitl, and Ximena's early education experiences in high school toward college not as mothers, but as Women of Color. These early educational experiences set the context of what they have lived, their reality, and what we—as educators, mentors/femtors, and administration—should consider setting proper and supportive student services, programs, and the continuous support of ethnic and gender studies.

The common experiences are a reflection of what young Women of Color, in particular first-generation Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous women, encounter throughout their education: a racialized, sexualized, and gendered one often identified through their "brown bodies." Therefore, by acknowledging the dichotomous experiences of being seen/not seen, visible/invisible sets a reminder of the hyper visibility and the erasures women experience in their earlier educational years and beyond. Many of the women related hypervisibility and erasures to their physical body, what they represented as indicators and markers of the "darkness" of their brown body, their curly hair, hoop earrings, red lipstick, tattoos, language, accents, slang, and their choice in silence.[13] For Motherscholars who entered the university setting with Children of Color, they remind us of the confronted racialized and gendered experiences as Motherscholars and felt their children were not welcomed facing erasures in "certain spaces," specifically academic spaces such as the university, conferences, and coffee shops.

Throughout this chapter, I will refer to visibility and invisibility, to be seen and unseen as markers of the dichotomous relationship and tensions between both the lived experiences of the Motherscholars in their everyday lives. These experiences of visibility and invisibility also highlights the third space, or the *Nepantla State* (Anzaldúa, 1999), where a Motherscholar is seen and not seen at the same time but also acknowledging the third space of transitions into foreign locations and nominal spaces like university settings for the first time. Therefore, it is possible for a Mother of Color to be seen and unseen at the same time, when her brown body gets attention and is asked to leave and violently erased. Indeed, these narratives shared, demonstrate

[13] In this data set, silence is related to not belonging, and not resisting. Many of my participants like Ceci and Luna experienced silence because they worried about not belonging or fear of standing out further.

how Motherscholars resist aggressive forms of erasure met with resilience in different ways; I argue it was through the consciousness formations espoused in Ethnic and Gender Studies, and mentoring programs, that deeply inform and empower Motherscholars. I shed light on the second significant finding of this selected data, the importance of Ethnic and Gender & Women's studies in the early educational trajectories and those critical femtors/mentors of the Women of Color *co-madres*.

For all of the Women of Color in this study (although I focus on only half of them in this chapter), Ethnic, Gender Studies, and first-generation research programs, became significant in their own exposure of their cultural backgrounds and histories. The data below indicates how significant it was for them to take courses in Chicana/o Studies, in Ethnic and Gender Studies, and come across femtors and mentors, T.A.s, and friends of color who encouraged them to pursue a college degree, an M.A., or a Ph.D. When the women took courses with professors that looked like them, they were surprised, "blown away," excited that this could be them in the future. Lastly, we see instances where othermotherwork begins to play a role by their own mothers (or mother figures) in the decisions the younger Women of Color make to pursue their college degree dreams and aspirations a reality. Much against the stereotype and at times experiences of mothers who have Daughters of Color who get accepted to a university or college, we will see in the data below the encouragement and support for them to "go" to college. We also witness the unseen labor other Women of Color perform to support Mothers of Color pursue their educational goals of earning a college degree.

The Hypervisibility of Being Seen and Unseen in Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs)

Ceci, a fierce Motherscholar who identifies as a first-generation Afro-Chicana, became a mother during her last year of undergraduate study at UC Berkeley. Ceci was excited about

being accepted to such an elite university from community college: "'Oh my God, it's Berkeley, I can't believe I'm here,' but also that shock of culture shock. Like I didn't know what a four-year institution was or a special place like Berkeley." At Cal, Ceci majored in English and literature and experienced instances of shock and invisibility on campus and in her department, however, these moments of shock were met with hope and encouragement from People of Color in Ethnic Studies and femtors/mentors. After graduating, she moved out on her own from Berkeley to Southern California with her infant baby. She began her first year of doctoral studies as a single mother without daycare or family in Southern California. Within the English department, Ceci sought people who "looked" like her, especially after transferring from a community college, which historically enrolls a majority of first-generation Students of Color. She faced difficulty finding "brown faces" and brown places. Her brown body felt out of place at Cal and again at USC, where her "dark brown skin" became a marker for discrimination at these elite institutions. She met this marginalization with resistance, continuously and exhaustedly navigating multiple sites of Whiteness and privilege. She shares how English curriculum at Cal is exclusionary for a Woman of Color like herself, "since I was majoring in English, a very White department . . . the requirements are very euro-centric." It was not until she was introduced to Ethnic Studies courses that she engulfed literature and articles that spoke of her and to her. She pivots with excitement when she discovered she could make Ethnic and Chicana Feminist Studies her major, making her feel visibility and provided language to name her experience and existence.

Although we can sense pride and excitement by her admission to a prestigious university like Berkeley, she struggled to find People of Color like herself in a department serving and teaching mostly White literatures and White students. She identified "shock" or "culture shock"

but also pride when she mentions "I can't believe I'm here" for being among the few selected Women of Color in the English department. As of 2017, Berkeley has 11,882 (47%) White students enrolled, 3,771 (15%) Mexican American students, and 1,395 (6%) African American students, within a population of 25,181 undergraduates (UCB, 2018). Since Ceci identifies with both the Chicana and African American communities, both identities are reflected as a double "shock" based on her identity, but a triple "shock" by engaging gender, and as a first-generation student navigating a mostly White institution and White major. In the next excerpt, she describes the types of courses she was required to take in her English major and her new-found encounter with Ethnic Studies, where she found herself among People of Color and written about within the lines of literatures central to, taught by, and written by People of Color.

> I had to take Shakespeare, pre-18 century, pre-1800s British literature, and 19th century focus on Europe, White people, and White authors (laughs). And my classes were mostly White people, and then, the professors were White people. My electives [were] Chicana literature or American survey courses, American literature were Black, Professors of Color, which was cool, but still the classes, it was just still mostly White people. (Cecilia, *plática*, April 21, 2017)

Above, she describes the requirements of her major, where she did not see herself reflected in the literature. However, it was through elective courses in Ethnic Studies she found herself visible in literatures by Women of Color writers like Octavia Butler, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Audre Lorde. When she found out she can major in Ethnic Studies, she was excited and quickly registered. "I'm gonna go sign up right now" she tells me, laughing. She had an urgency to find a place to exist and belong, which was deeply reflected in the literatures she began to read.

Ceci encountered professors, administration, and Counselors of Color who advocated for her in writing letters and mentoring/femtoring her to reach beyond the B.A. toward a Ph.D. A Chicano professor wrote a letter of recommendation for Ceci and encouraged her to apply to the

Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Program. She was admitted. "When I got that fellowship, that's when I was like, 'Oh, I can do a Ph.D.'" Because she felt unseen in her own program, and invisible in the representation of her major and department, Ceci rarely experienced support or encouragement to continue. Therefore, when the Chicano professor wrote the letters, she described him as "nice" and "caring" for seeing in her the aspiration, talent, and *ganas* [will] to continue. Her acceptance into the undergraduate research program was affirmed by his support, by femtorship/mentorship of other People of Color, and her agency to centralize herself and apply despite knowing the outcome.

Ceci became "conscious" and aware of her place in the institution through her readings in Eurocentric literature, which informs and guides her own writings, community work, and dissertation reflected back onto the Women of Color, Mothers of Color, and Children of Color as a form of resistance. The data illustrated a sense of visibility and invisibility dichotomy. Her awareness of her "brown" body in "White" spaces was slightly resolved when she found people who looked most like her in positions of power: brown, Chicanas/os, educators, femtors/mentors professors, and on-campus professionals. This became a system of support she did not quite identify initially as an undergraduate, and it was a system that manifested without a concrete structure.

However, Ceci expresses her exhaustion and choice to leave academia as a result of racial and gendered battle fatigue, when the body responds to exposed stressors due to discrimination, but also erasures from geographical spaces (Cisneros et al., 2019) in university campuses, which trigger anxiety, frustration, and fear (Smith et al., 2007), which I will address in Chapter Six. In turn, her creative writings as a public scholar became a call to action to herself and for other Motherscholars of Color to transform the academy by speaking truth to power. Ceci speaking

back to the erasures she experiences of her body, her skin color, her hair, and her son is powerfully reflected in her publication titled, "Mothering While Brown in White Spaces, Or, When I Took My Son to Octavia Butler's Exhibit" (2017). She states, "Mothering while brown means all the times I've been told, not asked, to leave White spaces while with my child—university classrooms, academic conferences, exhibits, museums, cafes, restaurants. So, you mother while brown anyway." She explicitly names the locations and spaces she had been asked to leave because not only is she brown, she is a mother, and her visibility is intended to be erased as a reminder that she is not welcomed and does not fit into that space.

Stereotype of the Flesh

Ceci's epistemology of her brown body not belonging is similar to that of Libertad, who felt her body was a "marker" when she attended her freshman orientation at UCLA. Libertad, a single mother scholar of three children, identifies as a first-generation Chicana with tattoos, and her young baby in tow during orientation made her feel "out of place" in this new academic space. Additionally, this Predominantly White Institution (PWI) felt more exclusionary because Libertad came in as a STEM major, a major different from her high school experience with a majority of Students of Color, Chicanas, and teen parents.

> In high school, I wasn't the only [young pregnant] Chicana . . . it was more common to see young Chicanas pregnant. But when I got to UCLA, being a Chicana, day one of orientation, being a Chicana with tattoos, straight out of high school and [with] my son, it was like everyone was straight out of high school, but no one was straight out of high school with a kid. . . (Libertad, *plática*, May 15, 2018)

Libertad remembers how impactful it was for her to feel out of place, not only through her "brown body" as not visible in the student body represented at her new university, but because she had "markers" on her body, tattoos, and a baby, she became hyper visible. The dichotomous irony of her visibility and invisibility are reflected because she felt unseen and seen

at the same time, specifically in her major in neuroscience with mostly White and Asian students. Although this painful experience critically impacted Libertad, I see her existence showing up for her orientation as a Chicana with tattoos and a baby as a form of resistance that challenges the notion of what one looks like linked to the academic performance and brilliance of that of Libertad. According to the Chicana/o Educational Pipeline (2015) for Chicanas/Latinas, Libertad was ranked 9 out 100 students to graduate high school and be admitted to a four-year university. Libertad was accepted to a summer bridge program as a freshman, and the inquisitive curiosity from her neuroscience classmates made her feel visible/invisible and overwhelmed.

> So, I remember I was like crying my first day . . . it was overwhelming, you know, to even be at UCLA with my son the first day. And then, not know how or where I fitted in. I didn't have community there. I didn't know anyone from UCLA. I had never stepped [on] a campus 'til like the first day of orientation. I just said, "I'm going there because my teacher said it was a good school. It's close to home." (Libertad, *plática*, 05/15/2018)

The first day of orientation is filled with excitement and overwhelming feelings to belong and be seen. Libertad was met with questions, and as a first-generation Chicana with a child, she felt alone. The community she left in high school and in her neighborhood was not presently available for her during this critical time of transition. She was not prepared to be met with the overwhelming feelings of not "fitting in" and how to navigate the institution, much less with her baby. She followed what her teachers recommended, to apply, and once she was admitted, to attend the university since it was closest to her home community. However, what is read through this part of Libertad's experience, is that as a first-generation Chicana new mother, she was not prepared by educators to encounter the cultural shock of attending a PWI. Likewise, being a new mother, plus the intersecting identity factors of race, ethnicity, and being first-generation, are difficult factors to navigate the PWI environment. In addition, when a first-generation Chicana

college admit is a Motherscholar, the identity of motherhood (as argued by Patricia Hill Collins and Reyna Anaya) impact the ways in which these Motherscholars experience the college setting.

The year Libertad was admitted to the university, the university did not have in place a proper parenting student orientation, which could have assisted Libertad in navigating student services and resources for herself and her child. Instead, Libertad found solace and assistance through the help of her mother, who moved into family housing to support her and take care of her baby while she participated in a six-week summer program on campus. This act of labor performed by her own mother is care work and othermotherwork to help the new mother succeed. Likewise, it was her femtors (and Libertad's will and agency), also first-generation Chicanas in higher education and some of which were Motherscholars themselves and worked for mentoring research programs on her campus, who motivated her to continue, finish, and pursue research programs and apply for Ph.D. programs. These acts of solidarity and support as Libertad navigated institutions of higher education without the guidance is what James (1993) calls othermotherwork, the act of supporting blood and spirit kin through motherhood and life. Much like Libertad's experience of visibility and invisibility, Luna expressed a similar experience as she was moving into her new university, Bay University, a state university in Northern California.

Pedagogies of Othermotherwork: Resistance and Visibility in the Home

Luna, a first-generation Chicana/Mexicana Motherscholar, moved to Bay University as the first to attend a four-year school in her family. Luna is currently an adjunct professor in California and is a mother of three. As we read in Chapter Four, Luna was motivated by her neighbor to apply to Bay University while she was in high school. Her older sister attended the

local community college, however, she did not complete her college degree and decided to get married and have children. Following in the shadows of her older sister, Luna applied to California state universities and was accepted to move to Bay University in California as the first woman in her family to attend a four-year school. However, Luna tells me in her interview that her decision to go to a university away from home was an act of resistance or *rebeldia* (to rebel) and travel more than 300 miles north of her community and home. Below, she explains her relationship with her mother and her older sister when she was admitted to Bay University.

> I was the first one to go to college. I have an older sister, but she went to Valverde; that's the local community college. And she went there on and off you know and she'll work. And so, she didn't really go. Half of the time, she was lying about going to her classes (laughs). So, I was the first one to leave because my sister was *la callejera*, *la aventada*, and I was the nerd, the dork, I would cry for everything. So, my mom was surprised that I would even think of like going outside but I was like *la rebelde* at the same time. But I would always talk back to my mom well my fucking grades are on point, you know? Why can't I do whatever I want? (Luna, *plática*, May 7, 2018)

Although jokingly, Luna admits that although her sister did not get to complete college, she also understood her sister worked many hours and did not sustain her drive to continue in college. Luna, as the younger one, faced more pressure from her mother about her academic success. Luna's resistance showed to be fruitful although she was faced with pressure by her decision to move away to college. When she was admitted to Bay University, she did not realize how it would impact her first year as a first-generation Chicana/*Mexicana* moving over 300 miles from home. She recalls her decision to leave causing anxiety and fear, yet she was resistant in her choice to leave when her mother showed support in her move, or othermothering in supporting her child's separation.

The support Luna received to move away to a four-year university from her mother and her entire family was critical for Luna long term, something she did not know would change her life and lead her toward a Ph.D. Below, she discusses telling her mother about getting admitted.

> . . . "I got a full ride", and she's like "all right, go." "I don't want to go, what do you mean? I don't know what to do?" I was scared. I remember crying to her one time "you just want me to leave, like you just don't want me to be around here." And she's like, "No, this is good for you, and I want to support you and if it means that we're all going to pack up and help you go." (Luna, *plática*, May 7, 2018)

The above excerpt exemplifies the importance of difficult decisions mothers make to support their daughters attending colleges and universities away from home, even if it means separation and distance. Luna's resistance to leave with the support of her entire family was critical. Despite feeling fear and anxiety, Luna's mother and entire family drove her to her new home for the next four years. Luna shares that it was important for her younger brothers to witness and participate in taking her to the university, where she settled with her new roommates. Luna's mother knew this would be helpful for her for the long run.

Luna is now the first doctor in the family among her siblings. Luna was clearly visible, supported, and loved through this difficult decision to move away for college, which unsettles the dominant discourse of what is "expected" of immigrant mothers raising first-generation Chicanas pursuing an education. This type of othermotherwork performed by a mother of a first-generation Chicana/*Mexicana* is an act of resistance that values the possibilities for her daughter. Likewise, we see the exchange of community cultural wealth when Luna's neighbor encouraged her to apply to a university, where she continues to be seen. When Luna and her family drove into her new home in the dorms, she indicated anxiety when she saw "surfing outfits" hanging from the balconies of other students' dorms. She instantly knew that she may be out of place in what seemed like a mostly White institution. Luna questioned her sense of belonging being that

she was the "darker" one in her family and with a "heavy accent." "My family would call me *la negrita."* The sense of invisibility began to sink in as she started her semester when she realized she was one of the few People of Color in her courses.

Luna made an observation that a small group of Students of Color that would help each other in the classes did not befriend her immediately. She realized that they all knew each other and would help each other complete course materials because they knew each other from high school. Because Luna felt out of place, her shyness and silence became more apparent because she feared her "accent." Not feeling like part of the community, Luna was ready to leave the university. Her first year had become isolating and lonely mainly because she was a Woman of Color, felt visible and invisible in her classes, and she did not have a car to go home and visit her family like her roommates Jane, who is White, and Stephanie, who is Filipina. Luna would stay in her dorms alone on weekends; however, she became close to Stephanie and began to accompany her to her families' home in San Jose, California. Two major things shifted for Luna that kept her at Bay University as an enrolled student: (a) Educational Opportunity Programs (EOP&S), which help first-generation, low-income, educationally disadvantaged students meet their educational goals and feel empowered (EOP&S website, 2019); and (b) Service Learning Requirement course in Chicana/o Studies.

Luna had been ready to "stop out" of Bay University and return to Los Angeles and enroll at the local community college. This would make her closer to her home community in Southern California, which included her partner, her mother, and her family and friends. However, becoming part of EOP&S and taking a required course all students need to complete while at Bay University through service learning, Chicana/o Studies History, while working in the community came at the perfect time to retain Luna at Bay University.

> That's what helped me out like this is what I needed, I need a community because it was either surfing or that military base. That was just it and I didn't identify as a surfer and I hated the military base and so it sucked. That's when I started carpooling [to a rec center] and there was another brown guy and he was from [the area]. He's like, "Oh, I'll give you a tour." He was like, "Yeah, there's a bunch of brown people up in here." And I was like "oh my God." That's how we got connected. I survived and after that I was like OK, I'm going to stay now. I stayed; I continued doing service learning. (Luna, *plática*, May 7, 2018)

Luna continues to say how much she loved working at the Rec Center San Antonio in a different region close to her campus. All of those who went into the Rec Center were People of Color who spoke Spanish. She continued her work at the Rec Center for several years because she felt like it was a piece of home. Inclusively, Luna mentions how important it was for her to take a course with the first Chicano professor she had ever seen teach on her campus. "I took one Chicano professor too and that helped me. That was my first time that I had seen a Chicana professor as well." As we can see, it proved to be important for Luna to be seen and part of the learning community as a first-generation Chicana/Mexicana at a university. Although Luna did not have children at this point of her life, the visibility of her identity, belonging, the importance of ethnic studies, and community are critically important for the academic success of Women of Color in colleges and universities. A community can have many shapes and forms. The people Luna worked with speaking Spanish to her at the rec center served as a reminder of microaffirmations (Solórzano, forthcoming, 2019), which helped her feel rooted. It is important to see others who look like her, like her carpooling friend, a local Chicano and student in the area, and her Chicano Studies professors. I argue that this type of lived experience based on the racial and gendered epistemologies of her brown body is what has informed Luna's spiritual activism to change how first-generation Students of Color like herself experience education. Once Luna became a parent during her Ph.D. program, her commitment shifted as an advocate to

support first-generation Mothers of Color in college and at the university through her teaching, advocacy, and scholarship.

Luna made her way to graduate school because of her friend Rosa, whom she met while working one of three jobs at Bay University. One of Luna's jobs was as a shuttle driver on campus, and she would pick up this young Chicana she had in her course. She belonged to the group of other Students of Color who would support and help each other prepare for exams and study together. Luna asked Rose jokingly (but also seriously) why she was never included in those small study groups. Rose said it was because they did not know her. However, since then, both built a strong bond and friendship. The next excerpt shows the type of nurturance and *movidas* other Chicanas make to help other Women of Color pursue higher education. Luna shares that once she graduated from Bay University, she moved back into a guest house with her high school sweetheart Angelo, Southern California, worked for El Torrito, and struggled to find herself post-college life. It was a simple phone call from Rosa that led Luna to move further from Southern California to Utah, taking a chance at an M.A. program and possibly a Ph.D. with the promise of full funding. Below is her conversation with Rosa before taking a leap of faith for her academic career.

> [Rosa] is like, "Hey, I'm out here I'm in Utah. And they're looking for more students to apply." She goes "it's full funding and everything; you should come." I was like "are you sure?" And she was like, "Yeah, yeah, I'm going to send you an application. I'm going to highlight all the things you got to fill out, send it to me and I'll help you, I'll help you." And actually, I still didn't know if I was going to get in, but I was so stuck stupid on like I'm going because I don't have anything else out here. (Luna, *plática*, May 7, 2018)

Luna and her high school sweetheart got married, and they moved to Utah. She was admitted to the Master of Education program and began working for the summer program for elementary Children of Color called SUEÑOS and began her studies as a fully funded graduate

student. Luna and Rosa's friendship remains one of the strongest bonds she has had as a first-generation student, and now both are Motherscholars. Luna had created a sense of belonging and community through her friendship with Rosa that led her to apply and be supported through her graduate school experience. Even in uncertainty, Luna took a chance at herself because another Chicana believed in her and pulled her into graduate studies alongside her. "It's always been people sort of believing in me and encouraging me and pretty much helping me out. Otherwise, it never came out of me." As seen in Luna's prior trajectory, there is someone who believes in her and motivates her to pursue degrees of higher learning, and in this case, it was another Chicana, whom she is grateful for. "I was very thankful that there was always [Rosa]."

Othermotherwork as a Tool for College Pathways

Similarly, to the experiences of Luna are the experiences of Xochitl, a fierce Motherscholar from Guatemala who came to live in the states at a young age and lived with her aunt (who mothered her, and she calls her mother) until she was accepted to a flagship university in Northern California from high school. Her aunt became the one who raised Xochitl, which is an act of othermother. Patricia Hill Collins (1994) and Audrey Lorde (1983) maintain that mothering and motherhood for Women and People of Color do not look like nuclear, heteronormative, and dichotomous family structures. They take shape in different ways, and in this case with Xochitl, an aunt became the main caretaker and "mother" figure for Xochitl. In such a role, Xochitl's mother encouraged her to continue her studies and leave to pursue a higher education, as did her older brothers.[14] Below she shares the interactions she had with her brothers about college:

[14] Xochitl addresses her biological cousins as brothers because she was raised with them most of her life.

> I had two older brothers. They're actually my cousins, but I grew up thinking of them as my brothers who went to Cal State LA. And so they lived at home and went to Cal State LA, so college was somewhat of a discussion, you know. I remember even having one of them like randomly showed up at my high school to talk to my college counselor, like without telling me. (Xochitl, *plática*, May 22, 2017)

This blurb is critical because although Xochitl had already spoken to her counselor that she decided not to apply to four-year universities and decided to attend community college, the counselor failed at encouraging her to pursue other options. Instead, we see how family and mentoring of support and advocacy came from her own kin, who took the initiative to support her and speak to her counselor about Xochitl's college education. Perhaps self-advocacy was not an option for her at the time to pursue a higher education beyond community college. Coupled with these experiences of advocacy, blood kin as mentors, and possibilities, Xochitl shares her disinterest in continuing her education because of the schooling environment she was in. Xochitl said her early educational experiences while being bused from South Central L.A. to Venice High School made her feel disinterested in school until two major things occurred. She met a fellow Guatemalan student who became her friend, and she was mentored, encouraged, and introduced to the prospect of attending a university by mentors and femtors from MEChA Xinachtli de UCLA. Through the ongoing mentoring of MEChistas, though, Xochitl learned about ethnic studies, her Guatemalan history and background, and the prospect of applying and attending a four-year university. In her family, Xochitl became the first woman to attend a four-year university. Her oldest sister was the first to get accepted to a university, and as mentioned above, her older brothers were also enrolled in state universities. However, her older sister got married and had children at the age of 22 and was working through residency status paperwork. Her older brothers, who had completed a college degree, also decided to get married and have children in their early 20s. For Xochitl's mother, she felt that if her children would have left to

college, they may have not started families at a young age. Here she explains how she determined to leave for school:

> I think my mom didn't play an active role, but she was also very much like, "If you want to go then you should go because I should have let your brother go and I didn't. I made the mistake of telling him to stay close, to not leave the house, to like, you know, he's gonna be alone out there . . . . But if you want to go, just go." And I think she also knew that our relationship was pretty bad, and she was also kind of like, "I don't have anything to offer you for you to stay." (Xochitl, *plática*, May 22, 2017)

Despite the "bad" relationship Xochitl had with her mother, the past lessons of not giving her children options to leave for college was something her mother considered when Xochitl was accepted to this university. This act of othermotherwork to painfully support and advocate for her to leave was part of the growth and long-term goals for Xochitl she may not have been expecting in her pursuit for a master, a Ph.D., and most currently the professorate. Xochitl had majored in Latina and Latino Studies and became more and more critical as she became exposed to ethnic studies and feminism, but also once she became an organizer on her campus and co-chaired MEChA with her now husband. "Once I was introduced to like feminism and learned more about like social inequality, economic inequality, I started to see things differently. I started to finally have like vocabulary and a context for me taking control of my life." Xochitl continues by sharing that it was three T.A.s of Color who encouraged her to pursue graduate school. Unaware what it meant to be a T.A. (a Ph.D. student or candidate), and what graduate school was or entails, she explains the encouragement she received.

> I had three Black T.A.s in different classes. [E]ach of them were like, "You should go to grad school. Your ideas and your writings are really strong … you should go to grad school." And I was just like, "OK." Not fully knowing what exactly that meant. But also, Antonio's uncle was a professor in Chicana, Chicano studies. (Xochitl, *plática*, May 22, 2017)

Antonio is Xochitl's husband, but at the time he was her partner while they were undergraduates at the university. Antonio comes from a legacy of community organizers, activists, and scholars fighting for environmental justice and rights in the East Los Angeles areas for several decades. This included having family members in the professorate teaching ethnic studies at a Southern California university. As seen in Xochitl's narrative, ethnic studies, community organizing and activism, and someone who looks like, relates to, and has gone through similar educational journeys (in this case her T.A.s, her oldest brothers, and her mentors from MEChA Xinachtli at UCLA) were major factors to her consciousness formation, providing her with language to name her experience but also agency. Likewise, I argue that these formations of awareness shape the desire for people like Xochitl, Luna, and Ceci to pursue social justice research, scholarship, and community involvement, specifically an understanding or a *saber* [a knowing] to name injustices they faced as they moved onto their educational journeys as doctoral Motherscholars.

Xochitl explains why she has become a huge advocate of ethnic studies and knowing her own history, which changed her life. "It was really once I became like a student organizer and like learned about the history of Guatemala. I pinpoint that first workshop on Guatemala history as the moment that changed my life." She continues by stating the importance of mentors and femtors who sacrifice their time to help others *sobresalir,* coupled with her history:

> [T]hat's why I advocate for ethnic studies outside of university disciplines because it was at a youth conference, you know, by a grad student who wasn't getting paid to do this workshop that this happened and then having college students who were taking time out of their own schedules to come and mentor other brown kids, you know. And so, they're the ones who helped with the college applications, who (said) the education you have as an undergrad is not gonna be the education you have [as a graduate student]. (Xochitl, *plática*, May 22, 2017)

In closing, the experience of Xochitl shows the importance of being seen in educational spaces, which can elevate the opportunities for first-generation students in the U.S. to pursue a higher education. Often times, the brown body are a politics that encompass targets for racism and sexism. In this case, Xochitl's brown body (although often silent and not visible) became a location to receive mentoring from others that looked like her. However, not all students have the opportunity and/or the luck to receive this type of mentorship, therefore, we lose many who did not know of their own potential and opportunity to succeed and pursue degrees of higher learning. Lastly, the narrative of a fierce Motherscholar is reflected in Ximena's experience of consciousness and mentorship when she returned to complete her B.A. at CSBU.

To Be Seen in Liminal Spaces

Ximena is a Motherscholar of one from South L.A. currently completing her Ph.D. in New Mexico at Pueblo University while raising her infant. Ximena was not the first in her family to attend a university, but she is considered first-generation in the U.S. Also, she discusses her resistance as one of the younger female siblings in her family pressed on her the expectation to pursue a higher education in an Ivy League university. Through her narrative, Ximena discusses her own carving of space in her pursuits to academia. The influence for Ximena to be seen and see came from others in her surroundings who were not her own family. When Ximena was an undergraduate at CSBU, she left in good standing to live in Denver and take a corporate job. However, after being out of the university for seven years, she returned as a re-entry student. During her time as a returning student at CSBU, Ximena was exposed to the powerful movement of Women of Color and student mobilization while she worked as a program coordinator for a prominent African scholar in Women and Gender Studies. It was through her director and the work to "nurture" students who were subject to dismissal that she

was exposed to the inside workings of academia and social justice-related work through a Mellon Mays grant her supervisor and the team received. "That's how I started to see how the process of using the funds, but also for change, that makes you see how powerful it is to be in institutions, and what kind of spaces are created within that." She continues to share that it was seeing her students and nurturing them, but also feeling nurtured herself that she learned about social justice as an act of retention by providing support. Below she states how this impact was part of her own coming to consciousness through mentoring.

> It was the students that really touched me, and really had the most impact on me. I mentored students who were on the brink of academic dismissal to creating, along with undergrads and graduate students, a peer mentoring program that allowed more students on academic probation to actually graduate, so retention. And walking them through, pairing them up with projects that they were engaged with. (Ximena, *plática*, June 2, 2018)

Ximena's exposure as a returning student to the power of those committed to social justice, working closely with students at the margin, mentoring, and providing support exposed her to see them and their potential in their entirety. As she had faced a second opportunity to return and engage in academia, she too provided the type of support and nurturance for students who needed the support and opportunity to complete a college degree. Below, I will discuss the importance of gender, ethnic studies, and social justice work related to the exposure to continue onto graduate school for several of the Motherscholars. The argument of the importance of acknowledging the intersecting identities of gender, race, and ethnicity for first-generation college students, in particular for women who were mothers at the time of college entry or in their Ph.D. programs, is an important factor for retention and to continue the conversation about ethnic studies and gender.

Ximena's exposure working with and for students in Gender and Women studies at CSBU through an established mentoring program shaped her desire to pursue a Ph.D. Her

supervisor set a critical foundation for her development as a prospective scholar in a Ph.D. program, along with other femtors and graduate students in Ethnic Studies. I highlight this part of Ximena's narrative because it is through the support, nurturance, and faith of others, in particular Women of Color in positions of power, that deeply impacts other Women of Color like Ximena to not only remain enrolled in college but pursue dreams and aspirations to potentially pursue. Below, she describes her job as the first job since her re-entry to CSBU unaware of her directors' position and role and the impact it had of her own pursuits.

> That was my first job . . . . I started reading her material, reading her research, and I said, "Oh my goodness, who is this woman?" Later to find out that she had established the African women's development in the continent out of South Cape, University of South Africa. After realizing, she was traveling a lot at that time, back to Africa, [she] was working with the UN and these various organizations, women's organizations, around the world. I was just like, "Wow, this is what academia allows." She was the one that basically said, "This is what academia has allowed me to do," with her passion of writing, organizing, and developing "programs," she calls them, organizing around social justice for women's development. (Ximena, *plática*, June 2, 2018)

To see and be seen reflected in positions to impact change as a Woman of Color making *movidas*, for the development and opportunity for other women deeply impacts other Women of Color surrounding the leadership globally and locally. She makes it clear that she was lucky to have female femtors challenge her thinking to pursue a Ph.D. But also, it provided Ximena an entry point to imagine the potential to create change and use academia as a tool for social justice, in particular for Women of Color in the U.S. and globally. Her exposure to the global work has impacted her current research in the Cuban and American relations, however, it was rooted in ethnic studies. Below, she discusses how working with students allowed her to see and be seen as a potential scholar.

> I feel very lucky, because again, being inside the academy, you have access to great scholars. It was really the women scholars that shaped and really made me question what exactly what I was doing, and what I could do. It was my mentors,

> A and Z, who at CSBU, a brilliant scholar as well, who really challenged me, and got me thinking of a potential Ph.D. (Ximena, *plática*, June 2, 2018)

She continues to state that because of the location of her office in the Ethnic Studies building, she was exposed to the research, conversations, and scholarship ethnic studies students were pursuing and she found herself deeply interested in Ph.D. programs. "I was in the ethnic studies building, so I had access to Native American studies, Chicano studies, and it was our collaborations through the social justice initiatives that I was seeing everything that other scholars were doing." Being exposed to scholarship in ethnic studies, gender studies, and feeling seen and supported by Femtors of Color pursuing social justice research critically impacted her desire to do more and advance her own studies, which led her to apply to multiple programs and land in New Mexico, where her older sister had completed a graduate program.

Fem/Mentors: Making *Movidas*

Like Ximena, Ceci experienced similar exposures to ethnic studies and the importance of gender reflected onto her own identity and how it shaped her desires at the time to pursue the professorate. Ceci's sense of belonging and visibility took shape when she took a course with a Chicana professor. This professor taught Chicana literatures, spirituality, and spiritual activism in humanities. Here we see how the powerful tools of visibility and belonging grasped Ceci's sense of existence as an agent of change and critically shaped her current life passion and work as a writer on spiritualties within literary works and write about them as well. From Ceci's trajectory, seeing a Chicana professor (also reflected in her own image as a brown Chicana) teaching Chicana Feminist Theory was a "shock" to her: "It blew my mind . . . . I didn't know you could teach this or do this for a living." Considering that Ceci seldom saw and read literatures of People of Color, much less Women of Color literatures taught by Women of Color, she was overjoyed to have had a Chicana like herself as her professor. It is important to address

how she initially did not see herself as a Ph.D. student or a professor until she saw a "Chicana professor" teaching Chicana Feminist Theory. Ceci affirms how impactful a "Chicana professor" who can "teach" as a career is like a "dream," "unreachable" but possible. As we have seen in Chapter One, the educational trajectory of Chicanas toward the professorate is scarce, where 0.2 out of 100 (Perez Húber et al., 2015) will earn a Ph.D., the required degree to become a professor at a UC system.

> [J]ust thought it was like a dream, like that's so cool that someone could do that as a career, and you could be, *I could be* a professor, a Chicana professor and teach . . . . It was through seeing this Chicana professor, and then my other professor helping me, and his specialty was in Chicana literature, and he was from the English department. (Ceci, *plática*, April 21, 2017)

She clearly makes this distinction between "seeing" a Chicana professor teach, and a Chicano professor write her letters of recommendation for the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellows Research Program, that she felt less invisible and was made to feel important. Ceci describes seeing a Chicana teaching in Chicana and Chicano Studies as a dream to become a professor teaching Chicana Literatures. Likewise, Ceci mentions receiving support and help from her Chicano professor to enter a research program, which she was grateful for receiving. The difference in her receiving support at the college level seems a bit of a surprise for her, being that she received no academic support or encouragement at the high school level. It can be argued that this shows the importance of retaining and supporting Women of Color in higher education and pursue graduate degrees and seeing themselves reflected in positions of power.

Conclusion

As mentioned before, Motherscholars like Libertad, Xochitl, Luna, Ceci, and Ximena describe Ethnic Studies, other Women of Color, and Social Justice work as encouraging them in direct and indirect ways to pursue a college degree, complete their degrees, and highly consider

graduate school, in particular Ph.D. programs. Ceci describes the encouragement of male mentors who supported her pursuit of research programs and apply to Ph.D. programs as an undergraduate student and at the time a pregnant first-generation Motherscholar. Libertad mentions the support of femtors and other Motherscholars supporting her research and encourage her to apply to Ronald E. McNair and pursue a Ph.D. Xochitl describes the free labor of femtors who went to her high school and provided academic support but also informal exposure to race and ethnic studies. She attended a youth conference at UCLA, where she learned of her Guatemalan history and *cultura*, coupled with the exposure of feminisms and ethnic studies that gave her language and agency to grow into her transformative identity. For Luna, it was Rosa, another Chicana from California she met as an undergraduate that she finally befriended in her remedial courses and persuaded her to move to Utah, apply for her M.A. and remain enrolled for her Ph.D.

We also see the importance of programs in place like EOP&S, Mellon Mays, Ronald E. McNair, and MEChA play a pivotal role in encouraging and assist other Students of Color, in particular Women of Color, pursue higher education degree, consider research and Ph.D. degrees. These programs and their initiatives are to support first-generation college students, and they have a long-term lasting effect reaching beyond the students they serve. It encompasses a life-changing opportunity that informs the will and drive for Motherscholars mentioned above to pay it forward. Through the data mentioned above, Ethnic Studies became central to their own development and consciousness building – including the ways they name marginalization as a first-generation, Women of Color in the U.S. and in college. We will see in Chapter Six how their exposure to Ethnic Studies in learning about their own history and identity shape their response to the different types of marginalization experienced at the Ph.D. level. Ethnic studies

as reflected in this chapter serve as a tool to tackle and enact active and inactive forms of spiritual activism in the classroom (a commitment to others), as organizers, as *maestras,* as writers. We will see in Chapter Six how values take shape and form as they engage in their doctoral program as Motherscholars in the ways they mother, teach, or produce research and become involved in different forms of activism as parenting scholars. The data in the next chapters clearly outlines the commonality weaving the experiences between all: These women pay it forward as a commitment to social justice work, whether in their scholarship, in the way they mentor and femtor, and the jobs they desire to pursue. This is an act of *spiritual activism*, as a social call to act by understanding the interrelatedness with all parts our community

Likewise, the data shows how what these Motherscholars derive from a legacy of othermothers, their own kin mothers, and femtors and other Women of Color, have nurtured them in non-traditional ways. As shown above, and as exposed in the literature, othermother work disrupts that nuclear and at times dichotomous expectation of what motherhood and Motherwork looks like. For example, it was with the help of an elder *abuelita*'s othermotherwork and othermothers that Ceci carved space for her and her baby to begin and finish her Ph.D. journey at USC. It highlights the importance of mentors, femtors, family kin, and other People of Color who have funds of knowledge who pay it forward. It includes sacrifice of separation from their mothers to be supported as they make hard choices to leave for college. There are mentions of nurturance, mentoring, and femtoring, something most of them received at some point in their educational trajectories. These acts of microaffirmations are important for these *mujeres* to continue on but also is reflected in their own goals to support, pay it forward, and advocate for others like themselves while surviving. Per the literatures on othermotherwork, often times, for Women and People of Color, it is about survival. As we read

above, Ceci's resilience is a form of resistance that embraces her survival and the survival of her son.

Early educational experiences have shown to go hand in hand with the ways in which student feel seen and validated but also, unseen and invalidated. These experiences inform how students, in particular first-generation Women of Color, experience educational spaces. There is no denying that Women of Color bodies become markers for discrimination, stereotypes, and certain expectations while in school. In this chapter, I focused on the ways in which co-madres experience visibility and invisibility and the power of feeling and being seen as a form of survivance that elevates Women of Color to thrive and *sobresalir*. Despite feeling erased and invisible, these mujeres, pushed forward beyond what is "expected" of them. To *sobresalir*, is to resist and challenge the systemic structures pressing violence to erase. To *sobresalir* is also a part of *sobrevivir*, it is required in order to survive for the sake of their children and the next seven generations.

CHAPTER SIX: MATERNAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

The Spooks in the Hallways of the Ivory Tower

Autohistoria Vignette #2

> [A]cknowledging how race, racism, and sexism work, I began to see and experience firsthand how I was being treated as a pregnant person at the university. And it came from people who were my colleagues and who I trusted. I shared with them that I was pregnant, and these questions came afterward, "Well, was it planned?" "What are you going to do now?" "Are you going to drop out of the Ph.D. program?" In society, we're told and trained that we don't have children while you're studying, so it's like when the fuck do you have children if you're studying for the rest of your life, right? (Christine, *reflexión*, May 25, 2018)

Introduction

In this above *autohistoria,* I share my first encounter with *maternal microaggressions* as a pregnant and soon-to-be Motherscholar. I define maternal microaggressions as everyday encounters with racism and sexism at the crux of motherhood and student status. These interactions include long-term physiological, mental, and emotional lasting effects by the receiver. Reflecting on my interaction, I recall how scared I was when I found out I was pregnant. I was not expecting to have children at all or that soon into my doctoral program. However, I made an important choice for myself and with my partner (another doctoral student) to have a baby and remain enrolled as a full-time doctoral student and continue my work as a graduate student researcher. Mustering all of my courage, I decided to do both—I became a mother *and* a scholar. All the while, I confronted questions and shrugs about my transformative and upcoming status as a parent in a university setting. I recall showing my colleagues the image of my ultrasound, nervous and excited. The question "Well, was it planned?" has deeply remained in my psyche and often informs my imposter syndrome, and the imposter syndrome of other Motherscholars in the academy. However, as it is taught in mindfulness and spiritual healing, rage can easily transform into passion and drive and alchemize instances of pain to

moments for growth. My internalized rage around "shaming" and questioning my own status in academia as a doctoral student is what turned into my dissertation, my parenting advocacy efforts on my own campus, and the publication of several journals and a book re-centralizing Motherscholars, particularly Motherscholars of Color.

In this chapter, I focus on how the everyday experiences of maternal microaggression occur and recounted by Motherscholar students in academic spaces. I begin refreshing us with the tenets of the *Chicana Maternalista Matrix* and the research question of focus. I continue by offering data collected through my consultation work providing workshops on perceptions and stereotypes of Motherscholars in colleges and universities in California and Colorado. Lastly, I move on to define maternal microaggressions that I have woven with *pláticas* collected. In the data below, I illustrate how intersectional identities as a first-generation, low-income, Chicana, Latina or Indigenous Motherscholar student engage with the impact of microaggression based on their shifting status as parents. Academic spaces, for this study, means university settings such as libraries, office hours, lectures halls, organizational meetings, interactions with peers, colleagues, faculty, and staff. As a refresher, I am providing five tenets of *Critical Maternalistas Matrix*:

1. Centralize race, ethnicity, gender, and motherhood experiences of Chicanas and Latinas enrolled in doctoral programs;

2. Illuminate the lived experiences of first-generation Chicana Latina doctoral Motherscholars;

3. Debunk deficit stereotypes of pregnant and or parenting Chicanas Latinas in doctoral programs;

4. Highlight the missing data in the educational pipeline of where pregnant and/or parenting Chicanas Latinas are leaked/left out; and

5. Acknowledge the often-erased narratives of Chicana Latina doctoral Motherscholars who *sobresalen* [thrive] in the academy.

Therefore, I highlight **Tenet 1 of the *Critical Maternalistas Matrix***, centralizing race, ethnicity, gender, motherhood, and student status among other intersecting identities. And I elaborate further on my Research Question 2: ***How do the intersecting identities of race, class, gender, motherhood, and student status impact first-generation Motherscholars?*** Using Tenet 1 with Research Question 2 allows me to illustrate how intersecting identities, along with assets and strengths for underserviced Communities of Color and Mothers, can function to target them and further face marginalization and prejudice of erasures by peers, faculty, and other members of the academic community. Marginalization (Collins, 1994; hooks, 1984; Solórzano & Perez-Huber, 2019), is (define it). Experiences of marginality manifest into racial and gendered microaggressions. However, centralizing motherhood, pregnancy, parenthood, and student status at that center names truth to power and debunks dangerous stereotypes of Motherscholars of Color. Based on my data, four years of ethnographic studies with Motherscholars of Color in the field, I contribute to this field what I identify as "maternal microaggressions," (please see Chapter Four for definition) which are everyday acts of racism and sexism on the basis of parenting, pregnancy or maternal status. Maternal microaggressions can be verbal and nonverbal forms of discrimination imbedded in everyday conversations, in everyday spaces. In my data analysis, I hope to illustrate the different forms of marginalizing experiences Motherscholar of Color have experienced during their time enrolled in doctoral programs. It is critical to understand that these experiences are not limited to doctoral programs. They happen throughout their educational pathways.

I use this example from my conversation with Alba while eating oatmeal and drinking freshly brewed *cafecito* at my kitchen table on the morning of her interview. As a reminder,

Alba is the mother of two beautiful children she had during her graduate studies at Southern California University (SCU). Alba recounts her experience learning she was pregnant as a master's degree student considering SCU for her Ph.D. or a Ph.D. from an institute in New Mexico. Since Alba is Chicana Pasqua Yaqui, New Mexico would be returning home. Alba is waiting for class to begin when she overhears a conversation from her peers as they express their opinions or "gossip" about a pregnant graduate student also considering SCU for a Ph.D.

> I remember in one of our classes, there was . . . this student who had her Master's, but she was sitting in for the Ph.D. program. [She] wanted to get a feel for it. She was very pregnant . . . very, very pregnant (laughs). [S]o she was trying to decide if this was something she wanted to apply for the following year. And she would only come here and there. [S]he wasn't really enrolled, and I would hear . . . comments from other students like, "Oh, she's not here today". . . "I wonder if she had the baby" or "Why is she even in the program?" . . . "Why is she trying to get in the program if you're gonna have kids. Like, none of the faculty have kids." I remember thinking, I don't think that's true. I think that faculty do have kids. Maybe they just don't talk about it, right? (Alba, *plática*, May 11, 2017)

Alba recounts bearing witness to the conversations as students gossiped about the "pregnant person," in particular a woman and Person of Color, seeking opportunities beyond the master's degree. This prospective student was eight months pregnant, while Alba was only a few weeks pregnant. The difference consisted that Alba was not yet showing, and the other mother had no choice as her body was "showing" and changing. These side conversations silenced Alba to reveal her changing status as a soon-to-be Motherscholar. As a bystander witnessing these comments, impacted how Motherscholars felt about herself causing shame, silence, and erasure. "Why is she trying to get in the program if you're trying to have kids" is an assumption that mothers who choose to parent while in the academy should not consider both. Is it that women should not engage in the academy and "give up" and "drop out" to maintain the responsibility of the household and raising children? Engrained in heteropatriarchal division of labor is women belonging in the "private" sphere and not in the public one like the university

setting. Alba experienced what authors in Cisneros et al. (2019) mention in their collaborative publication, *Mothers of Color in Academia: Fierce Mothering Challenging Spatial Exclusion Through a Chicana Feminist Praxis*. They state, "we shared dichotomous experiences of (in)visibility as pregnant-presenting individuals on campus. Our bodies were sites of discrimination and negative stereotypes; we felt the assumptions made by our peers and professors about our perceived lack of commitment to the academy . . . " (p. 290). It is clear that these assumptions are sexist, racist, and discriminatory. Private choices in public spaces are loaded with a competitive nature to "push out" parenting students to the margin. The same collective explain how physical spaces excludes bodies from the academy and contribute to maternal microaggressions.

Severe forms of discriminatory exclusion include structural and institutional settings in spaces students (and the overall academic community) frequent such as classrooms, offices, libraries, restrooms (and other campus locations). These locations have been named by all of my participants to have marginalized them and excluded them, and they even have been asked to leave them. Campus spaces constantly remind us of who is "invited" to frequent these locations and who is "excluded." Co-authors of Mothers of Color in Academia use a Chicana Feminist Praxis, Spatial Entitlement, and the *rasquache* aesthetic (Delgado Bernal et al., 2006; Johnson, 2013; and Mesa-Bains, 1999 as cited in Cisneros, 2019) to address the different ways the university excludes Motherscholars at campuses, in particular a public institution in Southern California. These forms of exclusion include and are not limited to access to legally abiding and state mandated lactation rooms, changing tables, ramps for strollers and others who need access buildings and most importantly, child care facilities, "before entering the university setting, WOC have shared histories of spatial immobilization, and we argue that within the institutional

setting, MOCs continue to face persistent spatial immobilization, whereby, for example, they are excluded from access to on-campus childcare facilities" (p. 294). As evidenced in research, microaggressions lead to health conditions and mental health impacts. For many of the first-generation Motherscholars in this study, these maternal microaggressions feed imposter syndrome. Imposter syndrome was coined by researchers Pauline Clance and Suzanne Imes at Georgia State University in 1978. "These psychologists observed that some high achieving individuals have a secret sense that they can't live up to others' expectations. Instead of seeing their failures and mistakes as performance feedback, they deeply personalize them" (Sherman, 2012, p. 2). I argue that all of the mothers in this study are high achieving, hence parenting as an identity further informs their own expectations, leading to imposter syndrome, which can cause depression, anxiety, and burnout.

Maternal Mental Health

Xochitl explains the mental health issues she faced her first year after giving birth and beginning her doctoral studies as we both watched our toddlers play T-ball.

> [Baby Milagro] was a surprise . . . and that was really hard. I struggled throughout the first year and even the summer after my first year trying to be competitive. Trying to stay committed, trying to be productive while I'm fucking sleep deprived. I ended up having panic attacks and these mental health issues. And then [Milagro] was a surprise. (Xochitl, *plática*, (May 22, 2017)

Xochitl says her struggle with academia and being a mother were very hard, given the difficulty in adjusting to new roles as both a parent and a student. The pressures of both are difficult to balance, because to be a "good" student, the student needs to be actively "competitive," "committed," and "productive," all while a new Motherscholar is "sleep-deprived" as a parent caring for an infant. Academic expectations feed the overshadowing guilt and shame of parenting students who desire an equitable opportunity as their non-parenting colleagues.

Graduate students are also sleep-deprived, staying up to complete readings and assignments, and remaining on task with the academic demands. I want to be careful in that reading what Xochitl expresses in the difficulty to manage both, systemic policies in place like parental leave is limited. Most parents only have six weeks off for parental leave and are required to return to work or school. The onus should not fall onto the parenting student, but rather the institution to have in place equitable parental leave, affordable and timely accessible daycare, and mental health providers to help parenting students on campus. Next, I address how maternal microaggressions impacted Xochitl through an aggressive comment left by her professor, who knew she was a parent.

> This is my first semester in a Ph.D. program. At the end of the semester, she gives me back my final paper and it's a B . . . she wrote this on the paper . . . "I don't know if you're tired because you're pregnant, but I decided to be generous with your grade." (Xochitl, *plática*, May 22, 2017)

I argue that these forms of marginalizing microaggressions heavily impact student success in programs, as we have seen in Chapter Five, which in turn highlights the importance of femtors/mentors to affirm their importance. The comment written in Xochitl's final paper is a painful archive capturing the thoughts that impact students deeply, scarring them and questioning their own sense of belonging and success. Instances such as these can deeply push students out from their academic journeys, in particular with low numbers of Ph.D. degrees attained by Chicanas and Latinas. I believe Motherscholars, parenting students, and first-generation and low-income students generally need on-campus support systems and programs with resources to ensure the academic success of their own pursuits and that of their children. Therefore, I urge educators, administration, staff, and others in all fields—especially social justice fields like American Studies and those focused on race and ethnicity—to rethink and rewire bias and

hurtful microaggression that do not motivate, but rather foster imposter syndrome as we read in the above from Xochitl.

(Re)framing and Challenging Notions of the Maternal Identity

As an academic community, our task is my call to action to *rethink, reconsider, and challenge* how we ourselves internalize racist and sexist assumptions of performance, success, and life choices against academic aspirations of Motherscholars of Color. Ceci reminds us of the importance of collective work for resistance because marginalizing Motherscholars causes long-term harm. Below, I highlight Ceci's analysis on how Maternal Microaggression at the intersections of race, class, and motherhood. Maternal Microaggressions have long-term effects on the everyday lives navigating the institution feeding imposter syndrome.

> I don't want anyone else to feel alone or ashamed, especially for low-income or poor [mothers] because that's been a big part of me . . . Single moms [are] dealing with the lack of financial resources, not able to afford childcare. Kinda feeling that internalized shame or guilt, or whatever it is. To know that they're not the only one and we can do what we want with our bodies in (laughs) these institutions. And, you know, and even if we're poor, so what? You know, we still have choices and dignity. (Ceci, *plática*, April 21, 2017)

Ceci names the aftermath as a result of maternal microaggressions, particularly those experienced by Women of Color. Aligned with imposter syndrome, the results are similarly expressed by Motherscholars including and not limited to isolation, shame, poverty, going without daycare/childcare, anxiety, stress, and depression.

Systemically, I argue these conditions are a systemic result of a capitalistic heteropatriarchal machine imitating Motherscholar pursuits to higher education. I argue that the internalization of shame and isolation, although very much part of the toxic academic experience, feeds imposter syndrome and can seesaw the *ganas* to continue. She ends the above excerpt with the following closing statement: "I see it like not feeling alone but using [it and]

trying to cultivate collectivity . . . like through Chicana M(other)work." Ceci explains that in order for Motherscholars to succeed, not only do we need resources, financial support, and supportive and encouraging femtors/mentors, we need each other. Chicana M(other)work is a collective of five Chicanas with advanced degrees and children. This collective was created through a collective dream to transform the academy. It was a maternal othermotherwork labor to feel visible, and at the crux of a political climate very much anti-woman for reproductive rights and justice, liberation, and choice. Motherscholars need collective Motherwork to see each other's success through the violent repression of academic space. Ceci argues for the important of collective resistance, sisterhood, motherhood, and othermothering vital to the existence and success of Motherscholars in Academia. "Cultivating" relationships stemming from moments of marginalization gives rise to a form of "survivance" that removes us from the painful edges of the margins to the center together.

Paloma is a fierce Chicana-Chapina Motherscholar activist enrolled in a public flagship institution in ethnic studies in Southern California. When I visited Paloma for the interview in early 2017, she had just given birth to her second baby. She was at home in recovery. I have known Paloma for a number of years, and I volunteered to clean around her house, prep her snacks for the remainder of her *cuarentena* [40 days of post-partum care]. I worked on infusing her sanitary napkins with a special herbal remedy with witch hazel, which I would repackage and freeze for her use. This was my commitment to *othermotherwork* in helping her while she lent me her time while her baby rested before his next feeding. Newborn babies feed every hour to two hours, and I needed to consciously work during my time with Paloma. I offered to reheat her food one of her sisters prepared for Paloma. She invited me to join her for lunch, and we ate an exquisite "milk-producing" meal together. After our meal, Paloma began to share her painful

testimonio, beginning with numerous migration instances of family, the economic hustle of her father, and her non-linear journey into a doctoral program. Paloma dropped out of high school by tenth grade. She felt her K-12 education was a miseducation after coming back to the U.S. Paloma states that her miseducation led her to make a decision, she is forever proud of. Her decision was to *not* get a GED after struggling with a bad K-12 schooling trajectory.

> [I] dropped out of high school and started going to community college. And then I never got a GED because my whole high school experience was a miseducation, you know? And even going back farther like middle school. Elementary school. Since I moved to the U.S. So, I just didn't want to validate that educational experience and I never wanted to get a GED or a high school diploma. . . . [Community college] is way better than high school. Like, that bad. I'm never going back to high school. (Paloma, *plática*, May 15, 2017)

Paloma says her K-12 miseducated her, and she left her schooling all together when she was 16. Instead, through a concurrent enrollment program, she registered into community college in Washington state. She took courses in sociology and anthropology, developing a deep interest in those fields.

After three years, Paloma applied and was enrolled at Southern University North (SUN). When she graduated SUN, Paloma moved to California to attend a public university for a master's degree in anthropology. Paloma then went for a Ph.D. in ethnic studies in Southern California, thanks to the mentorship of a veteran professor in Chicana/o studies at SUN. Paloma did not have children at the time of her earlier academic trajectories. She had her first pregnancy during her second year of the Ph.D. program; her baby was born during her third year. She had her second baby during her fifth year of the Ph.D. program. Below, we will read through her experiences as a pregnant presenting, and then, Motherscholar.

The power and acknowledgement of Paloma's experience and resistance highlight that young people know what works and does not vis-a-vis her resistance due to her "miseducation" as a young person. In academic literatures, a student "choosing" to drop out can be interpreted in deficit and negative. However, brilliant youth, children, and students like Paloma labeled as "problems," "hyperactive," "deviant," and "disruptive" are showcasing symptoms of disengagement. These deviant stereotypes are labels placed on mostly Black and brown children, or Youth of Color, and criminalized. As we have seen in Chapter Five, Paloma's educational trajectories are inconsistent and are not reflective of her brilliance, talent, or potential. Paloma was pushed beyond deviant expectations to pursue a higher educational degree without a high school diploma or GED. It can be interpreted that Paloma's choice to have a child during her Ph.D. can be read as "deviant," "non-traditional," and "resistant" because she was going against the academic current of a Ph.D. pathway.

Educational pathways are not linear, and in the following, Paloma names her experiences as a pregnant presenting, and then Motherscholar, in academia. Paloma shared the news of her first pregnancy with a Chicana professor surrounded by her peers.

> One of my experiences while I announced my pregnancy in a class, [to] a professor who's not my advisor, response was to say…that children were parasites, and that was such a "Chicanas Feminist" thing for her to say. Because it was such a radical feminist thing because back in the day, in the movement, Chicanas were just expected to have children. So, for her to say that and take that stance, was very feminist of her, you know? (Paloma, *plática*, May 15, 2017)

What Paloma explains above is her interaction with a Chicana professor who was part of the Chicana Liberation movement in the late 1960s. The discourse of this interaction reflects a problematic belief that Paloma was no longer "liberated" by choosing to have a child, in particular in academia. These perceptions, messy and complicated, are deeply weaved into

patriarchal belief systems. What Paloma has done in her choice to birth and mother is her agency, her body liberation, and her ability to birth and or raise Children of Color in the heteropatriarchal institution.

Similarly, Angela Davis (1981) reminds us of the motive of institutional resistance: "For many women of color, choosing to become a mother challenges institutional policy that encourage White, middle-class women to reproduce, and discourage and even penalize low-income racial ethnic women from doing so" (p. 318). Collins continues to remind us that once Women of Color choose to have children, they do not know the outcome of their Children of Color in a world that is cruel. To exist is a revolutionary act of love, survival, and perseverance. Paloma and her children embody this resistance, painfully making her the target of maternal microaggressions.

Paloma continues to share this first incident as vulnerable by sharing intimate news with whom she assumed would be a supportive ally. These everyday erasures shifted her views of academia. These erasures include the value of individual agency to choose what her liberated *bodymindspirit* desires of private choice in a public institution and continues to deconstruct her feelings from this incident.

> . . . [I]t was just such a strange comment for her to make when I was announcing my pregnancy and everyone else was excited and she made it about this political stance. It was very a big turn off to me. It was also very disheartening. (Paloma, *plática*, May 15, 2017)

Paloma felt disheartened, vulnerable, and upset. To dishearten in this instance means that the receiver of the maternal microaggression loses hope and confidence and feels dispirited and discouraged. That comment translated to Paloma that she was being told her unborn child was an "organism," dehumanizing her unborn baby. It erased Paloma's agency as a grown woman making a conscious choice to bring a child into the world. Maternal microaggression – and any

kind of microaggression—feeds imposter syndrome for first-generation Chicanas, Latinas, or Indigenous women in college. In the U.S., maternal microaggressions and imposter syndrome have long-lasting effects for vulnerable communities, in particular pregnant women with fear, feeling incompetent, and anxiety among other symptoms. Silencing interaction such as these left Paloma feeling precautionary and unsafe when she planned for her second pregnancy. Long-term effects left Paloma with feelings such as "negative energy." She felt that the negative comments were a "hex" causing her "stress" and putting her "life at risk." Although energy "cannot" be scientifically measured, physiological and mental impacts are real and produce long-term effects for an individual as the receiver of energy. Dr. Deepak Chopra (2019), a medical doctor and alternative medicine expert, shares the physiological impacts of negative energy in *6 Pathways to Remove Negative Energy from Your Mind and Body*:

> Negativity can make you feel heavy, dark, and gloomy; feel emotionally reactive and defensive; and view the world through a mixed filter of fear, anger, and paranoia. Since your mind and body are so deeply intertwined, mental and emotional negativity also has a physical counterpart: tense muscles, shallow breathing, increased blood pressure, elevated levels of adrenalin and cortisol—all the tell-tale signs of the stress response hard at work.

Below, Paloma continues to share her physiological, emotional response to the above interactions with the Chicana professor and another interaction with a professor within her department who presents as a cis-male.

> They put me in such a bad emotional state…a state of vulnerability, and I was a little bit more than halfway through my pregnancy, like five months around the time when I decided to come out about my pregnancy. Within a week, I got into two car accidents. And both were while I was leaving or going to school. I felt like it was because that negative energy they put out there on me that I was carrying…[A]ll of this negativity caused me to have so much stress and it put . . . my life at risk. (Paloma, *plática*, May 15, 2017)

Paloma identifies disclosing her pregnancy as a "coming out" process. She was received with unexpected negativity and shamed during a vulnerable state of being pregnant. It took her

five months to share she was pregnant with her committee. Despite Paloma advancing to candidacy at the same time as her cohort mates in her fifth year of doctoral studies, she faced a unique layer of harassment and shame. As a reminder, often times, at five months or more, pregnant people begin show. It becomes difficult to "hide" a physical pregnancy. Her choice to "hide" was an informed choice to protect herself and avoid shaming, harassment, and negativity. Below, Paloma continues to rationalize waiting five months (beyond halfway) to share her status as a pregnant Motherscholar for a second time.

> [W]hen I was about five months, I did tell my advisor because she was a woman who had children . . . I did start to tell people in my committee . . . but for the most part, I just stayed away from campus. I didn't tell the administrators . . . because I didn't want their negativity. Their negative comments. And their negative, just energy and harassment. People are already putting on me, "Oh, you're falling behind. You're not where a fifth-year student should be." So, I didn't want to open up anymore conversations like that. (Paloma, *plática*, May 15, 2017)

Similar to Paloma, Xochitl explains her *resistance* against faculty in her program that caused her much pain, including mental health issues and depression. For example, when Xochitl completed her Ph.D., her department was "celebrating" the culminating class and Xochitl, who walked with her two daughters, refused to participate in the American studies celebrations. Below we read her excerpt:

> Because my department is American studies and ethnicity [program], it's predominantly Faculty of Color. It's people who talk about social justice in their writing. It's people who can deconstruct race and racism and gender and like all these other things and nonetheless they constantly made comments and did things that prohibited me from feeling empowered in my education. I think that was/is not OK with me, you know? I refused to pretend that what they did was OK. [W]hen I graduated, the department has a celebration and all the graduates are supposed to go back to the department and have cake and champagne . . . I didn't go. I was the only one who didn't go. And I was like, "Ask my why." "I dare you." You want me to stand here in a room full of people who have been nothing but hostile to me as a parent? The very few people who did support me, which was primarily my committee, they're not even here. So why would I . . . go? (Xochitl, *plática*, May 22, 2017)

This recollection from Xochitl illustrates how race, racism, sexism, and maternal phobia in academy is pervasive and painful. Xochitl's refusal to participate in a culminating space with her two daughters was her political and motherly instinct to protect herself and her two daughters. She did not want to bring her young daughters to a "hostile" "celebration" among faculty who did "social justice" but behaved otherwise. Xochitl's testimonio is an example of heteropatriarchal sexist, racist everyday systems of oppression. For Xochitl, who had both her daughter and was pregnant during all of her Ph.D. training, left a long-lasting effect on her *bodymindspirit* by making a choice to parent while in the academy. In no way would she expose her daughters to the fallacy of a celebratory space. She took her power and stood strong in resisting her own department in the face of protecting herself and her children.

"Through a legal standpoint, Title IX law (1972), protects pregnant and or parenting students from discrimination enrolled in any private of public institution in the U.S. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 ("Title IX"), is a Federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex—including pregnancy and parental status—in educational programs and activities" (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Protection includes all private and public institutions that are federally funded. Despite these laws in place, and the required trainings on Title IX at the university on a yearly basis, professor, faculty, and staff, including peers, discriminate against, harass, and shame pregnant and parenting students. Therefore, this pushes parenting students to the shadows, or the margins to hide their identity. This impact is clearly gendered, as cis women or trans parents face this unique discrimination physically. Although "legally" protected to not face discrimination, Paloma chose to not step onto campus. The university and her department became a location of negativity she tried to avoid throughout her pregnancy. These experiences critically shaped Paloma to stand up for herself and say

"enough." In Chapter Seven, we see the spiritual activist role Paloma fostered as a campus organizer fighting for parenting rights.

Everyday *Movidas*: Chicana Latina Mothers as Liminal *Nepantleras*

Ximena walks us through her experience as a student with a new baby while completing coursework. Below, she describes motherhood as beautiful, and her everyday *movidas* is hustling with her baby as an enrolled doctoral student. Ximena did not have daycare at the time of her interview. Her partner was working out of the country as well.

> Motherhood is such a beautiful experience, but also an overwhelming experience. I think it's very undermined in academia, and any profession really. I feel very lucky, one, because I'm able to take him to class. I apologize to other students and the professor for him interrupting. Some people like to have him there. He used to kind of make his rounds of getting hugged and helping mom out or sleeping in someone else's hands. He's on the wait list for the childcare, which is more than three years' wait, and that's one of the hardest things, not having your family around, and two, that putting a burden on someone else. Financially, I can't afford babysitters, one because his dad just started, he just got his work permit, and so financially I've been the breadwinner. Undergraduate stipend. So, it's been rough in terms of navigating the academy. (Ximena, *plática*, June 4, 2018)

Ximena, a doctoral student in a public institution in New Mexico, faces similar timeframes to access daycare at her institution. She and her baby have to wait at least three years to get placement at her institution. This is not the first time Motherscholars have been confronted with on-campus marginalization without proper and affordable daycare access. This particular on-campus daycare offers a discount depending on the number of credits the undergraduate or graduate student is taking. For example, in order to have the child enrolled full time, it would be 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday for infants. Infants are 6 weeks to 11 months. Most campuses provide parental leave for six weeks, the age of the infant to enter into daycare facilities at this institution. The monthly costs vary from $1,127 (enrolled at 5%), $1,068 (enrolled at 10%), or $890 (enrolled at 25%). Faculty and staff pay a total of $1,186 a

month. The cost to care for older children varies from $1,155 to $757 a month. Daycare is detrimental to the academic success of Motherscholars and parenting scholars in general.

Ximena refuses to be pushed out of her academic career, therefore, she brings her infant to her classes while she teaches. Daycare for Ximena means "navigating the academy" and making *movidas*, or hustling to take her infant to classes with her. Preparing herself to participate while caring for her child during the time she is in class. In addition to her status as a student, Ximena needs to continue working as a graduate student researcher and consider taking her child to her sessions. She is the main breadwinner to her household. It is clear that access to affordable and available daycare not in place to support parenting students is marginalizing, specifically when students like Ximena are out of state. Lacking institutional access to daycare is a form of marginalization that adheres to the push-out culture of Motherscholars of Color who face the intersections of race, class, gender, and motherhood every day. Below, she explains the different interactions in her *movidas* in spaces she does not feel she and her baby do not belong such as libraries or class settings.

> Even now, people smile, or people are already taken aback. Or, feeling that I can't go into certain spaces, like the library for example. Because if he cries, everyone's staring at you. That's totally normal, they cry. In a way, it feels restrictive. For instance, I have to go to the archives, and you have to be quiet, and here I am with a baby, sorry. Or in class, that he's like that, is his normal, and professors are lecturing. There are students that would turn around and be like (stare and give an ugly face). And I would have to walk out of the class. It's only fair right, because they're paying their tuition not to hear a baby cry. At the same time, I was like, this is an institution that needs to be more inclusive, and this is part of it. It doesn't matter that he comes to class. (Ximena, *plática*, June 02, 2018)

We see the dichotomous as *nepantlera* split of Ximena bringing her baby to class, the library, or even the archives. It is clear her baby does not belong in certain spaces. As first-generation Chicanas, we are already aware of where "we do not belong" in the first place in the

Ivory Tower. However, in the last 60 years or so, the fight for educational access, in particular for Chicanas and Latinas in the U.S., continues to reflect through the different experiences of marginality at universities. We see the everyday choices Ximena makes to come into restrictive spaces such as quiet locations like the library and archives and bring her baby, so she too can participate in her learning. At times she apologizes, and other times she leaves the space. We bring our babies into academic spaces out of necessity because access has been denied or restricted. Therefore, as we move forward in academia, as first-generation women, we confront head on the "no you do not belong here" with resistance and refusal, even when we take on the energetic marginalization, the stares, the White gazes to remove ourselves and our child from the heteropatriarchal location of the academic classroom or space.

Strength and Struggle in the Liminal 3rd Space: Motherscholar Negotiations

As we read in Chapter Five, Libertad had given birth to her first child when she was 16 and in tenth grade of high school. She gave birth to her second and third babies her second year and fourth year at UCLA, respectively. She recalls how difficult it was for her to negotiate her identity and the academic space as a new student. Libertad faced the overwhelming feelings of entering the university as a Motherscholar to a baby and the heavy demand in STEM. When she discusses "doubt," she means navigating the academic terrains she felt when she was admitted and reaching her completion goals. She questions her ability to move through her program and complete her degree, especially remembering the "overwhelming" feeling when she began her first year at UCLA.

> I always like doubted how am I going to get there and how am I going to get through it? Since day one, it was very overwhelming. I feel like UCLA was more prominent, to be like a Chicana. First walking in with [my] son and then walking around…pregnant my second year and my fourth year at UCLA. There was a lot of struggling; it was hard. It was hard to be pregnant and then have the

> babies and still go back, you know, never stopped. (Libertad, *plática*, May 15, 2018)

Libertad struggled at UCLA while multitasking with pregnancy once she was admitted as a freshman. And also, when she became pregnant a second and third time. She talks about the difficulty shown as self-doubt on how she would complete her education. She recognizes UCLA as a campus that is a bit more inclusive of Chicanas given the location in Los Angeles. Latinas/os and Chicanas/os make up 22% (UCLA Admissions, 2019) or what they label under the umbrella "Hispanic" demographics as enrolled undergraduates and graduate students. Although UCLA has been growing largely in enrollment of Chicanas/os and Latinas/os, there is limited to no visibility for pregnant or parenting students on campus. She continues by describing her struggle" and her ongoing schooling to finish school while raising three children.

> School never stopped. I never took a summer off. I never stopped working. I never, I never stopped. I had to keep going, so that was a struggle for me to keep going. Mothering already, like my son and then another one and another one. It was tough to get through it. Because schooling already was hard, [and] I had to take care of others. (Libertad, *plática*, May 15, 2018)

Libertad's struggle is labor we often do not see. Her schooling "never stopped" means Libertad, who was in the quarter system, was taking courses year-round. She was enrolled in a quarterly course of 10 weeks three times during the academic year, and in six-week increments during the summer. Intersectional identities such as that of Libertad are complicated. As a full-time, student, Libertad is taking courses like all of her peers. She has to attend lectures and sections with her T.A.s. during the day and perhaps evenings. Most children, if they are accepted into daycare facilities at the university, are in Early Care as early as 6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. at a campus like UCLA. For undergraduates (at the time) like Libertad, course may have been only offered in the evening. This motherhood layer makes it difficult for her to catch a "break." Libertad, like many parenting students, needs to remain enrolled full time in order to qualify for

financial aid. Enrollment also means they qualify to keep their children in Early Care. To stop was not an option for Libertad. Instead, she "struggled" through it, pushed beyond. This type of *movida* [hustle], is detrimental for the survival of her family, herself, and the academic dream to move beyond a B.A. In addition, Libertad was a McNair Scholar, which means she was conducting research in addition to her regular B.A. requirements, prepare for the GRE and apply to graduate schools. Motherscholar identity significantly impacts why we "struggle" to *sobresalir* beyond the expectations of ourselves to "take care of others."

While facing struggles, Libertad had to overcome deficit stereotypes and maternal microaggression that were presumed of her, erasing her hustle, her struggle, and her super power. Below, we will read how Libertad addresses these instances as stereotypes she confronted. "You know, there was a lot of …pointing fingers, not only because I was a mom, a **young mom**, but I was a **young mom involved with gangs**." Libertad brings in an additional intersectional identity subjectivity deeply shaping her scholarly work and identity formation, and it allows us to consider how we understand intersectional identity. Layered, her racial, gendered identity is deeply impacted by her other identities as a young mother and gang member enrolled at a university with three children. The struggle includes confronting racialized stereotypes of young motherhood and gang affiliation, leading to deficit expectations of her academic performance and belonging. Libertad returns to a memory of her last days in high school and her determination to confront the stereotype by returning to school two weeks after her first baby was born.

> I kept going to school pregnant . . . two days before I gave birth, I was in high school and I went two weeks in. So . . . people see that, you know, like what I did . . . [and ask] "what is she going to do," right? (Libertad, *plática*, May 15, 2018)

When people ask, "what is she going to do?" insinuates and assumes a Motherscholar cannot possibly do both, be a student and mother. Although it is true that giving birth, post-partum care, and schoolwork are difficult tasks to accomplish at the same time, there's an unmeasurable drive that pushes mothers like Libertad to do all and push herself beyond capacities to succeed. These stereotypes driving them to push beyond their capacity cause stress, pain, and extreme exhaustion linked to what I argue is a response to racial and gendered battle fatigue. These acts of resistance are intended to dissolve deficit stereotypes and expectations society has of Motherscholars like Libertad. Layered within these stereotypes, Libertad had to peel back what was expected of her, in particular because of the fights she was involved as a student.

> So, there was a lot of stereotypes given that . . . I had already been in a lot of fights and riots and things like that. And then, get pregnant. So . . . [I] would hear things and for me, it was like I want to keep going, you know. I think people [think] the world ends, and I don't think it was like that for me. I think my world was brightened when I got pregnant. (Libertad, *plática*, May 15, 2018)

The above statement by Libertad highlights how for her identity formation, she worked on dissolving the stereotype of a gang-affiliated young mother who was involved in campus riots and fights. It added a complex and additional marginal "expectation" of her, deeply rooted in her race, her gang affiliation, and her gender. As we saw in Chapter Five, Libertad's experience changed once she learned she was pregnant. In the above excerpt, we witnessed how her oldest child "brightened" her world. It gave her purpose, life, and love. Although deeply difficult, Libertad shifted her life to make her identities a strength for her. It served to encourage her to demand more of herself, not only for her, but for her children. She makes a clear statement that although many people feel "the world ends" when you get pregnant, it is really a beginning for others.

Similar to expectations of an education "ending" as a student in high school, Xochitl experienced similar fears of "the end of a career" when she found out she was pregnant with her first child. She recalls the conversation she had with her husband over the phone.

> I remember when I called [my husband] and told him that I was pregnant with Milagro, he was like really happy and he was like, "That's awesome. Like we didn't expect that but that's awesome." And I was just like crying because I was like, "You don't understand, like this is the end of my career. Like I can't, how am I going to move forward with this?" (Laughs) (Xochitl, *plática*, May 22, 2017)

The world "ending" resonates because as we saw in the case studies I conducted, the social fabric on monitoring and surveilling young female brown bodies teaches us growing up to not have power or agency of our own bodies. It teaches us that we will "never know" what is best for ourselves or our bodies, as we have seen in the current political climate banning abortions and access to birth control in different states across the U.S. with a deep threat against *Roe v. Wade*. It is used as a tactic by our parents, teachers, and other educators to keep brown female bodies abstinent and not informed. Partially, information should include the choice to parent and the support to do so. As for Libertad, her children and her choice to parent as a high school student, a university undergraduate, and currently a doctoral student pursuing the professorate, plus her intersecting identities, her struggles, and her hustles, is a labor of love, transformation, and agency. In Chapter Seven, we will see how Libertad's transformation journey, highlighting the importance of intersectional identity and the unmeasurable power of *ganas* and *movidas*, continues to push beyond expectations and deficit stereotypes dissolved in her fierce mothering and *chingona* superpowers.

In closing, I want to highlight Xochitl's resistance and refusal to be erased in academic spaces. Xochitl was pressured to take her qualifying exams one month before she went into labor with her second daughter. She had doubts and did not want to schedule her exams before

Maya was born. She could have planned to have taken her exams after Maya was born and spent time preparing for them with calm.

> . . . So that was a really traumatic experience . . . I almost dropped out after that experience of the qualifying exams, but I also feel that like in some ways it made me so angry that I was like, I'm not gonna let them do this to me." You know, if I stay, I'm staying on my own terms, and I'm gonna be as authentic a person as I can be and I'm gonna have a much better work life balance. (Xochitl, *plática*, May 22, 2017)

One committee member did not pass her and she was forced to retake her exams. Because Xochitl was ill-advised and rushed to take her exams when she knew she perhaps should wait, she felt she was set up to fail. The result led her to the brink of almost leaving her program. But it taught her to assert her needs on her own terms and maintain a better work and life balance. This means that she made informed choices to remain true to her needs as a parent and to be clear about boundaries by not allowing the institution to push her out of her doctoral program.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I address the ways in which first-generation Chicana Latina Motherscholars experienced their education journeys once enrolled in doctoral programs. As a reminder, Motherscholars in this study, or co-madres, are the first in the U.S. or in their families to attend a four-year institution, and the first to be enrolled in doctoral programs. The criteria in selecting Motherscholars to participate included Motherscholars who had a child before entering a Ph.D. program, become pregnant, adopt, or become primary caretakers of a baby or child at the time of their enrollment. Likewise, Motherscholars were required to have been enrolled less than a year post-graduation to participate in this study. The goal of this chapter is to focus on how intersecting identities of race, class, gender, and motherhood impact first-generation Chicana Latina Motherscholars enrolled in doctoral degree granting programs in social science and humanity programs in the U.S. Southwest. By means of the data collected via a case study,

pláticas and testimonio, I attempt to address the ways in which Motherscholars experienced their doctoral journeys.

Although not mentioned here as much, a limitation to my work and in the plan for future research, I plan to pursue how "motherhood," "mothering," and "mother" roles shift through a queer, trans, non-binary parenting formations. In this study, three out of the nine Motherscholars identify as queer or gender-nonconforming, however, their sexuality and partner preference was not directly addressed in this study. From my brief discussion with Queer, Trans People of Color, and gender-non confirming folks interested in parenting, their experiences as parents remain different than hetero and cis gender Motherscholars of Color inclusively. The LGTBQ community experiences a complex layer of parenting microaggressions we are slowly uncovering through their conversations and limited publications on parenting as queer and LGTBQ communities in academia. I did not address this further in this study because it did not come out significantly in the data collection. However, the mention of motherhood first derived from Chicana and Black Feminist Queer mothers. Not sure where the gap exists in the current state of Queer Mothering, venturing to unpack what it means to be a queer mother in 2019, in conversation with the Chicana and Black Feminist Movements of the 1960s, '70s, and '80s. There is a disconnect between them all and I argue that Critical Maternal Studies and scholarship is attempting to bring this to the forefront again by queering mothering and parenting, in particular for People and Women of Color.

CHAPTER SEVEN: RESISTANCE, SURVIVANCE, AND RESILIENCE

Bodymindspirit: Acts of Spiritual Activisms for Healing *Heridas*

Autohistoría Vignette #3

> In my activism work as an on-campus student organizer and an off-campus parenting student advocate, I am happy and tired, but happy to see the emerging movement of Motherscholar and parenting student rights movements on my campus. I can say that I have seen the change from invisibility to empowerment as a parenting student. From feeling invisible during my pregnancy to changing policy on my campus alongside my *comadres*, my sisters on this fight. To exist in this brave fight, is to resist. This movement is to honor the land we stand on, but to honor those who were pushed out. To honor even our generations prior, like my momma, who always wanted to go to college and get a degree but had to drop out of high school at 17 because she was pregnant with me. This work is for the seven generations before me and after me, our seeds, our children. And so that other mothers and parenting students no longer have to feel invisible, erased, or marginalized. This is my act of spiritual activism, my maternal activism. (Christine, *reflexión*, May 25, 2018)

In Chapter Seven, I focus on the stories of resistance, survivance, and activism as resilience as identified and defined by Motherscholars in this study. I weave into these findings chapters the importance of *bodymindspirit*, which in unison are informed by our intuition, *saberes*, or knowings (Lara, 2003). Dr. Irene Lara reminds us that academia severs the connection and communication between the *bodymindspirit*. Academic violence has translated into erasures; it dismembers the feminine intuition into the intellectual and spiritual being of individuals. Therefore, in my study I emphasize the ways in which Motherscholars or *comadres* have embodied resistance, survivance, and activism (as seen and defined in Chapter Three) in their everyday lives navigating academia, motherhood, and activism. I apply Tenet 4 of the Critical *Maternalista* Matrix, which is to acknowledge the often-erased narratives of Chicana Latina doctoral Motherscholars who *sobresalen* [thrive] in the academy.

Listening to the Internal Mother: *Saberes* and Intuition

In her chapter "Birth Ceremony" in her book *Red Medicine*: *Traditional Indigenous Rites of Birthing and Healing*, Patrisia Gonzales (2012) shares the importance of the feminine and the mother's body as sacred:

> The mother's body also is a scared realm that aligns with astral beings, such as the moon and Venus, as well as the energies of the four elements on earth: "It's in the mother's womb, but it's also the home womb. That's its place to eat and sleep." The body is an altar. (p. 50)

Gonzales's description of the female body as ceremony and sacred illustrates the power we—as producers of life—carry within us. While pregnant, the sacred female body is a representation of life and death, duality, as well as an altar, a sacred being, a sacred place of prayer, of sustenance, of water, of life. I begin with this quote to illustrate the ways in which Motherscholars embody resistance, survival, and activism with their choices and intentions. Therefore, starting from the place of the feminine sacred body as an altar, I assess the powerful intuition of Motherscholars as they navigate academia.

I open this chapter with Paloma's narrative and her choice to not disclose her pregnancy to anyone within the university because, as we have read in previous chapters, faculty and staff had harassed her for first her pregnancy and she feared the same harassment after becoming pregnant again. The following is Paloma's resistance and choice in listening to her intuition and her sacred body.

> It was a really difficult time and I really felt like they put a curse on me . . . revealing this thing that was joyous to me had actually put me in a very negative and vulnerable state. I was gonna have a second child and when I got pregnant with him . . . I was on fellowship year. I didn't have to teach. I did end up teaching the fall, but I made that decision. I knew my body was pregnant. I knew I wouldn't be showing until six, seven months, even for most people, eight months. There was no reason for me to tell anybody. (Paloma, *plática*, May 15, 2017)

Above, Paloma revealed the painful experience she had had with her first pregnancy and how she was more aware of her own needs throughout her second pregnancy. In particular, Paloma was strategic in her choices to attend the university where she had already experienced maternal microaggressions. Her decision-making in her choices to not teach, or to teach while on fellowship, is a powerful indicator of her agency. Paloma's refusal to share her own pregnancy is agency and resistance. It is tied into survivance, securing her unborn child's safety and safeguarding them from her own previous exposure to negativity and judgment.

On the other hand, other Motherscholars chose to display their pregnancy as empowerment. Ximena talked about the power of the body while pregnant as a way to be "visible in a very different way." She continued: "I would actually feel empowered by it [pregnancy], because motherhood and pregnancy is so powerful. [**W]omen, we're so powerful**, **we give life** and **we give birth**, and this is a reason why we're here. Not the only reason, but yes." Ximena felt that it was important for her pregnancy and identity as a mother to be visible, and I argue that this choice is a political act of resistance and a marker of existence that reminds us that motherhood should not remain in the shadows.

Ximena explained how pregnancy and motherhood prepared her to teach, navigate the classroom, and discuss stigmas and difficult topics because she herself had endured multiple occasions of such as a pregnant-presenting person and Motherscholar in the academy.

> I think, [pregnancy and motherhood] got me ready. Especially teaching in a class, and teaching a lecture, intro to Chicano Studies, and talking about the stigmas, and being placed into boxes. I remember lecturing, and sometimes I'm out of breath, and I would tell the students. "Yes, there's two of us. Forgive me, especially we're at high altitude." But I would also talk to them about it, and they were receptive of that. I said, "Probably you've never pictured a professor or someone in a lecture to be pregnant." But I would make jokes too. It's like, "Just forgive me for being out of breath," and they would smile. I think that also prepared me to be able to carry him on campus after that. I don't feel ashamed. (Ximena, *plática*, June 2, 2018)

This powerful statement by Ximena encapsulates the constant negotiation between making a private matter of motherhood a public choice as resistance. In my eyes, Ximena shows a form of activism that dismantles stigmas, stereotypes, expectations, and deficit notions about who belongs in the classroom as an educator. The dichotomous choices between Paloma and Ximena are both powerful and important examples of choices to resist, protect, and enact agency. Although both are very different choices—one to not discuss their own pregnancy to protect a pregnancy as a Motherscholar, and one to remind students about their status as a pregnant professor—are compelling examples of how Motherscholars enact activism as survivance in the academy.

Ximena continued to share the importance of this consistent resistance as a lecturer, a student, a Motherscholar in the making.

> . . . Navigating those emotions and thoughts, about what is an interruption, versus what is expected, I've managed to keep calm and not feel guilty . . . . Then there is racism. I had this class where I was the only brown person. Three White males, and there's only four of us, another pregnant woman. She was only auditing the class, so she wasn't in the class . . . The professor invited me for the same reason, because I had a baby. There were some remarks in that class from certain students, in terms of financially, that made me feel insecure . . . . In the end I met with the professor privately, and I felt understood, in a different context. Because I said, "We can sit here and talk about jail and gender and crime, but the bottom line is that there's racism, and the system is meant to do that to us. Yes, I'm not supposed to be here, but I'm here, whether you like it or not. (Ximena, *plática*, June 2, 2018)

Ximena described her experience with her course where she was the only brown woman in this small seminar, surrounded by White colleagues and a Motherscholar who was auditing the class. While the class content made her question her place in the academy, working through guilt and shame helped remind Ximena that her own agency and status as a parent were powerful assets as opposed to interruptions. She also used her status as an example of how social expectations try to reinforce brown female bodies.

I see the above narrative as an analysis of the systemic problems of the industrial carceral system moving and caging brown bodies, keeping them out of academic spaces such as her seminar. Although she was not in the caracal system, Ximena understands that because of her status as a parent with a baby, her intersecting identity—as brown body, poor, from an under-resourced city in Los Angeles—meant that the odds were against her and her own relatives who were placed in jail. Her existence then became resistance, and her voice to address her concerns with her professor strengthened her conviction to speak up against racism for populations of color, namely Women of Color, and parenting students. For example, Ximena's closing statement, "I'm not supposed to be here, but I'm here, whether you like it or not," was a bold response to erasures. Here, Ximena explained to her professor that even though her White colleagues were making problematic statements, she existed within the complicated layers of her identity in a space that does not acknowledge her as a brown body, as a parent, or as a scholar.

Similarly, Libertad reminds us about the power of being visible and present, demanding and asking for more, and holding those who have resources and knowledges accountable in order to lead the way for others. For example, Libertad took us back to her choice to continue high school while pregnant, and also to continue her studies as a freshman at the public institution she had been enrolled in as an undergraduate. Libertad shared her response to her counselor who recommended she leave high school in favor of continuation school: "I don't want to just 'get out.' Like, I **need** . . . I **want more**. That option where they were telling me, 'Go to a continuation school,' I said, **no**, I think I can **thrive** here. **Just guide me**." To ask for more, to demand visibility on a high school campus as a Chicana, pregnant-presenting Motherscholar is a powerful statement. It ends the shame surrounding the choices young mothers like Libertad have made to be a powerful symbol to carry life. As stated above by Patricia Gonzales, "the body is

an altar" (p. 50). Libertad's powerful decision to not leave her high school grounds and want more is a symbol of her agentic power to reclaim classroom hallways, desks, and spaces not intended for the feminine pregnant or parenting bodies. This fierce power to remain on her campus until she graduated, walking on stage with her newborn son, sends a message to now allow others to tell you "no."

In our interview, Libertad walked us through her refusal to be erased on campus:

> I had to do a lot of pushing back. Like "nope, nope, nope," what do you mean, continuation school? What do you mean I can't go to college? What do you mean I can't do this? What do you mean I can't raise my son? Like I could do it . . . . My mom is here for me. Like some teachers believe in me. Like I need to do it for them. (Libertad, *plática*, May 7, 2018)

This powerful statement exemplifies her *corraje*, her rage, and her refusal to be pushed out. It also encompasses the power of her intersectional identities—as a mother, as a high school student, as a future college student. She is speaking back to those intersecting identities. She also acknowledges that this is not only her own personal task, it is for her mother, for her son, for her teachers, and for herself. I argue that her statements are also about life and death, survivance and resistance. As a formerly gang-affiliated young *mujer*, Libertad knew that she wanted better after her life had been threatened multiple times. Her choice to demand more was a responsibility to survive and resist at the same time, a powerful skill to navigate the difficult terrains of undergraduate and graduate school as a parenting student. She told me what drove her here:

> I think back then it wasn't . . . for me. I was thinking a lot about my family and . . . my son. It was a lot about them . . . . I wasn't thinking about how this would ever benefit me. Even though, you know, people say like financially you'll be good. (Libertad, *plática*, May 7, 2018)

Her passion, her refusal to be erased from the campus community, her refusal to not be led away from college opened many doors, although times were difficult during her journey.

As she realized that her drive took her to a PhD, she began to question how she better fit into the larger narrative of belonging, paying it forward, and doing critically ethical research. Libertad shared her thoughts about her ongoing process.

> I feel like now it's more like, "Well, how am I in this?" "How am where am I at?" "What is this doing for me?" "Do I serve as some sort of like guide now to others?" What is this, what do I have to say?" You know, "Where do I fit in the story?" "What can I do for everyone else?" (Libertad, *plática*, May 15, 2018)

What resonates for me are Libertad's questions about where she fits into the larger narrative to guide others and remain true to her work and the goal to both provide for her family—mainly her children—and produce scholarship. Her work focuses on her own homegirls, from her home community, who had lost their lives in the crossfire of violence, and how their deaths led Libertad to dedicate her life to research that centralized these often-erased narratives. As Libertad figures these intersecting identities and colliding questions about her positionality as a fierce Motherscholar, researcher, and parent, her fire continuously pushes her forth. Libertad has indeed thrived (and continues to do so)—she was accepted to several universities and her fierce passion has carried her forward in her studies in a doctoral program in a public university in sociology, funded by three years of fellowship by the Ford Foundation as a pre-doctoral scholar. Libertad is now a national and international scholar, has published in numerous venues, and has landed in the U.N. to speak on behalf of her research and work about mothers in the community, the brutal divide of the border, and state violence. She is in fact a path maker and fierce contributor to society, all the while raising three young Boys of Color.

Libertad's narrative reminds me of Antonio Machado's (1973) poem "Caminante, No Hay Camino":

Caminante, son tus huellas
el camino y nada más;
Caminante, no hay camino,
se hace camino al andar.
Al andar se hace el camino,
y al volver la vista atrás
se ve la senda que nunca
se ha de volver a pisar.
Caminante, no hay camino
sino estelas en la mar.

[Traveler, your footprints
are the only road, nothing else.
Traveler, there is no road;
you make your own path as you walk.
As you walk, you make your own road,
and when you look back
you see the path
you will never travel again.
Traveler, there is no road;
only a ship's wake on the sea.]

Creating new pathways, Motherscholars actively engage in research in academic settings and make themselves visible.

Additionally, Luna shared the example of conducting research while pregnant and the importance of setting that example for her students. Many people were surprised by her choice to be out "in the field," which for Luna was an elementary school where her presence was visible. Luna described her choice and the conversations that followed:

> When I collected my data . . . one of the students asked me if I was pregnant, [while] I was collecting. And she's like, "Just the fact that you're doing this and pregnant." Because when they ask you to collect research it's like, "Keep yourself out of it so that you can focus on them." But [I] couldn't keep myself out of being pregnant I was super huge . . . . Seeing that other people see you . . . . You have to share a lot about yourself, or they see you and that means a lot. All of these things are why it's so important to expose myself pregnant, while collecting academic work. (Luna, *plática*, May 7, 2018)

Luna discussed a very important aspect to resist erasures in academic settings, or in her case, while collecting research. Luna's pregnant body reminds me of what Michelle Téllez (2013) shared about being a junior faculty: "Having a visible, pregnant body put me in a particular

spotlight; in some ways, it humanized me and made them [students] curious about my personal life . . . .” From what Luna shared, she was willing to be visible while conducting her research, and it also invited questions and conversations with her students. Luna saw this as an opportunity to challenge expectations of who conducts research and when, in particular women. Her student was impressed with her dedication to collect data while pregnant, when pregnant-presenting people are often assumed to stay at home and not be active. However, some pregnancies do require expecting people to remain in bed rest for the safety of their pregnancies and themselves.

Luna unapologetically took up space with her “huge” belly, and she made a political statement with her body. She chose to let others see her, or as she stated, “Seeing that other people see you” as opposed to being erased and invisible herself. She continued by sharing the importance of resisting erasures. “It’s important for me to expose myself (laughs) pregnant while collecting academic work. I bet they say, **‘Oh shit you made it seem possible like I could be pregnant, have a family and still go the work.’”** Although difficult, Luna expressed her satisfaction in making herself feel visible to the larger community inside academia and outside. Unknowingly, and now as an active member of a Motherscholar collective, Luna espoused a political statement for all brown Motherscholars of Color in the academy who doubt themselves. Indeed, Motherscholars are capable of teaching, conducting research, collecting data, writing manuscripts, organizing, and setting the example for others to make agentic choices for themselves.

In closing, I introduce Alba’s narrative of going on campus tours as a prospective doctoral student while she was pregnant. Alba talked to me about visiting a few out-of-state

universities and investigated the sentiments and responses to her presence as a pregnant Chicana-*Indigena*. She wanted to identify how the representatives of the academy would treat her:

> I had applied to a few out-of-state PhD programs that I was really interested in. Then I visited when I was pregnant so that was interesting too. 'Cause I was visibly pregnant and trying to figure out . . . . kind of get people's reaction or see how they would accommodate or all that and I was very impressed with some universities, particularly [Los Coyotes University]. (Alba, *plática*, May 11, 2017)

Alba was impressed with the ways in which she was treated during her visits at different universities, in particular out of state ones like Los Coyotes University. She continued to state that this campus had "a lot more to offer" such as lactation rooms on campus and at the library. Plus, she would be enrolled as an ethnic studies scholar, where she would be surrounded by People and Scholars of Color.

Motherscholar Pedagogy: Mothering, Teaching, and the Next Generation

In this next section, I address Motherscholar Pedagogies (which I will further expand in a future publication), which consist of the ways in which mothering or motherhood impact Motherscholars in the classroom. I start with Alba, because when I first interviewed her, it impacted me deeply to hear her say that her mothering identity informed her pedagogy in the classroom, especially when teaching in a predominantly People of Color, Black, and immigrant campus in Southern California. After her interview, I paid close attention to how other Motherscholars addressed their intersecting identities in the classrooms. Alba was not the only one to address the ways her pedagogies transformed after having children. In particular, she talked about how her mothering and motherhood identity enhanced her teaching and awareness of teaching the aforementioned students.

> I think it's enhanced my ability to empathize as a teacher, as a professor whether it be at [University of California or a California State University]. My identity as a mom does influence how I treat others. Not that I treated people like shit before (laughing). I'm really able to, empathize but also have high expectations and a lot of the awareness in the patience that I bring to being a mom that my kids tap into me. Some of that labor goes

> into my teaching and into my research. And that can be good but it's also not- not uncomplicated. (Alba, *plática*, May 11, 2017)

As a junior and newly minted scholar, Alba emphasized how deeply impactful her identity informs how she treats her students, how she performs care work for them, how her expectations seem to be equivalent or higher for her students as she would have for her own children. Her educational privilege, and her educational *saberes*, or knowings, also give her a concrete understanding how the system is intended to push out Students of Color, in particular parenting students.

In her awareness, moreover, Alba challenges her students to do better and work harder because of the prospective barriers they will face. Alba indicated that these expectations are as rigorous at both the UC level and Cal State level—the love, the patience, and expectations are the same. Her Motherscholar pedagogies, I argue, have become a critical asset, because we teach as if these young people or students are our own relations. Alba understands that this is a complicated method to acknowledge; as Motherscholars dedicated to teaching, we do not want to "maternalize" the academy removing the agency of students. Instead, I see Alba trying to grapple with that messiness and entanglement with the complex, duel identities of Motherscholar and Pedagogue. Alba continued to discuss the complexities of her intersecting identities in the classroom.

> I think that sometimes, I bring in too much of that. [It's] not a problem for students that I can have standards, that I can scaffold, that I can comprehend. It enhances my teaching, but I also think it also leaves me open to overcommitting and overdoing sometimes. So, I think that in general, I would say it's positively influenced because, you know, whatever position, wherever I end up in, I know that I can do multiple things because I manage. At home, my children's education, my own. I'm on multiple projects . . . even as a researcher, right. (Alba, *plática*, May 11, 2017)

Alba told us here the different ways in which she supports her students, identifying them as having "high standards" and referring to her learning outcomes with terms such as "scaffold" and

"comprehend," which connote her commitments to social justice, equitable pedagogical practices, and access to transformative education. However, she follows that statement with "overcommitting" or "overdoing it." Alba's commitment to her students as a professor is so deeply braided with her love for them that she admittedly overcommits to them.

To recap, Alba is not a full-time, tenure-track professor. She is an adjunct professor, which is a role that is very important to the learning community, however, not compensated the same way as a tenure-track professor. Alba's comments highlight these frictions and tensions with the positive impact of being a mother as it informs her pedagogy and commitment. And, these quotes also highlight her *movidas*, or hustle to "manage" the commitment to her students as a professor, to her children's education, and to her own educational goals as a soon-to-be PhD. In closing, I want to end with something that Alba said that also significantly impacted my understanding of motherhood as *saberes*, a sort of *facultad*, or knowing that comes with becoming a parent. It is an intuitive and spiritual responsibility as a wealth that comes from mothering. Alba explained how her mothering as a pedagogy influences her approach to students and their families. A powerful statement to how she chooses to interact with them because they are "someone's kid." "**I play many multiple roles**. Like, **how I approach students**, **how I approach their families**. **I borrow from being a parent and knowing that the people that I teach**, even when they're 20, 22 years old . . . are someone's kid, right?" I interpret this statement as reflexive, in which Alba, thinks about how she would like to be approached as a mother of two who are in an unjust schooling system. Consequently, she approaches her students and their families with respect and visibility. She honors where they come from and their everyday lives, especially because many of the students Alba serves are first-generation Students of Color. Therefore, her mothering as pedagogy illustrates the

intersectional aspects that make mothering a powerful asset in our everyday lives, as pedagogues, as practitioners, and as researchers.

Academic Doulas: Birthing New Selves, Femtoring in Academia

During my interview with Xochitl, while we watched our children play t-ball, I asked her how mothering impacts her teaching, her pedagogy, and her everyday encounters with students in the classroom. And she mentioned something I have never thought about: academic doulas. She said that Motherscholars need a network of support, a *doula*. A doula is a traditional birth worker, not a midwife, but a birthing advocate and coach between the mother and the obstetrician. Doulas support the laboring mother through the difficulty of contractions, discomfort, navigating the hospital, checking in with relatives on behalf of the mother, and following the birth plan for the mother.

What I understood from Xochitl is that every single mother should have a doula during graduate school, a support system in place, to help them get through the difficult hurdles of graduate school, pregnancy, and parenting. Xochitl stated, "I think, sometimes . . . I feel tempted to respond to the **individual person 'You can do this; other people have done it.'** You need a network of support. **You probably need a doula**. (laughs)." Academic doulas may be critically relevant to femtoring in academia, expanding a support network specifically with roles of academic mothering and pedagogues to lessen and eliminate the erasures and rigorous academic expectations of parenting students.

> [E]very semester I've had one, two, like a small handful of students in my classes who are pregnant. For the ones that are pregnant, I'm just like when you're ready to leave, you just go. You know? (laughs) You don't need a sense of obligation . . . to come back. If you want to come back, and you want to be present in the class, cool. If you want to finish the meetings, cool, but you don't have to. Every pregnancy is different. You can't predict what your birth is gonna be like and what the aftermath, of your birth is gonna be like. (Xochitl, *plática*, May 22, 2017)

I believe that Xochitl's painful and unjust graduate school experience as a pregnant and then as a parent student has deeply impacted how she chooses to run her classroom. This act of academic doulaing, the support for a pregnant or parenting student, is critical to maintain our students in college. It is critical to retaining them in college when bringing life happens in the middle of the academic semester.

Xochitl continued to explain the conversations she has with her students surrounding the shame of birth and children in the following:

> So, if you find that you can't come back for the semester, don't worry about it. I always feel a little sad because a lot of the times these young moms feel like a sense of obligation to still come back. So even though I tell them "Go home" (laughs) you know, "It's okay," or "Bring your kid with you if want to," they always apologize when they have to. (Xochitl, *plática*, May 22, 2017)

What Xochitl does as an educator is coaching, and it entails the immense and vital support of her students who are pregnant. And it is not as if she reduces the academically rigorous expectations of her students who are pregnant, it is that she understands first-hand the exhaustive experience of the *bodymindspirit* for pregnant-presenting bodies creating a new life in the womb. What Xochitl is trying to explain is that these students are apologetic about their current status, because as we have seen throughout the dissertation, they carry the shaming of feminized bodies into the classroom by becoming visible in critically disrupting academic spaces with their powerful bodies as life-givers. These young mothers have learned persistent messages and backlash that they do not belong, but as their professor, Xochitl is telling them otherwise through her acts of academic doulaing.

> And they always come back and finish the semester. And I think part of that is, what I've seen, they're typically the children of immigrants if not immigrants themselves, first-gen Women of Color. So, I try to give them that freedom, to be honest. I always give them because I'm like you did enough already, you know? And that's a trip because they actually are better students (laughs) than my other students. So those are some of the things I do . . . for people who have kids. When . . . they're like "Oh, the babysitter had

> to cancel." They always come in apologetic like, "I'm so sorry." I'm just like, "About what? Like I think she's cute." (laughs) (Xochitl, *plática*, May 22, 2017)

Furthermore, Xochitl's examples are powerful statements and advocacy work to support her students at this public institution. Her parenting students performed the best. They exceeded their fullest potential. "My students turned in some of strongest essays of the semester when they were writing about that and ovarian cycles or Motherwork," Xochitl added. An important indicator in applying a culturally relevant curriculum to support the different identities inclusive of mothering, Motherwork, or parenting. Accepting and supporting students where they are at, in particular parenting students who are often erased from public spaces like the university, is a way to retain them in college.

> I'm glad they're here. I try to be very conscious of the fact that in addition to the labor that they're doing in my classroom, they're doing so much labor at home. That's not something that you need to excuse or have mercy on, but it is something intrinsically valuable and that they're learning from. So, they're incredibly important. (Xochitl, *plática*, May 22, 2017)

Xochitl values her students deeply and the labor they engage with as parents, partly because she was a parent during her own graduate studies and experienced first-hand exclusion, harassment, and erasures from the campus. I recall a story shared about Xochitl by another Motherscholar, which I will name Gabriela. Gabriela recollected the time that Xochitl had begun pumping during a class seminar. Gabriela shared: "I remember she asked Fernando, '**Can I pump during class**?' She came with her stuff. With her pump and everything, and Fernando was like, 'I don't know,' **then she (laughs).** That's so dope." I mention this story because it crosses between Motherscholars and offers context to how Xochitl addresses her students today. Gabriela, a Motherscholar herself, felt that this vignette of Xochitl pumping during class was a powerful moment for herself. She had not known of other parenting students at the university until this

moment occurred. She eventually formed a strong friendship with Xochitl and they both navigated academia as each other's support, *othermothering* together.

When university campuses do not have the proper spaces for lactation, at the law-abiding distance of a one-minute walk from a classroom, a work space, or research facility, the lactating and/ or breastfeeding parent will have to labor to extract milk (the food source) for their baby. Xochitl also understands the invisible labor of caring for a new life from home. The numerous hours without sleep, the feedings, the diaper cleaning, the hunger, the immense thirst. Xochitl recognizes that labor is hard work coupled with academic rigor and deadlines. And Xochitl's response to that while she was a graduate student—pumping in seminar—was significantly powerful to resist these erasures. It was her response to the lack of resources at a prestigious private university. As a parent and Motherscholar, she has a deeper *saber*, a knowing to better support her students, in particular as first-generation Students of Color at the multiple intersections of their identities.

Making Our/Selves Seen: Maternal *Movidas* for Access to Education

In this section, I share how Luna felt when she began to find herself represented in the activist work of Motherscholar Collectives. I start unraveling the narratives related to this Motherscholar movement because it is a way to make the invisible, very visible and valuable in the classroom. Additionally, advancing further in higher education is an achievement both for oneself as a parent, but also for students who may (or may not) see themselves reflected in their professors who identify themselves as parents as well. Luna shared the sense of relief she receives in body language by her students when they learn she is a human being, a parent, a scholar, and a researcher.

> I don't think had it been for [The Motherscholar Collective], I don't think I would identify myself as a mother . . . I say that in my classroom, "I'm a mom." You know I'm

> first-generation, I'm Chicana, I'm a mother, I'm this and that. I don't think I would have said that. And a lot of people find it irrelevant that I'm sharing that I'm a mom I'm like okay. Especially undergrads . . . but I find a connection with master's students because a few of them are mothers. And so, the fact that I'm sharing that as a professor, you [see] a lot of body language like, "Oh okay." It is a relief. (Luna, *plática*, May 7, 2018)

Luna is intentional about sharing her intersecting identities to make a conscious connection to her students. Although not all can relate, those who can—often ashamed or embarrassed to disclose a parenting identity—come out of the shadows. This statement is important, because like Luna, had it not been for others to lead the effort to reveal who they are as parents, Luna may not have found her own voice in academia as a parent. Perhaps she would remain silent and never mention this critically important identity. It also helps students see themselves as prospective professors, researchers, academics, and so on.

As we read in Chapter Five, to see themselves in others, supported by a common identity, is critical to the retention of Mothers of Color in higher education. Luna continued to share how finding her identity has given her confidence to be transparent about what she can and cannot do with her children.

> I have the confidence to tell them I will have a meeting, but my kids are going to be around. I don't have another choice. But I have my kids with me all the time. They somewhat understand that mom is in a meeting. I would have broken my head trying to think who can take of them, the *vecinos* [neighbors] real quick, versus now . . . . No, I have my kids and I can still do work. (Luna, *plática*, May 7, 2018)

Luna is now unapologetic about her identity and about her children. For the last five years, she has been an active member of The Motherscholar Collective which has supported scholarship development and production to reach larger, multidisciplinary audiences of parenting communities in academia. And this is how one makes institutional change. It is important to highlight Luna's resistance—she includes her children in meetings and provides notification to whoever is meeting with her that her children are part of this work. In part, this is a response to the larger issue that daycare or childcare support is not timely accessible not is it affordable for

adjunct faculty in the California State System. As of 2019, California State University adjunct salary is between $772 and $884 per month for a 3-unit course (glassdoor.com). By the end of the semester, the adjunct faculty will bring home an approximate $2,484 a semester. Yet each month, daycare alone costs approximately $1,230 for a toddler or $800 for a preschooler (Center for American Progress, 2019), in the U.S. that is an average of nearly $15,000 per year By not apologizing for the presence of children, being honest and transparent about her intersecting identities, Luna is making a statement about access to daycare or childcare. Likewise, Luna is making a statement about *movidas*, or hustles while she is doing work, a very difficult balance to attain in navigating both. Luna is even modeling for her own children that "mom is in a meeting" or "mom is working," which I believe is a message that challenges the institution and addresses conversations about access and equity for parenting communities in academia.

Like Luna, Xochitl talks further about access and equity for her students as they advance through the educational pipeline to make institutional change. She states, "for those of us who are **getting through the pipeline** at least for me, **I'm very committed to making institutional change.** As much **as an individual can rally the resources around them**, the **university has to be held accountable**." Luna is committed to making institutional change to best support the ongoing shifting demographics of students enrolling in universities. This includes parenting students, more Women of Color, veterans, and other students at the crux of intersectional identity. As read above, Xochitl made a very clear statement in supporting parenting students in the ways of resistance, in supporting them if they need to give birth, in supporting their everyday hustles to parent and remain in the academy. She continued with a critical stance on the responsibilities of the university:

> They [the institution], have to be held accountable to the fact that there [are] students who . . . are no longer White men who have wives that stay at home. So, that's not who the

> university is for anymore. Especially universities that are like state universities. I think more than anything I would tell them [parenting students] that as someone who is making it through the pipeline that I'm committing to advocating for those institutional changes so that they're not alone . . . that these are structural problems. (Xochitl, *plática*, May 22, 2017)

Xochitl, a full-time tenure-track professor in a California State University, is committed to parenting students, as well as how faculty, staff, and others in positions of power can help shift institutional marginalization of parenting students. From my thought-provoking interview with Xochitl—at the park, while we gave snacks to our kids who were at some point proportionally part of the interview asking for more snack and water—I reflect on the different ways Xochitl endured the academic erasure as a parent during her time in graduate studies. I reflect in her resistance in pumping while in a seminar, in her resistance and refusal to attend the graduation celebration with her department, and now, her continuous commitment to shift the structural problems at her campus. Marginalization has fueled her commitment for change for her students.

It Begins and Ends with Love: Mothering by All Means Necessary

I want to end this chapter by highlighting what all Motherscholars shared with me during these interviews. All mothers shared this common feeling about themselves, their children, and their community, and it is about love. To love oneself as we learn to mother ourselves, the love for our children, because their arrival into our world while pursuing a higher education teaches us about loving them and learning of love in ways only mothering can do, and the deep love and commitment to our communities and others who may look like, be like, and identify like us. Mostly our students pursuing college. I begin with Libertad, and highlight her narratives on love as a movement, a passion, and a redirection to inwards in learning and loving. Towards the end of her interview, I was struck by this beautiful way of closing our *plática*, it was with what drives us as Motherscholars, and it is our children and the deep unexplainable love we have for them.

To mother, to love as mother, does indeed feel like a super power, but it is also filled with anxiety and uncertainty as Angela Davis (1981) and Patricia Hill Collins (1994) remind us. To bring Children of Color into this world, in the current political state, while our young relatives are facing separation and being caged at the border, we can attest to the rage, frustration, and overwhelming sadness of a mother.

> As a mother, I feel you can do everything. You can be a guide. You can be . . . a doctor, you can be a cook. You can be a teacher. You can be so many things at once, and you have the ability to raise little minds to however you want. You can mold them. All of that is done with one main purpose, which is to give love . . . Always to give love. And to guide them to become whatever it is that they want to become. That's the approach that I take in my teaching and my being a friend and being a daughter. My passion for my research. I'm doing this with the idea of giving and spreading love. (Libertad, *plática*, May 15, 2018)

This powerful statement allows us and me, as a researcher and as a Motherscholar, to reflect on the idea of leading with love. Libertad pointed out the different tasks we embody as Motherscholars, the intersecting identities we develop. These shifting identities inform us and the unseen labor in the private sector as mothers, like cooking to feed our children, despite how exhausted we are after a long day of lecturing, attending courses, or grading. Of nursing injuries and baring the anxiety and fear (while trying to keep it together) when our children get injured, are sick, or hurt. To teach and support our children in their learning while in schools in supplementing their reading and phonics and at times doing homework in the van like Luna, prepping her daughter for her weekly spelling exams. "My van has become my office," she confided with me. Standing up to the teachers, administration, and principals when our children or other children are mistreated, targeted for rejecting to engage in the racist Thanksgiving curriculum. And conducting ethical, powerful, and truth-revealing realities in research as Motherscholars leading with love. We embody all of this and more, and Libertad encapsulated it powerfully.

She continued with how leading with love led her to graduate school and the love for her work. The love we receive also feeds our *bodymindspirit*, because it reminds us to keep going.

> All I know is love helped me get here. The love of my ancestors, the love of my mom, the love of my dad, my siblings. Teachers, people that cross my life at certain points. Although they might have not said I love you, but the love that they gave me and the support they gave me at that time I got a ride, the time I got whatever. (Libertad, *plática*, May 15, 2018)

There was a short conversation while Libertad spoke of love when she stated her adviser had left a meal in the lunch room for her and her three boys, so that she wouldn't have to cook that evening. That is a form of love and a form of being seen at all levels. Such small acts of kindness inform and feed our *bodymindspirit* and allows us as Motherscholars to push forward. Libertad continued by including how we as researchers and Motherscholars can lead with love in our careers. The critical impact of completing our degrees and being true to our authentic selves can serve to not only provide for our children, but to provide for our communities through our career paths.

> Like I think we materialize careers, and I get it. Finances help us survive and all. But if we don't do it with love and with passion, as we do our Mothering then what is the point? What is the purpose of life? It's always about love. How can I give my kids love, so that is what they know? That's what they spread. Ultimately, I will end up where my love takes me. My love for the people…My home girls who passed away, [I] have a lot of love for them. And that shows through my work. My brother who was deported who is hurting and continues to hurt for many years, have a lot of love for him. (Libertad, *plática*, May 15, 2018)

Libertad has been deeply motivated by her love for her work, for herself, for her children. This includes conducting research, pursuing a career path in or out of academia, to allow the love to show in the work. Her love for her people and her love for those who have been hurt. She closes with a message for Motherscholars everywhere: "Mothering with love and everything else follows." This means that we must continue to allow the work to move the *bodymindspirit*, and we will ultimately end up where we need to be.

Lastly, Paloma shared how her love for her children drove her work and served as motivation to continue conducting her research. She also described the realities of not wanting to leave her children behind to conduct research, especially when the institution does not reciprocate the same kind of love or respect.

> Suddenly I wouldn't have the drive to work with [my research]. I wouldn't have the drive. I wouldn't care about it. It's not that I wouldn't care but I wouldn't have those same passions. Something about me biologically, chemically changed to where my love would be my children. That would be my whole life. And I would get swallowed up in that. Then I wouldn't care about grad school… In my mind I thought, maybe that's why so many mothers drop out. [Because] they love their baby's so much. They don't wanna leave their kids and so their academic pursuits become less important. That's why they drop out, right? That was what I naively thought. (Paloma, *plática*, May 15, 2017)

Paloma explained her fears and the anxiety of loving too much and not completing her career path as a researcher in a Ph.D. program. Granted, as soon as we give birth, the mothering body definitely grapples with an influx of hormones and chemical changes. Mothers want to be with their children only. Everything else is secondary. And at times frightening to think that perhaps, Motherscholars stop out of higher education because the desire is to remain at home caring for the new baby. Although a reality, it is through these stories that remind Motherscholars that to mother our children also requires the same kind of love and patience to love and mother ourselves, by all means necessary. To mother and nurture our research in a caring way where our passion, rage, and fire is central. Our identities are no longer at the margin; rather, we bring all of the Motherscholars with us from the margin to the center along with all of the children, othermothering, doulaing, nurturing, healing and loving ourselves into existence. Our children and our bodies are sacred, and to do so acknowledges that is the most powerful form of resistance and activism any person can perform.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

Cerando Caderas, Closing Hips

My dissertation, a long-term commitment to centralize Motherscholars of Color, in particular first-generation Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous mothers in academia, was an intensive six-year commitment to love, justice, and equity. I title my conclusion *Cerando Caderas*, the Closing of Hips, as a reminder that this labor was feminized, a birth of sorts to bring closure to *el Nacimiento* of this dissertation project. *Cerando Caderas* is reference to the closure of hips usually performed by a *partera*, a midwife, a doula, an elder, or an auntie. It is community who participate in the practice of closure of hips and in this case, this research project, after the birth. And it has taken my community, my femtors and mentors, my co-madres and participants in this study, my partner, my adviser, my mother, and lastly, the inspiration to this work my **son** to bring into fruition my rage, anger, and frustration with the discrimination of Motherscholars in higher education.

Therefore, as a move onto the next research project that will focus on young Women of Color in high schools pushed out and criminalized when they are pregnant, onto "continuation schools" and queer mothering, I want to offer my closing thoughts to this project. I have been humbled, honored, and beyond grateful to this work. I have learned a lot about my participants, my co-madres, and the lives they navigate, and much about myself. Thank you.

The road map, or the umbilical cord that connects me to this work is as follows. I will briefly write about the different chapters in this study, and then highlight the implications and rationalize why this research project is important. I will start with a brief overview of my study describing the intent, the research project, the research questions and the ways in which I approached this work. I will address how my literature review showed me a different direction

to consider within my work and highlight the *Critical Maternalista Matrix* as a theoretical approach informed by CRT in Education Methodology, Chicana Feminisms, and Maternal Theory. I will then conclude with implications on my finding's chapters, reflecting on the data as most prominent in my work which was; the significance and the interventions of Ethnic and Gender Studies and the importance of femtors and mentors on academic pathways to disrupt the *invisibility/visibility* experiences in higher education.

Why is this dissertation study important? Why does it matter? And what are additional interventions or a call to action for faculty, staff, peers who teach, work, learn in the ivory tower? What am I doing for the field? This research study asks that we rethink and challenge the ideals and deficit notions of what pregnant presenting brown bodies, rethink motherhood as a social construction at the intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and parenthood. In order to diversity the institution we need to provide central resources and remove the onus on Motherscholars. Having deficit ideas of productivity against Black and Brown Motherscholar bodies needs to change and challenge notions of sexism and racism. As a refresher, the following are the research questions.

1) What educational experiences and factors impact first-generation Chicana and Latina Motherscholars in their educational pursuits toward a higher education?

2) How do the intersecting identities of race, class, gender, and motherhood impact first-generation Chicana and Latina Motherscholars enroll in doctoral degrees programs in social science and humanities in the U.S. Southwest?

3) How does motherhood inform and impact the intellectual, spiritual, and physical (*bodymindspirit*) experiences of first-generation Chicana and Latina Motherscholars in doctoral programs in their respective institutions?

My hope is that my dissertation is *a call* to action for on campus student services, administration, and faculty along with students' constituents for accessible resource to support

parenting students). My research study, *Strolling and Straddling Academic Boundaries: Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous Motherscholars in the Academy* reveal racial and gender disparities among first-generation Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous *Motherscholars* in Ph.D. programs in the U.S. Southwest. Nationally Latina, Chicana, and Indigenous women are less likely to complete post-secondary degrees. Further, academic mothers with children under five years of age, pursuing professorate positions, are less likely to receive tenure. Therefore, my research foci are as follows: (a) Ethnic and Gender studies as interventions of higher education retention; (b) Naming and addressing marginality and maternal microaggressions to offset oppressions; and (c) Spiritual and maternal activism as forms of resilience, resistance, and survivance. Key findings reveal painful stories of "push-out" culture grounded in gender-racial discrimination challenged by *testimonios* of resilience and survivance. This major finding supports a lens towards equity as it centralizes motherhood back to the center. In providing a platform for a counternarrative and services for marginalized Motherscholars, it ensures access, retention, and perseverance while addressing the importance of mentors/femtors of Color who acknowledge their potential. This includes acceptance of intersectional identities—not compensated—serving to foster care and resiliency in heteropatriarchal institutions of higher learning.

Perceptions of Motherscholars – A Workshop

I begin the data set as a concrete example of how stereotypes exist in our imaginary and have lived out in cultural ideals and expectations informing how Motherscholars are viewed and perceived. Stereotypical views of the mothers are also internalized and can inform how we view ourselves. I collected data by a simple method of polling and capturing stereotypes people have of Mother enrolled in high school, college, and in schooling to attain a higher education degree

(undergraduate, graduate, and professional school) throughout classroom setting in California and Colorado. In this next section, I address language that is a trigger and heavily charged as sexist, racist, and discriminatory stemming from what I believe is from heteropatriarchal and *machista* social fabric as "ideals" and "views" of the brown female body. Although difficult to situate, the genealogies of the maternal stereotype are transcribed from religion and colonization, and *machista* narratives of the "value" of the female body as property, disrupting matriarchy and egalitarian social structures. Chicana feminist movements historically address the analysis to disrupt the virgin/whore dichotomy (Peña, forthcoming) on the "mother" or the "feminine" with maternal roles. Through my time facilitating workshops in different campus settings in California and Colorado, I conducted a total of five class facilitations in this ethnographic case study. The intent of these workshops was to incite thinking around gender, race, and motherhood in spaces of higher learning. The class facilitation included an activity asking college students—undergraduates, graduate, and doctoral—and professors to participate in an interactive poll naming and identifying stereotypes they have been socially exposed, identifying how they viewed Motherscholars. These classroom settings were at a community college in Los Angeles, California, public universities, and public and private institutions in Denver, Colorado. Participants vary from community college, undergraduate, master's degree, and doctoral students. More than three quarters of participants were women. These three academic levels encompassed undergraduate Students of Color, graduate Students of Color, and Professors of Color, with the following poll question and the ways their perceptions inform stereotypes:

What are some of the stereotypes or assumptions you have had about Chicana or Latina women who became mothers in high school? In college? Or graduate school?

In the data collection for this set of questions, the responses were similar despite the classroom setting or state I was in. Students shared that despite their own gender, race, and ethnicity, they were socialized from a very young age that to become pregnant at a young age was "irresponsible" and it make you a "whore," or that they "threw away their life." When changing the age group of pregnancy and schooling, directly focusing on college students and enrolled doctoral students, the answer remained the same, however, "dropout" was most prominent. The stereotypes did not change much despite the academic gains for Motherscholars. When I asked the questions again, I changed the gender and asked the perceptions by men. The answers completely changed. For men, despite their educational levels of high school to advanced degrees, the answers shifted to "providers," "caregivers," "responsible," and "father." Grappling with these stereotypes as examples, it is easily redirected at the pervasive impact of internalized sexism and racism based on a woman's reproductive choice despite the educational advancement of women.

Figure 2. Stereotypes of Mothers of Color.

As a workshop facilitation, my goal was to redirect how we rationalize our internalized views of mothers in higher education. I asked that they all take a moment to think about the

stories they heard growing up of their own maternal figures, whether it be their mothers, grandmothers, sisters, aunties, or friends who have had to "choose" family over education, "choose" to have a family, or chose to do both. Once reflecting on my ask to redirect those in their life who have had children during their own educational trajectories or in their life, there was an instant shift to these stereotypes that challenged their views. The political became personal, and the stories of "push out" culture began to emerge of stories from their own mothers (or maternal figures) who had to drop out because they would not be supported by their families to continue their studies. For example, I shared my mother's testimonio and her "dropout" story. My mother was 17 when she got pregnant with me. She was married but was attending high school. She needed one more year to graduate and receive her high school diploma. My mother, an immigrant at the time, was also taking night school courses in English, so she was multitasking. She tells me during her interview (it has been translated from Spanish to English):

> When I found out I was pregnant with you, I was 17 years old. And I wanted to be an accountant and I went to night school and was taking my courses in high school. Once you were born, I wanted to return, but your dad and your grandmother said no, that the only way they would take care of you was if I went to work and not back to school. (Christina, personal communication, October 10, 2017)

After asking students in my workshop to share how they perceive maternal figures in their life who wanted to go to school or college, many shared similar painful truths. And they agreed that we had to rethink how we perceive Motherscholars. Instances of storytelling, naming oppressions, and our own oppressive ideas of Motherscholars challenge stereotypes; by "telling stories, [is] where we begin the process of naming oppressions and re-subjectification. To recount and to remember, we set off healing, we lessen the value of oppression" (Grande in Vega, 2016). Attempting to challenge the dichotomous public and private sphere of a nuclear family, the visible/invisible, and virgin/whore dichotomy, students began to name those whom

they have known personally who were pushed out of education and higher education instead, as "*chingonas*" [bad ass], "*luchadoras*" [fighters], "providers," and "amazing." Something shifted for participants when it came to describe those in their close proximity pushed out of academia. In trying to challenge stereotypes, we need to know firsthand the difficulty of navigating education as People of Color. Including an additional intersectional identity as parenting students adds another layer of difficulty. These labels as stereotypes are painful, and they impact and trigger imposter syndrome for a Motherscholars pursuing any level of education. It is complex and messy in unpacking how we are viewed on the everyday and the painful impact of internalizing these stereotypes.

Analysis on Motherscholars in my Study

My preliminary analysis on the narrative profiles of each Motherscholar lends itself to view the gendered and racial experiences of Motherscholars across the U.S. Southwest. My initial analysis shows each mother as first generation in the U.S. who in college were exposed to at least one person who motivated them to pursue a higher education. All the women encountered someone who "looks like them" and "inspires" them to continue moving forward with their studies. This is critical for their continuous academic development as first-generation Women of Color pursing a higher education. A second major indicator relevant across Motherscholar experiences has been their exposure to their culture or history. For many of the Motherscholars in this study, they all mentioned courses and experiences with people or classes where they learned about their history and culture in ethnic studies like Chicana/o studies. Lastly, reading through these narrative profiles, we can see how educational experiences for first-generation Motherscholars are not linear. Many took the community college route, while others were admitted to four-year colleges out of high school. Despite what happened in their

educational experiences, these women made it through the academic pipeline to pursue a Ph.D.

Based on the data, I think it is important to highlight how they arrived at their Ph.D. programs and who was involved in that process. This sheds light on how critical it is to support Women of Color through their pursuits of higher education, and the importance of establishing support systems that support women if and when they make the choice to have families. We will then pursue the instances when Motherscholars felt marginalized in the institution, highlighting what I call *Maternal Microaggression*. However, these marginal experiences did not begin when they became mothers. They were intensified because of the visibility they experienced as pregnant presenting people, when they disclosed their status as mothers, or when they brought their children to campus events or conferences. These instances are complicated because often times, Women of Color experienced maternal microaggressions from other women and People of Color. These instances inform how heteropatriarchal assumptions can also be perpetuated by other People of Color when it involves the reproductive rights of Women of Color in graduate school.

In Chapter Five, I addressed the importance Ethnic and Gender Studies and the important role of femtors, mentors, and graduate Students of Color who believed in their full potential. This was a common finding for all of my participants in my study. This was an unexpected finding, which I was not necessarily seeking through my research questions. Instead, it became a clear theme for each Motherscholar. These findings highlight the importance of Ethnic and Gender studies who disrupt the dominant narrative using Westernized canonical literacies. Ethnic Studies and Gender Studies became locations of counterpaces where Motherscholars, in particular while in college felt seen, validated, and important contributors to society. Because Ethnic and Gender studies exist, so do advance graduate students, T.A.s and programs exist

(thanks to civil rights movements for access and equity) that guided Motherscholars at some point of their academic journey. I caution that essentializing Ethnic and Gender studies can be dangerous, because such significant spaces are critical for all Students of Color and marginalized communities where embedded sexism and racism exist.

As seen in this study, Motherscholars also confronted prejudice and discrimination even in the most radical and supportive spaces and from critical scholars because of their status as parents. I recommend, as I have throughout this dissertation, we challenge ourselves to restructure our notions of toxic expectations on brown bodies, specifically parenting students of color. Learning and experiencing these ideas into acts, is what I call *Maternal Microaggression* (in gratitude to my colleague and *co-madre*, Ceci on developing this concept through her interview). In all interviews, we read through the instances Motherscholars experienced microaggressions because of their status as a pregnant presenting body or a mother. We witnessed the psychological, emotional, spiritual impacts Maternal Microaggressions have on Motherscholars. I continue to argue that these instances can determine if the parenting student continues their educational journey, silence their status as parents, or ask for help. If we desire to diversify the institution, be champions for equity and diversity, we need to re-frame how we respond to parenting students, their needs, and their academic success. This may include adding a paragraph in course syllabi that supports and welcomes parenting students and if need be, welcoming their children in the classroom. It can also include, constantly reminding students about being open and supportive for parenting students in the classroom.

As faculty, when sitting in hiring committees, and if the candidate is woman of color and bravely discloses their status as a Motherscholar, to consider parenting as an asset to the institution. My ask is including more research, readings, and upcoming literatures into your

course readings to include parenting status as a critical intersecting component to academia often times excluded. My last chapter highlights the ways in which Motherscholars resist, survive, and enact love as a form of resistance in their home, in the classroom, and in other non-traditional spaces. Motherscholars want to be included in academia, despite the difficulty of parenting, working, and studying, they commit to academia as a form of social mobility not only for themselves, but to provide better living conditions for their children. As we have seen in the last chapter, identities of Motherscholarship is an asset of love, inclusivity, and affirmations.

To be a Motherscholar of Color in academia is a loaded politics of intersectional identities, responsibilities, and *movidas* [hustles]. Motherscholars move within the borders of academia, the home, the third shift of parenting in an unseen act. Along with the daily *movidas* to coordinate multiple schedules, deadlines, and work flows, mother-scholars of color confront a unique layer of racial and gendered microaggressions I call maternal microaggression, where the identity of a mother-scholar is encountered with deficit stereotypes regarding their identity as a parent, as a woman, as a person of color in academia. These stereotypes and deficit notions do not begin in the academic setting, they are reinforced. Often, maternal microaggressions are carried over into academia from our own communities, However, by unpacking the messy layers of gender, race, education, and motherhood can allows us to take a glance into the lives of a small population of academics rarely researched, Chicana and Latina mother-scholars in doctoral programs. "Chicana social agent insists on moving forward with ways knowing that will not only legitimize the narratives of the women in our families but is also a movement toward standpoints that will challenge the censure of the brown body" (Cruz, 2006, p. 658).

More*Vida* (*Movidas*), Moving Forward

Closing up this research study has allowed me space to (re)imagine and dream wild on how I want to move forward with my research. I am committing to re-imagining and deeply contextualizing my work on Maternal Microaggressions. From the data I have collected, the narratives shared with me and also experienced first-hand, I would love to develop this work as branch of Microaggressions in the interdisciplinary fields of higher education. In addition, pulling from my data, I would like to offer the ways in which Maternal Affirmations were highlighted throughout this study and beyond. I see my work moving towards a few directions: Working with young women in high school who were pushed out of the physical space of the institution into continuation schools. Exploring how young Women of Color scholars face criminalization and a shifting status, as explored by the work of Subini A. Annamma on *Pedagogies of Pathologization: Dis/Abled Girls of Color in the School-prison Nexus* (2018).

In addition, my research agenda will also further explore the theorization and conceptual tool of the Critical *Maternalista* Matrix as an additional branch in Critical Race Theory Methodology in Education, Chicana Feminist Theory, and Critical Maternal Theory. I believe that this concept can help us explore and unravel the strengths of Microaffirmations by bringing to the surface the capitals and strengths brought forth by identity formations. I am committing to a few articles where this work can be further explored and theorized. Within these bodies of work, I would approach further the narratives of Queer Mothering, Fem/Mentorship and the strength of Ethnic & Gender Studies as critical interventions for access, retention, and continuous pathways towards higher education.

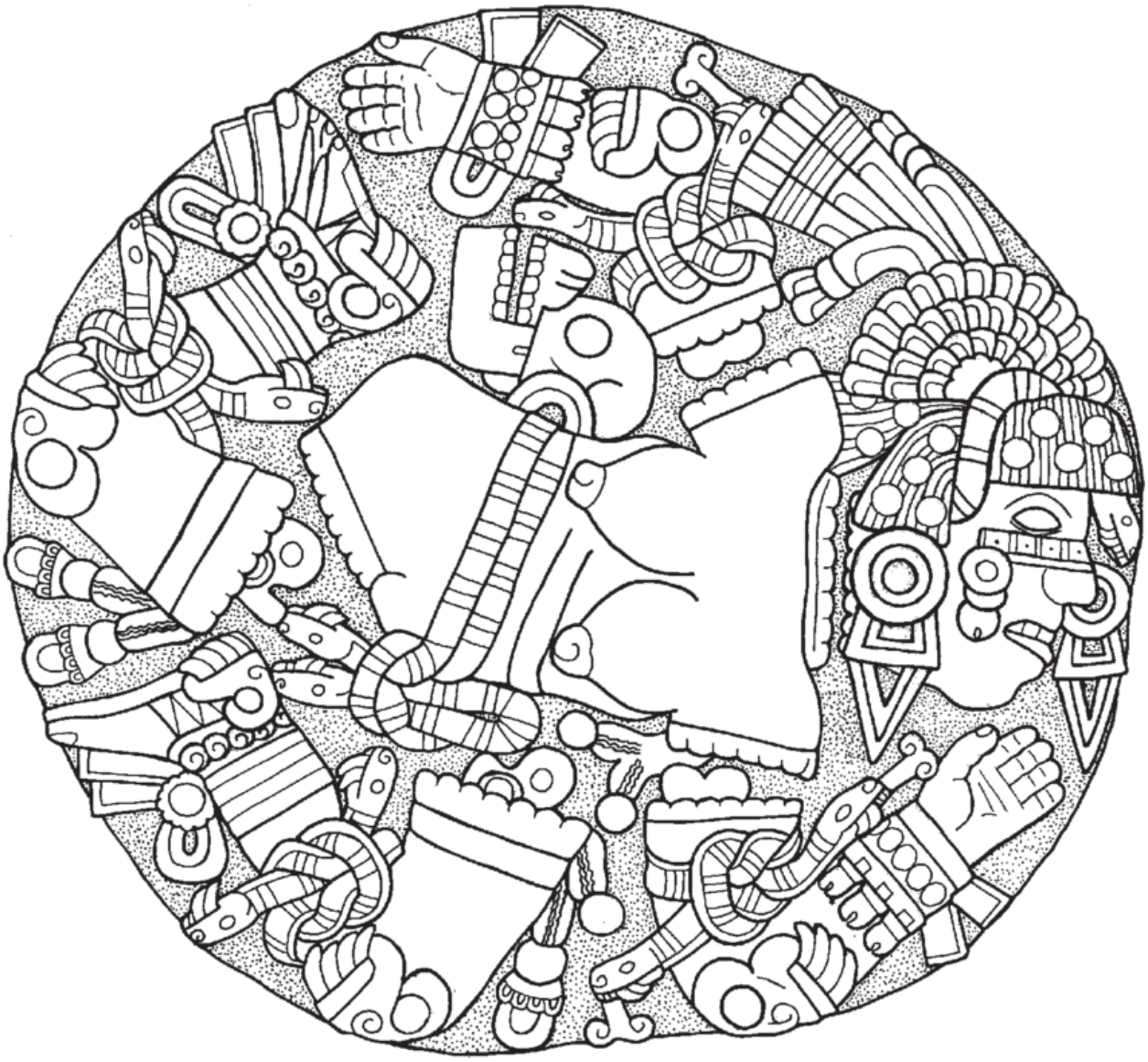
Lastly, as I began this study, my hope was to uncover more on the identity formations for the Motherscholars who identified as indigenous. Although several women did identify as

indigenous; Chicana and Native American, Mayan, Guatemalteca, Salvadoreñas, or Indigenous these formations were not deeply explored as much as I wanted to. However, I kept the term Indigenous in the body of the work because it was an identity that is important to these mothers, although not deeply translated in this work. In the future, I desire to work with scholars who identify as Native American, Indigenous, and *Indigena* of the Americas, who have a deep connection to their indigenous roots, spirituality, and higher education. I mention this because while I was in ceremony at Sundance (Summer of 2019), I counted all of degrees of higher education in our camp alone. Our camp is only a small percentage of those who attend this ceremony. We are approximately 30 in total without counting our children (an equivalent of 13 children under the age of 10). Within our own camp, there are at least 27 B.A.s, 12 M.A.s, and 5 Ph.D.s, (2 completed, and 3 in progress). From all of those who are working on Ph.D.s, they are all parenting scholars, first generation, Students of Color and Activist in their academic and local community, and following what we call the Red Road with the support of our Uncle and Auntie. Therefore, working with such population, can grant me a deeper understanding how the Chicano Movement led collective efforts to support Chicanas/os *Indigenas* pursue, remain, and graduate with degrees of higher education, while following a deep spiritual road of justice, while raising the next generation.

TLAZOCAMTLI NOCHTINOMECAYOTZIN

Gracias to all of my Relations for the labor of Love and Resistance.

APPENDIX A: ANIMATED IMAGE OF COYOLXAUHQUI UNEARTHED IN MEXICO



Team of pre-Conquest Aztec artists, Great Coyolxauhqui Stone. Sister of the god Huitzilopochtli, circa 1469–1473. Discovered at foot of Great Temple of Tenochtitlan in 1978; now in Museo del Templo Mayor, Mexico City. Drawing by Umberger (2007, p. 15).

APPENDIX B: CALL FOR PARTICIPANT EMAIL

Dearest Participant,

My name is Christine Vega and I am first generation Chicana Mother-Scholar at UCLA. I am conducting a study on the experiences of first-generation Chicana Latina mothers enrolled in doctoral programs. I have been working with mother-scholars for over 4 years organizing with Mothers of Color in Academia de UCLA and the Chicana M(other)work collective. I am very passionate about the different forms of resistance performed by mothers that are often unseen or validated. My goal is that my dissertation unsettles and challenges the erasures women of color mothers confront on the everyday.

I am very good friends with XXX and XXX and I will be at XXX late May for the XXX conference. I am hoping to link up with some of the mothers willing to share their story with me.

I am hoping I can interview you. I am changing my stay and should be there from May 30th to June 4th. Best days for me to interview are **June 1st, 2nd or 3rd** at any time.

Also, can you verify with me if you fall within the Chicana Latina spectrum? My study is central to women who identify fluidly within that spectrum. I have momma's who identify as Afro-Latina and Chicana and Native for example.

If you are willing to be interviewed, please let me know what three dates and times would be best for you. I can come to you. My interview takes 60-90 minutes and I pay $50 for your very important time. And here is my IRB Number: #16001281. Lastly, if you agree, I would like to speak on the phone with you to walk through the study processees and the components to it, including a photo-ethnography if you wish to participate on that.

Attached you will find my abstract to better illustrated my work. Please feel free to email or text me if you wish to speak with me 818-493-8567.

Thank you!

APPENDIX C: DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Motherscholars in Education Study - GSE&IS UCLA-
Christine Vega

Name:

Date/Time/Location:

Email:

Birthplace:

Birthplace of Parents:

Ethnic Identity:

Languages Spoken:

Resident of Which Community:

Education:

Degree Institution Area of Study

Occupation and Professional Activities:

APPENDIX D: RECRUITMENT FLYER

Recruitment Flyer

A study on first-generation Chicana/ Latina PhD mothers

- Do you identify as a Chicana or Latina?
- Are you currently enrolled in a PhD program or have filed your dissertation in the last year from UCLA, USC, Claremont or other institutions in California, Utah or Arizona?
- Is your area of study Education, Social Science or Humanities?
- Are you a first generation college student?
- Have you had a baby or adopted a child during your doctoral studies?

If you have answered yes to all of these, please consider participating in a study about PhD mothers.

Please contact Christine Vega
at cvega182@g.ucla.edu or
818-493-8567

IRB # 16-001281-CR-00001

APPENDIX E: DISSERTATION JOURNAL IMAGE

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