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Theorizing the Racial and Gendered Educational Experiences of Chicanas and Native American
Women at the Ph.D. Level in Higher Education:
Testimonios of Resistance, Defiance, Survival, and Hope

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Women's Studies

by

Bert María Cueva

2013

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2013

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

Theorizing the Racial and Gendered Educational Experiences of Chicanas and Native American

Women at the Ph.D. Level in Higher Education:

Testimonios of Resistance, Defiance, Survival, and Hope

By

Bert María Cueva

Doctor of Philosophy in Women's Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2013

Professor Daniel Solórzano, Co-chair

Professor Kris Gutierrez, Co-chair

This national case study examines the educational experiences of twenty-one women that self-identified as low-income or working-class Chicanas or Native American women pursuing professoriate degrees in the Humanities, Social Sciences, Forestry, and Education. The case study includes forty-two qualitative *testimonio* interviews that examine how racism, white privilege, and complex power relations affect Chicanas and Native American women at the doctoral level. This case study examines the types, contexts, effects, and responses that the women use to strategically navigate through their doctorates within predominantly white public universities. This case study uses Critical Race Theory (CRT), Chicana Feminism, and a qualitative method of *testimonio* to better understand the educational experiences of Chicanas and Native American women in higher education. CRT allows for an interdisciplinary perspective to examine how racism, white privilege, and complex power relations impact

women's educational experiences. Chicana feminism allows me to theorize from the intersectionalities of race, class, and gender, as well as draw from alternative sources of knowledge, such as women's bodies, lived experiences, and cultural intuition.¹ Cultural intuition is shaped by our personal, academic, and professional experiences, as well as our Chicana feminist oriented research practices.²

The methodological approach of *testimonio* is used to conduct, collect, and analyze forty-one *testimonio* interviews on Chicana and Native American women's educational experiences. *Testimonio* provides a format to document and better understand the effects of racism and race-based trauma through the psychological and physiological implications to women's bodies, minds, and health. Their *testimonios* are significant for educators, researchers, and policy makers to better understand how systematic racism and additional types of oppressive structures within higher education impact Chicanas and Native American women in the 21st Century. The method of *testimonio* allows women to name and reveal the discursive assaults experienced by institutional, social, and political injustices occurring in higher education.

The case study includes twenty-one women from predominantly white public universities throughout the United States. Most notably, the case study will contribute to creating interdisciplinary feminist research to better understand Chicanas and Native American women's racial and gendered educational experiences in order to create greater educational opportunities for marginalized women at the level of the professoriate.

¹ Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, 3rd (Berkeley: Women of Color Series/Third Woman Press, 2002).

² Dolores Delgado Bernal, "Using a Chicana Feminist Epistemology in Educational Research," *Harvard Educational Review* 68, (1998): 555-579.

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2013

DEDICATION: TO MY FAMILY

Dedicated to my loving Father *Ricardo Cueva* and in memory of my Mother *Frances Infante*

I am the daughter of a *Mexicano* Bracero immigrant and an independent free spirit mother of the Native American Luiseño tribe. This work is dedicated to my father, *Ricardo Cueva*, and written in memory of my mother, *Frances Infante*.



Photos 1 and 2: My parents and sister (*Ricardo Cueva* and *Frances Infante*)

I honor both of their *testimonios* about life's struggles, hardships, and triumphs. My father taught me to care about humanity, especially those that struggle, and to never to be afraid to advocate for justice in the service of creating change. My mother taught me to never take life for granted and to appreciate each and every day. Through my parent's lived experiences, I know that we are never alone, even in the most difficult of times. We are *always* guided and protected spiritually by Creator.



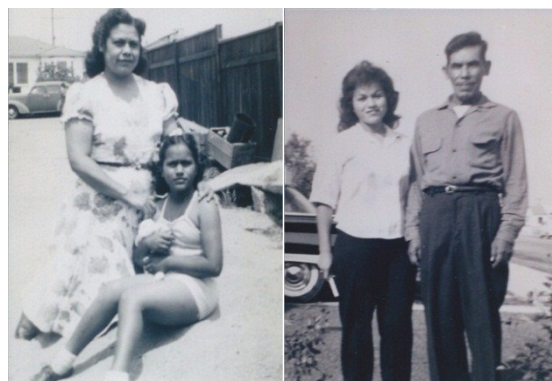
Photo 3 and 4: *La Familia Cueva*, Graduation Ceremonies (Apa, Chala, Bert, Ricardo Jr., Vicky, Jessica, Gabriel, Michael, Rachael, and Robert)

I am also grateful to my family for their love and support on this educational path towards the doctorate. My siblings (Chala, Ricardo, and Vicky) and beautiful godchildren (Jessica, Gabriel, Michael, and Rachael) fueled my spirit with hope and laughter throughout graduate school with their positive and loving energies.



Photos 5, 6, and 7: My Siblings, Godchildren, Sylvia and Joaquin

To my sister, Chala, thank you for all the sacrifices you have made for all of us. I am forever grateful. You inspire me, as an amazing mother and big sister *always*. Further, to Sylvia Betancourt for years of friendship, support, and healing during the journey of life. To my godchildren, thank you for teaching me the importance of being able to laugh and have fun. I feel fortunate to have a family that I adore, that makes me laugh, and that I cherish. They have all filled my spirit in different ways and have never let me give up on my dream towards the professoriate.



Photos 8 and 9: My *Nina*, *Nino*, and Mother

To my elders that have passed, I feel gratitude for being able to hear your stories and use them to learn from and guide me in life. To my *Nina* and *Nino*, I am forever grateful to have witnessed your 90 plus years in this lifetime. I value this type of ancestral, cultural, and lived knowledge *always*.

In addition, I have tremendous gratitude for three incredible women that I respect, love, and appreciate—Sonia Saldivar-Hull, Sylvia Betancourt, and Cindy Cruz. Their strong commitment to social justice and to seeking change for those that struggle fills my spirit with hope, faith, and courage.

Finally, this dissertation is dedicated to all those that feel isolated, persecuted, or silenced; and who share in a collective struggle and vision for change that honors humanitarian principles in a world that remains at war and thus on fire.

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Photo 10: RAC (Research Apprentice Course) at UCLA³

³ Photo courtesy of pocho1 of pocho1.com

To my academic community of critical race scholars at UCLA, I feel blessed to call this space my intellectual home. The space welcomes an opportunity to engage in critical dialogues, debates, and research grounded in humanitarian principles. All of you truly inspire me, as “armed soldiers of an intellectual revolution.” I will always have a special place in my heart for my friends and colleagues in RAC (Research Apprentice Course).

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The awakening of critical consciousness leads the way to the expression of social discontents precisely because these discontents are real components of an oppressive situation.⁴

Critical Race Scholars use Freire's practice of *conscientización* (critical consciousness) where communities construct critical movements in efforts to mobilize the oppressed through pedagogies of empowerment and praxis.⁵ *Conscientización* is a pedagogical praxis that introduces a critical form of thinking, existing, and engaging within one's conflicting worlds and brings us to a deeper awareness of our oppressions as human beings. With this in mind, educational researchers Solórzano and Yosso assert that traditional educational scholarship has failed to effectively address the various systems of oppression reflective of race and the racism that People of Color experience throughout the educational pipeline.⁶ Race is a social mode of classification based on phenotypes assigned to human beings within a historical context. Black and Solomos believe that the social construct of race uses physical and biological traits to assign and differentiate opportunities and resources that govern the distribution of wealth, social and political leverage for People of Color.⁷

In U.S. society, racial stratification and racism continue to exist in all aspects of American life, including customs, policies, laws, and education. In education, racism is evidenced by "the belief that one group is superior [and] that this 'superior' group has the power to carry out racist acts, and that various racial/ethnic groups are affected."⁸ However, there is

⁴ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 2001), 36.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Daniel Solórzano and Tara Yosso, "A Critical Race Counter Story of Race, Racism, and Affirmative Action," *Equity and Excellence in Education* 35, no. 2 (2002): 156-164. I capitalize terms, such as People of Color, Communities of Color, and Women of Color to reassign discursive agency to the marginalized subject.

⁷ Les Back and John Solomos, *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader*, (New York: Routledge, 2000), 3.

⁸ Daniel Solórzano, "Critical Race Theory, Race, and Gender Microaggressions and the Experiences of Chicana and Chicano Scholars," *Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 11, no. 1 (1998): 121-136.

minimal research available regarding the specific effects of racism on Chicanas and Native American women at the doctorate level. This interdisciplinary research specifically examines the educational experiences of twenty-one women that self-identify as Chicana or Native American in the Humanities, Social Sciences, Forestry, and Education within predominantly white public universities. As an interdisciplinary feminist researcher, it is important to unearth and convey the racial and gendered educational experiences of low-income women at the Ph.D. level to better understand how racial microaggressions affect their bodies, mind, health, and quality of life in higher education.

According to Solórzano *racial microaggressions* are a form of systematic racism used to keep those at the racial margins in their place. Racial microaggressions are 1) subtle verbal and non-verbal assaults directed towards People of Color, often carried out automatically or unconsciously; 2) are layered assaults, based on an individual's race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, immigration status, accent, surname, or phenotypes, and 3) cumulative emotional racial assaults taking a psychological or physiological toll on People of Color within predominantly white universities.⁹ Therefore, part of the research problem is that there is minimal scholarship regarding the educational experiences of low-income Chicanas and Native American women in higher education, especially in relation to “why women leave or are pushed out of their doctorate studies.” Valencia, an educational researcher, asserts that deficit perspectives in education are evidenced by the disproportionately high dropout or “push out” rates among Students of Color, as well as students from lower socio-economic backgrounds in the United States.¹⁰ He argues that negative beliefs regarding Students of Color and poor students can also result in cultural stereotypes that affect their academic performance. Further,

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Richard R. Valencia, *The Evolution of Deficit Thinking: Educational Thought and Practice* (Oxon: Routledge 1997), 190-199

educational deficit thinking is a form of blaming the victim that views the alleged deficiencies of Students of Color and low-income students and their families as predominantly responsible for school problems and academic failure without critically addressing structural inequalities evident throughout educational systems.¹¹ The case study engages in these important areas of inquiry to better understand and identify the implications of racism for low-income women at the doctoral level.

This national case study is the *first* feminist study to examine the educational experiences of women that self-identify as Chicana or Native American.¹² However, their racial/ethnic identities are not stagnant or fixed, as many of the women in the study also identified in more than one category, such as bi-racial. The tribes in the study include Mandan, Hidatsa, Sioux, Gabrieliño (Tongva), Muskogee Creek, Flandreau, Santee Sioux, Ojibway-Cree, Luiseño, Poarch Band of Creek Indians, and Navajo. The states represented in the study include California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Montana, Alabama, Massachusetts, Michigan, the *Yucatan* peninsula, North Dakota, Ohio, as well as additional sites like Canada and México.

The women in the study, identified as growing up in poverty or coming from low-income and working-class socio-economic backgrounds. Educational theorist, Hernandez, asserts that “basic governmental or historical categories equate poverty with an objective and measurable lack of food, clothing, shelter, and ability to meet basic needs.”¹³ However, she argues that what is missing from this definition of poverty is a nuanced unearthing of women’s *experiences* and

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² I invoke the self-identifier, ‘Chicana,’ as a politicized term that theorizes from a site of consciousness raising, resistance, as well as a praxis that engages in social advocacy. The term is reflective of a history with Mexico and critical of U.S. imperialism.

¹³ Angelica V. Hernandez, *Crawling through the Educational Pipeline: Latinas, poverty y educación*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, (2012), 51

how Women of Color draw strengths from their lived socio-economic struggles, defined by Hernandez as a Pedagogy of Poverty.¹⁴

Statement of Research Objective

The research objectives for this national case study are designed to help educators, researchers, and policy makers better understand the racial and gendered educational experiences of low-income Chicanas and Native American women pursuing professoriate degrees. The research is designed to help identify the types of institutional changes necessary in order to create greater educational opportunities at the Ph.D. level for underserved U.S. Women of Color. The case study is guided by the following research objectives.

First, the study is designed to gain a thorough knowledge of the educational experiences of Chicanas and Native American women during different stages of their Ph.D. studies. By centering women's racial educational experiences at the doctorate level, educators, researchers, and policy makers will better understand how to address and advocate for institutional changes via retention, recruitment, and providing equal educational access to racial/ethnic women in higher education.

Second, the study is designed to achieve a breadth of knowledge regarding the distinct educational experiences of Chicanas and Native American women, as they navigate through their Ph.D. studies. The women included in the study will contribute to our understanding of their experiences as pertain to three central categories. The first category in the study includes seven women currently pursuing their Ph.D.'s. The second category includes eight women that have left or that were pushed out of their Ph.D. studies. The third group includes six women that have completed their doctorate degrees. In total there are twenty-one women included in this national case study, and who have identified as attending public universities throughout the United States.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Third, the study will create interdisciplinary scholarship that critically addresses the depths of racial and gendered microaggressions that transpire in the academy and affect women's bodies, minds, and health. The study will also address how Chicanas and Native American women respond to, and thus strategically navigate through, microaggressions within predominantly white public universities. Therefore, the research objective is designed to document and preserve their *testimonios* in order to better understand the psychological and physiological effects of microaggressions occurring to racialized women at the professoriate level.

One could argue that access to and resources in higher education are connected to a larger capitalist political structure that reinforces institutional racism, white privilege, socio-economic inequities, and complex power relations for underserved racialized communities, particularly within educational institutions. For example, Chicana lesbian theorist Anzaldúa asserts:

Racism is especially rampant in places and people that produce knowledge... Racism sucks out the life blood from our bodies, our souls. As survivors of Racism, women-of-color suffer chronic stress and continual 'post-traumatic stress syndrome' (suffered by survivors of war)... The psychological effects of Racism have been greatly underestimated.¹⁵

Anzaldúa boldly argues that racism exists within educational systems and has psychological implications, such as Post Traumatic Stress disorder (PTSD), that impact U.S. Women of Color's bodies, minds, and spirits. The psychological and physiological implications of racism and race-based distress for Students of Color pursuing doctoral study has also been documented in Truong's groundbreaking national case study published in 2010.¹⁶ Necessarily, the race-based

¹⁵ Gloria Anzaldúa, "Haciendo Caras, Una Entrada: Introduction," in *Making Face, Making Soul: Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Women of Color*, ed. Gloria Anzaldúa (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Foundation Book, 1990), xi-xxviii

¹⁶ Kimberly A. Truong, *Racism and Racial Trauma in Doctoral Study: How Students of Color Experience and Negotiate the Political Complexities of Racial Encounters*, (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2010).

trauma endured by U.S. Women of Color in the academy represents very real and detrimental psychological ramifications.

To summarize, the case study examines marginalized areas of educational research from an interdisciplinary feminist perspective. This research will contribute to the discursive gaps in literature by revealing the political realities that Chicanas and Native American women navigate through at the doctoral level.

The Implications of Racism and Race-Based Trauma

According to a leading case study on psychological research conducted in 2009 by Carter and Forsyth, current definitions of racism do not offer ways to connect specific acts of racism to emotional and psychological reactions.¹⁷ They argue that what is missing in understanding acts of racism are clear definitions that provide an analysis linking racist acts to the victim's emotional and psychological responses. Carter and Forsyth assert that it is imperative to re-conceptualize the relationship between racist acts and the victim's psychological and physiological state of health.¹⁸ They posit that racial microaggressions are often disregarded in traditional fields of psychology that omit race-based trauma and prolonged exposure to racism in conventional clinical diagnoses for People of Color. For example, in an additional study conducted by Carter entitled, "Racism and Psychological and Emotional Injury: Recognizing and Assessing Race-Based Trauma," he asserts that racism and its associate trauma have been excluded in diagnosing stress, trauma, and injury in Mental Health Disorders through the use of a traditional psychological diagnosis text called DSM-IV- TR (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual

¹⁷ Robert Carter and J. Forsyth, "A Guide to the Forensic Assessment of Race-Based Traumatic Stress Reactions," *The Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law*, no. 37 (2009): 28-40.

¹⁸ Ibid.

of Mental Disorders).¹⁹ As the official diagnostic system for mental health disorders in the U.S., it is imperative that the DSM-IV-TR be re-conceptualize so as to not exclude racism and race-based trauma in a clinical diagnosis for People of Color, as racism continues to manifest in everyday interactions of people.

In a comparable case study, educational scholars Smith, Allen, and Danley propose and assert the term *racial battle fatigue* (RBF), arguing that RBF is manifested through the People of Color's prolonged exposure to racism in predominantly white institutions through psychological and physiological effects.²⁰ They argue that continued race-based distress trigger racial battle fatigue through one's "flight or fight" psychological response system. Racial battle fatigue is believed to affect one's psychological and physiological state, activated and thus heightened through continuous exposure to racial microaggressions in predominantly white hostile institutions.²¹ For example, Smith conducted a study on African American men at Harvard University, paying close attention to the implications of racism for this group of racialized men. The study reveals very serious findings: African-American men that were subjected to prolonged racism also developed racial battle fatigue. In accordance with this study, some of the symptoms of RBF include: elevated blood pressure, anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, acute stress, rapid heart palpitations, nausea, and insomnia. These conditions activate the human response system, and if unchecked can lead to a collapsed psychological state or chronic conditions that debilitate one's health and quality of life.

¹⁹ Robert Carter, "Racism and Psychological and Emotional Injury: Recognizing and Assessing Race-Based Trauma," *The Counseling Psychologist*, no. 35 (2007): 13-105.

²⁰ William Smith, W.A. Allen, and L.L. Danely, "Assume the Position... You fit the Description: Psychological Experiences and Racial Battle Fatigue among African American Male College Students." *American Behavior Scientist*, no.51 (2007): 551-578.

²¹ Ibid.

Furthermore, these race-based studies reveal the frequently ignored effects of racism and emphasize the deeper implications of racial battle fatigue for marginalized group subjected to prolonged exposure. Undeniable parallels can be drawn with between racial battle fatigue and PTSD. Although PTSD is clinically diagnosed as a psychological disability in trauma survivors and veterans of war, to date there is minimal feminist educational scholarship pertaining to the implications of racism and racial battle fatigue with regards to U.S. Women of Color in higher education. This national case study addresses and responds to this profound gap in research inquiry, and seeks to address discursive gaps in the literature in order to shed light on the crippling aftermath of race-based discrimination of Chicanas and Native American women at the doctoral rung. Although Carter and Smith’s assessments are important, it is also important to understand the historical continuity and colonial context of racism. Memmi claims that there is a relationship between the “colonizer and the colonized,” in which psychological trauma is used as a tool by the colonizer, to colonize, and thereafter control and dominate the minds of the colonized and/or oppressed.²² Additionally, Fanon reminds one that the historic impacts of colonization have inflicted deep seeded wounds within the colonized mind—wounds strategically executed by the colonizer with the intent to contain and control the minds of the colonized and/or the oppressed.²³ Moreover, he argues that colonization leads to a collapsed psychological defense where the depths of the psychological wounds are commensurate to “genuine genocide” caused through inhumane practices of psychological domination at the hands of the colonizer.²⁴ Both Memmi and Fanon provide a historical and colonial lens through which to lay bare the psychological impacts of colonization on the colonized mind (i.e. the oppressed) from a historical colonial perspective. Systematic racism has continually and consistently

²² Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), 69-71.

²³ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 181-184.

²⁴ Ibid.

manifested itself in different periods of history and in the 21st century, albeit in new and unexpected forms. Racism remains institutionalized throughout U.S. society, policy, and educational systems. The amorphous nature of race-based discrimination facilitates its continued use against People of Color to inflict fear, oppression, and domination. Solórzano suggests that the new manifestation of racism is evident in racial/gendered microaggressions, white privilege, and systematic racism within educational systems.²⁵ This case study examines the psychological and physiological effects of racism revealed in the twenty-one political narratives of Chicanas and Native American women in predominantly white public universities.

Statement of Research Problem

According to Back and Solomos, part of the challenge in conducting research on racism in education that racism has evolved and taken on new configurations. For example, “[t]he old fashioned type of racial hatred was overt, direct, and often intentional, [yet it] has increasingly morphed into a contemporary form that is subtle, indirect, and often disguised... The new manifestation of racism has been likened to carbon monoxide, invisible, but potentially lethal”²⁶ Therefore, the research problem is that systematic racism has taken on varied forms enacting oppressive functions within higher education that directly impact People of Color (i.e., educational inequities, intolerance, segregation, white privilege, discriminatory/differential treatment, unethical conduct, and complex power relations). When referring to these indirect and subtle affirmations of prevalent racism, Solórzano employs the term racial microaggressions—used to describe the contemporary form of racism that continues to play itself out in the daily lives of People of Color and work its detrimental effects throughout the educational pipeline.²⁷

²⁵ Daniel Solórzano, “Critical Race Theory, Race, and Gender Microaggressions, and the Experience of Chicana and Chicano Scholars,” *Qualitative Studies in Education* 11, no. 1 (1998): 121-136.

²⁶ Back and Solomos, *Theories of Race and Racism*, 3.

²⁷ Solórzano, “Critical Race Theory,” 121-136.

The case study builds from these important contributions in educational research; however, I examine the psychological and physiological consequences of racial and gendered microaggressions specifically on women's bodies, minds, health, and quality of life, and in so doing, aim to create interdisciplinary research.

Furthermore, data gathered from the U.S. Bureau of Census (listed below) illustrates alarming demographic data pertaining to Native Americans and Chicanas/os throughout the educational pipeline in the United States. The data reflects disturbingly low levels of educational attainment, with low figures for both racial/ethnic groups and genders throughout the different stages of the educational pipelines.²⁸ The data in Table 1 entitled, "The Educational Pipelines for Native Americans and Chicanas/os" illustrates the low retention rates for both racial/ethnic groups. The first number in each column represents the women and is highlighted in bold. The second number represents the men. Both categories commence with 100 students in both racial/ethnic categories (i.e. Native American and Chicanas/os) beginning from elementary school and ending with students that graduated with a Ph.D.

²⁸ U.S. Bureau of Census Data 2008, Current Population Survey: Ethnicity and Ancestry Statistics Branch <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/histpov/hstpov2.html>.

Table 1: The Educational Pipelines for Native Americans and Chicanas/os

Native American	Chicana/o
Educational Pipeline	Educational Pipeline
100 girls /100 boys	100 girls /100 boys
Graduate from Elementary	Graduate from Elementary School
72 women / 70 men	54 women / 51 men
Graduate from High School	Graduate from High School
12 women / 11 men	11 women / 10 men
Graduate from College	Graduate from College
4 women / 4 men	4 women / 4 men
Graduate from Grad School	Graduate from Grad School
0.4 women / 0.6 men	0.3 women / 0.4 men
Graduate with a Ph.D.	Graduate with a Ph.D.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census Data, 2008

The data for the Native American educational pipeline (left side) reflects that *only* **0.4** of Native American women and **0.6** of Native American men graduate with a Ph.D. out of a total of 100 students. In comparison, the Chicana/o Educational Pipeline (right side) suggests that *only* **0.3** of Chicanas and **0.4** of Chicanos graduate with a Ph.D. also out of 100 students. One must wonder what accounts for the low retention rates within the educational pipelines. Additionally, what is occurring in higher education, as both Ph.D. categories are extremely low for Native Americans and Chicanas/os? Further, one could argue that the low graduation rates reflect larger macro systematic disparities interconnected to political issues, such as systematic racism, educational inequities, economic disparities, and additional power relations occurring throughout the educational pipeline.

The case study addresses these important research inquiries to better understand how systematic racism and additional forms of oppression operate, particularly at the Ph.D. level, for low-income Chicanas and Native American women within predominantly white public universities nationwide. The case study examines the educational experiences of Native American women and Chicanas to better understand the political narratives via *testimonios* behind the demographic data. The case study examines the following three categories of women in higher education: 1) Seven women pursuing their Ph.D.'s; 2) Eight women that left or pushed out of their Ph.D.'s., and 3) Six women that completed their Ph.D.'s. In studying these target categories in the dissertation; I hope to shed light on the women's lived experiences, as they navigate through racism, white privilege, and complex power relations in public universities.

Significance of a National Case Study

This national case study is significant and will create interdisciplinary Critical Race feminist scholarship to better understand the educational experiences of low-income Chicanas and Native American women pursuing doctorate degrees. The study moves us beyond a theoretical contribution by incorporating a strategic designed to produce data via twenty-one *testimonio* qualitative interviews. This research will also create scholarship that addresses the discursive gaps in literature regarding the types of racial and gendered microaggressions; their contexts and effects; and Chicana and Native American women's responses to them at the professoriate level. The case study is designed to reveal how racism, white privilege, and oppressive conditions directly or indirectly impact the educational experiences of underrepresented Chicanas and Native American women in predominantly white public institutions. The conceptual frameworks that guide the case study are designed to shed light on these important politicized educational inquires.

The theoretical design of the dissertation includes Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Chicana Feminism. Critical Race Theory “challenges the dominant discourse of race and racism, as they relate to education by examining how educational theory, policy, and practice are used to subordinate certain racial and ethnic groups in education.”²⁹ Critical Race Theory consists of the following five tenets: 1) centralizes race, racism, and additional intersectionalities in the analysis; 2) provides an interdisciplinary framework; 3) centers the lived experiences of People of Color in the analysis; 4) challenges traditional ideologies and dominant discourses; 5) moves us beyond rhetoric and offers a grounded approach linked to advocacy.³⁰ I use CRT as an interdisciplinary critical race framework to examine issues of race, racism, complex power relations, and white privilege, as they relate to women’s strategic assumption of agency in their navigation through doctoral studies.

In addition, I use Chicana feminism, which strategically challenges Anglo feminism by shifting discursive agency and centering the racialized subjectivity of Chicanas/Latinas in particular and U.S. Women of Color in general, in the analysis.³¹ Chicana feminists like Anzaldúa and Moraga have created feminist-oriented research practices that analyze oppression within a history of colonialism, patriarchy, cultural nationalism, power, and white privilege.³² Chicana feminism also allows researchers to create knowledge from alternative sources, such as women’s bodies, memories/traumas, experiential knowledge, ancestral wisdom, and cultural intuition.³³ I use Chicana feminism to theorize from the intersections, as well as the interstices found within connections of the body, mind, and spirit connections where knowledge is also created. Chicana feminists continue to define and re-define Chicana projects as fluid. Therefore, attempting to assign one simple definition to Chicana feminism

²⁹ Solórzano, “Critical Race Theory, Race, and Gender Microaggressions,” 121-136.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Moraga and Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women*.

³² Ibid.

³³ Delgado Bernal, “Using a Chicana Feminist Epistemology,” 555-579; Moraga and Anzaldúa, *This Bridge*.

is not possible; it is imperative to view Chicana feminist thought as multiple, theoretically innovative, interdisciplinary, and a politically transformative body of knowledge.

By studying women's educational experiences, we are better able to understand and theorize on the discursive assaults occurring to women's bodies, minds, health, and quality of life at the professoriate level. After all, Chicana feminism allows researchers to use culturally specific ways of learning that are also linked to culture, family, ancestors, and created from lived experiences.³⁴ Therefore, women assume agency drawn from shared consciousness of conquest, subordination, and survival—used to humanize their racialized and gendered educational experiences throughout the research process.

For methodological design, I use *testimonio* as a qualitative method to preserve and document the political narrative of twenty-one women through the power of memory, remembering, pain/trauma, and recollection.³⁵ *Testimonios* document and inscribe into existence a social witness account of counter hegemonic knowledge based on experiences, political persecution, and human struggles that are erased through Western imperial discourses.³⁶ *Testimonio* allows researchers to reveal important politicized witness accounts of resistance, survival, and hope. *Testimonio* also sets a standard for emancipatory feminist research that advocates for change through a grounded and organic research process. By using *testimonio* the women are also better able to reflect, analyze, and theorize the discursive assaults occurring within the academy through systematic oppressions.

Research Questions

In the case study, I rely on Delgado Bernal's method of *cultural intuition* as a methodological research practice that allows researchers to connect personal, professional, and

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ The Latina Feminist Group, eds., "Introduction," in *Telling to Live: Latina Feminist Testimonios* (London: Duke University Press, 2001), 7-9.

³⁶ Ibid.

cultural experiences to the research process.³⁷ Cultural intuition provides a method through which to hone into one's research based on intuitive knowing, experiential knowledge; and challenges the notion that knowledge is "objective" for People of Color in the academy.³⁸

Cultural intuition guides the following research questions of the case study:

1. How do racism and other forms of oppression impact the educational experiences of Chicanas and Native American women in their pursuit of the Ph.D.'s?
2. What are the psychological and physiological effects of racism on women's bodies, minds, health, and quality of life in higher education?
3. What do women's *testimonios* teach us about strategically navigating through racism, complex power relations, and white privilege at the professoriate level?

In answering the aforementioned questions, I will create interdisciplinary educational research to better understand the racial and gendered educational experiences of low-income Chicanas and Native American women in higher education. Additionally, I will examine institutional barriers—such as systematic racism, white privilege, educational inequities—and academic climates, as Chicanas and Native American women navigate through their doctorate studies.

In summary, the original "blue print" for this dissertation research emerged from various educational experiences that I endured throughout the educational pipeline. Therefore, in honoring the tradition of *testimonio* and "breaking the silences" associated with political injustices, I conclude this section with my *testimonio*, as a connected part of this organic research process. My *testimonio* is created from the in-between spaces of living memory and experience, as I navigated through the educational pipeline.

³⁷ Delgado Bernal, "Using a Chicana Feminist Epistemology," 555-579.

³⁸ Dolores Delgado Bernal and Octavio Villalpando, "An Apartied of Knowledge in Academia: The Struggle over the Legitimate Knowledge of Faculty of Color," *Equity and Excellence in Education* 35, no.2 (2002), 169-180.

The Broken Educational Pipeline: A *Testimonio* of Resilience, Survival, and Hope

This political narrative symbolizes the importance of resiliency, survival, and hope when faced with adversities. Thus, how I chose to navigate through racism, white privilege, and complex power relations throughout the educational pipeline.

My testimonio:

At Richmond Elementary School (public school), I remember classrooms being divided by race and socio-economic status—not so much by gender. My white sixth grade teacher (Ms. Harper) often used an “angry tone” and “aggressive gaze” when addressing students with Latino surnames. She isolated Mexican-American bilingual students and ESL students at one table in the back of the classroom while middle-class white students worked on assignments up front. Although I did not understand her behavior, I knew at a very young age that Latino students were in fact treated differently according to their race and socio-economic status. Ms. Harper’s tone and treatment towards Latino students established a hostile learning environment in the classroom fostered a larger division amongst students. At this age, I did not know that I was experiencing blatant racism and racial microaggressions in the classroom. As an elementary student, I often questioned her authority and was consequently punished for doing so. As a result, I spent lots of time on the bench at recess when all I really wanted to do was learn.

In high school, I cannot recall a particular teacher that stood out from the rest. In my opinion, they were all the same “big empty blur.” My white female counselor encouraged me to be a secretary and not get pregnant; blurting out how much of a “big problem” it was for “Hispanic girls.” Like my earlier experience with Ms. Harper, I had no idea that I was experiencing racial and gendered form of microaggressions. Moreover, my history teacher Mr. Song was a complete joke, as he never taught a single history lesson in class. Instead, we were told to read silently, as he sat in a corner chair by the window reading the newspaper. I often wondered if this was what teachers got paid to do. Colleges were never suggested as an option for me after high school, nor were A.P. classes that would have prepared me for it. While in high school, I socialized with other working-class Chicana/o students on the P.E. steps. I felt at home with my Chicano community of youth and felt a sense of *familia* and support. As the years passed, I recall Chicano students disappearing “one by one” and no one seemed to care. I attended more memorial services for young Chicano men (age 16-19) than I care to remember. In school, we were racially stereotyped and called derogatory names by other students (i.e. “wetbacks,” “trouble-makers,” and, “gang bangers”). This really made me angry, so I “fought back” by joining the student council and organized the first chapter of *La Raza Club* to challenge the racist stereotypes and cultural ignorance of my peers.

During my senior year, I was walking across the P.E. field and the soft voice of a teacher named Mrs. Pence called out my name. She was one of my favorite teachers because she genuinely cared about students, especially us Students of Color. She informed me that we

were under surveillance by young police (narcs) posing as students and targeting Chicana/o students, African-Americans, and others. Mrs. Pence stated that we had been wrongfully “singled out” by administrators for this operation. She encouraged me to “speak up” and tell everyone, which I did, but it was too late. Police profiles landed many of my Chicano community in juvenile court and ultimately led to expulsion from high school. In the end, only six out of thirty six Chicana/o students graduated from our high school. Out of the six that graduated, I was the *only* person that continued my education and attended Santa Monica Community College

I transferred to UCLA from Santa Monica College a few years later. At UCLA, I developed a passion for political theory, as I double majored in Political Science and Chicana/o Studies. During my first year, I felt very isolated until attending my first MEChA meeting, where I found a predominantly working-class Chicana/o community of support. As a MEChista, I developed a critical political consciousness and learned the significance of Marxist theory, social advocacy and community activism. In particular, I started to understand that racism is institutionalized throughout U.S. society, and has been historically perpetuated through hegemony, white privilege, and capitalism. Although race is a social construct, race manifests itself in ways that impact every aspect of our lives throughout U.S. society. In addition, as a working-class student, I also felt the socio-economic hardships of attending UCLA as an undergraduate student. For years, I struggled to pay tuition, working at least two jobs at any given time to remain at the university. At one period, I worked for a privileged white woman in Brentwood for “room and board.” I recall trying to study in a small room connected to the outside garage. At night, I could hear rats running throughout the walls. I boarded the holes along the bathroom, but I could still hear them while studying at night. I felt overwhelmed with rage, as she did nothing to change the living conditions, yet felt entitled to call upon me day or night to work. Part of my job was to perform physical labor, take care of her children, and clean up after their dog. One evening, I had it with the living conditions and called her out, I was fired immediately and left that week. I often wondered if other students at UCLA went through these types of socio-economic hardships or experiences to pay for their education. These particular experiences gave me a better understanding of Marxist theory and the socio-economic differences amongst women based on class and the politics of racism.

During my senior year at UCLA, I took a course with Chicana Professor Sonia Saldívar-Hull entitled “WS 130: U.S. Women of Color.” She was the *first* Chicana Professor to cross my educational path in the university. Interestingly enough, she is the person that literally changed my life through her mentorship, support, and critical feminist teachings. She taught me the significance of “arming myself with knowledge” through one-on-one mentoring Sunday afternoons. She also encouraged me to acquire feminist analytical tools to challenge patriarchy, Chicano cultural nationalism, and to understand the deeper gendered politics of racism. Through her mentoring, I learned the significance of utilizing theories of our Chicana and *Indígena* foremothers—theories historically rooted and grounded in advocacy. Professor Saldívar-Hull gave me the strength, courage, and determination to pursue a Ph.D. in the field of Women’s Studies as an interdisciplinary Chicana feminist armed with a Marxist ideology.

I started the Women's Studies Ph.D. program with a B.A and M.A. from UCLA. I was excited to be part of the program; however, I quickly learned why so many Theorists of Color separated themselves from white privileged women during the Women's Movement. Throughout my graduate studies, I witnessed several accounts wherein white female faculty abused their power and privilege. I also witnessed female Faculty of Color directing similar hierarchal oppressive patterns towards U.S. Women of Color. One faculty member in particular often yelled at Women of Color behind closed doors and favored privileged white students. I always entered these hostile spaces with my Mother's prayer card and sage, in efforts to protect myself spiritually. I often prepared for meetings through the use of meditation and prayer circles. However, in time my body, mind, and spirit collapsed from the prolonged effects of the microaggressions. In time, I developed fatigue, acute anxiety, exhaustion, and elevated blood pressure. I felt like a "combatant in a war," as opposed to a graduate student. For years, I engaged in what I can *only* describe as a profoundly painful experience. However, I made a political choice to remain in academia, and so I navigated through each hurdle, never abandoning my faith through the process...

In retrospect, these types of painful/traumatic educational experiences truly changed me from within. I found myself filled with various emotions, like sadness, pain, self-doubt, and anger... I allowed myself to enter these dark spaces in attempts to heal my spirit. In time the emotions transformed, as I commenced the spiritual journey to recovery. I started to feel empathy for those that caused me pain and harm. I wondered what kind of life they lead that would make them behave the ways they did. I was determined to disrupt the pattern of psychological abuse, and never treat my students in that manner. Further, after extensive healing and soul work; I found myself surrounded with support and love from family, friends, supportive faculty, and progressive administrators at UCLA. I was also part of a progressive academic community in Education in which I was surrounded by critical race scholars, passionate about creating change. RAC (Research Apprentice Course) was an academic space where I finally felt safe. I have profound respect for my colleagues in RAC who have contributed to making our world a better place, especially for those that are marginalized and working-poor.

I humbly recognize that I have *always* been guided and protected spiritually while on this educational path towards the doctorate. Part of my healing process came from helping others in hopes of making changes for marginalized communities in the university system. To heal, I used critical self-reflection and the political writings of Gloria Anzaldúa. She encourages us to embrace our most painful experiences as "training grounds" in order to prepare us, on a deeper level, to contribute to making our world a better place for others. Anzaldúa defines the healing process as *conocimiento*.³⁹ *Conocimiento* is a process of reflection, awareness, growth, and healing that I fully embraced during my educational journey. After each traumatic battle, I took time to heal and rejuvenate my body, mind, and spirit. In time, I was able to use my voice and share

³⁹ Gloria Anzaldúa, "Now Let us Shift...The Path of *Conocimiento*...Inner Work, Public Acts," in *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation*, eds. Gloria Anzaldúa and Analouse Keating (New York: Routledge, 2002), 540-578.

my *testimonio* with others. I am grateful that I survived the educational pipeline and with the support and love of so many, especially my family, unhindered. My family helped me recover and walk with human dignity, self-respect, and compassion. My father also taught me the art of forgiving, in order to free the spirit and be able to create, dream, and believe...

This national case study is significant because it reveals and addresses the intangible, yet profoundly consequential, challenges of Chicana and Native American women in higher education. Therefore, as women on the educational path we are reminded that our *testimonios* have the ability to transform, create, and heal. In summary, these lived experiences serve as the blue print for the dissertation, designed to better understand the racial and gendered educational experiences of low-income Chicanas and Native American women navigating through their doctoral degrees.

Breakdown of Dissertation Chapters

To address the research questions, I will use cultural intuition; and various bodies of literature from education, sociology, and feminist theory. The dissertation is organized into Seven Chapters. Chapter One is the introduction, which includes my *testimonio*. Chapter Two provides a review of literature on race, racism, and racial microaggressions. In Chapter Three, I discuss the theoretical frameworks that include: Critical Race Theory (CRT), Chicana Feminist Epistemologies, and Third Space Feminism. These important theoretical foundations guide the research analysis, and thus allow me to theorize from the intersections and from an interdisciplinary Chicana feminist lens. In Chapter Four, I present the methodological design that includes data analysis and data collection. Here, I also use *testimonios*, as a qualitative method during field interviews. *Testimonios* document and inscribe into existence a social witness account of counter hegemonic knowledge based on experiences, political persecution, and human struggles that are erased through Western imperial discourses. Chapter Five includes

the introductions of the twenty-one women in the case study and their demographic data. In Chapter Six, I present the women's *testimonio* interviews reflective of their racial and gendered educational experiences during the doctorate. This section includes the types of microaggressions, their contexts and effects, and *responses* women use to challenge them in predominantly white public universities. Chapter Seven, is the discussion of findings where I revisit the research questions, discuss implications for theory, methodology, practice, policy, and make recommendations for future research to create greater educational opportunities for low-income Chicanas and Native American women in higher education.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I present a synthesis of the literature related to several bodies of scholarly sources that are significant in understanding the impacts of racism on People of Color. First, I approach the literature by defining race and racism, and systematic racism, as well their consequences. Second, I explore colonial literature regarding the psychological and physiological effects of racism on People of Color. Third, I include an analysis by educational theorists and Theorists of Color regarding racial microaggressions and racial battle fatigue. Fourth, I include feminist literature by Chicanas and Theorists of Color that provide a gendered perspective relating to “racialized differences” in feminist academic spaces, as well as the tensions in hegemonic feminisms from a critical Chicana race-gendered perspective. These bodies of literature provide a conceptual foundation to better understand the effects of racism towards People of Color, and racial/ethnic women in the academy.

Defining Race and Racism

There are many definitions of race. Education scholars, assert that “race” is a topic that should not be subsumed under culture or diversity, but instead needs to be confronted and challenged directly because it has demonstrated continuity and persistence the course of U.S. history.⁴⁰ The academic literature offers various definitions that circulate within different disciplines (i.e. sociology, education, psychology, and feminist theory). Hence, race continues to be a critical factor associated with questions concerning who does and does not benefit from social, economic, and educational resources.⁴¹ While many definitions of race exist, many

⁴⁰ R. Carter and A.L. Goodwin, “Racial Identity and Education,” *Review of Research in Education*, 20 (1994): 291-336.

⁴¹ Ibid.

critical scholars like Solórzano and Yosso agree that race is a socially constructed category.⁴² Therefore, racial definitions are fluid and continue to change throughout history to allocate and deny power (through racism) to specific groups of people according to their location within a racially stratified society. Hence, we do not currently inhabit a “color-blind society,” but instead, we reside in a society that has historically perpetuated institutional racism, patriarchy, and socio-economic class struggles towards People of Color throughout the United States and continues to find ways to renew and refurbish a historical system of oppression.⁴³

This case study examines the relationship between racist psychological and physiological *stressors* for racial/ethnic women. The social category of race is also interconnected to gender, socio-economic status, sexuality, immigration status, and age, further complicating the analysis. Nevertheless, despite complexity, abstraction, and fluidity of the term, what remains evident is a power dynamic that enables those in power to exact racism towards People of Color.⁴⁴ For instance, Solórzano, Allen, and Carroll assert that white privilege/supremacy can be understood as a system of racial domination and exploitation where power and resources are unequally distributed to privilege whites and systematically and where People of Color are oppressed in various contexts (i.e. policies, education, jobs, and opportunities).⁴⁵ Further, they assert that racism ascribes by the following tenets: 1) that one group believes itself to be superior; 2) the group that believes itself to be superior has power to carry out the racist behavior, and 3) racism affects multiple racial/ethnic groups.⁴⁶ It is, therefore, important to frame racism as institutional power that People of Color have never significantly possessed historically and has been

⁴² Daniel Solórzano and Tara Yosso, “A Critical Race Counter Story of Race, Racism, and Affirmative Action,” *Equity and Excellence in Education* 35, no. 2 (2002): 155-168.

⁴³ Back and Solomos, *Theories of Race and Racism*, 2-7

⁴⁴ Haney-Lopez, “The Social Construction of Race.” In Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), 163-175.

⁴⁵ Solórzano, Allen, and Carroll, “Keeping Race in its Place: Racial Microaggressions and Racial Campus Climate at the University of California, Berkeley,” *Chicano-Latino Law Review* 23, no. 15, (2002):15-112.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

protected by racist ideologies rooted in white privilege. With this in mind, race has been systematically socially constructed in order to maintain and perpetuate racism, white privilege, and institutional racism that creates ubiquitous social inequities for the disadvantaged in the racial hierarchy. Delgado Bernal and Villalpando assert that the fluidity of racism reproduces the institutional construct of hegemonic knowledge where whites control and dominate what is perceived as “objective truth” in educational systems, traditional discourses, and in spaces where knowledge is also created.⁴⁷ In return, this leads to the construction of racial definitions that benefit whites, validating and reinforcing white values, beliefs and knowledge as hegemonic truths. Such construction not only serves to subordinate People of Color, but also functions to institutionalize privileges, dominance, and control by whites.⁴⁸

In order to understand the extensive intricacies of race and racism, it is important to also understand the historical colonial context of European imperialism that gave way to the construction of racism. The European imperialist desire to maintain power and representation over racialized beings was realized through the institution of a privileged and elite selection process that sought to oppress and colonize conquered peoples.⁴⁹ The term racism implies a hierarchal distinction between races assumes and imposes the superiority of one’s race over others on a scale that assigns moral worth, intelligence, white privilege, and social importance.⁵⁰

Colonial Racism/ the Colonized Mind

Institutionally, colonial rule operated by setting up visible, rigid, and hierarchal distinctions between the colonizers and the colonized. The physical and symbolic separation of the races was deemed necessary to maintain social distance and authority over subjected peoples...⁵¹

⁴⁷ Delgado Bernal and Villalpando, “An Apartied of Knowledge in Academia,” 169-180.

⁴⁸ R. Delgado and J. Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory an Introduction*, (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 1-13.

⁴⁹ Albert Memmi, *Racism*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 168-170

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Chandra Mohanty, “Cartographies of Struggle,” in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 15-17.

According to Memmi, “[r]acism is the generalized and final assigning of value to real or imaginary differences, to the accuser’s benefit and at his victim’s expense, in order to justify the former’s own privileges or aggression.”⁵² Memmi argues that racism exists by emphasizing the race-based differences of the colonized group, which leads to an intensification of the sense of exclusion and separation that places the oppressed group outside of the community and of civilized humanity. In return, these acts of dominance allow the colonizer to discriminate on the basis of racial, biological, cultural, and moral classifications of other human beings. Racial intolerance and racist acts are based upon a hierarchal system of power which invokes the racial differences of the oppressed group as inferior and subordinate to the elite European or white colonizer.

Memmi suggests that there are concrete economic and psychological power relations based on racist acts that privilege the colonizer and cause the colonized to accept “mental self-condemnation.”⁵³ This process of mental self-devaluation and psychological enslavement (i.e. internalized racism, self-hatred, and the colonized mind) involves acceptance of a negative stigma of one’s self-worth, the acceptance of limited human rights, and acquiescence to “whiteness” as superior furthering People of Color’s sense of hopelessness.⁵⁴ Memmi reasons that colonial racism is built from three major ideological and psychological components. First, the colonizer utilizes racial differences to establish hierarchal standards of dominance (i.e. keeps the colonized separate and rejected from society). Second, the colonizer uses said racial differences to exploit the colonized thus maintain European and white privilege. Third, the colonizer employs a framework of colonization on the colonized mind as fact, thus securing

⁵² Memmi, *Racism*, 170.

⁵³ The term is similar to ‘internalized racism’ which suggests that one internalizes negative race-based stigma about one’s own abilities and self-worth.

⁵⁴ Memmi, *Racism*, 170-175.

immobility through the use of the psychological weapon of oppression, dominance, self-hatred, and control.⁵⁵ This explanation of racism helps us understand how race, a socially constructed category, has historically manifested itself through an ideology of white privilege/supremacy, based on racialized perceptions of difference. Thus, one can be victimized by racism, despite the reality of whether or not any real differences exist. The implications of internalized racism are evident through self-hatred and internalized psychological trauma. The implications of race-based trauma have psychological and physiological effects that impair the colonized mind from exploring a historical perspective that calls into question the motives of the colonizer, and the psychological sufferings and enslavement of the colonized mind.

In addition, Fanon argues that colonization, if unchallenged, inflicts psychological wounds on the colonized mind on behalf of the white colonizer.⁵⁶ For example, Fanon asserts that colonization has psychological implications that lead to a collapsed psychological defense that he parallels “genuine genocide” caused through acts of control and domination over the oppressed. Fanon also states, that the colonized literally fight back, as if through “the process, the colonized acquire a peculiar visceral intelligence dedicated to the survival of body and spirit.”⁵⁷ Colonial racism is in fact a product of institutional colonial rule maintained through hierarchal imperial relationships between the colonizers and the colonized. Consequently, both Memmi and Fanon argue that the psychological and physiological impacts of colonization (colonial racism) affect the colonized mind from a historical perspective. Therefore, racism is institutionalized and continues to exist through once coercive institutions of colonial rule that to

⁵⁵ Memmi, *The Colonizer*, 70-74.

⁵⁶ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, (New York: Grove Press, 1963), viii. Fanon’s interpretations of colonial racism emerged from his interpretations of metropolitan France in the 1950’s; the anti-colonial Algerian war of liberation and the lynching of Black Americans in the United States.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, ix

date reflect imperial systems of power (legal systems, education, government, laws, and policies).

In the case study, the term racism refers to a system of dominance, power, and privilege based on dominant group designations; thus, it's also rooted in an historical oppression of a group perceived by the dominant group as inferior, defiant, or undesirable. Within this framework, racism occurs under circumstances where privileged members of the dominant group create or accept their societal privilege by maintaining structures, ideologies, values, systems, and behaviors that strategically exclude non-dominant groups from power, status, and/or equal access to societal resources.⁵⁸ This is evident in educational institutions through various structures that maintain white privilege through practices of discrimination, segregation, and educational inequities.

Racial Battle Fatigue and Racial Microaggressions

The 'old fashioned' type of racial hatred was overt, direct, and often intentional, and has increasingly morphed into a contemporary form that is subtle, indirect, and often disguised... The 'new manifestation' of racism has been likened to carbon monoxide, invisible, but potentially lethal. Some researchers prefer to use the term 'racial microaggression' to describe this form of racism which occurs in the daily lives of people of color.⁵⁹

According to educational researchers, Smith, Yosso, and Solórzano, racism exists through institutional systems where white privilege, economic injustice, and power are used to justify the inferiority of racialized groups. They assert that racial hierarchies function through white privilege and white supremacy by maintaining a system of racial domination and exploitation where resources are unequally distributed to privilege whites and where People of

⁵⁸ S. P. Harrell, "A Multidimensional Conceptualization of Racism-Related Stress: Implications for the Wellness of People of Color," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 70, no. 1, (2000): 42-57.

⁵⁹ Derald W. Sue, Jennifer Bucceri, Annie I. Lin, Kevin Nadal, and Gina Torino, "Racial Microaggressions and the Asian American Experience," *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* 13, no.1, (2007): 72.

Color are continuously oppressed.⁶⁰ In other words, within the American social landscape, white privilege and supremacy serve to strategically position whites the “entitled beneficiaries” of privilege, status, and dominance.

Moreover, Smith argues that the present day effects of racism in higher education are related to issues of “structural segregation,” evident in the racial prejudices of white supremacy in the 21st century.⁶¹ Smith suggests that structural segregation of People of Color becomes highly evident in educational institutions for People of Color that are not free of hostile racial climates that have historically subordinated racial and gendered groups in higher education. Similarly, in “Challenging Racial Battle Fatigue on Historically White Campuses: A Critical Race Examination of Race-Related Stress,” Smith, Yosso, and Solórzano argue that the negative ideologies and hostile racist behaviors on white campuses create a tense and isolating atmosphere for People of Color.⁶² They liken the hostile academic climate to a war-like battleground that precipitates psychological and physiological strains and impairs the health and quality of life of People of Color in the academy.

Racial battle fatigue is “like being alone on the front lines of a racial war...”⁶³ Racial battle fatigue is experienced in the form of elevated stress levels, activated physiologically through “unavoidable front-line racial battles”—combating, confronting, and navigating through systematic racism in predominantly white hostile institutions.⁶⁴ Some of the symptoms of RBF include: suppressed immunity and increased sickness, tension headaches, trembling, chronic pain

⁶⁰ William Smith, Tara Yosso, and Daniel Solórzano, “Challenging Racial Battle Fatigue,” in *Faculty of Color: Teaching in Predominantly White Colleges and Universities*, (Massachusetts: Anker Publishing Company, Inc., 2006), 299-304.

⁶¹ William Smith, Allen, W. R., Danley, “Assume the Position... You Fit the Description: Psychosocial Experiences and Racial Battle Fatigue Among African American Male College Students,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 51, no.4 (2007): 551-578.

⁶² Smith, Yosso, and Solórzano, “Challenging Racial Battle Fatigue,” in *Faculty of Color*, 300-301.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 300-301.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*.

in healed injuries, elevated blood pressure, and rapid breathing. Additional symptoms relating to anticipated racial conflict include: diarrhea, upset stomach, constant anxiety, insomnia, rapid mood swings, difficulty thinking or speaking coherently, and emotional or social withdrawal.⁶⁵ Therefore, race-based stress aggravates the factors that increase the risk of long-term health disparities for People of Color in higher education. Thus, if untreated, prolonged racial battle fatigue may also lead to health conditions such as, depression, anxiety disorders, insomnia, social withdrawal, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Racial battle fatigue is often misdiagnosed in traditional psychological assessments and remains unnoticed, untreated, and dismissed. Racial discrimination and race-based trauma activate the psychological stress-response system inhibitors in which one's emergency "fight or flight" response system is activated or "turned on."⁶⁶ Consequently, in efforts to cope with the activated stressors one can experience extreme exhaustion, chronic fatigue, PTSD, and additional mental health conditions that debilitate one's body, health and quality of life through the educational process. The term racial battle fatigue is associated with the type of front-line psychological battle that brings about the mental health condition known as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), typically diagnosed among veterans of war, survivors of trauma, and domestic violence victims. Systematic exposure to these-types of stressors (i.e. racism, racial microaggressions, and racial battle fatigue) may in fact lead to long-term health consequences for People of Color in predominantly white universities. Consequently, People of Color endure and navigate through continuous exposure to racism and race-based trauma equating their

⁶⁵ Ibid, 300-301.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

experiences in higher education to a “psychological warfare game played every day just to survive.”⁶⁷

Furthermore, there is a strong connection that links racism and race-based stress to mental health disparities for People of Color in predominantly white institutions. In particular, white privilege in the classroom becomes physically and emotionally damaging and draining for racialized communities, particularly for their youth. Smith, Yosso, and Solórzano suggest that People of Color must learn to navigate through psychological and physiological racism while simultaneously living and working under constant emotional distress, thereby learning to function in ever-present hostile racialized climates. In other words, People of Color must learn to strategically navigate through chronically stressful situations that are, simply stated, dismissed white populations due to their white privilege.⁶⁸ Given these facts, one can understand the negative effects of racism and racial microaggressions experienced through prolonged race-based trauma.

According to Solórzano’s case study on racial and gendered microaggressions among Chicana/o Ford Fellows, participants reported three central themes associated with the nature of microaggressions.⁶⁹ First, they reported a sense of isolation, feeling ignored and invisible during their doctoral studies. For example, participants reported receiving messages that they did not belong in graduate school. Second, that faculty had “low expectations” of their academic abilities to perform. Third, participants reported that they were wrongfully judged based on their accents, race, gender, and skin color; thus, they observed that faculty believed that they were unqualified and unprepared to be in graduate school.⁷⁰ Hence, microaggressions characterized

⁶⁷ Ibid, 314-315.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 17.

⁶⁹ Solórzano, “Critical Race Theory,” 121-136.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

the differential treatment of Students of Color pursuing doctoral study compared to that of white doctoral students within the same programs of study. Further, educational researcher, Truong conducted a qualitative national case study on Students of Color in Ph.D. programs; and investigated the impacts of racial trauma and racism at the level of higher education.⁷¹ Her study included the responses of twenty-six Students of Color pursuing doctorate degrees; and revealed that, in general, Students of Color were exposed to subtle and blatant types of everyday racism, racial trauma, and racial microaggressions during their studies. Also, that students reported psychological, physiological, and emotional symptoms from race-based trauma including depression, fatigue, nausea, anxiety, stomach in knots, insomnia, anger, stress, frustration, rage, humiliation, self-doubt, low self-esteem, distress, crying, recounting racist situations, isolation, internalization, tight jaw, pain in body, vulnerability, changed personality, shortness of breath, nightmares, unhealthy diets, lack of productivity, rashes, body aches, cramps, headaches, paranoia, increased sickness, pain, lost, and feeling dehumanized.⁷² Such extensive symptoms revealed in the study substantiate that the implications of racism and racial trauma at the professoriate level are in fact producing negative effects for Students of Color nationwide.

According to Mays, Cochran, and Barnes there is a direct relationship linking race-based discrimination and health disparities in poor Communities of Color throughout the United States. These scholars study the mental health of African-Americans, and assert that race-based discrimination—along with poverty, lifestyle patterns, inherited health risks, and social/political inequities—*not only* increases levels of stress and elevates blood pressure, but significantly

⁷¹ Truong, *Racism and Racial Trauma in Doctoral Study*, 169-175. The student racial groups in her study include African-American, Latino, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Native American.

⁷² *Ibid*, 169-175.

impairs one's mental and physical health.⁷³ Their research suggests that additional societal factors that impact the mental health of People of Color include unfair treatment, chronic strain, race-based stress, poverty, and social disadvantages that cause elevated blood pressure that lead to mental health disorders.⁷⁴ Therefore, if race-based discrimination is endured for prolonged periods, it will damage one's psychological and physiological responses, over time weakening the immune system. Also, race-based discrimination is linked to actual and perceived experiences that set off a chain reaction through physiological responses. These responses produce biochemical reactions that can, alarmingly, lead to disease, injury, disability, premature aging, heart attacks, early pregnancies, and mortality.⁷⁵ For African American women some of the risks of race-based trauma have been documented as including premature births, low-birth-weight infants, and miscarriages. Additionally, there is also an increased risk of diabetes, chronic disease, heart disease, and the risk of high blood pressure.

The effect of racism to U.S. Women of Color remains an underdeveloped area of feminist educational research, particularly in relation to understanding the prolonged effects to women's bodies, health, and quality of life within predominantly white institutions. Chicana feminists assert that we must critically engage in a Marxist feminist analysis that understands capitalism and the systematic inequities women endure associated with different oppressive systems of dominance historically linked to colonization and imperialism.

The Gendered Politics of Racism

The reason racism is a feminist issue is easily explained by the inherent definition of feminism. Feminism is the political theory and practice to free all women; women of color, working-class women, poor women, and physically challenged women, lesbians,

⁷³ Vickie M. Mays, Susan Cochran, and Namdi Barnes, "Race, Race-Based Discrimination and Health Outcomes Among African Americans," *The Annual Review of Psychology*, 58:2 (2007): 1-24.

⁷⁴ Mays, Cochran, and Barnes, "Race, Race-Based Discrimination," 1-24.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 24.

old women, as well as white economically privileged heterosexual women... anything less than this is not feminism, but merely female self-aggrandizement.⁷⁶

For U.S. Women of Color in the academy, racism is in fact a feminist issue, as it relates to gendered systems of power, dominance, and white privilege in higher education. Historically, U.S. Women of Color have challenged racial discrimination, gender subordination, and socio-economic inequities by centering a social justice feminist agenda. This can be seen, for example, in the decision of Women of Color to separate from white women during the 1960's Women's Movement, demonstrating a keen awareness of white privilege. This separation was a clear contestation to racism, socio-economic disparities, marginalization, and discursive erasure of Women of Color in the academy. Black feminists shaped contemporary feminist epistemology by creating an autonomous theoretical space wherein women were theorizing from the intersectionalities of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality, as well as creating knowledge from women's working-class lived experiences.⁷⁷

Theorists of Color have actively responded to racism and gender inequities by subverting hegemonic feminism and determining autonomously what counts as theory; who gets to create theory; and who gets to claim theory. After all, white feminists that abuse their white privilege in the academy do nothing in the service of making radical, social or political change for marginalized women, or impoverished women. In the academy, white privileged women have a materially different relationship to the system of racism than do white men. For example, white women can "strategically" position themselves within the same patriarchal system as white men, using their white privilege as a

⁷⁶ Barbara Smith, "And When You Leave, Take Your Pictures With You: Racism in the Women's Movement," in *This Bridge Called My Back*, 3rd ed., Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga eds. (Berkeley: Women of Color Series/Third World Woman Press, 2002), 62-63.

⁷⁷ Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Intersectionality and Identity Politics: Learning From Violence against Women of Color," in *The Public Nature of Private Violence*, eds. Martha Albertson Fineman and Rixmanne Mykitiuk (New York: Routledge Press, 1994), 178- 193.

source of entitlement, consequently, subordinating U.S. Women of Color within the same hierarchal educational systems.

Anzaldúa affirms that it is imperative to challenge all forms of oppression and use our autobiographical accounts—through self-definition (i.e. counter-narratives), historical preservation (i.e. survival/memory), and experiential knowledge (i.e. theory in the flesh) —to strategically respond to racism.⁷⁸ Women of Color created a racialized feminist project forged from a “politic born out of necessity” that addresses the lived experiences—not only of Chicanas—but other U.S. Women of Color, and argues that “the revolution [literally] begins at home.”⁷⁹ *This Bridge* embodies the physical wounds and psychological traumas (i.e., autobiographical accounts) that remain carved in the human flesh, where “theory in the flesh” is created from women’s memories, bodies, and lived experiences. It is an analytical feminist tool to combat racism by “wrest [ling] power from those who have it and abuse it.”⁸⁰ Hence, we are reminded through women’s political autobiographical writing that it is time “to reclaim our ancient powers lying dormant with neglect, and create new powers in areas where they never before existed.”⁸¹ Therefore, theory has the ability to transform women’s lives and make way for effects that change people and transform the world.

Moraga offers another strategy for Theorists of Color to challenge racism and political injustices. She asserts that a feminist movement can inspire activism and that “politics that moves the spirit—draw from our greatest longings for freedom [that] gives meaning to our lives.”⁸² She contends that we must advocate for a cultural, anti-separatist, and humanist approach grounded in activism. Therefore, any movement based on racial hatred or intolerance is a failed movement. She contends that “without an emotional, heartfelt grappling with the source of our own oppression, without naming

⁷⁸ Anzaldúa, “Speaking in Tongues,” *This Bridge Called My Back*, 183-193.

⁷⁹ Moraga and Anzaldúa, ed., *This Bridge Called My Back*, 18-23.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Anzaldúa, “*Haciendo Caras*: Introduction,” in *Making Face, Making Soul*, xi-xxviii

⁸² Cherrie Moraga, *Loving in the War Years*, (Boston: South End Press, 1983), 130-133.

the enemy within ourselves and outside of us, no authentic, non-hierarchical connection among the oppressed groups can take place.”⁸³ Moraga acknowledges that the political system that fosters racism, class oppression, homophobia, and male privilege—intentionally separates women from one another. Moraga asserts that a critical praxis must be connected to emancipation that includes our physical, psychological, and spiritual survival. Similarly, Anzaldúa calls for survival as an integral component of being pro-active while also preserving our creativity and gifts through political writings and spiritual work. Hence, our political activism is a conscious and creative act of resistance, as we continue writing, healing, teaching, and surviving the impacts of racism.⁸⁴ Accordingly, we learn to invoke experiential knowledge, *Indígena* traditions, and healing to overcome various types of oppressions with a greater understanding of how to survive and combat racism and white supremacy in the Ivory Tower.

In the same way, Córdova suggests in “Power and Knowledge Colonialism in the Academy” that theory production is directly related to the development of a critical political consciousness linked to active social change for the racialized subject in academia.⁸⁵ For example, she writes:

In the struggle to give voice to our experiences, working class people of color encounter multiple mechanisms to silence us... [W]e encounter silencing when our voices speak of resistance to injustice—both against ourselves and our peoples. And yet, colonization is the historical legacy that continues to haunt us, even today. The ability to effectively promote justice requires vigilance so that we may ‘immunize’ ourselves against the paralysis that comes from being silenced... [We need] strength to carry on in the face of efforts to suppress a voice which I know speaks ‘truth to power.’⁸⁶

For Córdova, combating racism in the academy includes breaking the silences associated with discursive erasure and racist power dynamics in academia. In addition, People of Color resist by

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Anzaldúa, “Speaking in Tongues,” in *This Bridge*, 181-193.

⁸⁵ Teresa Córdova, “Power and Knowledge: Colonialism in the Academy,” *Living Chicana Theory*, Carla Trujillo, ed. (Berkeley: Third Woman Press: Berkeley, 1998), 17-45.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

invoking our multi-voiced subjectivity that integrates lived experiences, social justice, and diverse modes of consciousness produced through a Chicana feminist theoretical subjectivity.

Similarly, Delgado Bernal maintains “that knowledge production is created from raced and gendered epistemological experiences of People of Color.”⁸⁷ She goes on to say that People of Color possess different cultural and humanist perspectives as to what counts as theory and what is deemed as legitimate knowledge. She argues that knowledge is shaped through culturally specific ways of learning and teaching that are linked to our lived experiences, culture, family, languages, ancestors, and elders. Through the process of *concientización* (critical consciousness), the subaltern subject becomes empowered and assumes agency through shared knowledge of conquest, subordination, and survival. In the words of Delgado Bernal, “[I]f we believe in the wisdom of our ancient knowledge... then the knowledge that is passed from one generation to the next can help us survive in everyday life.”⁸⁸ She strategically decolonizes knowledge by exposing segregation, biases, marginalization, and the epistemological violence in Eurocentric mainstream academia and research. Delgado Bernal and Villalpando argue that “there is ‘apartheid of knowledge,’ sustained by an epistemological racism that limits the range of possible epistemologies considered legitimate [in academia]...”⁸⁹ Therefore, in order to challenge racist practices in higher education, it is imperative to contest elitist Eurocentric research and promote a pedagogical praxis that empowers People of Color as creators of knowledge and discourses in the process.⁹⁰

In summary, the literature reveals that racism manifests itself in various forms and contexts. Additionally, that racism can cause psychological and physiological consequences to People of Color in educational systems has become a major concern for education, critical race, and feminist scholars.

⁸⁷ Delgado Bernal, “Critical Race Theory,” 105-109.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Delgado Bernal and Villalpando, “An Apartheid of Knowledge,” 169-170.

⁹⁰ Delgado Bernal, “Critical Race Theory,” 105-110.

This literature also reveals that educational institutions reinforce systematic racism through white privilege that Delgado Bernal defines as “epistemological racism” throughout higher education. The case study builds from educational researchers and feminist theory to better understand the psychological and physiological implications of racial and gendered microaggressions to women’s bodies, minds, and health during their doctorate studies. Furthermore, in order to address these research questions in the study, I use Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Chicana Feminist Epistemologies. The next chapter discusses the theoretical foundations.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Introduction: *Weaving La Trenza*

The theoretical frameworks that guide the study include Chicana Feminist Epistemology, Third Space Feminism, and Critical Race Theory (CRT). These theoretical foundations reassign agency to the racialized subject, values experiential/cultural knowledge, and are rooted in social advocacy. These interdisciplinary theories are also interconnected, as illustrated in Irene Carranza's art, *Ultimo Abrazo*. The colors symbolize the theories, as they are all interconnected and grounded to emancipatory principles, and thus weaved together like a *trenza* (braid) throughout the case study.



Figure 3.1: *Ultimo Abrazo*, Irene Carranza

The chapter is organized as follows: The first section includes an analysis of Chicana Feminist Epistemologies which allows one to theorize from the intersections, as well as from lived experiences. I center the theoretical frameworks of Moraga, Anzaldúa, and Delgado Bernal in the analysis. Second, I use Critical Race Theory (CRT) as an interdisciplinary framework to

guide the study in examining how racism, white privilege, and complex power relations impact the educational experiences of Chicanas and Native American women at the professoriate level in public universities. The following section discusses the critical race and gendered analysis that guides this national case study.

Chicana Feminist Epistemologies

Chicana epistemologies inscribe into history racialized and gendered narratives of experiential and cultural knowledge. To define Chicana feminism one must understand the diverse historical trajectories that have influenced Chicana feminist thought and its development over time through different stages of historical specificity.⁹¹ Chicana feminists (i.e. Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherríe Moraga, and Norma Alarcón) confronted hegemonic feminism in their efforts to revolutionize the field by challenging the discursive erasure of the racialized subject, and intersectionalities based on race, class, gender, and sexuality.⁹² Contemporary Chicana theorists situated in Third Space Feminism continue to respond to racism and marginalization, and to theorize from in-between spaces, such as the body, mind, and connections of the spirit. For example, our memories and lived experiences are interconnected to our psychological, physiological, and spiritual well-being. From a Chicana feminist perspective, theoretical debates continue to dispute hegemonic feminism, incessantly challenging postmodern erasure regarding “what counts as theory, who creates theory, and who gets to claim theory.”⁹³ Ultimately, what counts as theory for U.S. Women of Color is shaped by our experiences, material conditions, cultural/experiential knowledge, interdisciplinary approaches, and a the presence

⁹¹ Alma Garcia, “Introduction.” In *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings*, edited by Alma Garcia, (New York: Routledge, 1997), 1-16. For example the Chicano Movement, the Women’s Movement, and the Civil Rights Movements.

⁹² Crenshaw, “Intersectionality and Identity Politics,” 178-193. Crenshaw coined the term ‘intersectionalities’ in 1989.

⁹³ Norma Alarcón, “The Theoretical Subject(s) of This Bridge Called My Back and Anglo-American Feminism,” in *Making Face, Making Soul (Haciendo Caras): Creative and Critical Perspectives by Women of Color*, edited by Gloria Anzaldúa, (San Francisco: an Aunt Lute Foundation Book, 1990), 356-369

of a commitment to social justice. To date, there is an epistemological danger associated with the psychological loss of our racialized subjectivity. For instance, Norma Alarcón argues that what constitutes a *teoría* for Chicanas is its creation through the use of our own autonomous discursive canons.⁹⁴ Anzaldúa asserts that it is imperative that Chicanas and Women of Color occupy theoretical spaces and that we not allow “White men and Anglo women” to solely occupy or claim them.⁹⁵ By bringing in our own interdisciplinary feminist approaches and methodologies, we transform that theorizing space. For Anzaldúa, theory has the ability to transform our lives, produce effects that change people, and the way in which one perceives and exists in the world. Anzaldúa argues that we need our own *teorías* that will enable us to re-interpret what happens in our world from our locations, visions, and experiences. Anzaldúa states that: “What is considered theory in the dominant academic community is not necessarily what counts as theory for women-of-color... *Necesitamos teorías* that will rewrite history, using race, class, gender and ethnicity as categories of analysis, theories that cross borders [and] that blur boundaries...”⁹⁶ These Anzaldúan political writings challenge the gendered politics of exclusion in hegemonic feminist theory and contest the Anglo power dynamics associated with who gets to claim theory, from a historical context of marginalization for Women of Color, Third World feminists, and queer Theorists of Color. For these reasons, I turn to Chicana Feminism and Third Space Feminism to guide the case study and research process.

Entering the Lives of Others and Theory in the Flesh

It is a theory rooted from human experiences and does not allow us to separate ‘the fibers of experience’ as struggling people.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Alarcón, “The Theoretical Subject(s),” in *Making Face, Making Soul*, 356-369

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, xv-xxviii.

⁹⁶ Anzaldúa, “*Haciendo Caras*,” *Making Face, Making Soul*, xi-xxviii. Translation: We need theories...

⁹⁷ Anzaldúa and Moraga, “Entering the Lives of Others,” *This Bridge Called My Back*, 20-21.

The first theoretical framework used in the case study includes lesbian theorists Anzaldúa and Moraga's "Entering the Lives of Others," which defines Theory in the Flesh as "the physical realities of our lives—our skin color, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longing—all fuse[d] to create a politic born out of necessity," as our call for revolution and rebellion begins at home.⁹⁸ It is a bold and resistant theory that represents an early articulation of Chicana feminism, first published in 1981 that emerged as an important set of theories moving U.S. Women of Color from the "margins to the center."⁹⁹ Both theorists are defiant and refuse to accept silence or apathy to justify any form of subordination or domination. Chicana researcher's use this feminist method to subvert Anglo feminism by capturing experiential and cultural knowledge produced by U.S. Women of Color. For instance, *This Bridge*: 1) creates a critical political movement for U.S. Women of Color and Third World feminists to shatter the Anglo "visibility vs. invisibility" hegemonic constrains, thus forges our continued political radicalism; 2) produces knowledge connected to racial and cultural experiences, what we now identify as lived knowledge; 3) creates a space for Women of Color and queer Theorists of Color to self-reflect and create a discourse of survival regarding the effects of racism and homophobia; 4) creates a theoretical space that humanizes our experiences.¹⁰⁰ In the study, I use theory in the flesh—to connect women's experiences and their physical bodies to the analysis. Theory in the Flesh focalizes the racialized and gendered political narratives reflected in the women's *testimonios* in the analysis.¹⁰¹ These theoretical approaches are grounded in Third Space Feminism, in which Chicana theorists are strategically situated as producers of knowledge.

⁹⁸ Ibid. 18-21.

⁹⁹ The first edition of *This Bridge* was published in 1981, followed by the 2nd edition published in 1983, and the 3rd edition in 2002.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., liii

¹⁰¹ The Latina Feminist Group, eds. *Telling to Live: Latina Feminist Testimonios* (London: Duke University Press, 2001), viiii.

Third Space Feminism: Contemporary Chicana Feminism

Third Space Feminism is a transformative body of knowledge shaped by our political consciousness of the history of U.S. colonialism, neo-colonialism, and imperialism at domestically and internationally. In “*El Mundo Zurdo: The Vision*,” Anzaldúa theorizes from the in-between states of *nepantla* (i.e. torn between ways), from where she asserts that freedom can *only* be obtained when all systems of oppression are destroyed.¹⁰² Anzaldúa is credited for her early theorizing and development of Third Space Feminism in *Borderlands/ La Frontera*, published in 1987. In Anzaldúa’s essay, “New *Mestiza* Consciousness,” she identifies a third in-between space where a racial, ideological, cultural, and spiritual consciousness emerges through a *Mestiza* consciousness in which *la Mestiza* constantly shifts in and out of locations for survival. Here, *la Mestiza* is in a constant state of transition and thus navigating in between spaces to survive. As a result of this process, she emerges with a new critical consciousness and spiritual awakening about humanity in *nepantla*. In my case study, I use *nepantla* as an analytical tool to examine how participants endure, cope, and develop survival strategies, as they navigate through *choques* (conflicts, microaggressions, and racism) in higher education.¹⁰³ For instance, women in the study navigate through *nepantla* when they confront and challenge racism, white privilege, and oppression during their doctoral studies. Hence, Anzaldúa argues that Anglo feminists still refuse to address racism within exclusionary feminist practices and continue to abuse their white privilege. Anzaldúa boldly states that:

Racism is exposed when they [white feminists] use their white privilege to coax women of color ... When that doesn’t work they pull rank.... Though they may pay lip service to diversity issues most don’t shift from their positions of power [or their white privilege.]¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Anzaldúa, “*El Mundo Zurdo: The Vision*,” *This Bridge Called My Back*, 216-218.

¹⁰³ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza Consciousness*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco, Aunt Lute Books, 1999), 99-121.

¹⁰⁴ Anzaldúa, “Now Let us Shift...The Path of *Conocimiento*...” *This Bridge We Call Home*, 540-576.

Moreover, three decades after the first publication of *This Bridge Called My Back*, a new anthology, *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation* was published in 2002. Edited by Anzaldúa and Keating, this book offers an innovative vision of political theorizing rooted in transformative Third Space Feminism.¹⁰⁵ In the “Preface: (Un) Natural Bridges, (Un) Safe Spaces,” Anzaldúa asserts that we must re-conceptualize old ideas to create new theories for the changing world of the 21st century.¹⁰⁶ Some of these changes include new battlegrounds at home (domestic setting).

I apply this revolutionary concept in my interdisciplinary feminist research, as I build upon the political foundations of educational researchers to critically study the psychological and physiological impacts of racism to the bodies, minds, and health of women scholars. These innovative epistemologies offer us new discursive tools, as “we move from what has been done to us (victimhood)” to a more extensive level of empowerment, healing, and transformation.¹⁰⁷ For instance, the art of Irene Carranza, entitled, *Harmony in a Lifetime of Peace*, symbolizes the power and beauty of a woman’s transformative state via the process of healing in body, mind, and spirit.

¹⁰⁵Gloria Anzaldúa and Analouise Keating, *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

¹⁰⁶ Anzaldúa, “(Un) Natural Bridges, (Un) Safe Spaces,” in *This Bridge We Call Home*, 1-5.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.



Figure 3.2: *Harmony in a Lifetime of Peace*, Irene Carranza

Thus, it signifies a state of wellness, strength, and our ability to shift in between spaces in a more balanced manner that honors the connection of the body, mind, and spirit. The case study also uses a theoretical healing model created by Anzaldúa and known as *conocimiento*.

Gloria Anzaldúa (2002): The Path of *Conocimiento*

Anzaldúa’s contemporary epistemology in, “Now let Us Shift...The Path of *Conocimiento*,” allows one to theorize from the in-between spaces of the conscious and subconscious thought process.¹⁰⁸ Anzaldúa encourages one to use painful memories, traumatic events, and lived experiences to serve as our training camps, as we learn to navigate through various types of oppressions. Through the various healing stages of *conocimiento*, we develop “new survival skills” that can be used in the academy, as we consciously learn to stop, reflect, grow, and heal, as a continuous process. After

¹⁰⁸ Anzaldúa, “Now Let us Shift...” *This Bridge We Call Home*, 540-576.

taking time to heal from our wounds and painful experiences, we reemerge as “active politicized agents” using our memories and once traumatic experiences in the service of helping others that struggle. In this way, we not *only* heal ourselves, but we also engage in a larger political movement rooted in humanizing the experiences of the oppressed. Through the seven stages of *conocimiento* we shift our understanding of how knowledge is constructed and we learn to re-conceptualize knowledge from the in-between spaces that also honor the body, mind, and spirit connections.

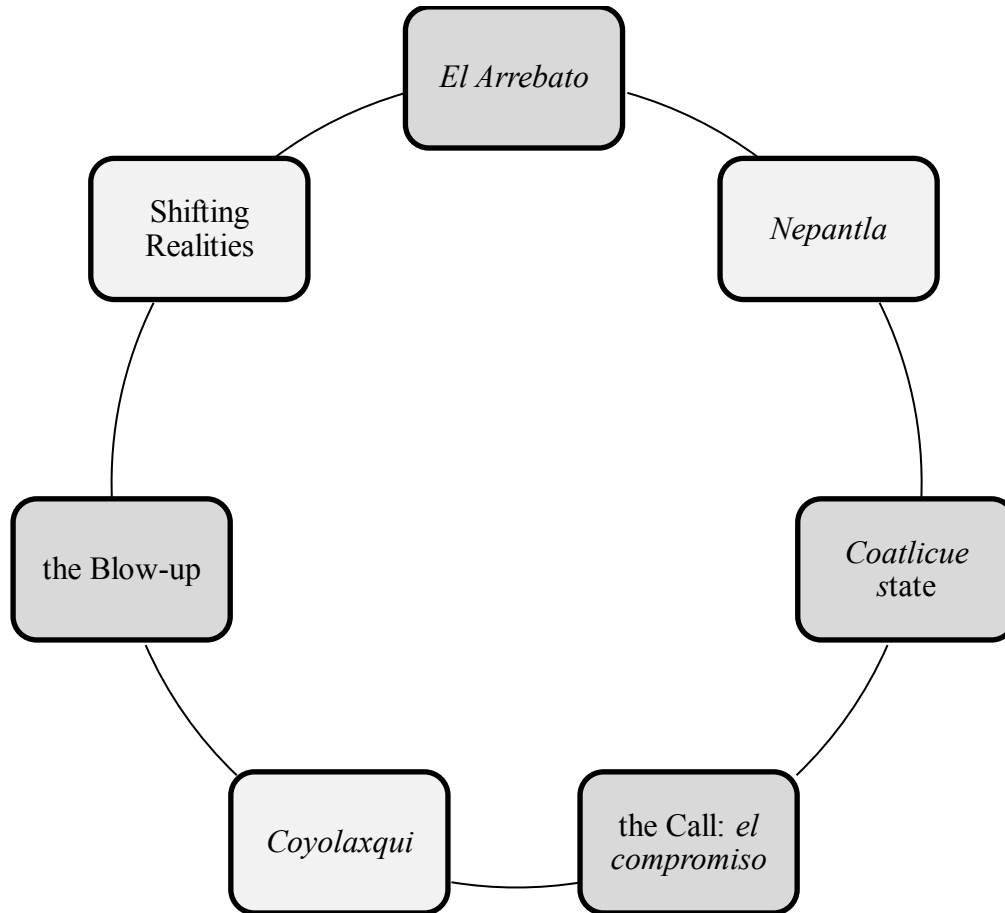
Through the seven stages of *conocimiento*, enlightenment comes from political awakenings, experiential knowledge, and spiritual advocacy—as our revolution is fought with ideas and concepts, not with guns, and thus filled by vision, hope, creativity, and dreams. Anzaldúa asserts that we are often guided by *conocimiento* in life—filling our spirits with inner strength to dedicate ourselves to transforming the conditions of life for those that are oppressed. She asserts that in redeeming our most painful experiences, traumas, and memories we transform them into something valuable; *además algo para compartir con otros*,¹⁰⁹ so that others may also be empowered through sharing, remembering, and knowing. In this way, Anzaldúa posits an *Indígena* pedagogy that encourages one to not be afraid of oppressions, but instead to seek truth and justice in life armed with dedication, knowledge, and passion.

In the case study, I use *conocimiento*, as a healing model for the women to share their racial and gendered educational experiences regarding racism, pain/trauma, and additional types of oppressions endured during their doctoral studies in a safe and protected space. In this context, the women were able to share their *testimonios* and commence the inner process of releasing some of the painful memories associated with their educational experiences. Therefore, healing as a process implies recovery; spiritual and physical balance; emotional safety; and survival. Healing requires validation, support, nurturance, establishing boundaries when necessary, and moving through pain to a

¹⁰⁹ Translation: Moreover, something to share with others.

place of health and well-being. With this in mind, the various stages of *conocimiento* are included in the figure below and incorporate the various healing stages of this circular process.

Figure 3.3 *Conocimiento: A Healing Pedagogy*¹¹⁰



Conocimiento: The Stages

This next section includes the interconnected stages of *conocimiento* built from the theoretical contributions of Anzaldúa.¹¹¹ One can exist in various stages simultaneously, thus the process of healing via *conocimiento* is not a linear process, but instead a circular process.

¹¹⁰ Anzaldúa, "Now Let Us Shift... The Path of *Conocimiento*," *This Bridge We Call Home*, 543-578.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, 543-578.

***el Arrebato* [the rupture] and fragmentation**

During this stage of *conocimiento*, one will experience *el Arrebato*. Here, there is a rupture or fragmentation that is experienced when one's world changes and we are forced into conflicting spaces (i.e. memories and painful experiences) forcing one to confront our deepest fears and emotions.

Nepantla

In *nepantla*, one literally experiences being jerked from a familiar and safe environment into a “transitional space” and thus suspended in between spaces. Here, we are literally caught in *remolinos* (conflicts) between the world we know and the unfamiliar. Our psychological state is split between “the before” and “the after,” thus we struggle to grasp the realities that we must face and overcome. In *nepantla* we are more able to see through the conflicts with a greater level of awareness regarding its significance and meaning.

***Coatlicue* State**

During the *Coatlicue* state, one is overwhelmed by the chaos of the conflicts. Hence, our bodies, minds, and spirits break from these lived internalized conflicts (i.e. one can descend into depression, isolation, or remain dysfunctional for weeks). In this stage, one also experiences the effects of our “shadow-beast” which emerges when we internalize oppression (i.e. self-hate and internalized racism). However, in time, we learn to get back up and thus confront our deepest internalized fears (shadow beast) and we respond with self-love, patience, and compassion.

The Call... *el Compromiso*

Here, we take time to stop for critical self-reflection, growth, and healing. We take time to face our deepest fears and take time to heal our deep seeded wounds buried in the psyche. We no longer seek to escape from painful memories or traumatic experiences; instead, we are

empowered and ready to face them releasing their power over us. In addition, we are also pushed toward an awakening—the call—a compromise with ourselves to overcome our fears and help others. In other words, we seek strategies to put ourselves back together and find new ways to heal our open wounds and wounded psyches.

Coyolaxuqui

In this stage, one takes the time to sort out the meaning of the circumstances that impaired one's life. Hence, within an empowered context, we also create new political narratives from a place of resiliency, agency, hope, and survival, and are thus able to deal with the conflicts (i.e. *remolinos*). We negotiate the tensions and contradictions we encounter with oppression and emerge as “active/empowered agents” through the process of reflection, Adaptation, and healing.

The Blow-up

In this stage, we take our *testimonios* and share them with others that struggle in the world. This is where one learns to purge the inner poisons associated with internalized racism (i.e. anger, rage, hopelessness, and despair.) Thus, we learn to re-evaluate their meaning and transform them into positive outlooks. Here, we free ourselves of the negative emotions and painful memories that consume our psyches, so that we are no longer blocked from exercising our creative abilities (i.e. writing, teaching, healing, organizing, surviving, and existing).

Shifting Realities

During the state of Shifting Realities, one experiences a critical turning point of inner transformations, as we learn to utilize our new survival skills and develop ways to renegotiate conflict and differences both within ourselves and with others. Here, we make a conscious transition to use our lived experiences to challenge other forms of oppression through activism.

This is where we learn to honor and make peace with once painful memories and traumatic experiences in order to help others via advocacy.

In summary, Anzaldúa encourages one to use painful memories, traumatic events, and lived experiences to serve as our training camps so that we may learn to navigate through various types of oppressions. Through the various healing stages of *conocimiento*, we develop “new survival skills” that can be used to reflect, grow, and heal. After, taking time to heal, we reemerge as “active politicized agents.” using our memories and traumatic experiences in the service of helping others. In this way, we not *only* heal ourselves, but we also engage in a larger political movement rooted in humanizing the experiences of the oppressed. Through the stages of *conocimiento* we shift our understanding of how knowledge is constructed, and we learn to re-conceptualize knowledge from the in-between spaces that honors the body, mind, and spirit connections.

In this way, Anzaldúa reminds us to work diligently to use our lived experiences in the service of helping and guiding others through their struggle. In the next section, I turn to Critical Race Theory (CRT) as an interdisciplinary framework that is critical of race, racism, complex power relations, and white privilege.

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

According to Mari Matsuda Critical Race Theory is defined as:

...the work of progressive legal scholars of color who are attempting to develop a jurisprudence that accounts for the role of racism in American law and that works towards the elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of eliminating all forms of subordination.¹¹²

Critical Race Theory originated in the late 1970's among legal scholars as a social justice epistemology aimed at challenging racism, white privilege, and deal with the post-Civil Rights racial structure in the United States. Critical Race Theory provides a framework that does not assume that we exist within a "color-blind" society, nor does it concur with the notion that all U.S. citizens are granted equal opportunities. CRT is characterized as a transformative epistemology that seeks to eliminate all forms of subordination. In education, CRT includes a radical call to challenge institutional racism in academia and to expose the ways in which racism reproduces educational inequalities (i.e. policy, theory, and practice). Historically, racism in the United States reveals how racialized and ethnic communities have been subjected to racial hatred, discrimination, as well as economic and political disparities through white privilege and domination.

Critical Race Scholars, Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, argue that white supremacy strategically positions whites as the "entitled beneficiaries" of privilege and status, thus normalizing white values, beliefs, and their experiences as dominant.¹¹³ From a contemporary perspective, racism continues to manifest itself throughout the U.S. in educational systems, albeit in a more covert and subtle form (i.e., racial microaggressions). For instance, racial microaggressions are subtle, automatic, and typically consist of verbal and non-verbal offensive

¹¹² Mari J. Matsuda, "Voices of America: Accent, Antidiscrimination Law, and Jurisprudence for the Last Reconstruction, *Yale Law Journal* 100, (1991): 133.

¹¹³ Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 7-17.

“put-downs” directed towards People of Color.¹¹⁴ Moreover, Delgado and Stefancic believe that “Racism’s victims become sensitized to its subtle nuances and code words—the body language, averted gazes, exasperated looks, terms like ‘you people,’ ‘highly qualified black,’ ‘articulate’ and so on—that whether intended or not, convey racially charged meanings.”¹¹⁵ Thus, microaggressions are subtle and unconscious forms of racism that are rarely investigated, yet cause harm to People of Color.

Critical Race Theorists like William Smith, Tara Yosso, and Daniel Solórzano, argue that racial microaggressions, when unchallenged, produce psychological and physiological impacts on People of Color. In other words, race-based stress can lead to various types of mental, emotional, and physical strains (i.e., racial battle fatigue). In addition, by activating one’s stress response system to cope with chronic stress, microaggressions, and other forms of race-based tension, will take a toll on the lives and health of People of Color. Some of the symptoms of racial battle fatigue include constant anxiety, ulcers, insomnia, mood swings, emotional and social withdrawal, as well as feeling mentally, emotionally, and physically drained.¹¹⁶

Critical Race Scholars use CRT to acknowledge, challenge, and respond to racism in higher education and in American society. I utilize Critical Race Theory as a social justice framework to examine the politics of racism, power, and white privilege in higher education for Women of Color. In my dissertation, CRT provides an analytical tool to analyze, identify, and challenge racism, power relations, and white privilege. Within study that focuses on the educational experiences of racialized women, CRT allows for a critical historicizing of race and

¹¹⁴ Solórzano, “Critical Race Theory,” 121-126.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 124-125.

¹¹⁴ Smith, Yosso, Solórzano, “Challenging Racial Battle Fatigue,” 299-321.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 300-302.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 299-321.

gender conditions in the 21st century. CRT is also a progressive and interdisciplinary theory rooted in Ethnic Studies, U.S./Third World feminism, Marxism, Critical legal studies, and internal colonialism. Holding at its core the following five central tenets CRT is characterized by the following according to educational theorist Solórzano:¹¹⁷

1. CRT calls for the centrality of race, racism with, and other forms of subordination. CRT starts with the principle that racism is an epidemic in the U.S. It acknowledges the intersection of racism with other types of subordination (i.e. gender, class, sexuality, language, citizenship, immigrant status, phenotype, disability).
2. CRT challenges dominant ideologies by questioning all traditional claims of objectivity regarding color blindness, race/gender neutrality, and notions of equal opportunity. CRT functions as a subversive lens to combat issues of power, white privilege and the self-interests of dominant groups that control discourses.
3. CRT is a progressive social justice framework that calls for accountability, transformation, and empowerment of the oppressed in its passionate commitment to social justice, emancipation and social transformation.
4. CRT recognizes that the experiential knowledge of People of Color is in fact legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding and examining racial subordination. Necessarily, CRT centralizes the experiential knowledge created from the location of the oppressed.
5. CRT offers an interdisciplinary perspective. In so doing, it challenges traditional and dominant frameworks by invoking additional interdisciplinary perspectives in the analysis.

¹¹⁷ Solórzano, "Critical Race Theory, Race, and Gender Microaggressions," 122-124

In summary, through the use of these five tenets of Critical Race Theory, I can analyze and address the issues of race, racism, and white privilege that specifically affect racial/ethnic women's educational experiences in academia. In this way, CRT opens up a new discursive space to study the impacts of racism, racial microaggressions, and racial battle fatigue experienced by Chicanas and Native American women. Additionally, CRT provides a critical analytical tool that guides the case study by creating counter-narratives that have the ability to transform educational systems via social advocacy, accountability, and policy. The next section includes the methodological research design of case study.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological design used to answer the research questions. This chapter is organized as follows: First, I provide definitions of *testimonio*, as a social justice methodology. Second, I discuss Data Collection (Criteria for Participation, Selection Process, and the Recruitment Process). Third, I discuss the various stages of the Data Analysis Phases.



Figure 4.1: *Soledad*, Irene Carranza

The research questions that guide the case study include: 1) how do racism and other forms of oppression impact the educational experiences of Chicanas and Native American women pursuing Ph.D.'s? 2) what are the psychological and physiological impacts of racism and other forms of oppression on women's bodies, minds, and health at the Ph.D. level?, and 3) what do their *testimonios* teach us about strategically navigating through racism, complex power relations, and white privilege in

higher education? *Testimonio* is used to capture the women's educational experiences in higher education.

***Testimonio* as a Social Justice Methodology**

Testimonio has been critical in movements for liberation in Latin America, offering an artistic form and methodology to create politicized understandings of identity and community. Similarly Latinas participated in the important political praxis of feminist consciousness raising. The second wave of feminist movement honored women's stories and showed how personal experience contains larger political meaning... Drawing from these various experiences, *testimonios* can be a powerful method of feminist research and praxis.¹¹⁸

The methodological design is a qualitative method called *testimonio*. *Testimonio* is used as both a method and methodology to preserve and document the educational experiences of Chicanas and Native American women as they navigate through the educational pipeline. Although there is no set definition of *testimonio*, it is based on accounts of lived experiences and collective solidarity against a common system of oppression. *Testimonio* is a social justice methodology that "calls for a radical repositioning of power for both the researcher and the subject"¹¹⁹ Further, *testimonio*, as a qualitative method, challenges Eurocentric knowledge. It allow us, as researchers and participants, to enter ourselves—our knowledge, our positionalities, and experiences, into the research process.¹²⁰ I use *testimonio* to interview twenty-one women during data collection in order to preserve, capture, and document their political narratives regarding their educational experiences at the professoriate level.

It is similar to the method of testimonial used by Indigenous scholar Smith who asserts that a testimonial is a method that allows for "the formality of a [political narrative to provide] a

¹¹⁸ *The Latina Feminist Group*, eds., in *Telling to Live*, 7-12.

¹¹⁹ Cynthia Cruz, "Testimonial as Methodology," in *Testimonial Narratives of Queer Street Youth*, (UCLA Dissertation, 2006), 28-35.

¹²⁰ Lindsay Pérez-Huber, "Disrupting Apartheid of Knowledge: *Testimonio* as Methodology in Critical Race Research in Education," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, vol. 22, no. 6, (2009): 639-654.

structure...through which the voice of a ‘witness’ is accorded space and protection.”¹²¹ Smith believes that it is imperative to use an anti-racist research model which provides researchers with methodological approaches that center the voices of the oppressed within a larger de-colonial project.¹²² Furthermore, that any de-colonial project must stress the importance of a research methodology that entails how imperialism, history, writing, colonialism, and theory are all “interrelated elements” that strategically challenge imperialist discourses through counter stories that are rooted in the histories and cultures of the oppressed.¹²³ *Testimonio* is also a politicized feminist methodology that transcends geopolitical borders, regions, and spaces.

A Politicized Feminist Methodology: *Testimonio*

Many of us, in some way or another, are professional *testimoniadoras* (producers of *testimonios*), whether as oral historians, literary scholars, ethnographers, creative writers, or psychologists. From our different personal, political, ethnic, and academic trajectories, we arrived at the importance of *testimonio* as a crucial means of bearing witness and inscribing into history those lived realities that would otherwise succumb to the alchemy of erasure.¹²⁴

From a feminist perspective, *testimonio* is also a methodological approach meant to preserve stories, memories, and lived experiences. The Latina Feminist Group builds from the political foundations of *Indígena* human rights activist Rigoberta Menchú and her use of *testimonio*.¹²⁵ Menchú used her *testimonio* as a political narrative based on experiential knowledge, through its use documenting the Guatemalan government’s genocide of *Indígena* peoples. Hence *testimonio*, as a politicized methodology, allows one to seek truthful accounts based on first hand witness accounts of colonization, oppression, and subordination.

¹²¹ Linda Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (New York: University of Otago, 2001).

¹²² Ibid, 142-158.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ *The Latina Feminist Group*, eds., “Introduction,” *Telling to Live*, 2-4

¹²⁵ Elizabeth Burgos-Debray, ed., *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala*, trans. Ann Wright (London: Verso, 1983).

The editors of the Latina Feminist Group assert that *testimonio*, as a methodology, strategically preserves feminist knowledge as a living testament to the political, cultural, and economic circumstances that colonized women endure globally.¹²⁶ In the study, I use *testimonio* as a qualitative research model to capture the psychological and physiological implications of racism that Chicanas and Native American women experience in predominantly white public institutions. During the interview process, *testimonio* is used to re-conceptualize the erased feminist subject into existence, as the women's *testimonios* reveal its consequences to their bodies, minds, and spirits. Therefore, as feminist researchers we "chart our own course through these contested terrains," while strategically situating ourselves through a politicized research process.¹²⁷

Contemporary Chicana feminists like Cynthia Cruz, Bernal Delgado, and the Latina Feminist Group editors utilize *testimonios*, stories and counter-narratives to theorize experiential knowledge, as they document new knowledge linked to a critical process of *conscientización* (critical consciousness). For instance, according to Cruz she asserts that *testimonio* is a subversive non-conventional method linked to social justice methodologies that "call for a radical repositioning of power for both the researcher and the subject."¹²⁸ Chicana and Latina theorists utilize these alternative methods that shift discursive power to the subaltern, i.e. indigenous populations, women, undocumented immigrants, and People of Color. The knowledge is therefore produced within a de-colonial framework relating to larger social inequities and power relations that effect subaltern communities differently.

In this study, I conduct forty-two qualitative *testimonio* interviews that allow participants to reveal institutional, social, and political injustices experienced during their Ph.D. studies. As a

¹²⁶ *The Latina Feminist Group*, eds., "Introduction," *Telling to Live*, 2-7.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ Cynthia Cruz, "Testimonio as Methodology," *Testimonial Narratives*, 28-33.

methodological approach, *testimonio* allows us to better understand how low-income and working-class Chicana and Native American women experience the types, contexts, effects of and responses to racial and gendered microaggressions during their doctorate studies.

The Methodological Research Design: Data Collection

The Recruitment Process and Criteria for Participation

For the recruitment process, I utilize a snowball sampling method of social networking to identify twenty-one participants for this national case study.¹²⁹ Snowball sampling is a method used when certain populations are difficult to locate, such as women that left or were pushed out of their Ph.D.'s. The recruitment process of participants also included the distribution of flyers in key locations (Appendix A: Recruitment Flyer). The criteria for the case study includes: 1) all participants self-identified as Chicana or Native American women; 2) all participants identified as growing up in poverty, low income, or coming from working-class socio-economic backgrounds; 3) all participants at some point have been enrolled in a Ph.D. program in the United States.

In addition, each interview will average approximately 2-4 hours and all interviews are audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. I conduct two in-depth interviews with each participant, thus totaling forty-two *testimonio* interviews for the study. Written consent is obtained prior to interviews and follows university IRB regulations (See Appendix B: IRB Consent Form). The interview script is the same for all participants. The researcher, as principal investigator, will be the *only* individual with direct access to the data. The location of interviews will take place at their university or at a location that is convenient to the participant. I will travel to accommodate all participants throughout the United States.

¹²⁹ Patricia Gándara, *Over the Ivy Walls: The Educational Mobility of low-income Chicanos* (NY: State University of New York Press, 1995). Snowball sampling allows researchers to use 'key resource individuals' to help identify potential participants who are otherwise difficult to locate.

Selection Process of Participants

Once selected, participants' names are coded with pseudonyms and placed in one of the following three categories: Category One includes six women currently working on their Ph.D.'s. Category Two includes eight women who have left their graduate studies or were "pushed out" of their Ph.D. studies without completing their degree. Category Three includes six women who have successfully completed their Ph.D.'s. In this study, each of the categories is designed to better understand the racial and gendered educational experiences of Chicanas and Native American women during different stages of the Ph.D. The table below includes the racial and ethnic breakdown of the twenty-one participants in the case study.

Table 4.1: Participants in the Case Study

Participants:	Category 1: Women pursuing their Ph.D.'s	Category 2: Women that left or pushed out of their Ph.D.	Category 3: Women that completed their Ph.D.
Native American	3	4	3
Chicanas	4	4	3
Total: 21	7	8	6

Criteria for Participants:

- All participants self-identified as Chicana or Native American women.
- All participants come from low-income or working-class backgrounds.
- All participants, at some juncture, were enrolled in a Ph.D. program.

The case study provides a structure to examine Chicanas and Native American women's racial and gendered educational experiences in relation to how they strategically navigate through racism, white

privilege, and additional types of oppression at the professoriate level. There are a total of twenty-one women in this national case study.

Data Analysis

Grounded Theory and Cultural Intuition

Furthermore, to code the data, I use Grounded Theory to analyze the data findings based on themes, categories, and repetition in participants' responses.¹³⁰ Grounded Theory by Charmaz allows me to critically organize and analyze the data using categories and sub-categories that emerge from responses to *testimonios* based on racial and gendered educational experiences. Additionally, the analysis and research process is also guided by Delgado Bernal's method of cultural intuition. Cultural intuition is rooted in Chicana feminist epistemology and provides a critical lens to understand knowledge production through a politicized perspective. Cultural intuition allows the participants and the researcher to discuss the findings collectively in order to encourage critical reflection, discussion, and open dialogues in the process of data analysis.¹³¹ This method allows the study to include personal experiences, cultural knowledge, and professional experiences in a collective effort to address and analyze the data findings. Cultural intuition allows the researchers to include one's professional, cultural, and personal experiences throughout the research process. In addition, she provides researchers with progressive analytical tools to expose biases, erasure, as well as the epistemological violence in traditional research. Delgado Bernal argues that "there is an 'apartheid of knowledge,' sustained by an epistemological racism that limits the range of possible epistemologies considered legitimate" in the academy.¹³²

¹³⁰ Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis* (London: Sage Publications, 2006).

¹³¹ Delgado Bernal, "Using Chicana Feminist Epistemology," 555-582.

¹³² Ibid.

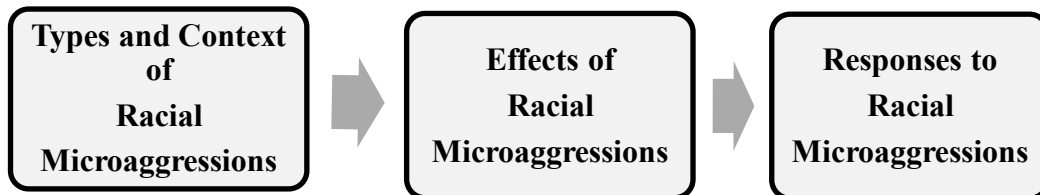
Data Collection

A Model for Data Collection and Analysis of Racial Microaggressions

Educational researchers Solórzano and Perez-Huber have developed a model to study and analyze racial microaggressions in order to better understand how racism is institutionalized within educational systems, classrooms, practices and teaching pedagogies. Therefore, racial microaggressions explain subtle, overt, and overall harmful ways in which systematic racism manifests in higher education. For the case study, I use the following model entitled “A Model for Data Collection and Analysis of Racial Microaggressions” to analyze racial and gender microaggressions in relation to the *types and contexts*, as well as the *effects* and *responses* reported in the data findings of forty-two qualitative *testimonio* interviews.

Figure 4.2: A Model for Data Collection and Analysis of Racial Microaggressions ¹³³

Source: Daniel Solórzano and Lindsay Pérez-Huber, 2012



The model highlights four central areas pertaining to racial microaggressions that occur within educational systems listed in detail below.

1. **Types of Racial Microaggressions** include how one is targeted or singled out by microaggressions. These can be based on race, gender, class, language, sexuality, age, immigration status, phenotype, accent, or surname.

¹³³ Daniel Solórzano and Lindsay Perez Huber, “Microaggressions, Racial,” in Banks, ed., *Encyclopedia of Diversity in Education*, (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publication, 2012), 1489-1492.

2. **Contexts of Racial Microaggressions** refers to how and where the microaggressions occur.
3. **Effects of Racial Microaggressions** pertain to the physical, emotional, and psychological consequences of microaggressions.
4. **Responses to Racial Microaggressions** involve how the individual responds to interpersonal and institutional racist acts and behaviors.

The model is designed to analyze racial microaggressions in terms of types and contexts, as well as effects and responses by Chicanas and Native American women in doctorate studies. This interdisciplinary feminist research is the first national case study to use the model in data analysis and collection to better understand the depths of racial and gendered microaggressions among Chicanas and Native American women in predominantly white public universities. The next section includes the twenty-one *testimonios* of the women's racial and gendered educational experiences.

CHAPTER FIVE: INTRODUCTION OF THE WOMEN IN THE STUDY

Introduction

The strongest prisons are built with walls of silence...I keep those moments like a living silent seed... I rebuilt my life... This wall of silence crumbles from the bigness of their crimes. This silent wall crushed by living memory.... I must speak... I find the windows where light escapes... From this cell of history this mute grave, we birth our rage. We heal our tongues. We listen to ourselves. We give testimony. Our noise is dangerous. We give testimony. We beat our hands like wings healed. We soar from these walls of silence...¹³⁴

The women in this national case study have shared personal and political narratives that reflect upon issues of invisibility, isolation, and shatter the silences occurring in higher education. The women in the case study make a political and conscious choice to break the silence associated with various injustices, as they strategically navigate through systemic racism, white privilege, and complex power relations. This chapter includes an introduction of the women in this case study, as they also share their educational experiences of courage, resiliency, and faith to create visibility. The chapter is divided into the following three sections. The first section includes women pursuing their Ph.D.'s. The second includes women that left their Ph.D. studies or were pushed out. The third includes women that completed their Ph.D.'s. The three sections are complimented by the contemporary works of Native American artist R.C. Gorman.¹³⁵ These art works reflect various stages of healing and thus the significance of the body, mind, and spirit connections, as the women navigate through their doctoral studies.

Each of the women was asked to reflect on their own educational experiences while navigating through the Ph.D. and share part of their *testimonios*. *Testimonio* honors an oral tradition that links “the spoken word to social action and privileges the oral narrative of personal experience as a source of knowledge, empowerment, and political strategy for claiming rights

¹³⁴ Janice Mirikitani, “Prisons of Silence,” in *Making Face Making Soul: Haciendo Caras*, 199-202.

¹³⁵ Navajo artist R. C. Gorman has been described as the ‘Picasso of the Southwest.’ Gorman’s celebration of Navajo women made him one of the most recognized contemporary artists throughout the U.S. and Europe.

and bringing about social change”¹³⁶ In honoring the method of *testimonio*, the women have written their own introductions—assuming agency and centered feminist subjectivity.¹³⁷ I conclude the chapter with an analysis of their demographic data.

¹³⁶ Benmayor, Torruellas, & Juarbe, 1997

¹³⁷ In some cases (i.e. Rene, Hettie, Ana, Tana, and Angela) the women’s information was included from their *testimonio* interviews.

Section One: Introduction of the Women Pursuing their Ph.D.'s

This section includes the women in the case study that identified as “pursuing their doctorate degrees.” This part includes the introductions of Luna, Lulu, Amelia, Vanessa, Canela, Rene, and Hettie. All the women are pursuing doctorate degrees from public universities with the exception of Rene who attended a private university. The third section includes the *testimonios* of the women that completed their Ph.D.'s



Figure 5.1: *Woman from Pine Springs*, R. C. Gorman

Luna: Chicana/Latina and Grew up in Poverty

I identify as Chicana and grew up in poverty. I was raised by a single parent: my Mother. I have two children and consider myself very fortunate and blessed. My educational experiences at first were difficult, but I strategically navigated through the university with support. I study Latinos and issues of poverty in Education. I am currently using my lived experience paired with my recent doctorate to share the message of “*si se puede.*” I do not necessarily see myself as a unique person that defied the odds of becoming the less than one percent of Latinas who receive a doctorate, but rather as a Latina with “*ganas.*”

I am inspired by my Mother and other immigrants that have demonstrate this type of determination or *ganas* to seek change in their lives. After living in poverty, confronting years of racism, classism, surviving abuse and fighting for freedom, I am taking my story to hallways of high schools, college auditoriums and to anyone else that will listen. I will take the stage at high schools and colleges around the country to remind others of the strength to be had in deflecting the “isms” we are all faced with. We need to stand up to our oppressors and be AGENTS of change for our own lives and futures.

Lulu: Native American (Mandan, Hidatsa & Sioux Tribes) Grew up Working-Class

I grew up with my extended family system and it’s a matrilineal culture on the reservation. As a young adult, I became more immersed in the Sioux and Assiniboine tribes, cultures, history, and spirituality. I am enrolled in the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation in North Dakota with tribal affiliations that are also Mandan and Hidatsa. As far as my Ph.D. program, I found a really good program that values my own research interests. It is inspiring and exciting to be in a program that is a “good fit” and where I have found great colleagues and faculty members that I respect and trust. In my family, education was always valued and the pursuit of higher

education was expected. I had many strong Native and female role models along the path.

For most of my academic career, I was a single parent. However, I was fortunate to have financial funding for all of my college education and have not incurred any debt. My family has *always* been with me, as I have worked my way through graduate school and now towards the Ph.D. My children and family are my support and inspiration. As a mother of young children, and more recently an infant, finding balance in my life has proven difficult at times, but has also strengthened my flexibility and creativity. My love for my family, my children, and my people motivates me to continue on this journey despite obstacles and challenges. Further, upon completion of my Ph.D., I intend to continue working with Native communities and tribal education.

Amelia: Chicana/Mexicana and Grew up Working-Class

Before entering the doctoral program, I was the type of person who would avoid conversations regarding spirituality. I felt myself to be in touch with my spirituality, but I was afraid of it and tried to suppress it. By spirituality, I mean my sense on knowing and seeing beyond what is obvious to the naked eye. My gut feeling and sixth sense formed part of my spirituality. During the time I took doctoral classes, my anxiety and self-doubt increased dramatically. Although I had received plenty of scholarships and awards before transferring to the doctoral program, I could not feel or see my past accomplishments. I would cry almost every night after arriving home from the university. The emotional pain became physical. It was in this painful stage that I claimed my spirituality. I began to dig deep into my psyche in efforts to figure out what was true and real about me. I have a very strong will and a deep sense of social justice. No matter what happens to me during the doctoral program, I know I will finish. I honestly don't know if completing the Ph.D. is worth the damage to my body and soul, but I

know I will complete it. I have turned the *terca* (stubborn) and *corajuda* (grouchy) inside of me into a diligent and persistent scholar. I am compassionate with others and myself. Every day, I make an attempt to learn and practice the art of patience. I am a “peace advocate” and I begin by finding peace within. I don’t believe in preaching, but rather teaching and leading by example. I don’t always feel beautiful, but deep down inside I know I am.

Vanessa: *Chicana/Yaqui* and Grew up Working-Class

To this day, I struggle to describe myself, as I tend to describe my family and community as me. More than a struggle, I would consider this a reflection of where I come from and my pathway through higher education. Through these years, I have become aware of who I am and my status in society, as I have moved through the educational pipeline. However, my status of having limited mobility is still very new for me. This has been at the forefront of how I now describe and see myself, as I am learning how to continue to move forward in new ways. Learning to navigate through the doctorate with these new types of limited physical mobility issues has had an impact on how I now describe myself at this point in my life.

Other parts of my social identity include being Xicana, working-class, raised Catholic, bisexual, being a female, and a woman. On a more personal level, I would describe myself as an artist still finding the right medium to communicate my dreams, ideas, etc. I hear music in all sounds around me and I seek out the beauty in everything nature shares with us. My research interests include social justice fields, such as equity in education for Women of Color, alternative education/continuation high schools, educational history and Xicana Feminism.¹³⁸

¹³⁸ Ana Castillo, *Massacre of the Dreamers* (New York: Plume/Penguin Book, 1994). Castillo presents a revolutionary Chicana theoretical definition that includes the history, cultures, and counter-narratives of our Mexican and *indígena* descendent. Castillo’s political definition re-conceptualizes the term Chicana, with a more radical term *Xicana* that extends the political dilemmas associated with race, class, gender and sexuality.

Canela: *Mexicana/Chixana*¹³⁹ and Grew up Working-Class

My favorite colors are green and blue because I can paint the earth, sky, and waters with these two colors. Although I haven't reached the peak of my artistry through the use of colors, I still consider myself an artist of words. I write about action research taking place in the schooling community to contribute to educational justice. Academic institutions are hierarchical, competitive, and promote individualism, and higher education can also be a *dehumanizing process* to our spirits and emotional well-being. Oftentimes what I see is a very grave compartmentalization of the self, a dehumanized pieced person... I refuse to choose that for myself and will not compromise myself. Instead, I take my whole being and strengths with me, as I see this as liberating the multiple generations that came before me. By acting from a place of a *rattle-shaker* that is grounded and holistic, I can also see things differently. It also creates a lot of stress and anxiety to be able to navigate through an institution that was not designed for us and that systematically denies our presence. Sometimes I also ask myself, do we need the institution? Is it effective to work within the institution to create change, or do we just outright work outside of it so we can throw it upside down and turn it over?

My research interests include a participatory action approach to identity agency formation for collective wellness of heart/liver, mind, body and spirit within educational excellence. Additionally, ancestral praxis and indigenous epistemologies are at the core of my research interests. Also, because I decided a long time ago to pursue my Ph.D., I'm going to see it through, so it's about disciplined focus, it's about finishing something that I started—thus following in the legacy of my parents, grandparents, and my ancestors to resist. We need to

¹³⁹ Castillo, *Massacre of the Dreamers*.

survive the environments that are toxic, so that we have the ability to create, exist, and contribute to change.

Favorite Quote: “As for the best leaders, the people do not notice their existence. The next best the people honor and praise. The next the people fear, and the next the people hate. When the best leader's work is done, the people say, ‘we did it ourselves!’ -Lao Tzu

Rene: Native American (Gabrieliño Tongva Tribe) and Chicana Grew up Low-Income

I'm in Archeology and I chose it because of contradicting educational experiences I had growing up Native from the Gabrieliño (Tongva), and having tribe be continuously dismissed and erased. In school, authority figures taught false information, for example, I was informed by my elementary school teacher that my “tribe is dead,” I navigated through my studies proud of my heritage and challenged teachers who stated ‘how can you be from that tribe? They are extinct.’ My response was ‘they’re not extinct because my family is still alive and here I am!’ Hence, I grew up with people trying to deny our existence as a tribe, denying my existence, and me calling them out, challenging their ignorance. This proved a major turning point in my education, as I fought back and decided to prove all people wrong about the erasure of my Gabrieliño (Tongva) community. I took action by educating myself and researching the history of my tribe. I was determined to write the next book on the Gabrieliño people to illustrate that we are not extinct or dead. In sixth grade, I went to our career office and looked up archeology; it said that I would need a Ph.D. to become an archeologist, so I found the top schools and knew that I would apply to them.

I am now an archaeologist. I received my BA in Anthropology from the University of Pennsylvania and my MA in Anthropology from Harvard University. My dissertation at Harvard investigates the relationship between Native Americans and archaeologists, in order to find ways

to incorporate indigenous perspectives into the practice of Archaeology. I am also Co-Director of the Pimu Catalina Island Archaeological Field School a Native-centered course that melds Archaeology with ancestral knowledge in collaboration with Gabrieliño (Tongva) community members. My life has been dedicated to obtaining the skills and knowledge necessary to combat the destruction of Native American sacred and cultural sites. My dream is to open up a Gabrieliño (Tongva) museum and cultural center to remind the Southern California community of the vibrant Gabrieliño's heritage, history, existence, and continuing contributions to the Southern California region.

Hettie: Native American (Muskogee Creek Tribe) and Grew up in Poverty

I'm mixed blood, Muskogee Creek and I grew up in poverty in Oklahoma. I'm American Indian and so very few of us have managed to escape the effects of colonialism in the university. I am the *first* member of my family to attend college and my inspirations are my children. One of my saving graces in the university has been my support system outside of the university. For instance, I have built a network of friends outside the university that have really helped me keep things in perspective. They've helped me recharge and reenergize on many levels. I am invested in making a difference for Native American women and Native communities throughout the educational pipeline. I believe that having positive role models in academia is vital to this endeavor, as well as having supportive retention programs for Native communities.

I specialize in Native American scholarship and additional areas pertaining to domestic violence. I consider myself a "sexual assault advocate." My work with ending violence against Native women guides me as to how to look at and analyze the concept of violence against Native women and its myriad of forms. For example, violence against women takes on different shapes and forms like physical violence, the violence of identity, institutional violence, as well as subtle

and blatant discrimination. Hence, in the academy, there is a type of academic violence that occurs through the lack of university support for our success, the devaluation of our voices, stories, and histories as contributions to the university.

Section 2: Introduction of the Women that Left or were Pushed Out of their Ph.D.'s

This section includes the women that left or were pushed out of the Ph.D. studies.¹⁴⁰ What follows are the introductions of Juanita, Winuna, Nicomedes, Lillian, Joy, Rainy Dawn, Deanna, and Liliana. All eight women attended predominantly white public universities in the United States.



Figure 5.2: *Woman with Pears*, R.C. Gorman

¹⁴⁰ Three women in this section refused to leave or quit their Ph.D. studies, including Winuna, Rainy Dawn, and Liliana. These three women are placed in this section, as their educational experiences shed light on the systematic push out process in higher education.

Juanita: Chicana/Latina and Grew up Working-Class

I am a first-generation college Chicana/Latina. My mother is my guiding light and *always* taught us (me and my two sisters) to be strong and confident despite our low socio-economic status in U.S. society. Despite the fact that my mother only has a second grade education, which she received in México, she made it a point to have her three daughters attend and graduate from the university. I consider myself a very passionate and caring person. I am dedicated to the many students and parents that I am able to help and work with on a daily basis. I believe that my purpose in life is to help others find their voice in the same manner that I once found mine. I am confident that I will soon (in the next couple of years) receive an Ed.D. This will help me contribute more to my community, and thus provide more resources to students and families who are navigating the educational pipeline with dreams and aspirations of being college graduates. I am thankful every day for the blessings and struggles in my life. I believe that every struggle is a “blessing.” For me, failing and overcoming these types of hurdles has *only* made me a stronger woman. I would not be here today had it not been for the obstacles that I faced and navigated through with human dignity, respect, and compassion. I love to laugh and I also love to read. I truly believe that we are life-long learners, so I enjoy filling my brain with knowledge that I can share with others (especially the students I work with).

Favorite Passage: It is my belief that each of us, as individuals has our own path. Every path is unique, yet academia (in my experience) calls for only one journey. It is impossible to lead students down one path when so many of us have a different story to tell.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ Juanita’s personal quote

Winuna: Native American (Flandreau, Santee Sioux & Muskogee Creek Tribes) and Grew up Working-Class

I am very devoted to my family and my community. My father raised me with the advice that “if you don’t like something then seek to change it from within—make a systematic change in the paradigm you are fighting against.” I was disillusioned with the educational system and left high school at fifteen because I did not see myself nor my Muskogee community represented in the curriculum. This was also why I decided to go back to school when I was in my mid-twenties, with the hope that I could somehow help to change the educational system, so that my children did not have to deal with the same issues that I faced in education. It is important to know your history to have a strong identity. For American Indian students this means teaching the Indigenous perspectives at all levels and in all fields of education. My dissertation tells the story of my own tribe’s forced exile from our homelands in Minnesota. I look at key issues of leadership over time—from my grandfather who was a chief to one of the first Dakota farming communities in present day Minneapolis. I discovered that my great uncle, who was one of the first American Indian physicians, was also a prolific writer and a social activist. I analyze how our language, religion, and cultural traditions were taken from us, in the hopes that knowing the strength of our ancestors can help us recover some of what was lost over the last one hundred and fifty years.

Favorite Passage: “I am an Indian; and while I have learned much from civilization, for which I am eternally grateful, I have never lost my Indian sense of right and justice. I am for development and progress along social and spiritual lines, rather than those of commerce, nationalism, or material efficiency. Nevertheless, so long as I live, I am an American.”¹⁴²

¹⁴² Winuna’s personal quote.

Nicomedes: Chicana and Grew up Low-Income

I identify as a working-class Chicana. I am also an activist working on ending sexual violence, and additional forms of oppression that affect Women of Color. I want to be a role model for Women of Color in the social service and mental health fields. I was raised in South East Los Angeles by parents who came to the U.S. from Mexico. I am also the second born and the *first* member of my family to attend college. Currently, I am the only grandchild on both sides of my family to have a graduate degree. During my spare time, I volunteer at a teen center, as a Latina representative for the City of Santa Barbara Human Services Committee. I believe it is important to create political change via grounded activism. I am also invested in being part of that change. Currently, I serve as Vice President to the following organizations: the Santa Barbara Women's Political Committee and the California Coalition against Sexual Assault.

Lillian: Native American (Ojicree and Cree) Grew up Low-Income/Poverty

I am Ojicree and from the Eagle Clan of the Ojibway, while my Dad is Cree. Currently, I am a case manager on my reservation in Canada, plus an adjunct Sociology professor at Oklahoma State University in Oklahoma City. I have earned three of my degrees at Oklahoma State, and one of my Master's at the University of Arkansas, while being a single Mother to my son. My research interests were initially Social Inequalities and Social Psychology, but I got bit by the environmental bug and also became interested in environmental issues that affect Native Americans communities. Hence, I wrote a paper entitled, "Native Americans Living in a Contemporary World: When Environmental Injustices Compromise Traditions and Culture" and developed this important social justice work into a qualitative piece centering the voices of the Native people against the development of the South Lawrence Traffic way. This research was

also used as the Creative Component for my last Masters. I have chosen to share a writing which I have composed, as I think about myself as a “Modern Day Horse Thief.”

Favorite Phrase: I am a “Modern Day Horse Thief” which means that I take knowledge from the university then ride out to the community to share it...”¹⁴³

Joy: Chicana/Mexican and Grew up Working-Class

I identify as being Mexican or Chicana, depending on the context, but I’m most comfortable with Latina. My socioeconomic status is working-class. As a first-generation Chicana college graduate, my educational pathway has proved to be challenging and non-linear. At first, pursuing my degree felt very isolating. However, I was very grateful that in my cohort there was another Latina entering at the same time, so we both connected as our experiences were very similar as the *only* ones that identified as Latina and engaged in social justice research pertaining to Latino issues in Education.

After a while I started silencing myself in the classroom, and instead took to writing as a way of expressing my thoughts. Hence, instead of voicing my opinions in class, I would write about them and share them with the professor. I also engaged in a lot of one-on-one with faculty because I felt more comfortable participating in that sense. Meeting with them on a one-on-one level was much more comfortable for me. The learning environment felt manageable, so I didn’t feel like I was a little fish in a big pond, but I still felt very *isolated*. The program was a new Ph.D. program and it felt like we were the “guinea pigs,” as resources were also limited. It felt like they were still working on the program, as we were going through it, so that was extremely frustrating. I had to reexamine if the Ph.D. program was really there for me or there to just push us through and I think when I found a professor to work with at another campus, it allowed me to gain a lot of perspective about the limitations of my Ph.D. program. Ultimately, that was the

¹⁴³ Lillian’s personal quote.

decision-maker for me. I found that my program was ultimately not supporting where I was going. Being a first-generation Chicana Ph.D. student is scary enough, but to be in a program where *they* had no idea how to help us was even more frustrating. I just had to make the ultimate decision to distance myself from it and figure out how to cut the ties. And so, I made a conscious choice to leave the doctorate. However, my personal and professional aspirations towards community involvement have led me to continue pursuing a strong connection with my community through a multitude of other avenues outside the academy.

Favorite Quote: “No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.” Eleanor Roosevelt

Rainy Dawn: Chicana/Native American (Luiseño Tribe) and Grew up Low-Income

I am first generation Chicana and belong to the Luiseño tribe of Southern California. I grew up working poor in various states throughout the southwest. I feel enormous gratitude to my family for helping ground my spirit while on the path towards the doctorate. For me, the university is a racist, hostile, and intolerant battle field, but one that we must literally *survive* in order to change its oppressive structure. I believe that we have to strive for emancipatory changes as a conscious, political, and spiritual choice in a world that remains at war.

Also, I believe that many of us have a spiritual calling to be resistant, defiant, and seek change in order to create a more humane, tolerant, and just society. I view my *spiritual activism* as a powerful weapon that can be used to combat oppression in all of its dominant forms (i.e. hegemony, colonization, genocide, racism, and hatred). My *testimonio* symbolizes a political act of resistance, defiance, and survival to humanize our experiences and existence in the academy. Hence, our political work is significant in continuing to strive and demand emancipatory changes that create greater educational opportunities for those that are persecuted, marginalized, and silenced.

I have the utmost respect for those that have dedicated their lives to seeking change for those that struggle or are oppressed. I have no respect for those that have power and abuse it. To date, I am invested in using my Ph.D. in the service of teaching tolerance, advocating for change, and creating greater educational opportunities for disenfranchised communities to exist with human dignity, respect, and citizenship. Favorite Quote: “We are all charged with life when we breathe and are embraced into this world. That breath seals our promise to walk with integrity into this earthly place. It is that simple.”¹⁴⁴

Deanna: Native American (Navajo Tribe) and Grew up Low Income

I am Navajo and grew up low income. I attended the university for four years and made a conscious choice to leave my Ph.D. studies on my terms. One of the things that I’ve struggled with in terms of thinking about my experience in my Ph.D. program has been determining whether I decided to leave or whether I was pushed out, and I think that it’s definitely a mixture of both. I think that ultimately I took a *proactive stand* on deciding to leave the Ph.D., but there certainly were additional factors that played into that decision. For example, I did not have adequate support to keep going in my program. I was really at a crossroads both in terms of my own goals when I started my program and feeling financially stressed of having done a master’s program, plus an additional four years into my PhD program, so in some ways I also felt like I couldn’t afford to stay any longer. It took me a year to decide, but I just felt like it was crazy to continue moving forward and put four more years into my Ph.D. program, as I also had other goals and dreams in my life, so it just seemed crazy to keep moving forward.

I did a cost benefit analysis of what I was going to get out of putting more years into the Ph.D. versus what I could do with the rest of my life in those years, and what would ultimately make me happy and make me feel fulfilled, thus do something with that time because time is

¹⁴⁴ Joy Harjo, “New Voices Spirit Workshop,” November, 2006.

precious in our lives. So that's the context of my experience, as I made a conscious choice to leave and invest my time in other pursuits that would also benefit Native communities.

I am interested in areas advancing educational opportunities for Native and Indigenous communities. I am also currently the Executive Director for a non-profit organization geared towards advancing the needs of Native communities throughout the U.S. I am grateful that I am now in a position to contribute to change and feel fulfilled.

Liliana: Chicana/Mexican and grew up Low-Income/Poverty

I am a young mother, who grew up poor in rural Arizona in a domestically violent home, and I identify primarily as Mexicana/Chicana. I was raised in a trailer park by my Mexican-born and Spanish-speaking mother and grandmother. We lived in an area that was once inhabited by Yavapai Indians and I grew up playing in the remnants of their culture and homes, while other kids were playing video games. I was socialized and educated with other ethnic/racial peoples, including Chicanos/as, Blacks, Yavapais, Navajos, Hopis, and poor whites. Due to the violence in my home, I dropped out of high school and left home at the age of fourteen. Shortly after, my mother became homeless for about ten years. At the age of twenty, I took the exam for the G.E.D. and passed. I began community college in Mesa, Arizona shortly after, and I received the Pell Grant, took out student loans, and became a waitress to finance my education. Later, I transferred to Northern Arizona University, where utilizing the same funding sources, I finished the B.S. and M.A. degrees in History.

My troubles with the University began in my third year, after a young woman was raped and I refused to pressure her to do anything she did not want to do, and I refused to give her name, as it was confidential. In the almost three years since, my life has become a total nightmare because of the University's negligence in handling the situation. Now, I struggle to

finish my doctorate degree and I plan on finishing! I come from a state that is volatile, especially for the oppressed and persecuted via unjust immigration laws in Arizona, so I know what it means to literally fight back. During the Ph.D., I refused to be “pushed out” of my studies and organized a hunger strike with my children present. May this *testimonio* give others hope and courage to continue fighting inhumane injustices.

Section 3: Introduction of the Women that Completed their Ph.D.'s

This section includes the six women that identified in the case study, as having completed their doctorate degrees from public universities. This part includes the introductions of Carmen, Tana, Irene, Sonya, Ana, and Angela.

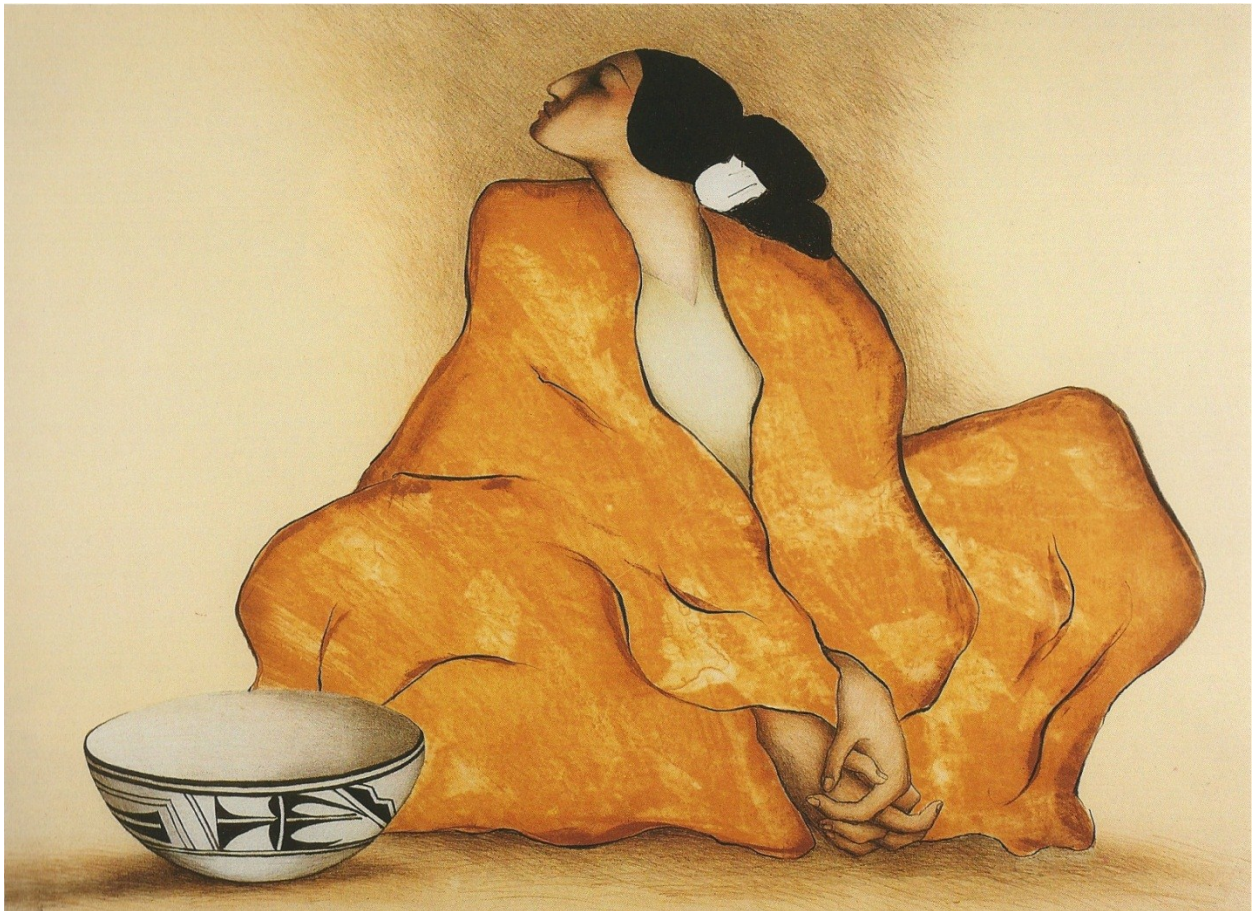


Figure 5.3: *Zia*, R. C. Gorman

Carmen: Chicana and Grew Up Working-Class

I was born in Los Angeles to immigrant parents from Mexico. I am also a first generation college student and was amongst the *few* Chicanas in my high school to have been accepted to a UC. Prior to attending graduate school, I had worked in various human service agencies and worked in community programs mentoring youth. During graduate school, I drew a lot of the strength from my Chicana and working-class background. I think that my personal experiences growing up, allowed me to create various navigational strategies for the Ph.D. For example, knowing what racism looks like, even covert forms of racism, and just knowing how to be strategic in terms of when to say something or when to use my silence as an act of resistance. These experiences formed vital “navigational strategies” that I used throughout my Ph.D. studies. I also felt greatly empowered knowing my Chicana/o history of survival, resistance, activism, and courage. In addition, I also had various support systems in place throughout the Ph.D., such as my family, friends, a great faculty advisor, outlets, and my roommates in graduate school. I also taught and know that my students have always been a major part of the healing process for me, as I love my students. That is how I navigated through the doctorate degree.

I am currently a postdoctoral researcher and a part-time faculty in Chicana and Chicano Studies in California. My primary research interests include: Chicano community college students and the racialized masculinities of Chicano male students in secondary schooling contexts. I am also a proud mother of a toddler with Down syndrome.

Favorite Quote: “My anger has meant pain to me but it has also meant survival, and before I give it up I’m going to be sure that there is something at least as powerful to replace it on the road to clarity” (Lorde 2001).

Tana: American Indian (*Tigua* Tribe) and Chicana Grew up Low-Income

I grew up navigating multiple geopolitical borders. I lived five minutes from the Mexican border and an Indian reservation (my father's peoples). Thus, I am used to crossing so-called borders. In retrospect, I didn't perceive them as borders, just the places I grew up and where I have been, as I am intimately aware of my precarious relationship with the Nation-state. Specifically, I have been aware of my "outsider status" in relation to it. My identity is *not* fixed to the Nation-state. It is in conversation with it, but not determined by it.

Some of the navigational strategies I used during the Ph.D. included forming good relationships with peers and a supportive faculty advisor. I also met my partner during the doctorate, so it was really nice to be able to have an identity outside of the PhD program because we were both really good about creating a life outside of that program. Within the program, just seeing good folks and friends in American Indian studies was huge for me, as well as seeking great mentors there that I could reach out to. To date, I am still really close with them. So it is really important to have great peers and friends in the program and outside the program. I also found myself going home all the time to El Paso, Texas, especially during the first two years. For me, going home meant arriving at a physically healing space. There is also a lot of research regarding the retention of American Indian students in higher education and how American Indian students return home to fulfill those connections of family, ceremonies or spiritual ties that also sustain us. Whether you believe in that stuff or not, it is very important to anchor one's spirit. The academy is such a little part of the bigger picture, so we have to find our way in this world and not lose the important connections to whatever our spiritual beliefs are. I'm not talking about religion here; I'm talking about a spiritual level that at the end of the day, reminds us that what matters are the types of relationships we have in life and with the world.

Irene: Chicana and Grew up Working-Class

I'm a fourth generation Chicana and a first generation college student. My great grandparents were from Mexico. I chose to attend college three miles from my family's home to stay connected with my parents, three brothers, and two sisters. In general, I guess I have mixed feelings about the Ph.D. experience because I felt that, in general, it was a very *isolating* and exhausting experience, but I feel like to just describe it in that way would be too limited because I also benefited from a lot of support networks that guided me throughout the Ph.D. process. I had great mentors and some really good friends, not necessarily in my own program, but from other places. I was fortunate to receive funding from organizations that also emphasized things like building community and support for Communities of Color, so I feel like that improved the Ph.D. experience in a lot of different ways, as I was able to remain connected to various counter spaces.

With the positive support of my family, faculty mentors, outreach programs, and funding sources that were dedicated to diversifying the academy; I completed my Ph.D. in Sociology. I also have additional research interests including educational inequities, Gender Studies, and Latina/o Sociology. My Ph.D. has been a combined *collective* family effort. My strategy was to complete the Ph.D. by pulling in my brothers and sisters to help me with my dissertation. I also did my best to draw on the strengths of other people, so for me, this experience was isolating and lonely, but it's also been such a shared experience. To date, all my diplomas are at my parents' house. The degree is not just mine, but instead belongs to my family, as it was a collective effort. I am currently an Assistant Professor of Sociology and Ethnic Studies at a small, liberal arts college in the Pacific Northwest. In this new role, I draw energy and strength from my family, my students, and community members.

Sonya: Chicana and Grew up Working-Class

I grew up in a working-class family in Southern California and am the oldest of two siblings (sisters). The importance of education was instilled in me, and in my sisters, from a very young age. Although we didn't have family members who had attended college, I always knew this was the next step for me after high school. My undergraduate experience was difficult, as it is for so many other first generations, low-income Students of Color. I was fortunate to find a strong support network of Latina/o faculty who introduced me to undergraduate research and supported my academic work. Shortly after completing my undergraduate degrees, I became a mother to my first daughter. Right after her first birthday, I entered graduate school and she remained my motivation to complete my doctoral degree. In graduate school, I was again, so fortunate to have an amazing advisor and small group of other Chicana graduate students who provided tremendous academic, professional and personal forms of support. During graduate school and shortly after, I experienced the violence of microaggressions. In some places, they were expected and I could prepare. However, when perpetrated by those I did not expect—others who claimed to be “critical” and “social justice” oriented folks, these hurt the most. I continue toward a journey of healing from these experiences. Today, I continue to find support in my family, a group of people related by blood and some just related by soul. My family has grown. I am blessed. I have an amazing partner and two daughters. I am now tenure-track faculty at a four-year university in Southern California. Every time I share my story, my *testimonio*, it is an act of healing.

Favorite Passage: *Dime con quien andas y te diré quien eres.*¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ Translation: Tell me who you are with and I will tell you who you are. This passage is from Sonya's father.

Ana: Native American (Poarch Band of Creek Indians) and Grew up Working-Class

I am *first* generation Poarch Band of Creek Indians and grew up working-class. I am from a small southern town and grew up five miles from my reservation. My mother is Native, but my father is not, so growing up I always questioned why the two sides of my family were so different. This turns out to be a great way to train future anthropologists. In my field of Anthropology, obviously, there is racism, as well as a horrible history, so it is important to learn how to combat it; in order to work on behalf of the Native people that you're working for and include them in your research project. My adviser was an incredible mentor, the personal sacrifices he was willing to make to really talk about difficult issues in the department was inspiring. During the political injustices, I started feeling very depressed and sought out a therapist to deal with it. I ended up being hospitalized because I got some kind of virus and I think that the stress was just so high that my immune system and body were not able to fight it off. During this period, I ended up being hospitalized for a while. It's like this childhood disease, but it gets worse as you get older. I got it at a time when I was highly stressed out about finishing and filing the Ph.D., as I was also teaching at the same time. Again, I am grateful to my faculty advisor because he helped me, so that I could just focus on getting better. He advocated on my behalf and the department hired a substitute to teach my course. My advice to others is not to sweat the small stuff, build key allies with colleagues, and a strong support network inside the university.

After college, I taught in Atlanta before applying to grad school at a large research institution. I received my Ph.D. there in 2011 with an MA and a Certificate in Museum Studies. I am currently working as an Assistant Professor in a small liberal arts institution. At present, I am

trying put to good use the tools I learned in academia and improve the quality of life for members of my tribe.

Angela: Native American (Navajo Tribe) and Grew Up Low-Income/Poverty

I am from the Navajo Nation and grew up working-poor. It's just important for me to use this Ph.D. for the community that I want to serve. I also want to do something that is worth doing in terms of my own spiritual health, as well as taking care of myself through the process. I look forward to working on the reservation cultivating my garden, and being able to come home and enjoy my time with my fiancé and his sons.

My department was predominantly a white middle-class constituency with American values, so most of the Ph.D. process was very *isolating*. The bureaucracy of the university is amazingly difficult to navigate through, as its mostly older white men, so it's clear as to who has the power in our department. However, I did have a great mentor that worked on tribal coursework and continuously pushed me to work harder. I really liked her and appreciated the time she took to help me prepare during the Ph.D. By my second year, I was involved with the American Indian Studies Department and that really saved my sanity. For instance, just hanging out and being around Native people who knew where I was from was comforting because I didn't have to constantly explain my political views. My primary research interests include Education, pedagogy, archaeology, service-learning, law, and indigenous perspectives in anthropology. My ultimate goal is to move from the university over to teaching at the Navajo college on the reservation and becoming an English teacher.

Analytical Summary of Sections

The women in this case study share their own theory in the flesh based on their educational experiences inclusive of the intersectionalities of race/ethnicity, class, gender,

sexuality, and age. Their educational experiences embrace tenets like resistance, faith, pain, and survival, as they navigate through predominantly white public universities.

Anzaldúa encourages one to use painful memories, traumatic events, and lived experiences to serve as our training camps so that we may learn to navigate through various types of oppressions. For instance, through the various healing stages of *conocimiento*, we develop new survival skills that can be used to reflect, grow, and heal from painful lived experiences.¹⁴⁶ After, taking time to heal, we reemerge as “active politicized agents” using our memories and traumatic experiences in the service of helping others. In this way, we not *only* heal ourselves, but we also engage in a larger political movement rooted in humanizing the experiences of the oppressed.

This brief introduction provides an overview of who they are and what moves them to social justice agenda. All the women in this study took time from their busy schedules to participate. They wanted nothing in return, but the knowledge that their educational experiences could potentially help additional marginalized communities navigate through higher education with human dignity, resiliency, courage, and hope. The next section will discuss the women’s overall demographic data.

Section 4: Demographic Data of Chicanas and Native American Women in the Case Study

The following Demographic Data in Tables (5.1-5.3) represents the data for the women that participated in this national case study. First, all of the women self-identified as Chicana or Native American women. Second, Native American women had tribal affiliations throughout the U.S. and Canada. Some of the tribes represented include: Mandan, Hidatsa, Sioux, Gabrieliño (Tongva), Muskogee Creek, Flandreau, Santee Sioux, Ojibway-Cree, Luiseño, Poarch Band of

¹⁴⁶ Anzaldúa, “Now Let us Shift...” in *This Bridge We Call Home*, 540-576.

Creek Indians, *Tigua*, and Navajo. Each tribe has a distinct history and diverse cultural attributes.

Third, as for the category of Chicana, women in the study also used the following terms:

Mexicana, Chixana, Latina, *Indigena*, and Mexican-American. The racial/ethnic categories are not fixed, as many women in the study also identified as bi-racial.

The study was designed to capture the educational experiences of economically challenged women in higher education as well. Therefore, all the women in this case study identified as coming from socio-economic backgrounds ranging from: 1) low-income; 2) grew up in poverty; or 3) working-class. Many of the participant's parents were also working-class wherein their labor varied from manual, clerical, construction, as well as teachers and therapists. Furthermore, the women's educational data suggests that all of the women reported attending public educational schools while growing up and *only* one woman identified as attending a private school. Also, ten women identified as transferring from a community college to their Ph.D. studies while eleven women identified as entering after completing their undergraduate or graduate studies (i.e. Master's Degree). Additionally, thirteen women in the study identified as being the "first members" of their families to attend college, whereas eight women reported that additional family members (i.e. siblings) were the first members to attend college.

The overall economic debt that the women incurred varied case by case. The debt estimates for the women at the Ph.D. level also ranged. For example, the low end of economic debt was approximately \$10,000.00 and the high end was \$120,000.00 of total debt endured during their graduate studies. However, there was *only* one case (i.e. Lulu) that stated that she had "no debt," as she was fully funded by the Ford Foundation prior to entering her doctorate studies, thus making her the only woman in the case study that identified as debt free.

Moreover, nine women identified as having children and twelve women did not have any children. The women with children navigated through the doctorate with additional challenges as working mothers, but also reported that their children served as vital sources of motivation for them. The women also ranged in sexual orientation. For instance, sixteen women identified as heterosexual; one woman identified as lesbian; three women identified as bi-sexual, and one woman identified as “two spirited.”¹⁴⁷

In addition, six women identified as married; eight women reported having partners; one woman was divorced, and six women identified as single. It is important to point out that women that identified coming from a household with one income struggled financially, but women with partners also struggled, but reported some form of stable income for their household. Finally, all the women reported attending public universities for their doctorate degrees with one exception (Rene) who attended a Private university. The public universities are not revealed in this study to protect some of the women that participated in it. However, the public universities are in the following states California, Arizona, Texas, Minnesota, Alabama, North Dakota, Massachusetts, Michigan, Washington, Oklahoma, Montana, Ohio, and New Mexico. Additional sites include México and Canada. The next section includes the women’s individualized demographic data gathered from their *testimonios* for this national case study on low-income or working-class Chicanas and Native American women pursuing doctorate degrees in higher education. The tables are organized in the following three categories: 1) Women pursuing their Ph.D.’s; 2) Women that left or were pushed out of their Ph.D.’s, and 3) Women that completed their Ph.D.’s. Following the tables, Chapter Six, includes the women’s in-depth *testimonios*.

¹⁴⁷ The term two-spirit is an umbrella term for Native people who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual as well as transgender and transsexual or otherwise experience their sexual and gender identities as being outside of the hetero-normative binaries. www.tribal-institute.org

Table 5.1: Demographic Data of the Women Pursuing their Ph.D.’s

Pseudonym	Luna	Lulu	Amelia	Vanessa	Canela	Renee	Hettie
Identity or Identities	Latina/ Mexican	Native American	Mexicana & Chicana	Chicana & <i>Indigena</i>	Mexicana & Chixana <i>Indigena</i>	Native American & Chicana	Native American
Tribal Affiliation	None	Mandan, Hidatsa, & Sioux	None	<i>Yaqui</i>	None	Gabrieliño (Tongva)	Muskogee Creek
Class	Grew up in Poverty	Working Class	Working-Class	Working Class	Working Class	Low Income	Grew up in Poverty
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female
Sexuality	Lesbian	Hetero	Bisexual	Bisexual	Hetero	Hetero	Hetero
First College	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Discipline	Education	Forestry	American Studies	Education	Education	Archeology	Women’s Studies
Years in Degree	12	3	4	6	6+	12 +	7+
Estimated Debt	\$90,000	0	\$45,000	120,000	35,000	Unknown	45,000
State born	CA	Montana	Baja Mexico	CA	CA	CA	CA
Schooling	Public	Public	Public	Public	Public	Public	Public
Transfer Student	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Marital Status	Married	With Partner	With Partner	With Partner	Single	With Partner	With Partner
Children	2	3	0	0	0	0	2
Father’s Occupation	Flooring	Retired Worker	Deceased	Disabled Veteran	Disabled	Truck Driver	Unknown
Father’s Education	High School	Tech College	Unknown	High School	5 th Grade	Some High School	11 th grade
Mother’s Occupation	Homemaker & Mother	Therapist	Federal Employee	Payroll Clerk	Yard Duty Supervisor	Wal-Mart Cashier	Admin Assistant
Mother’s Education	<i>Escuela</i> Comercial	Master’s Degree	A.A.	High School	Elementary School	Some high school	High School

Table 5.2: Demographic Data of the Women That Left or Were Pushed Out of Ph.D.'s

Pseudonym	Juanita	Winuna	Nicomedes	Lillian	Joy	Rainy Dawn	Deanna	Liliana
Identity or Identities	Chicana	Native American	Chicana	Native American	Chicana Mexican American	Chicana & Native American	Native American	Chicana Mexican
Tribal Affiliation	N/A	Flandreau, Santee Sioux	N/A	Ojibway-Cree	N/A	Luiseño	Navajo	N/A
Class	Low Income	Working Class	Low Income	Low Income	Low Income	Low Income	Low Income	Low Income
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female
Sexuality	Hetero	Hetero	Bisexual	Hetero	Hetero	Hetero	Hetero	Hetero
Category	Pushed Out	Fought Back	Pushed Out	Pushed Out	Pushed Out	Fought Back	Pushed Out	Fought Back
First College	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Discipline	Educational Policy	American Studies	Sociology	Sociology	Education Policy	Sociology	Educational	History
Schooling	Public	Public	Public	Public	Public	Public	Public	Public/GED
Years in Degree	2	5	1	4	2	6	4	5
Estimated Debt	\$10,000	\$25,000	Unknown	\$35,000	0	110,000	?	\$90,000
State born	CA	Arizona	CA	Canada	CA	CA	New Mexico	Arizona
Transfer Student	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Status	With Partner	With Partner	Married	Single Mother	Married	Single	Single	Divorced
Children	1	0	0	6	0	0	0	2
Father's Occupation	Worker	College Instructor	Baker	Facility Foreman	School Custodian	Construction 3 rd grade	?	N/A
Father's Education	6 th Grade	M.A.	1 st Grade	12 th Grade	Middle School		?	High School
Mother's Occupation	Farm worker Retired	College Instructor	Machine Operator	Odd Jobs	Coordinator	Deceased	?	Housewife
Mother's Education	2 nd Grade	M.A.	None	12 th grade	Middle School	High School	?	High School

Table 5.3: Demographic Data of the Women that Completed their Ph.D.'s

Pseudonym	Carmen	Tana	Irene	Sonya	Anna	Angela
Identity or Identities	Chicana	American Indian & Mexican	Chicana	Chicana	Native American	Native American
Tribal Affiliation	N/A	<i>Tigua</i>	N/A	N/A	Poarch Band of Creek Indians	Navajo
Class	Working Class	Working Class	Working Class	Working Class	Working Class	Low Income
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female
Sexuality	Two-Spirited	Hetero	Hetero	Hetero	Hetero	Hetero
First College	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Discipline	Education	Education	Sociology Feminist Studies	Education	Anthropology	Anthropology
Schooling	Public	Public	Public	Public	Private	Public
Years in Degree	6	6	7	4	Unknown	6
Estimated Debt	\$70,000	\$120,000	\$75,000	40,000	\$58,000	\$140,000
State born	CA	Texas	CA	CA	Alabama	Arizona
Transfer Student	No	No	No	No	No	No
Marital Status	Married	Married	Single	Married	Single	Single
Children	1	1	0	2	0	0
Father's Occupation	Mechanical Engineer	Deceased	Maintenance Worker	Deceased	Auto/ Body Shop	Carpenter
Father's Education	High School	Elementary school	High School	High School	College: B.S	Jr. High school
Mother's Occupation	Case-worker	Retired	Janitor	Hair dresser	Transportation Driver	Middle School Principal
Mother's Education	Jr. High School	Elementary school	High School	High School	College B.A.	Grad school M.A.

CHAPTER SIX: *TESTIMONIOS* OF THE WOMEN'S RACIAL AND GENDERED EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES DURING THEIR DOCTORAL STUDY

The brown body [is] central in an ongoing practice of negotiation in which multiple, often opposing, ideas, and ways of being are addressed, appropriated, and negotiated. The brown body, with its multiple and often oppositional intersections of sociopolitical locations, must be acknowledged in its centrality in creating new knowledge. For the educational researcher, understanding the brown body and the regulation of its movements is fundamental in the reclamation of narrative and the development of radical projects of transformation and liberation.¹⁴⁸



Figure 6.1: *Two Trees*, Irene Carranza

The analysis is guided by Third Space Feminism which allows us to create knowledge from the in-between spaces of the body, mind, and spirit connections.

¹⁴⁸ Cruz, "Testimonial Narratives of Queer Street Youth," 37-51.

Introduction

This national case study examines the racial and gendered educational experiences of twenty-one women that self-identified as Chicana or Native American from low-income and working-class socio-economic backgrounds. By critically analyzing their *testimonios*, I capture the types/contexts, as well as the effects of and responses to racial and gendered microaggressions the women reported on their bodies, minds, and health within predominantly white public universities. This next section examines the implications of microaggressions by addressing the following research questions:

1. How do racism and other forms of oppression impact the educational experiences of Chicanas and Native American women pursuing Ph.D.'s
2. What are the psychological and physiological effects of racism and other forms of oppression to women's bodies, minds, and health at the doctorate level?
3. What do their *testimonios* teach us about strategically navigating through racism, complex power relations, and white privilege in higher education?

The women's answers varied depending on additional factors, such as histories, cultures, educational institutions, intensity/duration of microaggressions, and navigational strategies used to respond to racism and additional forms of oppression during their doctorate studies.

Additionally, I also acknowledge the historical, cultural, social, and political differences in these two particular racial/ethnic groups (i.e., Chicanas and Native American women), thus the categories are not monolithic, but instead complex and fluid with distinct histories pertaining to colonization, genocide, oppression, and U.S. imperialism.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ The study was designed to capture the women's educational experiences at the doctorate level. The study does not address the tensions and/or historical conflicts amongst these particular racial/ethnic groups of women.

This chapter is guided by Chicana Feminist Epistemology (CFE) and Critical Race Theory (CRT). Chicana feminism allows for a critical race-gendered perspective that includes working-class lived experiences. Also, contemporary Chicana feminism and Third Space Feminism allows one to theorize from the in-between spaces of the body, mind, and connections of the spirit, inclusive of memories, pain, and trauma. Moreover, CRT allows one to examine how racism, complex power relations, and white privilege occur within predominantly white public universities to Chicanas and Native American women from an interdisciplinary perspective.

The study seeks to understand the implications of racial and gendered microaggressions for Chicanas and Native American women at the professoriate level. For instance, Solórzano asserts that racial microaggressions are one form of systemic everyday racism that are: 1) subtle, verbal, and nonverbal assaults directed towards People of Color, often carried out automatically or unconsciously; 2) layered assaults based on a Person of Color's race, gender, class, sexuality, language, immigration status, phenotype, accent, or surname; and 3) cumulative assaults that take a psychological and physiological toll on People of Color.¹⁵⁰ However, it is important to point out that there is minimal scholarship pertaining to the “gendered effects” of microaggressions specifically to women's bodies, minds, health, spirits, and quality of life at the Ph.D. level. This national case study successfully addresses these important research inquiries, as I analyzed forty-two *testimonios* by Chicanas and Native American women in higher education.

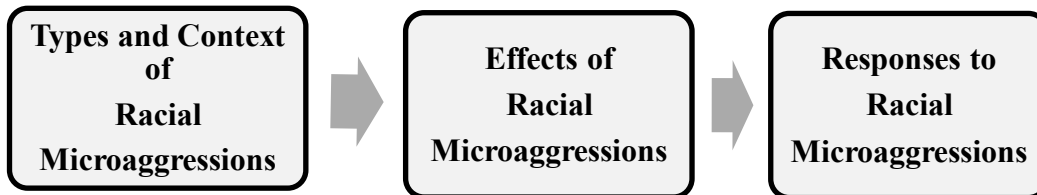
In revising each of the research questions the analysis is guided by Solórzano and Pérez-Huber's “Model for Data Collection and Analysis of Racial Microaggressions.” I use this model to study racial and gender microaggressions in relation to understanding the *types/contexts*, as

¹⁵⁰ Solórzano, “Critical Race Theory, Race, and Gender Microaggressions,” 123-125.

well as the *effects* and *responses* of Chicanas and Native American women within predominantly white public universities.

Figure 6.2: A Model for Data Collection and Analysis of Racial Microaggressions

Source: Daniel Solórzano and Lindsay Pérez-Huber, 2012



The model reveals four central areas pertaining to racial microaggressions that occur within educational systems, and are listed below in detail:

1. **Types of Racial Microaggressions** includes how one is targeted or singled out by microaggressions, which can be based on race, gender, class, language, sexuality, age, immigration status, phenotype, accent, or surname.
2. **Contexts of Racial Microaggressions** includes how and where the microaggressions occur.
3. **Effects of Racial Microaggressions** includes the physical, emotional, and psychological consequences of microaggressions.
4. **Responses to Racial Microaggressions** include how the individual responds to interpersonal and institutional racist acts and behaviors.

The above-mentioned model is used to examine these four aspects of microaggressions in the national case study. The study captures various types and contexts of racial and gendered microaggressions reported by Chicanas and Native American women endured in predominantly white public universities. The types and contexts of microaggressions also lead to or resulted in

negative effects with physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual consequences for the women targeted by them. This model allows researchers to better understand women's racial and gendered educational experiences, as they navigate through their doctorate studies within predominantly white public universities.

The following sections of the chapter include *testimonios* of the twenty-one women who participated in this case study. *Testimonio* as a methodology allows the researcher to seek truthful accounts based on first hand witness reports of colonization, oppression, and subordination. I use *testimonios* as a grounded qualitative research approach to re-conceptualize the often-marginalized racial feminist subject by capturing, preserving, and honoring the women's experiences in higher education. Through the use of *testimonio*, I can also reveal the discursive assaults occurring to women's bodies, minds, and health via institutional, social, and political injustices within predominantly white public universities. The analysis is guided by Delgado Bernal's method of *cultural intuition*. Cultural intuition allows researcher's to use one's personal, professional, and cultural experiences into the research process.¹⁵¹ Furthermore, each section highlights the types, contexts, effects, and responses of racial and gendered microaggressions reported in the women's *testimonios*.

The chapter is organized into three sections. The first section includes the *testimonios* of women pursuing their Ph.D.'s. The second section includes the *testimonios* of women that left or were pushed out of their Ph.D.'s. The third section includes the *testimonios* of the women that completed their Ph.D.'s. These sections are complimented by the healing artworks of R.C. Gorman.

¹⁵¹ Delgado Bernal, "Using a Chicana Feminist Epistemology in Educational Research," 105-110.

Section 1: *Testimonios* of the Women Pursuing their Ph.D.'s

This section includes the *testimonios* of Luna, Lulu, Amelia, Vanessa, Canela, Rene, and Hettie, as they navigate through systematic racism and additional forms of oppression while pursuing their doctorate degrees in predominantly white public universities.¹⁵²



Figure 6.3: *Woman with Mantra*, R.C. Gorman

¹⁵² Rene is the *only* participant in the case study that attended a private university.

Luna's Testimonio: The Grenade Effect

Luna identifies as Latina and grew up in poverty. She was raised by a single parent, her mother, and was the *first* member of her family to attend college. At the time of the *testimonio* she was in the process of completing her Ph.D. from a UC in California. Her inspirations include her two children, her partner, as well as her political aspirations to seek change for impoverished Latino communities throughout the educational pipeline.

Luna states:

I consider myself Mexican and Chicana, but Latina is the term that fits better today... I grew up in poverty and was raised by my mother... Other than there being very few Chicanas in my Ph.D. program, I felt very isolated. One of my white professor's felt that I didn't have what it took to be at UCLA, as she reiterated to me time after time that 'if it wasn't for her, I wouldn't be here!' She mentioned that I was specially chosen as an 'at risk student.' She was my advisor and verbally abusive towards me... Her behavior towards me was belittling and you could feel the tension of it! I became not the brunt of the jokes, but I became the 'problem.' What happened was that other students thought they could speak to me the way she did which was disrespectful and unprofessional. I was also intimidated by her, but knew that I would have to bring it to her attention, so I made an appointment. I told her that I didn't understand why she was always 'shaming me' in front my peers... Meanwhile, I'm vomiting the morning before I have class with her, as I can barely get to school, yet alone stomach the two hour class I have with her! It's like the trauma response...

I suffer from PTSD already as the result of living in a violent neighborhood, but I never imagined that going to a university was going to re-traumatize me in such an abusive way, but the bottom line was that her behavior towards me was 'volatile, traumatizing, and aggressive!' She was a bully and manipulative... In just thinking of her, I would become ill. At times, in class, I would have to use the bathroom and she would even challenge that. Her intolerant behavior was undeniable... Most of the things that she would say to me, I called the *Grenade Effect*. In other words, she would say it and I would not be sure how to respond to it; it would be awkward and shocking to me. Then it would hit me later and I would be like 'wow that was really racist, painful and inappropriate of her to say to me!' I endured her unethical behavior for years, until I finally changed advisers.

Luna's educational experiences were met with verbal abuse, blatant racism, discriminatory treatment, and unethical conduct, specifically at the hands of her female faculty advisor that

abused her white privilege in a public university. Although, Luna was professionally diagnosed with PTSD prior to entering her Ph.D. studies, she asserts that navigating through the continual abuse, trauma, and hostile academic climate triggered her PTSD causing additional effects, such as vomiting, tension, anxiety, isolation, low-self-esteem, rapid breathing, and fatigue. The effects of the racial/gendered microaggressions were *psychological* and *physiological* and impacted her body, mind, and health. Additional reproductive changes that Luna reported include: missed periods, polycystic ovaries, and need for fertility drugs to impregnate. The *Grenade Effect* is a metaphor Luna used to describe the aftermath of the microaggressions which she identified as a “combative environment” based on the aggressive nature of the attacks. When Luna’s faculty adviser abused her faculty position, she also violated various university ethical codes of conduct.

Furthermore, Luna was also accepted into her Ph.D. studies, as an “at risk student” which assigned a “negative label” to her that affected her self-esteem and confidence. This deficit model was continuously used by her white faculty adviser to describe socially degrade and embarrass her. These types of microaggressions promoted an overall hostile and toxic learning environment for Luna. However, equally important, Luna responded to the microaggressions by seeking guidance from colleagues, friends, and supportive faculty to navigate through the microaggressions in her department. Additionally, Luna also confronted her abusive faculty advisor regarding the acts of public humiliation, bullying, and continuous verbal assaults. Luna responded to the microaggressions by creating a counter-space in her department with additional colleagues and friends, and a new faculty advisor. The racial and gendered microaggressions Luna endured, in time, manifested into “chronic conditions” affecting her body, spirit, mental health, and quality of life while pursuing her doctorate degree. However, Luna never quit. In fact, she was determined to complete her doctorate as an act of resistance, agency, and

determination. Luna's *testimonio* teaches us the importance of responding strategically to microaggressions, in one's navigation through racism and additional types of oppression in higher education. Luna used the following strategies to respond to microaggressions in a hostile academic climate within the university.

Responses to Challenge Racial and Gendered Microaggressions

1. During difficult times, Luna called upon her "faith" to guide her through the pain and trauma of the racism. Luna *refused* to give-up, thus her resiliency and determination to survive systemic racism guided her throughout the Ph.D. process.
2. Luna took time to *reflect* and *heal* her body, mind, and spirit with the support of her family, partner, and children.
3. Luna assumed *agency* and replaced her abusive white female advisor, finding an advisor that respected her intellect, and value as a human being.
4. Luna created a *counter-space* within the university, where she benefited from the academic support of additional social justice scholars that respected her.
5. She also sought out additional support networks to heal from the deeper psychological effects of the microaggressions by seeking *therapy*.
6. She made holistic changes in body, mind, and spirit. For example, she changed her nutritional diet (no sugar), and increased her exercise to regain her health.
7. Luna also used her lived experiences (i.e. growing up in poverty, as a Latina), as a source of *empowerment*, as she was determined to complete her doctorate no matter what.
8. She is committed to using her Ph.D. to advance social justice research for impoverished Latino communities, thus create change.

Luna's educational experiences are important in understanding the types of and contexts in which microaggressions take place within predominantly white public universities. Luna was in fact targeted based on her race, class, gender, sexuality, phenotype, and surname by her faculty advisor, who violated university policies of ethical codes of conduct. By identifying a supported, well-respected, and social justice oriented faculty member, Luna was enacting a political strategy that was vital for her to secure a positive and healthy academic environment, and progress toward the completion of her Ph.D. Additionally, Luna was invited by her new faculty advisor to be part of a larger academic community of educators where she excelled in her research endeavors. Luna described her new advisor as "genuinely invested in her intellectual development and her academic success." She concluded her *testimonio* by stating that there was "mutual respect amongst them," as well as a shared academic community of support that also contributed to her success and survival in a predominantly white public university.

Testimonio of Lulu: Guided by Faith, Hope, and Creator

Lulu is enrolled in the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation in North Dakota with tribal affiliations that are Mandan and Hidatsa. Lulu identifies as working-class and currently working on her Ph.D. studies in the State of Montana. Her biggest inspirations include her grandmother and three children. She plans on using her Ph.D. as a “tool” to advance tribal education and create change for larger Native communities. Currently, she is the *only* Native American female doctorate student in her predominantly white department:

Lulu shares:

I grew up with my extended family system and it’s a matrilineal culture... As a young adult, I became more immersed in the Sioux and Assiniboine tribes, cultures, history, and then also the spirituality... As far as my Ph.D. program itself, I’ve really enjoyed my cohort. I think I found a really good program as far as my own research interests. It is inspiring and exciting to be in a program that is a ‘good fit’ and to have great colleagues and faculty members that I respect and trust... Fortunately, I found a program where colleagues and faculty are open and willing to learn and engage in dialogues and in conversations. [Also] for the Ph.D. it is important to have a supportive faculty adviser and committee members that will advocate for you, as well as have positive female role-models and mentors... Thus, if you don’t have them, you have to look elsewhere as Native students... They must also be aware of your unique attributes... Therefore, most of the challenges that I’ve experienced haven’t been directly with the program, but the overall university experience...

In Montana, Native Americans make up the largest non-white group, so on campus there is representation, but as far as some of the actions that take place on campus, you don’t necessarily see diversity... They have diversity policies and initiatives for American Indian and Indigenous education, but what is actually happening isn’t necessarily in line with those policies, so you see a lack of diversity and a lack of inclusion of Native communities at other levels. We have a very small number of Native faculty and Native staff, so as far as having any *visible* Native leadership on campus, that’s not the case even though we are within 20 minutes of many reservations. There are seven reservations here in the state, so it’s not like there’s a lack of Native populations, but for whatever reason, there’s definitely a lack of Native representation at those different levels within the university, as well as a lack of support. I think it’s frustrating having that type of ‘lip service’ in the university and feeling the exclusions, which are the hardest part of it. So when there’s not proper representation of the Native voice included, I think that’s discouraging and disheartening to be at an institution that has a Native presence, but makes you feel like you can be here, but don’t say anything because we don’t want to hear from you... I think there is a sense of exclusion among the Native population on

campus, i.e. staff, faculty, and limited representation at the student level in higher education. It's like being *invisible*...

At times, academia has been an exhausting and draining process. I mean it's physically and emotionally just awful at times, which affects other parts of your life. What helps me is trying to see that light at the end of the tunnel and that keeps me moving forward... I have a really good support system in place. I have the encouragement of family; I have a good partner who's really supportive, and my children are my main motivations. Also, I just keep continuing to have faith in the Creator and the greater universe to make it happen. I think it's really been a big part of being able to come as far as I have by making affirmations to something that is greater than just me in this doctorate process and connecting that to larger Native communities.

Lulu's *testimonio* is critical of the contexts in which she experienced microaggressions, issues of *invisibility*, as well as a lack of support for Native American communities in the university. She asserts that public universities need to increase active recruitment and tribal outreach that connects the institution specifically to tribal reservations to secure educational access for Native students. Moreover, Lulu also reported the following effects from racial and gendered microaggressions in her predominantly white public university: isolation, stress, anxiety, invisibility, frustration/tiredness, and fatigue. Lulu also responded to the microaggressions by networking with students and seeking change via recruitment from tribal reservations. Additional responses Lulu used include pro-active strategies and responses.

Responses to Challenge Racial and Gendered Microaggressions

1. Lulu's navigational strategies at the doctorate level include her *external supportive networks* such as family, advancing tribal education, community on the reservation, a supportive partner, and her children.

2. She also said it was important to research one's Ph.D. program prior to entrance and thus strategically apply to a Ph.D. program that is the "right fit" and matches your research interests.
3. She politically aligned herself with *supportive* faculty, a great advisor, mentors, and respectable colleagues, as she navigated through the Ph.D.
4. Lulu stressed the importance of entering a doctorate program with *financial security*, as a tactic to secure long-term success. She states that securing *funding* for the Ph.D. helped her navigate through the doctorate without the additional economic burdens.
5. Also, Lulu would visit her reservation as much as possible to *ground* herself and take time to visit with family, elders, and her community.
6. She also called upon her *faith* in Creator to guide her spiritually through the challenges experienced at the Ph.D. level. She used this spiritual tactic for "survival," as she navigated through her doctorate studies.
7. She also gained internal strength, courage, and determination as a Mother to create a better and more just world for her children.

In short, Lulu's *testimonio* reminds one of the importance of staying grounded to faith, hope, and family while on the path towards the doctorate degree. Lulu asserts that "the degree is not about the individual, but instead the degree is connected to larger communities." Lulu humbly reminds us that our families, communities, elders, children, and ancestors accompany us throughout the Ph.D. experience. Therefore, we can call upon various "spiritual resources" that guide us, as well as connect us to others. Her grounded *testimonio* of faith, compassion, and love is inspirational and grounded in humanitarian principles.

Amelia's *Testimonio*: Fetishizing the Queer Chicana Body

Amelia identifies as both *Mexicana* and Chicana. She was born in México and identifies as working-class. She is currently pursuing her doctorate degree in a predominantly white university in the Midwest. Her feminist research interests at the doctorate level include cultures of resistance practiced within queer migrant communities and Women of Color Feminisms. She also identifies as a “peace advocate” and is inspired by her family and passion to social justice research on Latino immigrant communities. Her current doctorate research seeks to humanize the experiences of Latino immigrant communities.

Amelia states:

I have faced racism because white faculty and students perceive my race and ethnic background to be inferior to them. They have treated me, and other women of color, very poorly. For example, in the classroom white colleagues have yelled at me in front of the entire class. They did this when I was calmly explaining why it is troubling for white, middle-class women to conduct research on Black and Chicana sexualities. I have felt tokenized because white students have invited me to social events and ask me questions about my thoughts on social issues only to appropriate my words and pretend that they have always had a certain level of knowledge of the lived experience of queer people of color. Comments that I made in the class were later repeated “verbatim” by white women who claimed to be feminists. They never made an attempt to acknowledge any of my contributions to intellectual dialogue. Being the only Chicana in the graduate classroom is another form of racism and tokenization. Every contribution that I made while in the classroom was highly scrutinized and questioned. Most of my comments, as I said earlier were accepted and appropriated, but I never felt that any comment coming from me would be accepted as truth. As a result, I worked hard to provide “evidence” for every little statement I wanted to convey.

My program prides itself in being a queer-friendly place. This is a very limited view imposed by those who are white, middle-class, thin, and able-bodied. The program is itself populated by very normative bodies who claim to be sex positive. Sex positive is the view that sex and bodies should be celebrated. The problem with this is that brown, working-class bodies of queer people are used for exploitation in the name of “sex positive” academic space. I felt a lot of sexism when white colleagues expected me to be as “free” with my body. I heard conversations about my sexuality constantly. Colleagues wanted to know who I was sleeping with. As a queer woman of color, I felt that my body was under high scrutiny while at the same time expected to perform and move like the “majority” of queer white middle class bodies. I was different because I was not sleeping with any of them and I was eventually excluded from social events. I would have been

invited to the social functions hosted by white queer academics, if I had acted like them and assumed a “sex positive” attitude. But, I never ever trusted the place and my body felt tense when I was around them.

I have felt anxiety, insecurity, depression and pain in the hips. I have experienced insomnia. I have spent a lot of sleepless nights wondering if I was doing something wrong in the classroom or if my voice was being heard and understood. I did a lot of self-blaming when others did not understand my position as a woman of color. During the time I took doctoral classes, my anxiety and self-doubt increased dramatically... I could not “feel” or “see” my past accomplishments. I would cry almost every night after getting home from the university campus. The emotional pain became physical pain and it was in this painful stage that I claimed my spirituality. By spirituality, I mean my sense of knowing and seeing beyond what is obvious to the naked eye. My gut feeling and sixth sense formed part of my spirituality. I began to dig deep into my psyche and figure out what was true and real about me. I have a very strong will and a deep sense of social justice. No matter what happens to me during the doctoral program, I know I will finish. I honestly don't know if completing the Ph.D. is worth the damage to my body and soul but I know I will complete it.

Amelia's *testimonio* preserves truthful accounts of what many U.S. Women of Color endure in predominantly white feminist academic spaces. Amelia states that “gendered oppression amongst women in her department created a hostile and academically violent environment” that made her feel sick and at times powerless, as white women used their privilege in intrusive ways pertaining to her sexuality, as a Chicana. However, Amelia responded by challenging the intrusive behavior that “erotized her brown body,” as she used her voice to create a healthy boundary from her white peers and faculty. She states that the effects of microaggressions would make her feel “disconnected from her body,” as a defense mechanism to cope with the raw emotions (i.e. anger, pain, and trauma), as they felt entitled to scrutinize her sexuality. Amelia responded to the blatant microaggressions by informing her peers that her sexuality and/or activities were “none of their concern, thus not public information.” She also sought out supportive colleagues that were predominantly Women of Color and created counter spaces within her department to navigate through the blatant racial and gendered microaggressions.

Amelia assumed agency by using her voice and enforcing a boundary pertaining to information shared, as well as not shared in her predominantly white feminist department.

Moreover, Amelia also witnessed female Faculty of Color that recreated oppressive academic spaces for Women of Color in her department. She critiqued these faculty members for reinforcing hegemony and an “individualistic academic climate” that did not create and/or nurture a supportive academic environment. Instead, it promoted an isolating and competitive atmosphere that lacked support from faculty and students. Amelia responded to the microaggressions by creating community outside of her department, as well as collective feminist circles that were also committed to social justice educators. These counter spaces created a safe, supportive, and protected environment for Amelia to strategically navigate through the hostile feminist politics occurring within her department.

Further, Amelia stated in her *testimonio* that the prolonged racial/gendered microaggressions affected her body, mind, health, and quality of life during her Ph.D. studies. The psychological and physiological *effects* that she reported include: depression, PTSD, low self-esteem, clenching teeth/grinding teeth, tension, pain in her body, difficulty breathing, weight gain (approximately 17-20 lbs.), anger, exhaustion, chronic anxiety, acute stress, trauma, rapid aging, chronic fatigue, insomnia, isolation, dissociative disorder, high cholesterol, exhaustion, and a taxed immune system leading to continuous viral infections. Amelia also reported various changes to her body and menstrual cycle. For example, she experienced the following effects: irregular periods, extreme pelvic pain, and chronic PMS during her Ph.D. studies.

Responses to Challenge Racial and Gendered Microaggressions

1. Amelia established healthy “boundaries” while in graduate school from gossiping peers.

2. She sought out healthy academic spaces to work with progressive Women of Color in her department, thus created a counter space for support and survival.
3. She was cautious around Faculty of Color that reproduced oppressive structures for Women of Color in her department, thus sought out an advisor that she could trust.
4. Amelia developed strong friendship with another Mexicana living in the Midwest. This was a source of source of strength, survival, and inspiration.
5. Amelia also sought out strong Women of Color working at the university to talk about issues of racism and isolation.
6. Amelia also did critical reflection to figure out what exactly was hurting her through the hostile interactions. During her alone time, she walked to put her feelings into perspective.
7. Amelia also had the love and support of her family, especially her mother to talk to. Her mother helped her talk through many of the issues and helped Amelia heal.
8. She also took time to reflect and be able to laugh. Laughing on the phone with her mother was healing, inspirational, and gave her strength to keep going.
9. Amelia learned how to ask for help, especially in relation to navigating through a hostile academic environment. She also became more open to those there to help her open up to talk about her concerns and needs.

Amelia's *testimonio* reminds us how much work still needs to be done in the academy to create healthy, positive, and welcoming academic environments for U.S. Women of Color. Hence, her *testimonio* reminds us to strategically navigate through the gendered and complex feminist politics with a strategy, support, and community in order to survive. For instance, Anzaldúa reminds us of the significance of naming and surviving racism, as well as understanding the

negative psychological effects, but more importantly re-conceptualizing these painful experiences as our training grounds to reflect upon, heal, and grow from.¹⁵³ It is vital to create critical race and gendered counter-spaces in order to survive the political differences that continue to exist within feminist academic spaces. Anzaldúa calls for “survival” as an integral component of being pro-active and preserving our creativity, abilities, and gifts through our political works. She reminds us that our political activism is a creative and conscious act, as we move forward and continue writing, resisting, speaking, healing, and surviving in order to create change.¹⁵⁴ Amelia’s political narrative is an important testament to her ability to strategically navigate through various institutional types of oppression at the professoriate level.

¹⁵³ Anzaldúa, “Now Let Us Shift...” 562-568.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

Vanessa's *Testimonio*: Healing in Body, Mind, and Health During the Doctorate Degree

Vanessa identifies as Chicana and has *Indígena* roots that are *Yaqui*. She is currently pursuing her Ph.D. at a UC in California. Vanessa is interested in serving her larger Chicano community via social justice research in alternative continuation schools. She is inspired by her family and her commitment to seek change for disenfranchised Chicana/o students. However, while in graduate school, she developed fibromyalgia while working on her doctorate degree, and thus had to learn how to navigate through various challenges and disabilities simultaneously.

Vanessa shares:

Within the classroom, I have felt that there has been 'low expectations' not only because of my race/ethnicity, but because of the nature of my doctorate studies. When I've done well, some professors have responded with 'surprise' that I did well on an assignment. On the same note, if I do not perform well, then my ability to do critical work is questioned. Either way, I experience racialized scrutiny in academia... For example, in a Philosophy of Education course, I brought in Linda Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies* because I felt that that it was appropriate to apply to the course. I presented it to the class and when I went to check in with the professor, he said, 'I'm blown away; I want to say flabbergasted by the quality of your work... It is outstanding!' On the one hand, I could have taken it as a complement, but I didn't feel it in that way. To me, it was more of a reflection that he had low expectations of my ability and the quality of my work...

[Also] when I would go in to class, my defenses were always up... Many academic spaces were hostile spaces to be... There's other times that my presence is not acknowledged in a 'positive' way, either making me feel more isolated and separated because I don't feel supported... Hence, I felt a sense of 'invisibility.'

Within various roles as a Ph.D. student, I have experienced comments from undergraduate students related to my qualifications as part-time faculty at various community colleges and universities. As a woman of color, some students expect me to be more 'nurturing and less critical' because I am a woman. Their reactions vary when I do not conform and more often their comments are negative and include derogatory insults that are demeaning towards women. It definitely takes a lot of energy to come back to this place, so having to remind myself of that or even work my way through it takes a lot of energy. I don't know how else to describe it other than it just takes so much energy and it is exhausting. I would leave class physically emotionally and mentally exhausted all the time...

I mean right when I step on campus, I experience many triggers. I would try to calm down and just breathe. I constantly have to remind myself to 'breathe' to calm down in

order to keep from getting a full blown anxiety or panic attack... it's there, but it's definitely heightened when I go to my department or near certain departments...I actually take medication specifically for anxiety, anxiety attacks, and panic attacks. I also get nauseous a lot of the times, especially when I'm emotionally upset. I've left class feeling sick to my stomach because of whatever happened that day on campus. For me it's more of a 'response to the hostile climate' and very real. I think it is also something that we overlook a lot in terms of understanding depression and mental health issues...In retrospect, my whole life is completely different now and part of it is because of the health issues that come along with the Ph.D.... I have experienced significant health problems and many are complicated...

Vanessa reported feeling an overwhelming sense of exhaustion, as she confronted racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression (i.e. chronic pain from the fibromyalgia) in her graduate studies. The racial and gendered microaggressions endured were overt, continual, and institutional. Vanessa described her educational experiences, as a type of *intellectual violence* that was physical, emotional, and spiritual, yet also connected to a historical legacy of colonization based on the politics of U.S. imperialism. The effects that she reported from the racial/gendered microaggressions include various psychological and physiological symptoms, such as: chronic depression, PTSD, panic attacks, chronic anxiety, weight fluctuations, nausea, vomiting, rapid breathing, grinding teeth, locked jaw, high blood pressure, chronic pain, low sugar levels, fainting, immobility issues, and various addictions. In addition, she also reported various reproductive issues, such as irregular periods, missed periods, excessive bleeding, fibroids, and chronic lower back pain. Vanessa sought out medical intervention and additional support during her Ph.D. studies to deal with the implications of the microaggressions to her body, mind, and health, but felt that the university health system failed her. To date, Vanessa is learning how to manage her disabilities in graduate school with dignity, respect, and compassion.

Furthermore, Vanessa used various navigational strategies to respond to the racial and gendered microaggressions in her predominantly white public university. For instance, she

organized support networks with family, community, and friends. In addition, she also created counter spaces within her university with colleagues and community members. Vanessa concluded her *testimonio* by sharing additional “survival tactics” that she used to navigate through her doctorate studies. Below are additional responses that Vanessa shared during her *testimonio*.

Responses and Survival Tactics for the Doctorate Degree

1. Find a supportive *faculty advisor* that you respect, trust, and that supports your research endeavors.
2. Teach diverse courses to strengthen your “craft/art” in developing a *critical teaching pedagogy* that mentors students.
3. Seek *financial resources* to secure *economic stability* for the duration of the Ph.D.
4. Learn to stop, reflect, and heal; in order to take care of your body, mind, and health throughout the Ph.D. process, as it takes a physical toll.
5. Understand the hidden and/or unspoken politics of academia, so that you are prepared long-term. For example, do not invest time in faculty that are not supportive.
6. Find *supportive faculty* that are committed to your success and willing to serve as *mentors* during the Ph.D. process.
7. Find value in other colleagues’ lived experiences and *build strong alliances* with diverse Communities of Color, as we also learn from each other.
8. Seek all *health services* and *university resources* that contribute to academic success, health, and wellness (i.e. retention services, nutritionist, and acupuncture) for support systems in the university.

9. On a spiritual level connect with various resources, such as Mother Earth, ancestors, and prayer circles for positive support throughout the Ph.D. process.
10. Invest in exercise, wellness, and nutrition to create a healthier and more balanced life from the start.
11. Connect with *family members*, as much as possible for support, love, and purpose.
12. Be gentle, loving, and compassionate with “self” throughout the doctorate process.
13. If you have a disability tap into all available resources and advocate for yourself.

Vanessa shared the above-mentioned survival strategies based on her educational experiences navigating through her Ph.D. studies. These tactics are vital in surviving the Ph.D. experience in a healthy, positive and a balanced context. Vanessa concluded her *testimonio* by sharing her painful and difficult experiences in hopes that it would help Students of Color, especially women; navigate through their graduate studies with human dignity, respect, support, and self-love.

**Canela's *Testimonio*: Humanizing our Existence in the Academy by
Invoking Indigenous Practices**

Canela identifies as, Chixana, spelled with the letter “x” as a political term that incorporates her Mexican descent, ancestral history, and political consciousness, as an Indigenous woman. She also identified as working-class and states that “as long as we depend on our labor for survival, that’s considered working-class...” Canela strategically pursued her Ph.D. at a UC to remain close to her family, work, and community. Her *testimonio* teaches us the importance of seeking balance, health, and wellness, as a continuous process throughout the Ph.D. and as a mantra of life.

In her *testimonio*, Canela states that:

Knowledge systems in education are hierarchical and there’s one particular way of knowing a very ‘positivist’ approach. There’s one truth and there’s one way to find the truth, so when I question that or given the gazing eye and looked at like “what is she doing here...?” To me that is blatant racism....

Academic institutions are hierarchical competitive, and promote individualism, but it is also a dehumanizing process to our spirits and emotional well-being... Oftentimes what I see is a very serious compartmentalization of self, a dehumanized pieced person... I refuse to choose that for myself and will not compromise myself... Instead, I take my ‘whole being’ and strengths with me, I am liberating multi-generations that have left. By acting from a place of a *rattle-shaker* and that is holistic, I can also see things differently. It also creates a lot of stress and anxiety to be able to navigate in an institution that was not designed for us and that systematically denies our presence. Sometimes I also ask myself do we need the institution. Is it effective to work within the institution to create change or do we just outright work outside of it, so we can throw it upside down and turn it over... Additionally, I don’t think the university as an institution does a good job of retaining us, mostly because education is not a priority in our country. Instead war is and building prisons or promoting reactionary measures... It’s very important for our people to also be able to speak the language of academia, thus being able to read the law books, being able to name the historical practices of colonization is important...

It’s like yes, there is racism; yes, there is classism, and sexism. I experienced it and sometimes people want to see me as a doormat, but if I internalize that, then I will become that... I work hard towards elevating my consciousness, so we are able to develop ourselves because working from that place is a very strong place. I take my intellectual capacity very seriously and so when I am not taken seriously it has the

potential to damage the spirit. In the past, I have coped, but it affects your motivation, self-esteem, and confidence. It kind of reifies the imposter syndrome like, 'do I really belong here?' And if I'm not doing a good job according to the people who are evaluating me, is academia really for me? It's very important for me to carry myself with 'integrity' everywhere and with everything that I do. To break me up into small pieces is dehumanizing and I just refuse to do that. It forces me then to be very critical and hyper-vigilant...Lately my dissertation proposal is lingering over me... It is something that I know I could do, but I just have to push really hard and that creates a lot of anxiety... People assume at times that I am very peaceful, but really I'm not, so post-traumatic stress disorder and depression was something that I was diagnosed with, so I registered as a student with disabilities...

I feel anxiety and tension in my body especially around deadlines. I always joke that I have a stress ball on my right shoulder and that stress ball just gets bigger when deadlines approach, so time management is important... Also, my eye sight started hurting at some point because I was on the computer for too long and I had to find ways to fix that, to make that better. Again, the tension in my muscles and slow circulation in my body was slowing down as a result of feeling the academic pressure, so the choice that I was making was to eat. Sugar is a huge addiction for me and I also come from a diabetic family, so I have to watch that. The sugar also lead to a lack of motivation, a sense of feeling physically exhausted...

There are good days and there are bad days it's definitely a struggle. My weight also varies and I definitely can tell when I'm stressed out or when I have difficulty with my school work... I'm employed 75% and I a graduate student 100%, so these are two full-time jobs, plus my activism is a full-time job because that is where my heart is, that is what gives me purpose. If I am disconnected from a community of students, teachers, and parents, then all of this academic paperwork becomes very arbitrary to me. There is no life because I breathe life into it with my energy and my work...I choose this for myself, but we also overextend ourselves as .02 % of the population represented in PhD programs... We overextend ourselves and that causes more stress, so then I get this paranoia like, 'OK, I'm putting all of these things on my plate,' then I really have to take care of myself... Then I really have to find strategies and cope with these things that will help me get through it....

For Canela, the contexts in which microaggressions occurred include: classrooms, graduate seminars, with peers, in training sites, and in her department. She describes racism as institutional and connected to a violent history of oppression and violence towards Indigenous Mexican peoples. Canela is critical of the educational system, and sees it as an extension of colonization. She uses the term, "survival" as a metaphor linking history to imperialism. Her

educational experiences were also layered with various types of racial and gendered microaggressions that she endured during her doctorate experience.

Moreover, her *testimonio* also reveals the various psychological and physiological effects of racial and gendered microaggressions on her body and her psyche. Some of the effects reported include: PTSD, depression, insomnia, anxiety, tension in her body, acute stress, hyper-vigilance, sugar addictions, weight gain, knots/tension in shoulders, fatigue, lack of motivation, exhaustion, over extended, and lack of movement in her body. Canela also reported effects to her body, such as irregular periods and changes to her menstrual cycle.

Canela responded to the racial/gendered microaggressions by utilizing various “holistic practices” grounded in Indigenous resources that honor health, wellness, meditation, reflection, and healing. She used various wellness techniques to navigate through the symptoms of microaggressions during her doctorate studies in order to create a more balanced and healthier path while pursuing her Ph.D. Below are some of her responses.

Strategies and Responses for Healing and Wellness

A. Meditations and Training

Canela used *meditation training* to increase focus and awareness in her body, breath, and emotions while pursuing her Ph.D. She used Buddhist practices to heal from microaggressions that produced negative effects to her body, mind, health, and spirit. For instance, meditative training can help one mentally, spiritually and physically to train in order to promote healing as a conscious practice to challenge the effects of microaggressions. Canela asserts, “it is vital to develop emotional intelligence, to move past the pain and trauma, thus fully heal our spirits... It means to further develop our ‘emotional intelligence,’ and to know when to release it and not repress it.” In other words, Canela reminds us that we have the ability to transform negative

experiences and energies in our minds, as we also possess the ability to heal and consciously release them.

B. Sweat Lodge and Prayer

Canela also attended a sweat lodge to heal, cleanse, and for prayer (i.e. state of being). Sweat lodges helped her obtain focus, inner awareness, and allowed her to connect to others in a sacred ritual. For Canela “sweat lodge is a largely meditative practice, as you go through an emotional cleansing and spiritual awakening while engaging in the physical practice of meditating and prayer.” Hence, sweat lodges vary depending on tribal affiliations, rituals, and healing practices utilized for ceremonies. The ritual and ceremony of the healing process is emotional, physical, and spiritual. However, one must also prepare in body, mind, and spirit prior to practicing in any type of sweat lodge ceremony.

C. Additional Wellness Strategies

Furthermore, Canela used additional wellness strategies, as she navigated through her doctorate studies which include the following items listed below.

1. She wrote in a journal to *release* emotions and stress.
2. Daily *exercise* to release internal stressors and anxiety.
3. Canela *detoxed* her body regularly to clean out her system and achieve balance.
4. She ate *healthy* (organic food) and avoided all processed foods like white products (i.e., sugar, white rice, white bread, and additional refined foods).
5. She drank a “vegetable green” drink to help curb the sugar cravings/addiction.
6. She invested in *self-help resources* that tailored to her needs.
7. Canela used *acupuncture* to release trapped stress, anxiety and pain in her body.

8. She invested in *psychotherapy*, as a way of healing on a deeper level.
9. She practiced critical *self-reflection* for growth, healing, and self-care.
10. She used *supportive networks* (i.e., family, community, and students) for grounding.
11. Canela used Indigenous ceremonial and ritual practices to heal in body, mind, and spirit.
12. She remained connected to support systems that were healthy, positive, and nurtured intellectual growth during her Ph.D. process.
13. Finally, she stressed the importance of not taking the people that you love for granted.

Canela selected a university close to her family, so she created a network of support all around her, especially with her *abuelita* (grandmother) who taught her how to sing.

In summary, Canela shared these important healing strategies and responses in order to promote a more balanced, healthy, and holistic approach while navigating through the Ph.D. experience.

These practices honor ancestral knowledge, as well as various Indigenous healing practices.

Canela's *testimonio* reminds women that we also have the ability to heal our physical, emotional, and spiritual wounds by using ancient healing practices that promote wellness and honor the body, mind, and spirit connections. Hence, it is important to take time to heal and reflect while in the academy in order to create healthier and holistic approaches that also honor one's existence, as well as "humanize" our experiences in higher education.

**Rene's Testimonio: We Are Not Extinct: Humanizing the Existence of the
Gabrieliño (Tongva) Tribe**

Rene is from the Gabrieliño (Tongva) tribe and grew up in Southern California. She also identifies as working poor/low-income. Rene is the *first* member of her family to attend college. She studies archeology and selected this field because of her contradicting educational experiences while growing up. Rene was continuously informed by her teachers that her Gabrieliño (Tongva) tribe was extinct. She was defiant and began conducting research on her own tribe at an early age. As a result of these early experiences, she was determined to obtain a Ph.D. to ensure that her tribal history was not erased and thus accurately preserved.

Rene shares:

In the beginning, my graduate experience was welcoming, but in time it changed. Graduate school culture is different from Native ways because it is an 'individualistic place.' I recall taking an African Archeology class. The professor was from South Africa. One of the class projects was to analyze skeletal remains so we could talk about physical traits based on skeletal material... However, I didn't like using skeletal materials as study objects unless there was 'expressed permission' or consent for them to be used as research subjects. After class, I approached the professor and said, 'I can't participate in your class because I don't want to use human remains as study objects without consent.' I also informed him that I could do anything else like write an extra report, but that I would not attend that particular class. He replied 'Okay, you don't have to attend class, but you will have to explain your absence to the students.' I thought everything was fine, but at the next class, he asked me to inform my peers why I missed class, so I shared my reasons, as a Native woman, for not wanting to use human remains without consent...

Then the South African professor publicly ridiculed me in front of everyone. I basically shut down in class. He made me feel dumb. He wanted to put me down for having 'personal and cultural beliefs' about how to deal with human remains. I think that was the point he was trying to make—I also think being a Native American woman had a lot to do with it. I know he had issues dealing with other women in the department. He also favored his male students over his female students, so his conduct had more to do with his racist and sexist behavior... Apparently, the next day he was confronted on my behalf by a faculty member and informed that what he did was a horrible way of treating a Native woman in front of the class... The South African professor didn't say anything else to me afterwards nor did he apologize for his insensitive comments. I think I was very naïve about the whole situation because I had never experienced straight out racism

and sexism... After the incident, I had very little interaction with him and I never took classes with him again...

In our university, the Native American community is separated by disciplines, so we never really get to talk to each other. It is isolating, and so a few years ago we all started getting together to talk and create support networks across campus. I spent a lot of time with the students at the Native American Program on campus as a way to cope with feelings of isolation. I also made it a point to do a lot programming in the Native American program to set up lunches where students could share space. We built a strong community of support across sub-disciplines. At first, I was like 'wow there's other Native people doing archeology!' We decided to come together and create something for ourselves because we were all so isolated in our studies. It was fun to hang out. We published together and challenged Eurocentric theory and methods relating to Native people... To navigate through graduate school I had to recognize that there are also other things going on in life... it is about balance, knowing who you are, and what your abilities are. I feel fortunate that I have self-confidence and can stand up for myself. The biggest challenge is finding an environment that's going to allow you to be human.

The types of microaggressions Rene experienced were based on her race, ethnicity, class, and gender in a predominantly white private university in the east coast. Some of the symptoms that she reported include: stress, insomnia, weight gain (100 pounds), depression, isolation, anxiety attacks, and guilt for leaving her family, as well as anger, and exhaustion. Additional physiological symptoms to her body include abdominal pain, an irregular menstrual cycle, and she was also diagnosed with a condition known as polycystic cysts leading to a surgery to remove her ovaries. The latter symptom was diagnosed by a physician. The contexts of the microaggressions occurred in various academic spaces, such as lectures, with faculty, in classrooms, as well as off campus. However, Rene's strong will and determination allowed her to confront the microaggressions head on. She decided early on that she would complete her Ph.D. and not be derailed, as her goal was to use the Ph.D. as a political tool to preserve the history of her Native community. Hence, she navigated through various oppressive structures within her predominantly white male dominated private university to succeed and nothing was going to stand in her way. Some of strategies she used to combat microaggressions include:

Responses to Challenge Racial/Gendered Microaggressions

1. Use your *voice* to assert and challenge any type of injustice and be direct. Do not be afraid to stand up for yourself!
2. If you feel *isolated* find friends, colleagues, and people that you can connect with socially outside the university and organize events to create supportive spaces.
3. For *long-term financial stability* find a Ph.D. program that offers full funding, especially if you are a low-income student.
4. Secure a *tenured faculty advisor* that is available and knowledgeable about your research interests and aspirations for support and mentorship.
5. If classes are Eurocentric try to find classes in other fields. Do not settle for what is the standard curriculum, so take charge of your education.
6. Organize *counter spaces* with additional Native students across disciplines to publish, share ideas, present at conferences, and create community.
7. Visit *family* as often as possible, especially grandparents, if you are out of state. Their support and love is invaluable.
8. If subjected to hostile conduct, confront the professor or student immediately. In other words, stand up for yourself and remain self-confident no matter what.
9. Create an academic environment that *humanizes* your existence.
10. Seek all *mental health resources*, especially if you are struggling with deeper issues, such as depression. It is important for long-term wellness and health.
11. Create an *external community* of friends for support, have fun, and create safe spaces to build friendships outside the university setting.

Rene survived various systematic types of oppressions in her private university by remaining focused on the “end goal” of obtaining her Ph.D. and using it as a political tool to preserve her Native ancestry. While navigating through her doctoral studies, she used acts of resistance, defiance, and assumed agency, as she challenged microaggressions directly. Rene stated that her ability to navigate through her studies was connected to her strong sense of self and confidence. Her direct nature proved to be successful, as she also remained grounded throughout her Ph.D. experience.

Hettie's Testimonio: Surviving Academic Violence in the Academy

Hettie is Muskogee Creek and grew up in poverty. She is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in a predominantly white public university. She is inspired by her children and her strong commitment to ending violence against Native women and Women of Color. Hettie describes microaggressions as forms of *academic violence* with real implications to women's bodies, mental health, and spirits. Hettie's political narrative challenges various types of oppressions, as she navigates through her graduate studies armed with determination, courage, and resiliency, as a working mother.

In her *testimonio*, Hettie shares:

I'm mixed blood, Muskogee Creek and I grew up working poor... I'm American Indian and so very few of us have managed to escape the effects of colonialism in the university. I can't even tell you the numbers of times I have wanted to quit my Ph.D. program. My department is predominantly white female faculty and the racist ideologies are just so blatant. There is preferential treatment given to white female students (i.e., TA ships, funding/department resources, teaching positions, rankings, etc.).

My experience as a Native woman at the Ph.D. level has been a very isolating experience overall. There are only a few Native students. I feel like there's more community and cohesiveness amongst the undergrad Native students. I did my best, I would say, as a grad student to participate in the American Indian Grad Student Association when that existed, but it's such a small group of people...It's just a very isolating...

In the classroom that is just another bad experience. I had these students that at the end of the day truly frightened me... I TA'd a course and had a white male athlete who didn't get the grade he wanted, despite the fact that he did not do the work. This man was stalking me all the way through Christmas and then started sending me angry e-mails wanting to discuss his grade. I directed him to the Professor a number of times, and informed him, as the TA I do not give final grades! This white male athlete continued to harass me for months until he finally met with the Professor. I believe that she told him, 'If this does not stop, we will report it as harassment, if you contact either of us about this issue again.' He finally stopped after months of stalking and harassing me on campus. There are those moments in teaching where you literally feel frightened by them and threatened physically as a woman. There is a type of *academic violence* that occurs in these types of situations that also harm us when teaching. I think the way I have dealt with it is by trying to talk it out with my friends and colleagues so it does not eat me up inside.

On another occasion, I got a work study position and I was working in the office. I was shocked that they had me packing and moving boxes. A new white professor came in and she had me unpacking and carrying her books to her office, so I was doing all this sort of difficult manual labor that was time-consuming labor and did not contribute to my academic pursuits. However, many of my white peers got more economic resources than I did. I mean, they were living in other countries for the summer, which I certainly could not afford to do. They had Graduate Student Research positions that did not require them to be in an office daily moving heavy boxes and doing that sort of work. I feel like that economic resources in the department favored white women and even the positions were racialized, as women of color got less... I remember being in meetings with faculty and having conversations about the lack of transparency of funding... There was definitely white privilege in the department, and it was instituted by the Chair and staff. It was just blatantly obvious that she was intolerant towards women of color in the department and favored white women.

Hettie uses the term *academic violence* to describe the context in which microaggressions occurred while she taught in a hostile academic climate, and to describe the racist encounters with the white chair that also occurred in her department. Here, the term academic violence is used to describe the intellectual and physical acts of aggression endured in a hostile academic climate. Hettie's *testimonio* sheds light on how systematic racism is conducted behind closed doors and/or in private. Hettie experienced racism, unethical conduct, verbal abuse, and aggressive behavior from her white female chair that abused her privilege, position, and power in a public university. The prolonged and blatant microaggressions Hettie experienced during her Ph.D. studies included: intimidation, threats, stalking, verbal abuse, racism, sexism, differential/discriminatory treatment, unethical conduct, and harassment. Hettie also developed a sense of "hyper-vigilance" and chronic anxiety while on campus. The systematic oppressions that Hettie faced were complex and did not end in the classroom, she also had to deal with a white male student's aggressive conduct, as he harassed and stalked her on campus.

Hettie responded to the microaggressions by confronting the white male student who continuously harassed her by reporting him to the Professor. Hettie assumed agency and

responded to the macro-aggressions by coordinating efforts with a supportive female African-American professor that intervened on her behalf, as white faculty members did little to support her within the hostile predominantly white department. These types of aggressive behaviors are important to report, as they can easily escalate into violence and physical harms towards women on university campuses (i.e., harassment, intimidation, threats, stalking, and violence). Hettie's *testimonio* informs us of multiple oppressive structures that Hettie had to simultaneously navigate through in a predominantly white public university. Nevertheless, Hettie remained focused on completing her Ph.D. by choosing her battles. What follows are additional strategies and responses Hettie suggested for women navigating through sexual harassment and institutional racism simultaneously.

Responses to Challenge Racial and Gendered Microaggressions

1. Demand mandatory *sexual harassment training* in universities for all students, staff, departments, and faculty that honor Federal/State laws (i.e., Title IX).
2. *Protect* yourself from white faculty that abuse their privilege and power by reporting them through internal university grievance procedures, so it is documented.
3. Demand that Federal/State laws regarding *sexual harassment* be upheld, as well as be *transparent* and *available* in public universities.
4. Institutionalize a *separate* investigation process outside of the university police system for sexual harassment, crimes, and rape cases that harm women.
5. Advocate for *transparency of information* in order for Women of Color to obtain equal educational access to resources, information, support and funding in a public university.

6. If retaliated against or subjected to differential treatment due to race, ethnicity, class, gender, age, or sexuality; know it is a violation of the Civil Right Act, thus educate yourself and know your rights as a student.
7. Report *unethical conduct* and seek protections from *retaliations* in the university system by also filing an external grievance.
8. Mandate public universities to change the current “grievance procedure” in reporting sexual harassment, as well as violent crimes against women, as the current process is intrusive, insensitive, and abrasive to women.
9. *Document* all evidence, seek counsel, and report violations to outside agencies to secure prosecution, protections, and safety. Thus, if in doubt seek legal advice.
10. Secure *protections* from *retaliations* for women that report sexual harassment, violence, and/or crimes in a public university.
11. Be *strategic* and pick your battles, as racism and sexism are institutionalized within educational systems.

In summary, the nature of sexual harassment and racist conduct has no boundaries and the effects cause psychological, physical, and spiritual harm to women teaching in these types of hostile academic spaces. Therefore, it is vital to seek institutional changes that mandate proper training, resources, and professional/sensitive conduct when documenting and reporting violations of university policies. Hence, Hettie’s *testimonio* informs us of ways we can strategically navigate through oppressive challenges with support and knowledge of the internal university processes that are mandated by Federal and State laws.

Analytical Summary of Sections

All seven women in this section identified in the case study, as pursuing their doctorate degrees in public universities. The women's *testimonios* are a way of talking about a series of events, lived experiences, and painful memories. For instance, Smith asserts that "[t]he formality of testimony provides a structure. [Therefore] a testimony is also a form through which the voice of a 'witness' is accorded space and protection"¹⁵⁵ Through their *testimonios* new knowledge is created from critical raced and gendered lived experiences that possess different cultural perspectives, as to what counts as theory and legitimate knowledge.¹⁵⁶ The women used various strategies to navigate through systematic racism, white privilege, and complex power relations in predominantly white public universities and one private university.

Educational researcher Solórzano asserts that People of Color experience subtle and overt *types* of racial and gendered microaggressions based on their based their race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, surname, immigration status, and phenotypes in the *contexts* of schools, classrooms, and while teaching at public universities. Additional ways in which the women experienced institutionalized forms of racism included: isolation, unethical conduct, verbal abuse, discriminatory and differential treatment, intentional/deliberate harm, unequal educational access, violations of university policies/procedures, and violations of Federal/State laws (i.e., Title IX) conducted mostly in private or behind closed doors.

The women's *responses* to microaggressions also varied. Some examples included acts of resistance, resiliency, faith, hyper-vigilance, self-policing, activism, as well as creating counter spaces. The women also used external university support systems including family, partners, children, elders, community, tribal members, and spiritual resources to heal in body, mind, and

¹⁵⁵ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 144.

¹⁵⁶ Delgado Bernal, "Critical Race Theory," *Qualitative Inquiry*, 105-109.

spirit. Also evident, as a politicized strategy to respond to microaggressions is Freire's practice of *concientización* (critical consciousness). Through *concientización* the subaltern assumes agency that is shared knowledge of subordination and survival that serves to empower the oppressed and humanize our experiences through the process.¹⁵⁷

Furthermore, the *effects* of the microaggressions produced negative psychological and physiological implications to women's bodies, minds, health, and quality of life at the Ph.D. level. Also, the women reported various changes to their bodies regarding reproductive issues, such as irregular periods, polycystic ovaries, PMS, pelvic pain, excessive bleeding, fertility issues, and heavy cramping. According to a national study conducted by Truong on twenty-six Students of Color, she argues that "experiencing racism has severe consequences" which include psychological, physiological, and spiritual consequences.¹⁵⁸ The women's individualized effects reported while pursuing their Ph.D.'s in public universities are included in the following Table 6.1 listed below.

¹⁵⁷ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 2-35.

¹⁵⁸ Truong, *Racism and Racial Trauma in Doctoral Study*, 174-176.

Table 6.1: The Effects of Microaggressions to Chicanas and Native American Women Pursuing their Ph.D.'s

Coded	Psychological and Physiological Effects Reported and Experienced	Reproductive Issues	Additional Symptoms
Luna	PTSD, chronic fatigue, isolation, low self-esteem, trauma, depression, acute stress, chronic anxiety, insomnia, rapid breathing, vomiting, nausea, tension, and racial battle fatigue	Irregular periods & Polycystic ovaries	Fertility drugs to impregnate ovaries
Lulu	Acute stress, isolation, anxiety, fatigue, frustration, and invisibility	No	No
Amelia	Depression, PTSD, low self-esteem, grinding teeth, pain in body, rapid breathing, weight gain (17-20 lbs.), chronic anxiety, chronic stress, trauma, fatigue, insomnia, isolation, dissociative disorder, high cholesterol, exhaustion, anger, rage, taxed immune system, and racial battle fatigue	Irregular periods, PMS, & Heavy cramping	Rapid aging
Vanessa	Chronic depression, PTSD, insomnia, hyper-vigilance, chronic fatigue, weight gain, weight loss, chronic stress, rapid breathing, panic attacks, chronic anxiety, locked jaw, teeth grinding, nausea, high blood pressure, low sugar levels, fainting, vomiting, exhaustion, various addictions (i.e. food & medications), chronic pain, & racial battle fatigue	Irregular periods PMS & Excessive bleeding Fibroids	Rosacea Immobility Anemia
Canela	PTSD, insomnia, chronic stress, anxiety, isolation, body tension, depression, fatigue, overeating, insomnia, nutritional issues, sugar addiction, digestive issues, and unnatural balance	Irregular periods	Family history of diabetes
Rene	Depression, stress, weight gain (about 100 lbs.), some addictions, exhaustion, high sugar levels, isolation, insomnia, rapid breathing, fatigue, and pre-diabetic	Irregular Periods & Polycystic Cysts	Obesity Abdominal pain
Hettie	Depression, PTSD, chronic anxiety, panic attacks, chronic fatigue, hyper-vigilance, stress, trauma, insomnia, nausea, weight gain/loss, isolation, rapid breathing, exhaustion, racial battle fatigue	Irregular periods & Abnormal pap smears	Anxious

Section 2: *Testimonios* of the Women that Left or were Pushed Out of their Ph.D.'s

This section includes the *testimonios* of Juanita, Winuna, Nicomedes, Joy, Lillian, Rainy Dawn, Deanna, and Liliana.¹⁵⁹ These particular women navigated through systematic racism and additional oppressive structures while pursuing their doctorate degrees in predominantly white public universities. Their *testimonios* reveal why they left, as well as reveal an internal “push out” process occurring in higher education.

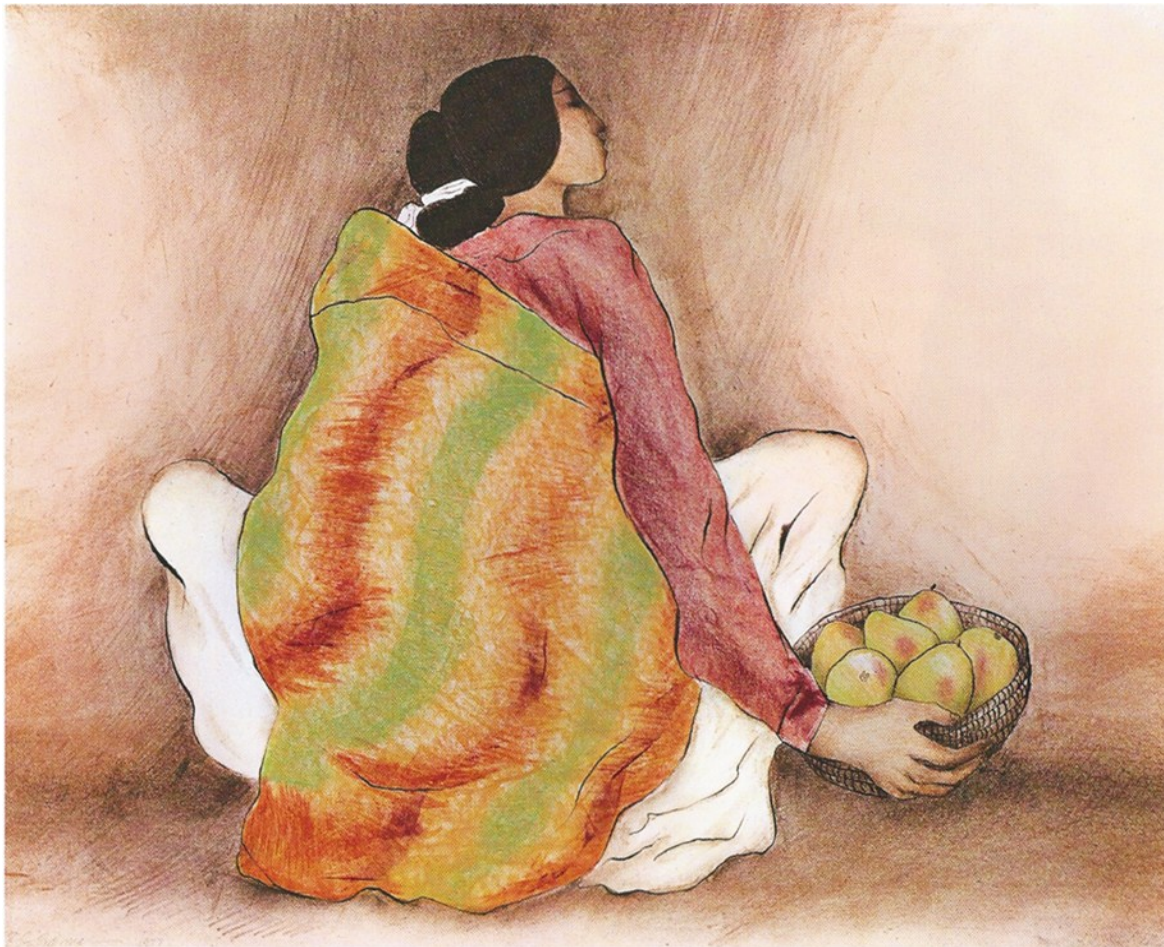


Figure 6.4: *Navajo Woman with Pears*, R.C. Gorman

¹⁵⁹ The *testimonios* of Winuna, Rainy Dawn, and Liliana are in this category because their narratives reveal various tenets exposing a systematic push out process within their public universities. Also, these three women refused to leave, quit, or be pushed-out, thus responded via acts of resistance, defiance, and activism.

Testimonio of Juanita: WTF! How much do I have to sacrifice for the Ph.D.?¹⁶⁰

Juanita identified as Chicana and grew up in California. She shares a story of struggle, pain, and sacrifice during her Ph.D. studies at a UC in the State of California. Her *testimonio* is important in understanding why low-income Chicanas also make an “informed decision” to leave their doctorate studies. Although Juanita left her Ph.D. program, she is determined to return in the near future to pursue a doctorate to study Latino educational issues, especially in light of the current anti-immigrant movement sweeping across the State of Arizona.

Juanita states:

I was confident coming in to my PhD program... However, once, I got there, I did not feel support from my Chicana/Latina faculty adviser and I was struggling... It was like a “swim or sink” environment. I remember meeting with my advisor and she [would] often say to me, “Well, you know I’m not here to hold your hand.” I didn’t say anything to her, but in my head, I’m like, “I’m not asking you to hold my hand. I’m asking for some guidance... My adviser was Latina which made it harder for me to process the lack of support that also shattered my confidence... By my second year, I could no longer stick it out and by that point; I was done fighting and felt very unhappy, isolated, and depressed. For two years, I fought to stay, but it took every ounce of my energy and I was sad all the time... I went to bed sad and woke up the same way. Every day it was hard to get up and go to campus. During this time, I also gained weight and used food to make my troubles go away... I honestly felt like a ‘zombie’ just going through the motions of sadness and then depression... I was struggling dealing with all of this and then started having scary thoughts, like “what if I just disappeared?” Once I started having these types of thoughts, I sought help for the depression because I was really scared and did not want to hurt myself and I love my family! However, the depression went on for months and months... I painfully realized that every day I was just really depressed and it was getting harder to get up... I was not happy and to me that’s not a good quality of life to live...

My experiences with my Chicana/Latina faculty adviser also shattered my confidence, as she often compared me to other Ph.D. students. I remember being in a meeting with her and I felt scared, anxious, and uncomfortable. She also lacked basic social skills in working with students, thus it was all about publishing for her. I often felt like I was wasting her time. Every time I had a meeting with her, I would stress out and could not wait for it to be over! In one meeting, she asked me about my family and wanted to know how much time I spent with them; then she informed me that I would have to put my family aside and put my academics first and family second. I love my family and I did not want to do this nor was I willing to sacrifice my family. My family has always been supportive, so it made no sense to cut off my support! I recall sitting there thinking I

¹⁶⁰ Translation: ‘What the Fuck!’ A term used to protest the unhealthy and unjust sacrifices at the doctorate level.

don't know how to make sense of separating from my family... It was completely absurd for me to put my family on the side when they are my main supporters and that's when it hit me. I finally got God's message and I said 'look you are bending backwards and forwards for a program that does not believe in you, a program that wants you to put your family aside, a program that is ready to let you go, a program that does not care about you!' I was done bending backwards and forwards for this Chicana faculty adviser that had no time for me also did not support me either. That was the final straw for me! I left my Ph.D. studies after two years and within that year four Women of Color also left their graduate studies.

The contexts in which these microaggressions occurred varied from classrooms, meetings with faculty, campus, to graduate lounges. Juanita's decision to leave her Ph.D. studies was due to the lack of support from her faculty advisor, as well as limited funding available to her. Juanita felt highly discouraged by her advisor's "insensitive comments" and lack of support while in her doctorate program. Juanita points out that there is a *domino effect* for Students of Color when Faculty of Color are unavailable, self-centered, and refuse to mentor students. In Juanita's case, her faculty advisor did not have time to mentor graduate students and was not a tenured faculty member. Juanita said it was vital that faculty be held accountable, as well as be invested in issues pertaining to the retention of Students of Color at the Ph.D. level. Juanita's *testimonio* provides educators and researchers with a better understanding regarding the complex gendered power relations that take place between female Faculty of Color in higher education and Faculty of Color. What happens when faculty, particularly Faculty of Color, are not invested in mentoring and/or working with graduate students.

Juanita reported various psychological and physiological effects caused by the continuous racial and gendered microaggressions during her Ph.D. studies. Some of the symptoms included: chronic depression, acute stress, weight gain (approximately 10-15 pounds), chronic anxiety, isolation, tension in neck/body, pain, trauma, insomnia, lack of confidence, low self-esteem, high cholesterol, irregular ovulation, addictions (i.e. food), and contemplation of suicide. The latter is

immediately life-threatening and rarely ever discussed in the academy, thus merits serious attention. Juanita's *testimonio* teaches us the significance of recognizing the serious nature of chronic conditions, as well as the importance of seeking proper treatment, mental health resources, and immediate intervention, if one suspects contemplation of suicide or harming themselves. Here, Juanita recognized the seriousness of the effects to her psyche and sought out immediate intervention at her university. Juanita put herself in therapy and was supported by her family throughout the process.

Furthermore, Juanita stressed that she did not simply leave her doctorate; instead, she took a stand and said she was “no longer willing to compromise or sacrifice her health, mental health, or family through the process.” Hence, she made an informed and brave decision to select her health, happiness, and quality of life instead. With this in mind, Juanita responds to the racial/gendered microaggressions by exposing the “complex gendered power relations” that also occur in private within public universities. Juanita said it was important to also hold Faculty of Color accountable for duplicating oppressive systems within the university. She states that having a supportive faculty advisor to work with at the Ph.D. level is vital to complete the Ph.D. Juanita also points out that her financial needs were not met within her department, as she also had limited funding and was apparently admitted as “at risk student”—a label that worked to her disadvantage within the department. When I asked Juanita, why she decided to leave her Ph.D. studies she responded with the reasons listed below (1-14) and said these tenets are vital for long-term survival and success at the Ph.D. level.

Reasons Juanita *left* her Ph.D. studies

1. Lack of *faculty support* in her Ph.D. program.
2. *Faculty advisors* did not have time to work with graduate students.

3. Overall sense of isolation in the program and lack of diversity.
4. *Faculty of Color* recreated hierarchal and oppressive academic environments for Chicanas/Latinas in the program.
5. Lack of critical *teaching pedagogies* linking “theory to praxis” in her Ph.D. studies (i.e., hegemonic curriculum and the educational theory course was highly abstract).
6. Lack of *research* linking the university to immigrant communities in her Ph.D. studies.
7. Lack of *structure* at the Ph.D. level pertaining to course work, curriculum, research methods, and faculty guidance in the program.
8. Faculty of Color were highly self-absorbed furthering their own academic agendas (i.e. publishing and tenure) and not available to graduate students.
9. Lack of institutional support networks for Chicanas/Latinas pertaining to *retention services* and *counseling services* at the doctorate level.
10. Highly *dysfunctional* and *uncomfortable academic environment*, as Chicanas/Latinas were also set up to compete against each other, instead of creating a supportive community of scholars.
11. *Cultural insensitivity* regarding the importance of *familia* (family) support.
12. *Deficit models* used at the Ph.D. level to set Chicanas/Latinas up to fail. For instance, Juanita was admitted as an “at risk student” which also created negative perceptions of her by faculty.
13. Lack of adequate funding resources available, especially for low-income Students of Color in higher education.
14. Health concerns caused during the Ph.D. experience.

In short, Juanita's reasons for leaving are important to understand, as they shed light on larger systemic inequalities occurring in higher education towards low-income Chicanas. Juanita's *testimonio* highlights the types of racial and gendered microaggressions endured based on her race, ethnicity, class, gender, immigration status, surname, and phenotype. To date, there is minimal educational research regarding why racial/ethnic women leave their doctorate studies, thus Juanita's *testimonio* sheds light on this important area of research. Her racial and gendered educational experiences are also interrelated to her socio-economic hardships, as it was difficult to continue her Ph.D. studies with limited funding.

Equally important, although Juanita left her Ph.D. studies she plans on returning in the near future, but is interested in a doctorate in Education. She remains committed to social justice research that will benefit Latino immigrant communities in the educational pipeline. Juanita is currently working for a non-profit organization that is community-based and enjoying the birth of her newborn son. She has also taken time to heal and recover from her educational experiences, thus determined to use her lived experiences to help others that struggle.

Winuna's Testimonio: Navigating Through Cultural Ignorance, Bullying, and Sexual Harassment in the Academy

Winuna is pursuing her Ph.D. in a predominantly white university in the Midwest. She is inspired by her father, as well as writing her tribal history from a Native woman's perspective. During the time of the *testimonio*, she was contemplating leaving her doctorate studies due to various types of racial/gendered microaggressions occurring within her department. Winuna is determined to complete her Ph.D., despite the political and economic hardships.

In her *testimonio*, Winuna states:

I'm Dakota, Flandreau, but I'm also Muskogee Creek on my mother's side. I grew up working-class and was raised by my father... Throughout my graduate experience, I've never felt comfortable in the university... The reason I decided to pursue my Ph.D. was to write my tribal history because nobody had done it correctly. I went into my program knowing that this was going to be my dissertation topic and purpose, but it was hard finding Native professors to work with. I have experienced some particular instances in my academic career that felt very uncomfortable—where I sometimes felt that my race was definitely an identifier in being treated differently. I also had to deal with additional struggles in white classrooms that were filled with cultural ignorance. I felt my race was definitely an identifier in being treated differently as an American-Indian scholar, and as a woman... I felt that my academic contributions in class were met with hostility, disrespect, and racism due to ignorance and differences in world-views in class discussions... These same individuals do not take into consideration the historical prejudices that my tribe has faced, which has led to many tribal members not trusting people in academia, as well as the low number in American Indian scholars in the academy.

One of the hostile experiences had to do with a white male from Yale, who singled me out, whenever I made comments in class about an indigenous perspective. Once, I was sharing a Creation story about my people and he laughed and ridiculed me in front of others. He then commented in front of the entire class that my story was ridiculous. He was confrontational all the time and had this sick sense of entitlement... After class, my African-American professor stopped me from leaving class and asked me if I would share my Creation story with her, so I did. In similar situations as described above, I have felt that my being a woman has contributed to a lack of respect by men in my cohort, as well... The fact is female graduate TA's must dress formally to gain the same amount of respect that young white male graduate students receive while wearing rock band t-shirts and ripped jeans in the workplace. I have also observed within my own department that female TA's also seem to garner many more complaints about grades from students than

their male counterparts. In my program white males often receive the best and most sought after TA assignments as well...

In the classrooms, there was also a blatant lack of respect for female Faculty of Color compared to white male faculty in our department. I witnessed a deliberate attack on an African-American female professor led by white ignorant students, as they verbally attacked her in class and then filed complaints about her teaching methods. Later, I then experienced a similar traumatic experience that caused me great anxiety and stress when my department set me up as a TA for the arrogant white male student from Yale. I really do not know what the hell is problem was with me, but he was continuously disrespectful, racist, and condescending towards me. I documented everything and reported him to our department, but they did nothing! Instead, their response to me was that I didn't want to get on negative terms with the department; thus, if I left the TA position, I would lose my funding. I was infuriated, as this was my only source of income to stay in my studies. I stayed for the quarter, but could not take his hostile behavior and sexist insults anymore! It was degrading to have to put up with him! It was during this time, that I decided to temporarily leave my Ph.D. studies, so I lost my TA ship, as I refused to be subjected to his cultural ignorance and intolerant behavior. I came very close to leaving my program twice due to stress induced health complications.

Winuna's *testimonio* sheds light on the context of her educational experiences, as a working-class Native American woman singled-out in a predominantly white male-dominated university.

It is important to point out that Winuna did all in her power to navigate through the sexual harassment, bullying, and overt microaggressions in her department. However, once she refused to work with the abusive white male student from Yale, she lost her TA ship, which was her primary source of funding. Winuna made it clear during her *testimonio* that she plans on completing her Ph.D. and return to her studies once she can secure outside funding. Thus secure a healthier academic climate and learning environment to complete her Ph.D.

The psychological and physiological effects that Winuna reported from prolonged racial/gendered microaggressions include: panic attacks, stress, fatigue, insomnia, migraines, headaches, sadness, low self-esteem, isolation, trauma, depression, chronic pain, and grinding her teeth. Unfortunately, Winuna also experienced a miscarriage and is taking time to heal from

this type of loss. Although she was not clinically diagnosed by a specialist, she was informed by a Dr. that many of the symptoms she experienced were caused by extreme stress.

Winuna responded to the racial/gendered microaggressions by making an informed decision to no longer be subjected to harassment, bullying, public ridicule, and racism in a hostile academic teaching environment. Hence, Winuna is not a victim, but instead assumed agency, as she confronted the male bully and also reported his unethical conduct to her department. Winuna utilized internal university processes to navigate through the racial and gendered microaggressions, but also invoked external networks for support. For instance, Winuna responded to the microaggressions by organizing networks of support with community, as well as tribal members to remain focused on her educational aspirations and dream to write her tribal history. Winuna also responded to the microaggressions by seeking family support that provided her with positive encouragement, love, and guidance through the process. Further, Winuna also has a special relationship with her father who provided additional spiritual support that re-energized her spirit. Her father is a veteran activist and leading member of their tribal community. Additional strategies that Winuna used to actively respond to the racial and gendered microaggressions include the following responses (1-7).

Responses to Challenge Racial and Gendered Microaggressions

1. Winuna remains *determined* and *focused* to complete her Ph.D., despite the politics and temporary financial setback.
2. She remains *connected* with her family, partner, and community. These support networks have helped her rejuvenate her spirit, energies and resiliency.
3. She sought *external funding resources* to continue her doctorate studies.

4. Winuna is *committed* to being the first Native American woman to write her tribal history, thus is greatly inspired by her larger community.
5. She also draws strength, passion, and courage, as an *activist* dedicated to creating change for Native people via political advocacy, thus critical of U.S. imperialism.
6. She is a *survivor* and is using ancestral knowledge and cultural experiences as a source of empowerment honoring her history through the educational journey.
7. Winuna rides horses to *heal* from the effects of microaggressions. This allows her to rejuvenate her body, mind, and spirit. She feels “free” from systematic oppressions when she rides in open land. For Winuna this is an act of resistance and healing.

Winuna’s *testimonio* provides educators and researchers with a better understanding regarding the educational experiences of Native American women in a predominantly white hostile public university. In addition, her *testimonio* conveys the need to seek political changes in higher education to create greater educational opportunities via funding resources for Native American women at the Ph.D. level. Winuna concluded her *testimonio* by stating that she looks forward to completing her Ph.D. in the near future and being the first Native woman to write her tribal history—critical of U.S. colonization, imperialism, and written from a woman’s perspective for the next generation. Her *testimonio* is inspiring and teaches one the importance of strategically navigating through various institutional oppressions at the doctorate level. Hence, she stresses the importance of connecting to supportive networks in order to heal one’s body, mind, and spirit throughout the doctorate process, for long-term “survival” in the academy.

***Testimonio* of Nicomedes: The Economic Hardships of the Doctorate Degree**

Nicomedes self-identifies as Chicana and grew up in poverty. She attended a UC in California and left her Ph.D. studies in the first year. Nicomedes is a well-respected advocate for Women of Color in the community and committed to ending sexual violence against women. Here is her *testimonio* regarding the economic burdens that she experienced while working full-time to finance herself through school, as a working-class woman.

Nicomedes shares:

In my department there weren't many of us that were People of Color... What made me decide to leave my Ph.D. studies was at the time, I just felt very exhausted. I felt like I was constantly running up against a wall because I didn't feel that I fit the university model. I was a full-time *working adult* and it was economically difficult for me, as I also supported myself and family... In addition, I didn't feel support or any type of connection with any of the faculty in my department... I felt completely disconnected from them, as they seemed to be in their own worlds of books and theories, thus lacked a social praxis including practical experiences. I also felt like I could not approach faculty because I was in a different status, as I had to work full time to sustain myself and I was also trying to attend school, but I kept feeling that I wasn't supported, as there wasn't much flexibility.

In general, I think it's a challenge for women of color and indigenous women to navigate in an academic environment where it's very *individualized* and there's no emphasis on community or collaborating with others. Like for me, I left because I genuinely felt that it was too individualistic and lacked community-based networks...Community work is very important, especially if we are in Ph.D. programs, as we also have an ethical obligation to advance our communities...

[Moreover] the academic environment was hostile. In class, students would make a lot of racist comments towards marginalized communities and I constantly felt like I had to speak up, but even then it felt like I wasn't necessarily being heard... Racist comments varied like, *those people* and additional comments that were dehumanizing to cultures and people... I also felt the pain when other women of color or people of color, wouldn't speak up. I also felt the racism within campus, as I experienced racist slurs by white students and that was very challenging! At times, I felt that the environment was very toxic and I didn't feel safe...

In leaving the university, I felt like I never had anybody—it was a decision I made and I told the faculty there, but I had no one to support me. I did feel like there was something wrong because why couldn't I continue, but I just wasn't able to do it.

Nicomedes struggled financially to remain in her Ph.D. studies, as a working-class Chicana. She stressed the importance of having “financial stability” prior to entering a doctorate program, as she experienced difficulty balancing a full-time job in conjunction with being a full-time student. Nicomedes described her predominantly white university as hostile, racist, and toxic for Women of Color. She also stated that her educational experiences were *isolating* and that she felt *invisible* in her department. During her *testimonio*, she reported the following psychological and physiological effects from racial/gendered microaggressions: PTSD, hyper-vigilance, headaches, migraines, chronic insomnia, nausea/vomiting, chronic fatigue, rapid heart palpitations, some addictions, isolation, loss of appetite, digestive issues, as well as irregular menstrual periods. The symptoms that Nicomedes reported were also connected to additional stressors caused by economic hardships endured during her doctorate studies. For example, Nicomedes worked several jobs to support herself and her family while attending graduate school. She responded to the microaggressions by embracing her educational experiences via critical self-reflection in order to learn and grow from them. For instance, she took time to weigh all her options and made an informed decision to leave her Ph.D. studies. Therefore, she left, but with the intent of returning to pursue a different degree that aligned with her areas of interest in working in the field of domestic violence, social welfare, and integrating community in the process. Nicomedes is not a victim, but instead has made an informed choice to leave and pursue a “different degree in another field” in order to better serve her target community (i.e., women that survive domestic violence).

Again, there is minimal research available pertaining to why low-income women leave their Ph.D. studies; hence, her *testimonio* sheds light on this important area of marginalized educational research. Her reasons for leaving her Ph.D. studies are important in understanding

the context of her educational experiences. Her reasons for leaving include the following items listed below, as (1-10).

Reasons that Nicomedes *left* her Ph.D. studies

1. Lack of *funding resources* for low-income students at the Ph.D. level. Plus the lack of fellowships, TA ships, resources, and grants for low-income students.
2. Lack of *collaborative community* research in her department. In other words, there was no direct outreach to the surrounding community.
3. Lack of *diversity* (i.e., Women of Color) in the department.
4. Overall, lack of *recruitment* and *retention services* to obtain diversity and cultural richness in her predominantly white department.
5. The academic environment was *individualistic*. It lacked a collaborate model to bridge community outreach programs.
6. *Lack of Faculty of Color* to serve as advisors, mentors, and/or support Women of Color in her predominantly white university
7. Extremely *hostile, racist, and toxic* academic climate and learning environment.
8. Lack of *flexibility* or support for full-time working students.
9. Sense of *invisibility* and *isolation* in the academic setting for Women of Color, as she also felt marginalized in a predominantly white academic setting.

In summary, her reasons for leaving are important in understanding the political realities and economic hardships that many low-income Chicanas experience at the doctorate level, as funding sources become more limited and educational costs increase in the State of California. Further, her *testimonio* provides an important political narrative to help educators and researchers better understand the economic burdens that working poor women endure at the

doctorate level. Her *testimonio* sheds light on the importance of seeking “greater funding opportunities” via grants, scholarships, and private financial resources to assist with the economic cost and financial challenges of the doctorate degree.

Testimonio of Joy: The Ph.D. is Just Not the Right Fit

Joy self-identified as Chicana from a working-class socio-economic background. She made an informed decision to leave her Ph.D. studies after two years in a UC in California. Her research areas of interest include higher education; access and equity issues for low-income students; and critical transitions between community college Latina/Latino transfer students into four-year institutions.

Joy shares in her *testimonio*:

I decided to leave the program because it was no longer an appropriate fit for where I was going personally and professionally... I felt like the program was no longer offering me what I needed to succeed as a student... Therefore, I made the *conscious choice* because I felt like the department didn't have what I needed, so that was the unspoken way of pushing me out. I found support at another university that helped me out, but the fact was that I was constantly asking and redefining the research that I was doing. The department was not bringing in new faculty, or supporting the classes that I wanted to take... So then I needed to look out for myself and figure out what's going to work best for me. In addition, what I also want other people to know is that I did not leave my studies because I couldn't hack it and I couldn't make it. I left it because there weren't the resources and the support for me as a student and that is something that I've expressed to the department as well. When I left, I wrote a letter saying that same thing... Therefore, It's not because I couldn't cut it and it's not because I'm not strong enough to get through it, it's just they changed the program and it wasn't the *right fit* for me.

I think something that I wish I would have done when I was looking for Ph.D. programs was to be more forceful in the questions that I asked. I did ask questions, but I think because I had already made up my mind that I wanted to stay locally that this particular UC was my *only* option and I believed that they would "take care of us" because we were the first class, but instead we were their guinea pigs. In retrospect, now I acknowledge that this was very naïve of me, as I put my confidence in their hands and hoped and trusted that they would take care of me and unfortunately that didn't happen. Therefore, now I know the type of questions to ask, if I pursue a PhD. Although it may seem very invasive, I would ask what type of support are they going offer each year? You know, it's great that they're going to admit you, but what is their success rate, how long does it take for an average dissertation to be completed? What is that faculty-student ratio? How many students does an advisor have? What does that look like? I think it becomes questions for the department, as to what their success rate is; in addition, how do they support students of color? For example, do they have a welcome week for students of color? What types of services are there in the university that is specific to grad students of color? In other words, it is important to just be very reporter-like and being much more invasive and asking them the *tough questions* and really holding their answers, the way

that they answer and the way that they hold themselves very critically as a reflection to the program. I think something else that's critical that I didn't do... Well, I couldn't do in this program were asking the grad students themselves that are in the program how they liked it, what are the real undertones in the department...

Joy is highly critical of the department's overall lack of resources, curriculum, lack of diversity, and structure making it a difficult to successfully navigate through the doctorate program. Joy reported that microaggressions occurred in the contexts of classrooms, in faculty meetings, in courses, on campus, and with colleagues.

Further, some of the psychological and physiological effects that she reported during her *testimonio* interview included: depression, chronic anxiety, chronic stress, headaches, insomnia, weight loss, tension in her neck/back, body aches and pain, acne breakouts, frustration, fatigue, and isolation. She also experienced reproductive changes in her body that included irregular periods, and missed menstrual cycles for months at a time, and severe headaches. For example, Joy states that:

I think the headaches were a pivotal point in my health, as to how I was dealing with my first years in my program. The headaches were key, followed by a lot of body aches and pain from sitting at a computer all day every day, so I developed back problems. In addition, not being able to sleep because I was always thinking about, how I was going to get through the next day or how I was going to keep going on like this was painful. I already knew that I wasn't happy and feeling depressed; combined with headaches, body aches, and stomachaches it really took a toll on my overall health. When I get anxiety or really nervous about things, I get stomach aches. It almost feels like the onset of ulcers. I've had them before, but not to this level, so I related them to the severe anxiety that I was also feeling in the program. So I think physically those were some of the more salient cues that also made me think about the program and my long-term health.

Joy provides an important political narrative regarding the significance of researching a Ph.D. program and its faculty prior to starting a doctorate program. Joy says it is vital to ensure that the program is the "right fit" according to one's research interests and to find supportive faculty that

are invested in the long-term academic success of their students. Joy provides additional reasons, as to why she decided to leave her Ph.D. studies.

Reasons that Joy *left* her Ph.D. studies

1. Lack of *faculty support* or a faculty advisor in her doctorate program.
2. Lack of *funding resources* in her program.
3. Her Ph.D. program was relatively “new” and lacked courses, diverse curriculum, and structure. Joy found herself taking courses in other fields to make up for the lack of available courses within her program.
4. Joy made an informed choice to leave because the program was not the right fit for her educational research interests.
5. The program lacked *diversity* in faculty, as well as student diversity.
6. The curriculum was traditional, outdated, and limited.
7. The *academic climate* was not welcoming or supportive.
8. The program’s lack of structure (courses, methods, and supportive faculty) caused her additional stress, anxiety, and health related issues.

The above-mentioned tenets are reflective of Joy’s decision to leave her program. Also evident in her decision to leave her Ph.D. studies is an overall lack of faculty of color, funding resources, traditional curriculum, and lack of diversity amongst students. With this in mind, Joy also reminds us to respond to microaggressions by paying close attention to the psychological and physiological cues experienced in the physical body. She also reminds us of the importance of tuning in our body’s indication of “unnatural balance” (i.e. digestion, exhaustion, weight changes, acne, fatigue, nutrition), as warning signs to literally stop, reflect, and seek self-care (i.e., exercise, rest, proper nutrition, sleep, and yoga). She emphasizes the importance of being

mindful and committed to and prioritizing of one's health, wellness, and bodies while on the educational path. Her *testimonio* is a reminder for women in the academy to make empowered choices that do not compromise one's health, bodies, or quality of life through the Ph.D. process.

Lillian's *Testimonio*: The Political Realities of the Push Out Process

Lillian is Ojibway-Cree and identified as being “pushed out” of her Ph.D. studies in the State of Oklahoma. Lillian states that having to navigate through institutional racism; in addition to managing multiple oppressions in her white male-dominated department was difficult and traumatic. During Lillian’s third year, her white male chair encouraged her to transfer out of her Ph.D. studies or leave her doctorate studies with a terminal Master’s Degree. Lillian responded by challenging the internal racist structure that informed his deficit recommendation. In the following passage, Lillian painfully talks about the negative effects of the racial and gendered microaggressions that she experienced.

Lillian states:

The day of my preliminary exams... I was informed that my brother had died. I didn't know that I could not leave, but I did after getting the news, so I didn't pass. They said I would have to appeal, so of course I appealed and I won to re-take the exam. I studied and I was prepared... However, the test was 'different' and made just for me which was weird and I didn't pass it. Shortly after, I found out that the people that didn't pass were predominantly all minority students and only one minority passed.

I decided to fight back and went to the university discrimination office on campus. They said that they would look into it, as I felt it was racial discrimination, as all the students that failed were predominantly minority students. However, I never heard back from them... I followed up with a few phone calls and e-mails, but nothing was done. The woman in the office later informed me that there was nothing they could do and that I was “just out of the program.” This issue really taxed my mental health, so I sought out mental health professionals, as the toll of all of this was too intense and I was exhausted.

A couple of days later, I received an e-mail, a very brisk e-mail informing me that I was kicked out of the program. Basically the letter stated that I was no longer part of the program... It was an abrasive e-mail, as some of the words were underlined and the language was degrading. For me, it was the way they went about it, as they could have easily said, 'you are no longer part of the program,' but instead the e-mail was abrasive...

I'm tired and I am tired of school... This is one of reasons that I didn't want to transfer to another department and start all over again... I feel that I should have probably sought out legal advice before leaving, but I am really tired... If I leave they will give me a 'terminal master's degree' in Sociology for the work I have already completed, but I am one class away from finishing my Ph.D. course requirements, so I really contemplated

transferring into another program... However, I am just really tired of trying to fit into their academic circles, it's impossible... I have always felt like an outsider here... After my health worsened, I decided to take that offer for that second master's degree...

Lillian's *testimonio* reveals how Native American women are also pushed out of white male--dominated academic spaces. Her story describes various struggles, as she navigated through racism, white male privilege, and a sexist department. The overall toll that Lillian endured caused her health to collapse from physical exhaustion and chronic fatigue. Lillian reported the following psychological and physiological effects from prolonged exposure to blatant racial and gendered microaggressions: chronic depression, low self-esteem, panic attacks, chronic anxiety, chronic fatigue, physical exhaustion, high blood pressure, isolation, chronic stress, PTSD, and trauma. Also, some of the changes to her body included irregular periods, chronic pain, and excessive bleeding that caused anemia. It is important to stress that many of symptoms also changed to "chronic conditions," as her health deteriorated.

Moreover, Lillian responded to the microaggressions by organizing Students of Color in her department to also challenge the *educational inequities* and *discriminatory treatment* occurring predominantly to Scholars of Color in her department. She also sought out faculty support within the department, but to no avail. Lillian stated that she reached a point of extreme "physical exhaustion" and could no longer remain in her Ph.D. studies. Therefore, she made the difficult choice to leave her Ph.D. studies with a terminal Master's Degree. At the close of her *testimonio*, Lillian stated that she wished that she would have consulted with an attorney prior to leaving her Ph.D. studies to hold the program accountable. However, she had to leave in order to protect her mental health, wellness, and quality of life.

Lillian's *testimonio* is vital in understanding how systemic racism is also associated with her experiences in the push-out process. For example, Lillian stated that Students of Color were

disproportionately failed during their preliminary exams in comparison to white male students in her department. She described it as an unspoken type of *hazing process* occurring behind closed doors, institutionalized by white privileged male faculty. Lillian stated that the push-out process she endured was physically, mentally, and spiritually exhaustive. She revealed the context of racial and gendered microaggressions endured during the push-out process in depth and consisting of the following.

Reponses to Challenge Racial and Gendered Microaggressions

1. She experienced *isolation, public humiliation, and character assassination* in her male-dominated white department. For example, she was informed by a white faculty member that “they did not want an old female cheerleader in the department.” She responded by no longer meeting with this abusive faculty member.
2. She endured *differential and discriminatory* treatment based on her race/ethnicity, class, gender, and age in a public university. She was given a “different” exam in comparison to her colleagues in the same department. She responded by seeking guidance through the discrimination officer in her public university.
3. She was subjected to *unethical conduct and intentional harm* in her department. Lillian reported that faculty continuously harassed her to leave, as well as disregarded the negative effects on her health during the push-out process. In the end, she responded and left her Ph.D. due to serious health debilitations.
4. She was subjected to *educational inequities* (i.e. unequal educational access to resources that were freely granted to white male doctorate students in her department. She responded by organizing Students of Color in protest.

5. She endured *violations* of policies and procedures during the push-out process and responded by sharing her painful lived experiences in hopes of helping others.
6. Take time to heal, especially if you feel fatigued and/or mentally exhausted, as the process of advocating for self takes a lot of emotional, spiritual, and physical energy.

In summary, Lillian's *testimonio* exposes important information pertaining to the educational inequities occurring at the Ph.D. level for Native American women, thus preserves an important political narrative that reveals how racism, complex power relations, and white privilege contribute to systematic educational inequities at the Ph.D. level in higher education. Lillian's *testimonio* bravely reveals how she was "pushed out" of her Ph.D. studies. Furthermore, it sheds light on this important area of marginalized educational research to better understand the political implications to low-income Native American women. Equally important, is for educators to understand the serious implication that microaggressions hold for women's bodies, minds, and health at the doctorate level. Hence, her *testimonio* provides vital information for educators, researchers, and policy makers to better understand the internal "push out process" occurring in predominantly white public universities and the urgent need to create greater educational opportunities for Native American women on a national level.

***Testimonio* of Rainy Dawn: Navigating through the Combat Battle Grounds of White
Feminist Privilege at the Ph.D. Level**

Rainy Dawn is from the Luiseño tribe and grew up in poverty. She studies Indigenous rights and Red Pedagogies. Her *testimonio* informs us of the serious effects of racial and gendered microaggressions that caused harm to her body, mental health, and quality of life while pursuing her Ph.D. At the time of the interview, Rainy Dawn was in the process of being “pushed out” of her Ph.D. studies; however, she refused to leave or quit. Rainy Dawn’s *testimonio* bravely exposes what she went through during the push out process, as she described her educational experiences as a “continuous battle zone.” Despite the painful educational experiences, she fought to stay.

Rainy Dawn asserts:

While in grad school, I developed chronic depression, PTSD, high blood pressure, fatigue, insomnia, panic attacks, nausea, teeth grinding, irregular periods, and a painful miscarriage. To date, I am still healing from these deep traumas that impaired my body and health... These issues were not related to what I would describe as ‘normal stressors’ of graduate school... My symptoms evolved over time, like a ‘slow poison that cripples you from within.’ During my studies, I experienced isolation, hostile persecution, and continuous racism by white female faculty that abused their power in the university... I remember being put into a room and yelled at by our grad chair for reporting a white tenured professor for her racist comments in class. Followed by another traumatizing event where I was verbally assaulted by our angry white chair for filing a grievance and reporting the department... In heart and spirit, I felt that I had no other choice, but to ‘speak up’ or else it would be easier for them to get rid of me... The hostile climate literally took a toll on my body, mind, and spirit. Day after day, I lived in this type of really dysfunctional academic climate, but did all in my power to keep grounded by faith and my family... I started to ‘disconnect from my body’ to tolerate their racist assaults, hatred, isolation, and character assassination, but it was difficult. I had sacrificed so much to be here, so in heart and spirit I refused to leave without a fight! I would often go into combat mode while on campus, as it was my ‘invisible protective armor’ for the long battles. I also documented every act of racial hatred, unethical conduct, segregation, and public humiliation occurring in private in my department.

The following year, I was labeled as a ‘trouble maker’ for reporting the department for violations of federal/state laws.... Navigating through the internal university bureaucracy was challenging and exhausting, as I was sent in endless circles without protections from

university agencies. For me, it was not a university, but instead a combat zone... I never had the privilege of just being a Ph.D. student; it was always about survival and tactical planning to navigate through the political injustices. I can only say that I had this deep anger and rage that I channeled to survive. I started using my voice to challenge their attempts to push me out quietly. However, I was not going to leave quietly, I knew that for certain... After every battle, I had to learn how to navigate quickly in order to 'get up again' for the next round of battles... This was my doctorate experience and it felt like I was a 'combatant in a war zone.' I responded by reporting my department to various university agencies, as well as filed an official discriminatory grievance, which infuriated them. I was not leaving without my Ph.D. and I was prepared for legal action, if necessary.

In grad school, I was diagnosed by a specialist with multiple conditions. I was also asked if I wanted to be 'hospitalized for exhaustion' and that really scared me! I could feel the slow debilitating effects to my body, as I engaged in each battle. My body started getting more infections like bronchitis, nasal colds, etc... It was like this overwhelming sense of feeling 'tired all the time,' yet still having to engage in hostile battles with abusive white female faculty. Due to the prolonged exposure and hostile climate, I also found myself struggling with functioning with the day-to-day things, as a wave of depression took over. I could feel the pain, body aches, and fatigue manifesting in my body... I could feel myself slipping into a dark place, as the deep depression settled in, so I immediately sought help and went on a mission of wellness resources to navigate through simultaneously. I continued to report my department and decided to go public after consulting with an attorney... There was no way that I was going to leave or quit, despite the additional hurdles my department put up for me. I was determined to finish and I had the love and support of my entire family throughout the process.

I trusted my Dr. and shared my painful educational experiences with her. She was genuinely concerned with the debilitation of my health and I was placed under her care, as she prescribed medications, monitored my blood pressure, and in time, I slowly regained my health. I never made a full recovery, but I remain determined to do so. I am learning how to manage my chronic conditions now with human dignity, compassion, love, and patience as I continue to heal from these deep seeded battle wounds... In retrospect, I believe that Creator has a plan for all of us, thus I am determined to use these painful educational experiences and do something positive with them...

Rainy Dawn's *testimonio* exposes how systematic racism is interconnected to intolerance, hatred, and ignorance. Her *testimonio* informs us about the serious health related consequences of prolonged racial/gendered microaggressions that, if left unchecked, can lead to health disparities and chronic conditions. Rainy Dawn reported various psychological and physiological effects from overt racial/gendered microaggressions in a hostile academic climate. Some of her

symptoms included: chronic depression, PTSD, chronic anxiety, chronic stress, fatigue, insomnia, nausea, disassociate disorder, weight gain (approximately 40-50 pounds), chronic pain, diarrhea, nausea, nightmares, and high blood pressure. Rainy Dawn was diagnosed by a Dr. and she was also informed that her reproductive issues could have been caused by extreme “distress,” but the cause of the miscarriage could not be determined. Rainy Dawn shared this personal part of her *testimonio* in hopes that it would help other Women of Color heal from this type of loss, pain, and sacrifice. Reproductive issues like miscarriages are rarely ever discussed in graduate school, but have real implications to women’s bodies, minds, and health. Hence, it is vital to take time to rest, heal, and seek support (i.e., prayer circles, therapy, and family) throughout the process.

Rainy Dawn responded to the microaggressions by blatantly refusing to leave or quit her doctorate studies; instead, she responded with defiance and resistance, and thus made a political decision to remain and challenge the push-out process. She strategically met with university administrators and diligently documented all evidence during the push-out process. She also consulted with an attorney who advised her to file an “official discrimination grievance” and to send copies to external agencies not controlled by the university. In addition, Rainy Dawn also publicly reported her department via a Whistleblower Hotline for segregation, unequal educational access, retaliatory treatment, racism, privacy violations, unethical conduct, persecution, violations of federal/state laws, and discriminatory/differential treatment based on her race/ethnicity, class, gender, and age. Her political strategy was effective in publicly exposing her department’s unethical conduct, as university officials intervened on her behalf. However, the process of intervention was slow and caused additional harm to her health, as university official took their time to protect her. Nevertheless, her grounded approach in

advocacy revealed a pattern occurring in her department, as additional U.S. Women of Color stepped forward to report the their department.

Rainy Dawn's *testimonio* reveals institutional types and *contexts* of microaggressions. For instance, she experienced: isolation, character assassination, discriminatory/differential treatment, racism, retaliations, bullying, intentional harm, educational inequities, privacy violations of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERBA), violations of university policies, as well as violations of Federal/State laws (i.e. Civil Right Act and Title IX) in her predominantly white department. Rainy Dawn stated that "leaving [her] Ph.D. was not an option, and [she] refused to leave or quit!" She responded via acts of resistance, resiliency, and advocacy, as her goal was to complete her Ph.D. and do all in her abilities to "survive the politics." Here are the responses and strategies she used to challenge the overt and prolonged microaggressions that caused racial battle fatigue while navigating through the push-out process.

Responses used to Challenge the Push-Out Process

1. Rainy Dawn utilized *internal university resources* to report violations of the Civil Rights Act. (i.e., filed an official grievance based on *differential/discriminatory* treatment based on her race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, and age) in a public university.
2. She diligently documented all accounts of systematic racism, unethical conduct, segregation, intentional harm, verbal abuse, and privacy violations. She then reported her department to internal and external agencies. Her strategy was to expose the violations and seek protections to complete her Ph.D.
3. She *lobbied* support from faculty and university administrators. However, some administrators sent her in "endless administrative circles" without protections from

retaliations that caused greater harm to her health in the form of physical exhaustion, chronic fatigue, anxiety, racial battle fatigue, and high blood pressure.

4. She consulted with *an attorney* to guide her through the *internal university grievance process*: a one-sided procedure set-up to protect the interests of the university and by doing so also prepared for *legal action* outside the university.
5. She created a strong *communal network* of support outside the university in the form of family, prayer circles, and friends. Her family supported her decision to remain at the university and helped her heal in body, mind, and spirit to literally “fight back.”
6. She sought supportive faculty that she could *trust* through the push-out process. This tactic was imperative for her to *move forward* and remain in her Ph.D. studies.
7. Rainy Dawn used *activism* as a political tool to organize resources for support, guidance, and assistance throughout the hostile educational experiences.
8. She also used various *healing practices* to rejuvenate her body, mind, and spirit. For example, she used acupuncture, a nutritionist, exercise, meditation, a therapist, healing, prayers, and sweat lodge to survive the toxic academic climate.
9. Rainy Dawn was determined to use her lived experiences and painful memories to help others by exposing the racism, white privilege, and the push out process.
10. No matter what, do not give up and find resources to advocate for yourself.
11. Also, take time to rest, recover, and heal in body, mind, and spirit.

In summary, Rainy Dawn used various strategies to successfully respond to the racial/gendered microaggressions in her predominantly white hostile department. She concluded her *testimonio* by stating that she “survived these painful educational experiences because [her] family never allowed [her] to give up!” She also stated that she felt an “ethical obligation” and human

responsibility to expose the educational injustices in her department. In the end, Rainy Dawn's political narrative informs us of how she strategically navigated through the push-out process by using acts of resistance, resiliency, faith/hope, and grounded activism. She continues use these types of "painful educational experiences" to seek healthier and tolerant academic environments for others in the academy. In the end, Rainy Dawn was not pushed out of her Ph.D. studies and since then has successfully completed her doctorate degree. She currently teaches at a college near her reservation and remains committed to using her insights to humanize the experiences of Native and Indigenous political issues on a global scale.

Deanna's *Testimonio*: 70 % Left and 30% Pushed Out of the Doctorate

Deanna is Navajo and identifies as growing up low-income. Deanna identified in the case study as both leaving her studies and being pushed out. During the *testimonio*, Deanna had a framework that she wanted to use to tell her story. Therefore, I am honoring her request and structuring her *testimonio* accordingly. Deanna made a conscious choice to leave her Ph.D. studies in the state of Washington after carefully evaluating her living situation, long-term goals, the Ph.D. program, and cost of the doctorate. She also described her academic climate as hostile and that it lacked diversity in all areas (i.e. curriculum development, research methods, and Native faculty). During our interview she made a list identifying issues that she felt contributed to her leaving her Ph.D. studies, but at the same time also felt pushed out. Deanna states:

Well... I think one of the things that I've struggled with in terms of thinking about my experiences in my PhD program was where I am in that continuum of did I decide to leave or did I feel pushed out of my studies... And I think that it's definitely a mixture of both. I would say that 70% felt like I left and 30% felt that I was pushed out... I guess I would have to define being 'pushed out' in my particular position, as just not having sufficient support in my department... I don't think it was like a proactive pushing out... I feel like it was sort of a passive like sink or swim sort of pushing out...

Deanna's reasons for leaving her Ph.D. studies are important, as she explains her process based on a formula that identifies 70% of her decision was based on how she felt within the program and 30% as based on being pushed out. Deanna reported the following two categories below.

70 % of the Reason why Deanna *left* her Doctorate Studies

Deanna shares important factors that contributed to her decision to leave her Ph.D. studies in a predominantly white public university.

1. I did not have financial support, thus could not afford to stay in my Ph.D. studies.
2. My adviser was not supportive, available, or engaged with me, despite his progressive white politics, so it seemed "crazy" to stay without structured faculty support.

3. Once my faculty advisor left the university; I had no one to work with in my department.
I felt *alone* and *isolated*.
4. I also felt a sense of *guilt* and *isolation* from my family and community, because there was no connection to the community at the university.
5. I contemplated the issue of *sacrifice* in relation to how much time it would take to complete the degree, so I wondered if it is was really worth it.
6. The academic culture was *traditional*, so there was no real room for cultural perspectives in the Eurocentric curriculum.
7. I did not want to teach or work with predominantly white students; I want to work with Native communities.
8. My program lacked any *community-based* outreach or research linking Native communities to the university. This was a huge factor for me.
9. My faculty advisor was not tenured, was unavailable to his students, and was over extended.
10. I felt that white privileged students were difficult to work with, as they did not have to deal or engage with critical political issues. It was exhausting having to continuously educate them about their *white privilege*.
11. I was tired of research that was viewed through a deficit/traditional perspective and excluded cultural perspectives.
12. The educational oppressive system at the Ph.D. level was difficult and exhausting to deal with on a daily basis.

Institutional Reasons why Deanna felt pushed out of her Ph.D. studies

Further, in this section, Deanna shares her reasons, as to why she felt that was her decision to leave her program was 30% informed by feeling pushed out of her Ph.D. studies.

1. There was a *lack of faculty support* in my department and an *absence* of Native American faculty to work with in Education.
2. There was a *lack of funding available* to continue my Ph.D. studies, and so it was economically difficult to pay for registration.
3. There was a *lack of research* pertaining to Native American issues, and research endeavors aimed at benefiting Native communities within the university setting.
4. I was matched with the *wrong faculty advisor* and it was not an appropriate fit.
5. There was a *lack of supportive programs* relating to *retention* for Native Americans.
6. The educational structure in my department (College of Education) was *oppressive*. I felt there was no academic support for Native students or Students of Color in general.
7. The curriculum was beyond traditional; it was “racist.” It was exhausting to be in these types of academic climates.
8. Our department *lacked qualitative research courses* that bridged Native American or Indigenous research perspectives into the curriculum.
9. The academic environment was *intolerant* for Students of Color.
10. *Cultural Ignorance*. I felt that faculty lacked the deeper understanding that Native American scholars engage in research differently. Our research is “personal and political,” thus connected to creating change on a larger scale as opposed to meeting individualistic academic needs. It is also ridiculous to think that knowledge is “objective.” This notion is naïve and untrue.

Deanna's *testimonio* includes the above-mentioned tenets, in order to provide vital information for Native communities interested in entering a doctorate program. She encourages future Students of Color to research their departments and seek a supportive faculty advisor that is tenured. Further, Deanna reported the following psychological and physiological effects from racial/gendered microaggressions: mild depression, guilt, unhappiness, pain, exhaustion, fatigue, rapid breathing, and trauma. Although, Deanna left her doctorate studies, she stressed it was the right choice for her. Deanna is currently an Executive Director for a non-profit organization that provides funding resources to various Native communities. She concludes her *testimonio* by stating:

I don't want to say it's like this beautiful ending to the story and it's like I ran off into the sunset because it's still hard... I feel like this is just as hard [i.e., community organizing/advocacy], if not harder than being in a grad school... I still have to deal with politics... I still have to deal with institutional racism... I still have to deal with those microaggressions... I mean I still have to deal with a lot of that, but I feel better equipped to be in these spaces and to be the one that raises these important critical issues and questions to benefit Native communities....

In summary, Deanna's *testimonio* provides us with an important narrative regarding her decision to leave her Ph.D. studies. She strategically responded to microaggressions by assuming a position in a non-profit to further the "political agendas" that benefit larger Native and Indigenous communities. She also responded to the microaggressions by taking time to reflect, learn, grow, and heal. These responses provided her with a "healthy and positive approach" to taking care of her body, mind, and spirit through the process.

Liliana's *Testimonio*: Listen *Pendejos*, I Am Not Leaving without My Ph.D.!

Liliana grew up in poverty and identifies as Mexicana. During the time of her *testimonio* she was in the process of challenging her department in order to remain in her doctorate studies. Her *testimonio* is inspirational, as she refused to be pushed-out and used acts of resistance, defiance, and activism to challenge cultural nationalism in a male-dominated department.

Liliana asserts:

I'm Mexicana and I also grew up very poor...In my Ph.D. studies, I had this one professor and it was just a nightmare... I started hearing people call me dramatic and male professors of color calling me over-dramatic... So these little things were happening to me and I would become sensitive to it... I couldn't really put my finger on what the hell was happening, so I went to a faculty of color whom I trusted and he totally humiliated me... It was like the male culture in my department was not receptive or supportive... It's really difficult for me to separate the racism from the sexism because they're little things and you don't expect to come from scholars of color, but they do... I started raising issues about sexual harassment to faculty of color. Later, I raised more issues and was labeled as a "drama queen" and crazy for trying to make change in my department pertaining to sexual harassment training. By this time, I was also experiencing gender discrimination from faculty of color and I felt blocked in the degree. Shortly after, my entire Ph.D. committee was gone... Once I lost my committee, I was asked to sign a contract by a woman in the office of graduate studies, but she was hesitant to show me the retaliation policies. I informed her that I was not going to sign a contract without a lawyer! They were basically telling me that I had to sign a contract or I would not get a new Ph.D. committee...I tried to find resources on campus, but the university made it so complicated, as I was sent to at least eight or nine different offices making it impossible to do anything! I felt traumatized, tired, and kept getting sick all the time... I was so furious at this point and I knew this was further retaliation for speaking up against sexual harassment...

Later, my department refused to pay my fees and I knew this was more about retaliation, so I decided to go on a hunger strike! I've never been on a hunger strike before and it was during lent which is also religious... I brought my kids with me to campus because this was hard on all of us... So, I went on a hunger strike during the end of finals week. I did not know what else to do and I felt that I had no other options because not finishing the Ph.D. was not an option for me! I went and saw a priest and did a confession... Then I started to prepare myself and send my kids home because I didn't want them to see me like that, but I wanted to show that it doesn't just affect me, it affects my kids!

Liliana's *testimonio* exposes important experiences that inform the push out process within universities. These experiences and circumstances merit serious attention, especially in relation to issues of retention and equal educational access for Chicanas. During the push-out process Liliana also had to navigate through blatant racial and gendered microaggressions that impaired her health. She reported the following psychological and physiological effects from prolonged exposure to microaggressions which included PTSD, panic attacks, isolation, anxiety, hyper-vigilance, developed kidney stones, trauma, weight loss (approximately 15- 20 pounds), fatigue, exhaustion, loss of appetite, and some levels of depression. Additionally, the microaggressions were also caused through hostile acts perpetrated by male Faculty of Color and included negative labeling, isolation, character assassination, unethical conduct, harassment and discriminatory/differential treatment based on race, class, and gender within the setting of a public university.

Furthermore, Liliana responded to the blatant racial and gendered microaggressions through acts of resistance and defiance grounded in political advocacy. For instance, to combat the push-out process in her Ph.D. studies, Liliana made herself highly *visible*, then organized and executed a "hunger strike" on her campus to protest the political injustices with her children present. Liliana refused to be pushed out quietly or behind closed doors. Instead, she bravely stepped forward and publicly exposed her department for sexual harassment. When I asked Liliana why a hunger strike, she boldly stated that "a hunger strike was the only [way] these *pendejos* were going to understand" that leaving the Ph.D. was not an option. She challenged the cultural nationalists that reinforced gender subordination and sexual harassment towards women in her department, and her pro-active feminist stand proved successful.

Liliana's *testimonio* is a critical exposé of how racism, complex power relations, and white privilege were used to "attempt" to push her out of her Ph.D. studies. Her *testimonio* is

significant in understanding the political implications of how low-income Chicanas are literally pushed out of their doctorate studies. The model below reveals university and departmental tactics employed in attempts to push Liliana out of her doctorate studies, and the ways in which Liliana fought back and refused to leave or quit. She responded via acts of resistance, defiance, and grounded activism.

Responses to Challenge Racial and Gendered Microaggressions

1. Liliana reported being *isolated* and *segregated* in a public university. She responded by creating counter spaces for Women of Color at a coffee shop for support.
2. She experienced *differential* and *discriminatory treatment* based on her race, class, and gender in a hostile male-dominated academic climate. For instance, she was the *only* Chicana Ph.D. student asked to sign a “bogus contract” to formulate a Ph.D. committee. However, no other student was in her department was asked to sign a contract in order to formulate a Ph.D. committee. Also, this was not policy or procedure in her department. She responded by writing all over it and refusing to sign it.
3. Her department used *unethical conduct* and *acts of intimidation* to discredit her within her department. She responded by actively seeking out supportive faculty, despite the *character assassination* conducted by sexist male faculty that wanted her to quit.
4. The department made it difficult for her to formulate a functioning Ph.D. committee, as faculty sabotaged her by *negatively labeling* her. Liliana responded by reaching out to various faculty members until she could organize a supportive Ph.D. committee to remain in her doctorate studies. It took time, but she never quit, thus her persistence and resilience guided her throughout the process.

5. Isolation, harassment, and *unequal educational access* within her department made it difficult for her to progress toward her doctoral degree. She responded, however, by organizing a “hunger strike” on campus with her children present in order to publicly expose the unethical conduct occurring behind closed doors and illustrate that such conduct impacted people other than herself.
6. Liliana was subjected to blatant and prolonged microaggressions in her navigation through the push-out process. She responded by seeking support networks in family, friends, and additional spiritual resources to help her through the trauma.
7. Liliana refused to leave or quit her Ph.D. studies. To date, she has successfully navigated through the push-out process and is moving forward to complete her Ph.D.

Liliana used the above-mentioned tactics to successfully respond to the racial/gendered microaggressions. Most importantly, she never gave up “hope” and used various acts of resistance, defiance, and activism to challenge the push-out process. Her *testimonio* provides educators and researchers with a better understanding of what low-income Chicanas experience during the debilitating push-out process also reinforced by male Faculty of Color and cultural nationalists in public universities. Liliana’s *testimonio* is living testament to her courage, resiliency, and strength, as she successfully challenged the push-out process and continues to work toward the completion of her Ph.D. degree.

Analytical Summary of Section

This section includes the women that left their Ph.D. studies and the women that were pushed out of the Ph.D. However, three women, Winuna, Rainy Dawn, and Liliana, refused to leave or quit their doctorate programs but were nonetheless subjected to the psychologically and physiologically traumatic push-out process. To date, there is a discursive gap in educational research pertaining to the educational experiences of racial/ethnic women that leave or are pushed out of their doctorate studies. Their important *testimonios* create new knowledge and shed light on institutional types of oppressions occurring within predominantly white universities nationally.

All eight women share their educational experiences and painful memories as a conscious and political act of survival. Survival in the academy for many People of Color depends on several levels of struggle, be it physical, cultural, psychological, and/or spiritual. Our cultural intuition has the power of memory to warn us of danger. The women used *conocimiento* as a method of survival that invoked critical reflection, growth, and healing from various traumas through microaggressions in the forms of racism, unethical conduct, segregation, and hostile academic climates.¹⁶¹ Many women in the study experienced the stage of *nepantla*, where they were literally jerked from familiar spaces in the academy into a transitional space (i.e. the push out process). In time, the women also adapted to the stressors and were able to use their experiences to help others within their universities.

The types of racial and gendered microaggressions women reported were based on their race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, surname, immigration status, age, accents, and phenotypes. Additionally, the *contexts* of the racial and gendered microaggressions varied case to case but included faculty offices, classrooms, while they taught, when surrounded with faculty, when surrounded with students, in lecture halls, off campus, and in hallways. Institutional racism was operationalized toward

¹⁶¹ Anzaldúa, "Now Let us Shift..." in *This Bridge We Call Home*, 540-576.

the women through isolation, segregation, discriminatory/differential treatment, unethical conduct, hostile academic climate, intentional/deliberate harm, denial of educational access, violations of university policies, violations of Federal/State laws (i.e., Civil Rights Act, American Disability Act, and Title IX.), and privacy violations pertaining to privacy rights (FERBA).

The data findings reflect a similar qualitative case study conducted in 2007 by Harper and Hurtado on Students of Color (i.e., Asian American, Black, Latino, Native American, and White students) that reported various types of prejudice and racism in predominantly white intuitions.¹⁶² Their data analyses identified nine themes based on 278 responses by Students of Color. The themes in their study include: 1) Institutions' lack of commitment to diversity issues; 2) treatment of race as a taboo topic not to be spoken of; 3) student self-segregation; 4) variation in levels of satisfaction with college experiences based on students' race/ethnicity; 5) institutions' "bad reputations" with regards to their treatment of race and diversity issues; 6) inaccurate and overestimations of minority student experiences by White peers; 7) lack of diversity in curriculum and activities; 8) awareness of racial inequalities by minority administrators, but lack of action for fear of losing their jobs; and 9) failure on behalf of institutions to utilize research resources to assess campus racial climate.¹⁶³ There is a national pattern evident pertaining to the serious implications of systemic racism and its negative effects for underserved and working-poor communities nationwide.

The women's *responses* to racial and gendered microaggressions also varied according to their *testimonios*. Some responses include acts of resistance, defiance, political advocacy, the creation of counter spaces, activism, and support networks. In addition, women also used various healing

¹⁶² S. R. Harper and S. Hurtado "Nine Themes in Campus Racial Climates and Implications for Institutional Transformation," in *Responding to the Realities of Race on College Campuses*, ed. S.R. Harper and L. Patton (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007), no. 120, 7-24.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

practices, like prayer circles, acupuncture, yoga, *limpias* (spiritual cleansings), sweat lodges, connecting to Mother Earth, and Indigenous ceremonial practices to heal in body, mind, and spirit. These important resources helped women heal and recover, as they navigated through their doctorate studies.

Further, the *effects* of the microaggressions reported by the women reveal various psychological and physiological implications. In some cases these included chronic conditions as well as racial battle fatigue. Educational researcher, Smith, asserts that racial battle fatigue manifests itself for People of Color that experience prolonged racism in predominantly white institutions through psychological and physiological reactions. It is caused by prolonged levels of race-based stress affecting one's psychological and physiological state, and is activated and heightened through continuous exposure to racial microaggressions. Furthermore, if unchecked, the symptoms can lead to a collapsed psychological state or chronic conditions that debilitate one's health and quality of life. However, the symptoms of racial battle fatigue are in fact different for U.S. Women of Color in comparison to Men of Color. This case study reveals that two women reported having miscarriages, while others testified to additional physiological changes to their bodies such as irregular periods, missed periods, premenstrual symptoms, body aches, abdominal pain, excessive vaginal bleeding, heavy cramping, and fertility issues. Their individualized symptoms are listed in the following Table 6.2. The table reveals the serious implications of racial and gendered microaggressions to women's bodies, mind, health, and quality of life at the doctorate level.

Table 6.2: The Effects of Microaggressions to Chicanas and Native American Women that Left or Were Pushed Out of their Doctorate Degrees

Pseudonym	Psychological and Physiological Symptoms Experienced and Reported	Reproductive Issues	Additional Symptoms Reported
Juanita	Chronic depression, PTSD, isolation, rapid breathing, high cholesterol, insomnia, weight gain (10-15 lbs.), low self-esteem, trauma, tension, chronic stress, chronic anxiety, racial battle fatigue, and contemplation of suicide	Irregular Ovulation	Body pain & tension
		Irregular periods	Food Addictions
Winuna	Depression, low self-esteem, isolation, insomnia, chronic anxiety, stress, fatigue, panic attacks, migraines, headaches, trauma, chronic pain, teeth/molar grinding, rapid breathing, disconnect from body, and racial battle fatigue	Miscarriage	Yes
Nicomedes	PTSD, insomnia, hyper-vigilance, chronic stress, anxiety, nausea, vomiting, various addictions, headaches/migraines, rapid breathing, isolation, loss of appetite, exhaustion, digestive issues, weight changes, and chronic fatigue	Irregular Periods & Missed Periods	Trauma Shingles
Joy	Depression, chronic anxiety, stress, insomnia, fatigue, loss of appetite, weight loss, vomiting, nausea, rapid breathing, migraines, headaches, isolation, pain in body, and stomach aches	Irregular periods & PMS	Acne break-outs
Lillian	Chronic depression, PTSD, low self-esteem, panic attacks, chronic anxiety, distress, chronic fatigue, exhaustion, trauma, high blood pressure, rapid breathing, isolation, various mental health conditions, and racial battle fatigue	Irregular periods	Diabetes Anemia
		Excessive bleeding	
Rainy Dawn	Chronic depression, PTSD, chronic anxiety, insomnia, chronic stress, chronic fatigue, exhaustion, weight gain (45 lbs.), pain in body, high blood pressure, isolation, rapid breathing, high sugar levels, disassociate disorder, hair loss, nightmares, anger/rage, & racial battle fatigue	Heavy cramping	Acne
		Extreme PMS	Obesity
		Miscarriage	Pain in body
Deanna	Mild depression, guilt, unhappiness, pain in body, exhaustion, fatigue, rapid breathing, and trauma	Unknown	No
Liliana	Depression, PTSD, trauma, chronic anxiety, weight loss (i.e. 15-20 lbs.), chronic stress, panic attacks, chronic fatigue, physical exhaustion, hyper-vigilance, rapid breathing, isolation, low-self-esteem, loss of appetite, anger, and racial battle fatigue	PMS, Irregular periods & Pain	Kidney stones Lumps in breast

Sections 3: *Testimonios* of the Women that Completed their Ph.D.'s

This section includes the *testimonios* of Carmen, Tana, Irene, Sonya, Anna, and Angela. These particular women self-identified in the case study, as “completing their Ph.D.’s” in predominantly white public universities.

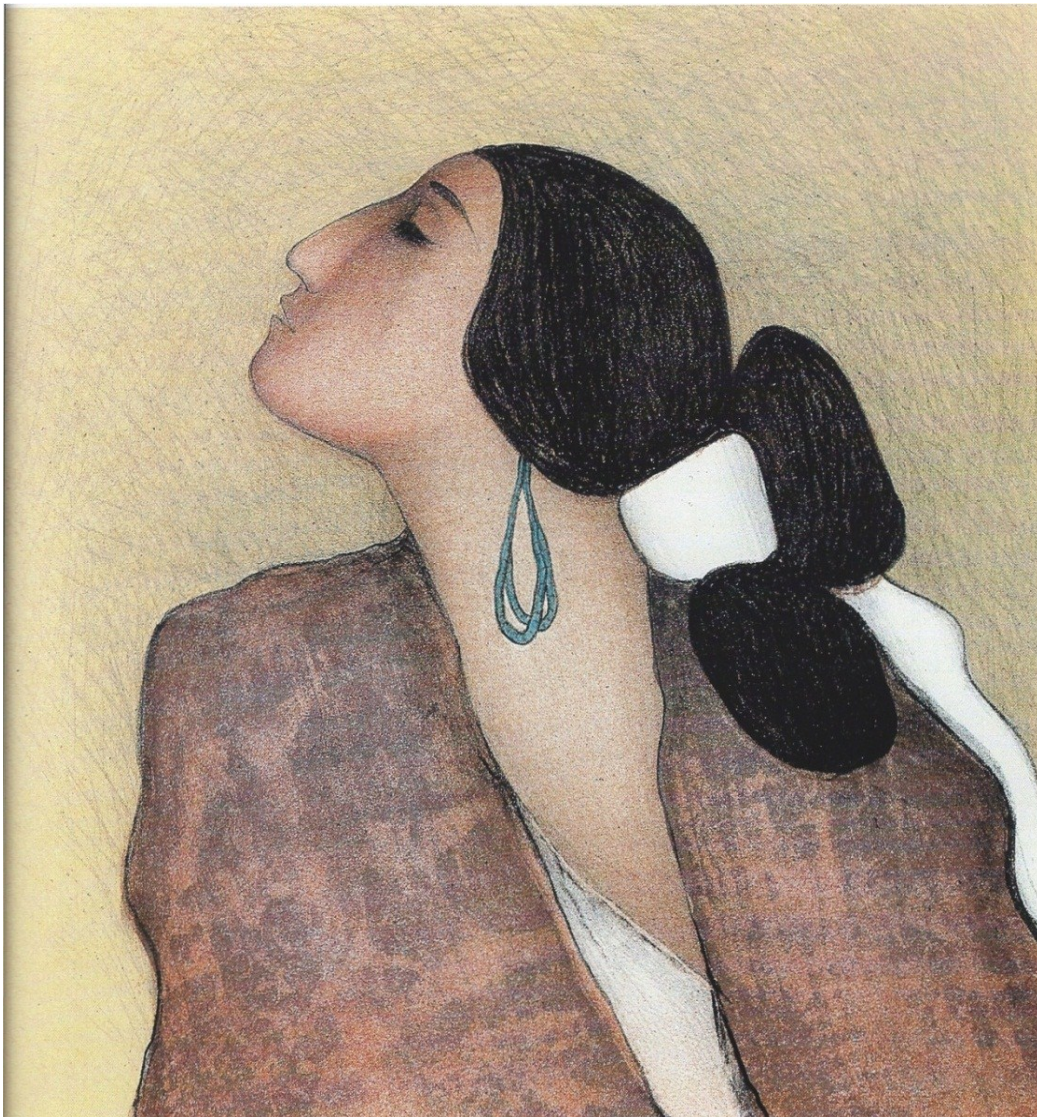


Figure 6.5: *Danya*, R. C. Gorman

Carmen's *Testimonio*: The Importance of Paying it Forward

Carmen completed her doctorate at a UC in California. She identifies as a second generation Chicana and her parents are immigrants from México. She grew up working-class and her biggest inspirations in completing the Ph.D. were her Father, son, and family. In addition, she is also dedicated to using her Ph.D., as a “critical transformative tool” in seeking change for marginalized Chicana/o communities, especially youth. Carmen is a social justice educator and her passion is directly linked to working with students and teaching at the university level.

Carmen asserts:

I went to graduate school because I was frustrated with the profession when I saw the limitations of it for Chicana/o communities... I also knew that there would be limitations in academia, but the social justice part of it was definitely a factor in me pursuing the Ph.D. I believe that ‘paying it forward’ is part of this, an important research agenda, and why I came to graduate school... We know racism is there and is blatant. We also know that sexism is there and that they are interconnected. I have learned that racism and sexism are very damaging, and unfortunately as people of color, it also hurts us and damages so many. I learned that how we pay it forward is also grounded in a decolonizing framework agenda in terms of how we teach, how we collaborate, how we work with people...

During the Ph.D., I just remember feeling sick to my stomach every day. I was also really tired and working several jobs while attending the university. My first quarter, I got three kidney infections in a month and I went to the doctor and it turned out that I have a predisposition to kidney disease. However, it's just interesting how various health related issues started to emerge in graduate school... I felt it was related to the different levels of stress that you're putting your body through which is different in graduate school... I also experienced physical manifestations to my body through anxiety and OCD, so when things got really stressful, I started to pick at my body... I've never had that issue until the time in which I was finishing my dissertation. I think it is some kind of anxiety issue that is both physiological and psychological. I think that physiologically having so much anxiety, constant deadlines, and being here manifested into what I have been doing to my body in terms of picking... I also gained weight and it was also connected to the stress... It was also a ‘different type’ of weight gain... It's like this space is just so toxic! I feel it and I've never felt comfortable here. I never felt like this is a safe academic space. I don't know—at times, I felt like everybody was hostile...

I also experienced anxiety attacks especially during the time that I had to file the final dissertation deadline... During this time, I had to isolate myself a lot just to get it done, but even after finishing my Ph.D. I still hate walking around the halls of my department. I

just don't want to run into people that have internalized this academic sense of toxicity... And so, that means being responsible because if we're going to transform these academic spaces we can't replicate what we have gone through to others... I've seen certain professors say, 'Well, I went through this ritual and you have to get used to it too.' I think its bullshit and to be successful does not mean you have to step on people and put others through bullshit to prove ourselves as scholars. So, I think if you survive, then you need to 'pay that forward' and help others survive this place....

Also, the contexts of the microaggressions occurred in various spaces within the university for example, in classrooms, while teaching, with peers, with faculty, in teaching seminars, and in her department. The psychological and physiological effects Carmen reported from prolonged exposure to microaggressions include: isolation, stress, acute anxiety, back pain, depression, weight gain, skin conditions, nausea, vomiting, panic attacks, and increased sickness via continuous infections due to a taxed immune system. Carmen's *testimonio* preserves an important political narrative of resiliency and survival that she used to strategically navigate throughout her doctorate studies. For example some of her survival strategies used while navigating through her Ph.D. are listed below.

Responses to Challenge Racial and Gendered Microaggressions

1. Carmen had an organized "plan of action" prior to entering her Ph.D. program. For example, she knew she wanted to work with a certain faculty advisor and met with him several times to secure a *respectful* mentor/student relationship.
2. Also, her Chicano faculty adviser strategically "matched" her educational research interests and aspirations.
3. Carmen said it was vital to know when to be *strategic* in terms of challenging racism and when to use silence, as an *act of resistance*, in higher education to avoid burning-out.
4. She also suggested surrounding oneself with supportive faculty, great colleagues, and a community also invested in social justice research.

5. She the importance of being critical, strategic, and mindful in picking one's battles, and thus sharing educational experiences with additional Scholars of Color to release the negative effects.
6. Carmen also used acts of resistance, defiance, and resiliency to navigate through systematic oppressions at the Ph.D. level.
7. Carmen invoked counter spaces inside the university to surround herself with additional Theorists of Color to create a supportive feminist space in the academy. Here, she also sought out Chicana feminists to publish with and jointly present with at conferences.
8. Lastly, she also created *supportive networks* with family, communities, students, and colleagues while pursuing her Ph.D.

With this in mind, Carmen responds to the microaggressions with an organized and strategic plan of action that ensured her “survival” necessary to successfully complete her Ph.D.

Carmen created several counter spaces within the university that surrounded her with social justice educators also invested in creating change for Chicanos throughout the educational pipeline. Carmen selected a discipline that honored her personal, cultural, and lived experiences, as a working-class Chicana who valued her various attributes. Carmen concluded her *testimonio* by stressing the significance of engaging in research that is “bigger than oneself.” In other words, as a Chicana feminist educator, she believes that it is also our responsibility to share our knowledge with the next generation, thus create positive academic climates that embrace diversity and cultural richness. Carmen concluded her *testimonio* by emphasizing that it is vital to “pay it forward” by working diligently with marginalized students in order to create greater educational opportunities throughout the educational pipeline.

Tana's *Testimonio*: The Significance of Seeking Balance in the Academy

Tana completed her Ph.D. in the state of California at a UC. She identifies as American Indian and Mexican. Tana is also from a working-class background and grew up in Texas. Tana asserts that the academy is highly competitive and mirrors larger societal issues that include racism, classism, sexism, and homophobia within Euro-centered institutions. She asserts that it is imperative to remain “balanced” throughout the doctorate process and to stay focused on the objective to finish. Here is her *testimonio*.

Tana shares:

What has *always* motivated me is just the ‘injustices’ that I saw around me, particularly the injustices that happened not only to me, but...to my parents, to people. Those are the biggest motivators for me and just hearing the stories of—the tragedies, really, generations after generation it happened in my family. This cannot continue to be set up generation after generation... Something has to change and honestly that’s also why I pursued this academic path. I’m just tired of this generational trauma and believe it is important challenges these types of racial injustices...

I recall during my graduate studies that I enrolled in an anthropology course and, during the second week of class, had a heated discussion with a white woman about indigenous issues in México. She proceeded to tell me that what I was saying wasn’t true because she had been there and hadn’t seen what I had spoken of... I challenged her, asking whether she really believed that she was the ‘ultimate authority’ and she dismissed me. No one spoke up in that class, not even the professor, and I withdrew from it.

On another occasion, I was enrolled in class in education and we were having a heated discussion... I think it was the argument of how class predetermines race. A white male student kept going on and on making a point about this. I was upset because a wealthy white male student was speaking directly to Students of Color about how oppression is all about race. I was shaking my head in disagreement. I didn’t interrupt him, just shook my head in disbelief. He snapped at me yelling ‘don’t you shake your head at me...’ I replied back to him saying something strongly worded. Again no one said anything, not the professor, no one. I did have some female students come up to me after class and thank me for saying something back to that student. I will never forget that moment and that person... I don’t respect him and he continued in his sexist comments and attitude towards me throughout our time at UCLA.

In graduate school, I think things that I experienced other people would call racism, but in the context of where I came from (Texas) and where I grew up, racism was *always* around me... The academic environment overall was definitely hostile and I think if it

weren't for my strong personality, I think it could have hurt a lot more, but I'm a tough person and as a student, I guess I wore my 'armor' a little thicker.... [Also] You cannot lose yourself in the academy either nor does it define you. I think that's one of the 'healthiest things' I've done to this day is know that the academy doesn't define who I am. If I were to lose my job today, the thing I would be most worried about is obviously my 'financial stability,' but my academic job, no. It is the same thing with the Ph.D. program, you have to be a person outside of it because it can consume you and you have to cultivate relationships outside and within the academy.

I also definitely think it had an impact on my overall health. I think the stress of just all aspects of the program, like my physical health, definitely suffered especially in the first couple of years there. It was a little bit better later, but it's still the stress that you internalize, so it is important to stop and take time to heal... It definitely impacted my body and I think it also impacted my spiritual health... I would say that my quality of life in terms of financial insecurity was a big one for me, as financial burdens also took a toll in addition to the amount of time devoted to study, and sometimes balancing that between like taking a break and needing just to focus on being human gets lost...

The types of racial and gendered microaggressions that Tana experienced were based on her race, ethnicity, class, gender, and surname in a predominantly white public university. The contexts of the microaggressions occurred in various places, such as classrooms, while teaching, in graduate seminars, with faculty, with peers, campus, and within her department. Tana did all in her power to remain balanced through her Ph.D. studies and quickly learned to be vigilant about her surroundings, and particularly when to engage and when to strategically preserve her energies.

Tana reported various psychological and physiological effects from racial and gendered microaggressions which include: mild depression, insomnia, isolation, high blood pressure, headaches, self-doubt, clenching of the jaw, low self-esteem, acute stress, pain in her body, high cholesterol, weight gain (20 lbs.), as well as reproductive issues like extreme PMS, heavy cramping, and pelvic pain. Additional symptoms include carpal tunnel and irritable bowel syndrome caused from skeletal/muscular issues due to sitting and writing too long which causes additional strain to the physical body. Tana stressed the importance of listening to the cues of the

body, mind, and spirit and to know when it is time to take breaks in order to have a healthier experience while pursuing the Ph.D.

Furthermore, Tana also used various resources to respond to the racial/gendered microaggressions while pursuing her Ph.D. in a predominantly white public university. Some of the responses that she used to create a balanced approach in the academy include the following tenets listed below.

Responses to Challenge Racial and Gendered Microaggressions

1. Tana stated that it was important to have a *supportive faculty advisor* at the Ph.D. level that respects your academic contributions to the discipline
2. To surround yourself with supportive colleagues, open faculty, and great friends while navigating through the doctorate.
3. If possible, for long-term economic success, try and secure stable *funding* prior to entering a Ph. D. program.
4. Solicit all university resources diligently, especially funding.
5. When formulating your Ph.D. committee makes sure that all faculty members work well together, if not it can cause problems later (i.e., academic politics).
6. Avoid battles that drain your body, mind, and spirit in classrooms. Engage *strategically* and choose your battles wisely.
7. Tana also maintained a close *relationship* with her family in Texas and took time to visit them out of state for additional support, as much as possible.
8. She also utilized spiritual resources to heal and re-connect her to family's cultural practices. For example, Tana participated in Catholic ceremonies that honored la *Virgen de Guadalupe* and reconnected to her family, culture, and elders.

9. Tana also utilized Indigenous resources for healing, reflection, and spiritual rejuvenation. For example, she used water and *limpias* (spiritual cleansings), as a ritual to heal in body, mind, and spirit.

Tana shared these important strategies and responses to racial and gendered microaggressions in hopes that these responses and strategies would also help additional Communities of Color navigate through their doctorate degrees with human dignity, vital information, and guidance. Tana concluded her *testimonio* by advising future generations of Women of Color scholars to always be mindful of seeking balance in the academy and to not neglect other parts of one's life such as our families, partner's, children, teaching, and parenting. She reminds us that the Ph.D. is *only* one small part of the larger picture.

Irene's Testimonio: The Ph.D. as a Collective Family Effort

Irene completed her Ph.D. at a UC in California. She identifies as Chicana and from a working-class background. Irene has three brothers and two sisters, and is the *first* member of her family to attend college. She stated that her family was her main inspiration throughout her Ph.D. studies, especially her grandmother. She also said that completing her Ph.D. was a “collective family effort” and her degree is currently mounted in her family’s home.

Irene says:

In general, I have mixed feelings about graduate school because I felt it was a very isolating and exhausting experience, but I also benefited from various support networks. I had really great mentors, good friends, and a supportive family. I was fortunate to receive funding from organizations that also emphasized things like building community, working from a social justice framework, and a supportive Chicana faculty advisor... I really hated going to class. I hated course work! I couldn’t wait for that part of the program to be over... I felt like students were constantly showing off, so just watching my white peers talk with confidence in class was really intimidating. I’ve heard horror stories of other places and I don’t think people here are out to sabotage each other, but there is a strong sense of competition... One case comes to mind when our graduate advisor told us (my cohort) our first year that we should consider using the learning center on campus for help with writing, especially if we come from interdisciplinary backgrounds such as ethnic or women’s studies.

I also felt tired a lot, but it was really bad around the academic milestones. I remember right after I advanced to candidacy and I wanted to celebrate, but I couldn’t because I was just so exhausted... Then it was like reoccurring—I mean right after when I turned in my dissertation draft, I remember feeling like I should celebrate feeling like I should do something and not being able to because again, I was so tired... I’ve struggled with being exhausted... I feel like I lose weight and gain weight because I’m stressed all the time... So there’s been times where I’ve been so stressed out that my meal cycle is not regular (i.e., forgetting to eat or neglecting to eat). It is like being so stressed that I’m just not nourishing my body. This was especially the case when I was writing and trying to finish my dissertation...

What has helped me get through so many hurdles is knowing that I did not do it alone, the sense of pulling in my brothers and sisters to help me with my dissertation. I mentioned traveling with friends to get writing done, how this was as isolating as it can be. I did my best to draw on, the strengths of other people. And so for me, this experience, yeah is isolating and lonely and what not but it’s been such a shared experience for me. I shared it with so many people... All my diplomas, I don’t even have them. They are at my parents’ house... They’re not mine... They are theirs. And so,

feeling accomplished and feeling the ownership of what I've been able to accomplish, but it's been an incredibly collective experience for me with my research participants, with the students that I interviewed, with the teachers whose classrooms I observed. It's been really collective.

It was also very painful to watch other women get pushed out of their Ph.D. programs. Looking back, I think students are also set up to fail, like to be admitted on a probationary basis and so that was incredibly frustrating. So, to see these things happening to women at different stages of their career, it's hard to not get caught up in it right? Or it's hard to not get caught up in discouragement, to see these incredibly successful women dealing with bull shit like that... How are we supposed to maintain our hope when that's happening right in front of us...? It was testing all the time. I have always been very selective about whom to trust in academia, as well... I feel like the quality of the relationships that I had with people and that I chose to trust was incredibly amazing and supportive for me. It just takes a little time to figure out who those people are.

The university environment and our department was a strange place because there's a lot of wealth and evident economic disparities... I was just thinking of some of the incidents that were racist and sexist like I was walking downtown this white, fat-looking guy said *hey señorita!* I was so irritated... In addition, a couple of times I was pulled over by the police to see where I was going, so things like that occurred just living there.

The types of racial and gendered microaggressions that Irene experienced were based on her race, class, and gender in a predominantly white public university. The contexts of the microaggressions occurred in classrooms, with colleagues, while teaching, and in her department. However, Irene also experienced microaggressions outside the university, as evident in the sexist/racist comments that she and her friends experienced walking downtown, as well as being pulled over by the police for no reason while driving in the surrounding wealthy neighborhood.

During graduate school, Irene was diagnosed with the following symptoms: high cholesterol and subclinical hypothyroidism. She also struggled with acne and weight fluctuations. Additional symptoms from racial and gendered microaggressions included fatigue, exhaustion, isolation, acute stress, tension/pain in her body, hyper-vigilance, and nutritional

imbalances. She also mentioned that one of her biggest regrets during the Ph.D. experience was not taking time to “celebrate” after successfully completing academic milestones in her Ph.D. studies because she was too tired, isolated, and physically exhausted.

Irene responded to the racial and gendered microaggressions she endured by creating internal and external support systems throughout her experience in pursuit of the doctorate degree. Some of the ways in which she responded are listed below.

Responses to Navigate through Racial and Gendered Microaggressions

1. Irene created various *internal university support networks* to succeed, but took time to establish networks that she could *trust* (i.e., faculty, colleagues, and friends).
2. She secured a *supportive faculty advisor* that was invested in her long-term success.
3. She also secured *stable funding* for the Ph.D. through various resources.
4. She created *counter spaces* with supportive colleagues and Scholars of Color.
5. Irene secured a Ph.D. committee that worked well together and invested in her success.
6. She was *determined* to use her Ph.D. as a “social justice tool” to work with marginalized students at the college level.
7. Irene also organized *external support systems* to keep her grounded through the Ph.D. experience and these included her parents, family, and her home space.
8. Irene was surrounded by love and support from her family, especially her grandmother.
9. She also *strategically* picked her battles within the university.

Irene’s *testimonio* sheds light on the Ph.D. experience with various support networks in place. She also teaches one the importance of entering a Ph.D. program prepared, but also reminds one to rest, especially after passing each academic milestone, as “exhaustion” can occur throughout the Ph.D. process. Additionally, her *testimonio* informs one of the importance of devoting time to

see one's family, grandparents, and parents, as they are also a source of empowerment and support. Irene shared these responses in hopes that they would guide and/or help larger Communities of Color navigate through their Ph.D. in a healthy and positive manner.

Sonya's *Testimonio*: Armed with Knowledge and Ready for the Ph.D.!

Sonya attended a UC in the State of California. She identifies as Chicana and as coming from a working-class socio-economic background. Her desire to study social justice issues is connected to her lived experiences and strong commitment to creating a more diverse and welcoming educational pipeline for marginalized students. Sonya knew that her academic trajectory would include a Ph.D. to address and study educational inequities.

Sonya states:

At any early age, I knew that I would attend a UC near my home. I selected a university that was close enough to my family, but that also allowed me to live on my own. I strategically picked a UC where I could study Education and issues of race. I took time to research the university, as well as meet with its faculty members... My experiences, as a Chicana were in fact gendered, as I met with some white male faculty members, but did not feel any type of connection to their research. However, as a woman it was hard because I could feel the different expectations, plus I was pregnant. However, I had the support of my family throughout the process. In addition, my strong sense of faith guided me throughout the Ph.D. experience, as a working mother... My strong sense of faith has guided me during my graduate studies. While in graduate school, I worked with a great faculty advisor and amazing Chicana colleagues and friends. During this time, I also worked a lot. I enjoyed working on issues to benefit the Latino educational pipeline, and address educational inequities for marginalized communities. My Ph.D. experience began with securing a faculty advisor that believed in me and also cared about social justice issues. After meeting with him, I knew instantly that he was a 'good person' and that I wanted to work with him.

During graduate school, I felt safe and protected, but that was because I had a great faculty advisor and a support network set up in the department. I felt very fortunate, as I was also aware of how racism played out in the university. Microaggressions, however, have a way of chipping away at your self-confidence and/or our research in the university... I did experience microaggressions, but in relation to my research, as my research was in areas of race, racism, and gender... The academy is always trying to find ways to discredit our work, particularly white scholars... When microaggressions occur, it takes time to process them, but you can feel them in your body... Some of the microaggressions that I have experienced have occurred mostly at conferences or have been perpetrated by white colleagues... They have varied from subtle to blatant, but my body just took them in.

I have learned, however, to respond to microaggressions with confidence. Now, I prepare ahead of time when I interact with white scholars, so I am very strategic as to what I share with certain scholars... I also learned to pick my battles... I remember a

particularly telling experience wherein I was having a discussion with an older white faculty member about Proposition 209. He had a tendency to dominate the conversation and would make physical signs of disrespect while I was talking... He just kept interrupting and saying the most racist things... I was just shocked that these were “progressive” scholars and yet their dialogues were very racist.

In time, I found comfort in talking with other Chicanas about our racist experiences, so I had a community of women to talk and share ideas with. In class, we would sit together and support each other. If one of us would say something in class, we would back each other up and confront racist comments strategically. I think being a strong unified collective in classes is important to challenge racism.

The types of racial and gendered microaggressions Sonya endured were based on her race, class, surname, and gender in her Ph.D. studies. The context of the microaggressions occurred in classrooms, lectures, with faculty, as well as at additional academic sites outside the university, such as conferences. Some of the symptoms she reported from microaggressions included: depression, headaches, chronic anxiety, ulcers, fatigue, chronic stress, weight loss, loss of appetite, physical exhaustion, tightening of chest, overwhelmed, self-policing, self-doubt, rapid breathing, isolation, health issues, lack of self-confidence, and insomnia. Also, some of the physiological changes to her body include irregular periods and she also experienced a miscarriage. In hindsight, Sonya wishes that she would have sought out health related resources to help her deal with the chronic anxiety and stress on a deeper level during her Ph.D.

Further, Sonya utilized many strategies to successfully navigate through her Ph.D. studies. Some of her responses are listed below.

Responses to Racial and Gendered Microaggressions

1. Sonya states that it is vital to have a *supportive faculty advisor* and to create a nurturing academic space in the university.
2. She encourages one to create *supportive* academic spaces with colleagues that one respects and to publish and present conference panels together.

3. She emphasizes the importance of securing *funding* to help navigate through the economic hardships of college.
4. Sonya realized she could not be afraid and had to branch out to meet good quality people while in grad school.
5. Her *faith* and/or spirituality kept her grounded. Faith is vital for survival.
6. Sonya stressed the importance of *family* and that she had unconditional support and love from her sisters, father, mother, and grandmother.
7. She developed long-term healthy friendships with other women that were supportive.
8. She was *strategic* about networking and seeking resources.
9. Sonya advises that when one feels stressed, it is important to take time to rest and recover in body, mind, and spirit.
10. She illustrates the benefit of preparing ahead of time to *combat* racist microaggressions and/or respond to racist comments.
11. However, she also advises one to be *strategic* and pick one's battles to avoid "burning out!"
12. She realized the significance of seeking out support services for emotional trauma (i.e. mental health services or talking to friends, etc.) Most importantly, she warns against internalizing racism.
13. Sonya also strongly suggests that one *time* for one's significant other (i.e., a date night for relaxation).

Sonya strategically navigated through her Ph.D. studies with the support of her family, good friends, a great faculty advisor, and supportive colleagues. Her *testimonio* teaches us the importance of researching a Ph.D. program and its faculty members prior to entering a

doctoral studies program. In addition, her *testimonio* advocates for one to take charge of the educational path by planning ahead and seeking out mentors that supports a social justice agenda. Sonya concluded her *testimonio* by stating that we have to have faith and hope in what we are doing as educators, because we are contributing to active change for the next generation of scholars. Therefore, remaining grounded to our faith is connected to our survival in the academy. Sonya remains invested in using her Ph.D. as a political tool in service of helping larger marginalized Latino communities.

**Ana's *Testimonio*: The Academy Gatekeepers That Abuse
Their Positions in Research Institutions**

Ana is the first member of her family and tribe to obtain a Ph.D. She believes that Native ways present a different worldview in comparison to most individualistic university systems.

Ana states that within her community, she grew up with a sense of humbleness that encourages her to care about others. Therefore, she believes that these opposing worldviews also play out in the academy through systematic racism, white privilege, and gatekeepers.

Ana states:

I went to grad school on the east coast... The university has a museum of anthropology and I've heard stories that they possess close to 1500 pairs of human remains from Native tribes... Native scholars are very uneasy working there with the white gatekeepers in terms of identifying the remains of Native people because they lack respectful research ethics. In 1990, a law came out stating that Native tribes must be consulted regarding the remains of Native Peoples, if related. However, the problem started, as researchers basically declared everything to be 'culturally unidentifiable' from the get go. So tribes could not give consent. All of these political issues happened before I started the Ph.D. program. Overall there was just a blatant disregard for Native peoples used as cultural objects by the museum. When I started the Ph.D., I had no clue that all of these things were going on. I was informed by a Native scholar who invited me to be part of a larger group of Native American grad students invested in supporting each other in the university.

During my first semester, I obtained all this information and it was very overwhelming for me... I just started crying because it was basically evil—meaning the institutional politics that play out are incredibly racist and I can see how they play out against Native Americans, especially in relation to white archeologists and the unethical things they do in the name of 'research.' There was this one white faculty member who was very disrespectful to Native people... I was at a couple of different Native North America talks with a faculty, but the kinds of things that he would say were just extremely racist and problematic, but nobody would check him on it. Although our department is perceived as 'progressive,' there was unethical research and racist actions occurring towards Native remains and artifacts at the university museum. During my studies, I would speak up and was quickly labeled a 'trouble maker.'

One semester, I was supposed to work at the museum, but that was a real big problem for me because I could not work with Native human remains without consent of their tribes, as it was disrespectful. My adviser understood and supported my decision. Later, I received an email from one of the white female gatekeepers from the museum telling me

in the most derogatory and imaginable terms that all Native tribes aren't the same, so she made me feel like a fifth grader and shamed me for speaking up. No matter what I said, it didn't matter because she had made up her mind and viewed my idea as stupid... I was also singled out by abusive faculty for speaking up. It was very difficult during this time. But in the end, it was about faculty and gatekeepers' abusing their power and so much bullshit. I ended up not doing an internship in a place where I feel like I had every right to do one precisely because the gatekeepers were completely narrow minded and relied on so called "scientific ways" of dealing with human remains—ways that were disrespectful to the Native remains in their possession... My adviser promised me that if I couldn't work in the museum that he would not work there either which was really supportive of him. My advisor took on this 'big fight' personally because he stood up for me and for Native tribes. My adviser was an incredible mentor, the personal sacrifices he was willing to make to raise these types of important issues in the department is to be respected.

Soon after, different racial/ethnic groups aligned to navigate through the blatant racist acts occurring academically in our various fields. We responded to the cultural insensitivities by organizing a big group of graduate students. Our motto was "Ethnography as Activism" and we called ourselves the Repatriation Sub-Group of Ethnography as Activism. It was during this time, that faculty stopped putting on the nice face towards me, as the only Native American woman in the department. However, I also became the target of all their hatred. There were lots of rumors and gossip by faculty, but it was never about my abilities as a researcher; instead it was gossip by faculty like 'she's a fucking bitch!' it was an extremely hostile and unwelcoming climate. People were just saying all these terrible things about me, thus I started feeling very depressed and eventually saw a therapist to deal with all of this.

Later, I ended up being hospitalized because I got some kind of virus and I think that the stress was just at such a high level, that my body was not able to fight it off. I was hospitalized for a while and the doctors thought it was heart failure; it was scary and I did all in my power to recover. I had strong allies and a supportive family during these times. It took my whole family to put me back together. It's been a journey, but I feel so grateful that I completed the Ph.D. and am now back home. I think when you experience these types of traumatic experiences, as you take time to recover you come back a very different person. You come back more determined and stronger! Hence, you cannot be taken down anymore, and it makes you fight harder for Native people...

Ana experienced blatant and prolonged racial and gendered microaggressions in her university, as she was singled-out due to her race, ethnicity, gender, and class. The contexts of the microaggressions occurred throughout the university, especially with white faculty members that used unethical conduct, discriminatory/differential treatment, character assassination, and verbal abuse towards Ana. For example, Ana describes her academic climate as extremely hostile and

racist. She states, “I think that I had been stressed for such a long time; it just became such a hostile place to be, so I dreaded having to go to the department. I didn’t want to deal with it and because I kind of feel like I got casted... I stopped going to talks because I no longer wanted to participate. It was too hard to deal with the hatred.” Ana was singled out because white faculties were also threatened by her courage, resiliency, and determination to seek ethical codes when conducting research on Native human remains. She assumed agency and held the gatekeepers accountable for their questionable research practices in the university.

The symptoms that Ana reported from the prolonged racial and gendered microaggressions include: depression PTSD, flashbacks, anxiety attacks, insomnia, hyper-vigilance, fatigue isolation, grinding of your teeth, weight gain (20 pounds), low self-esteem, exhaustion, diagnoses of diabetes-type two, chronic headaches, racial battle fatigue, and hospitalization due to prolonged exposure to stress. In addition, some of the physiological changes Ana reported to her body include: irregular periods, heavy cramping, and missed periods.

Ana navigated through her doctorate studies, as she was determined to “fight back” by completing her Ph.D., and thus use her degree for larger political advocacy. She strategically navigated through the Ph.D. with the love and support of her family, friends, and community. Ana stated that her family would not allow her to quit and helped her heal and recover after each battle. Also, she was politically supported by a tenured faculty advisor that intervened on her behalf and held abusive faculty accountable for their intolerance, racism, and cultural ignorance. Below are additional responses that Ana used to challenge aggressive microaggressions in her predominantly white male-dominated university.

Responses to Challenge Racial and Gendered Microaggressions

1. Ana was strategic and tried to “master the university politics.” She also protected herself by seeking a supportive faculty advisor that guided her through the university politics.
2. Ana created counter spaces with additional graduate students to publish conference papers, as well as to jointly expose racist practices in her university.
3. Ana remained connected to her Native community for *balance* while in graduate school.
4. It is vital to have a supportive tenured faculty advisor that is not afraid of hostile politics and that can guide you through the Ph.D. process.
5. She built strong allies and networks across diverse communities, and thus was open to support also from unexpected spaces.
6. Native students organized writing groups to keep each other accountable during the Ph.D. process.
7. Ana sought out friends who really pushed her to exercise and get out, especially if depressed.
8. She exercised daily: cardio classes helped Ana’s recovery process, as she had more energy to function and release stress.
9. Ana sought out services via therapy, as her mental health was compromised during the Ph.D. process.
10. It was important to know when to seek help and not be afraid to reach out for it. Ana realized it was important to avoid internalizing the abuse, trauma, or negative comments from faculty.
11. She visited family and loved ones back home as much as possible for recovery, love, and understanding.

12. Ana also created a community of support so that in the case of verbal attacks, she did not feel alone and had someone to talk. She encourages one to avoid self-isolation.

Ana's *testimonio* teaches us the importance of academic survival and remaining grounded throughout the Ph.D. process. Her ability to navigate through various systematic oppressions reminds us of the significance of continuing to strive for higher standards in conducting research, as well as establishing respectful academic climates that also hold faculty accountable within research universities.

Angela's Testimonio: The Toll of the Ph.D. to My Body, Health, and Wellness

Angela identifies as low-income and from the Navajo nation. She completed her Ph.D. at a public university in the Southwest and is currently teaching at a liberal arts college. Angela raises important educational issues about isolation, struggle, and sacrifice during her Ph.D. studies, thus the significance of preparing for the Ph.D. ahead of time in body, mind, and spirit.

Angela shares:

I was the only Native American woman in my Ph.D. program and to date the only female archaeologist to graduate from my program. The racism I encountered was primarily ignorance, it's hard to describe... I was told that the university 'took affirmative action seriously...' Conversations on topics pertaining to Native Americans in Archeology in class came to a halt whenever I participated... Some of my classmates made no secret of their disdain for tribal consultation. Early on, I sought out support in the American Indian Studies Department... I have pretty much felt like an observer in my classes, as peers were unwilling to engage me in a conversation because I'm Native and they felt that I did not really get it...? I had a tendency to speak up in classes, so I would characterize it as loneliness...

I tried to drop out several times because I felt that I had to get out of the department for my own mental health... And every time, I was strongly encouraged to stay and reminded that I was a role model... However, there were some instances when white folks started pouring out profanity related to Native American tribes. It's like they forgot I was Native American and standing right there, so it was an overall hostile environment... They were middle-class white students and very much reflected the make-up of the department with white American values. Then here I come from the reservation, so the entire process of the doctorate was isolating... The demands of Ph.D. program are: you live, you breathe, you research... I didn't want to be too far from my family, but my life centered on the university and the stress that was created there, as there was constantly something to do in graduate school and if I deviated from the plan, to go on a hike or to do whatever, I felt guilty. I felt like there was this constant guilt of academic performance and it was just an unhealthy existence...

Teaching in a university has not been fulfilling, as my intention was to work with Native students... To date, I teach very few Navajo students, as our Native American students are a small minority and I've kind of formulated the conclusion that I might actually be working towards leaving the university system. I think the ultimate goal for me is to move over to teaching at the Navajo college on the reservation because its community... The bureaucracy in the university is difficult. Plus, I just don't want to do it. I would rather be working on the reservation cultivating my garden and being able to come home and enjoy my time with my fiancé and his sons... I need to change the situation and I'm hoping that sort of pulling myself away from the more traditional research, professor role,

and into more of an educator parent role will help... On the reservation, my concerns are more practical, like creating safe roads, water access, and electricity in tribal areas. However, in the university, everything is just academic and abstract...

In the six months leading up to my final dissertation defense, I stopped ovulating. I also saw a Dr. and found out that I had high blood pressure and high triglycerides which are the direct results of my weight gain. I gained like 30 pounds while preparing for final exams. I also experienced heavy cramping for about six months; it was pretty close to what I feel like crippling would be... It was like my body shut down and I was not getting enough sleep and eating crap the whole time. I'm seeing the doctor more frequently and working with the doctor and a dietitian, so I'm getting my body back to normal and trying really hard to find some time to just de-stress. I also started grinding my teeth while I was writing my dissertation and broke a molar...

The types of microaggressions that Angela experienced were based on her race, ethnicity, class, gender, and age in a predominantly white public university. Angela's *testimonio* is important in understanding her educational experiences, as a Native American woman that included sacrifice, commitment, survival, and struggle. The context of the racial and gendered microaggressions occurred in graduate courses, classrooms, with faculty, with peers, and throughout her department.

Angela reported that she experienced various psychological and physiological effects from microaggressions while pursuing her Ph.D. These ranged from subtle to chronic conditions. Some of her symptoms include depression, acute stress, dissociative disorder, PTSD, insomnia, fatigue, isolation, withdrawn, weight gain (approximately 30 pounds), high blood pressure, high triglycerides, high cholesterol, panic attacks, chronic anxiety, teeth grinding/molar grinding, chronic lower back pain, and various addictions. Angela also said that her overall quality of life "diminished" and that "most of [her] Ph.D. program was just a very stressful experience." Although Angela completed her Ph.D., she also contemplated leaving her program, but her father reminded her that her degree was also representative of serving a greater purpose. He reminded her that the Navajo tribe had also invested in her education. Angela's *testimonio* reveals her

courage, agency, and resilience, as she fought through the various oppressions that she experienced in a predominantly white department. Angela shared her reasons for almost leaving her doctorate studies in hopes that this information could help others prepare for the Ph.D. experience with dignity and respect.

Reasons Angela felt like *leaving* her Ph.D. studies

1. She felt *separated* from her family, as well as extremely homesick. There was little time to visit her family and this connection was very important to her.
2. The *academic curriculum* was traditional, boring, and outdated.
3. The lack of Native American *support systems* in place in her department. She was also *isolated* from her Navajo community, reservation, and family.
4. Her *academic climate* and *learning environment* was hostile, racist, and consisted predominantly of a white middle-class constituency.
5. She felt *isolated* and *out of place* in her Ph.D. program due to a *lack of diversity* in her department and university.
6. It was difficult to navigate through the *mental health* issues that escalated over time causing depression, chronic stress, and fatigue.
7. Navigating through continuous racism put her in a continual state of anxiety, acute stress, and her body, mind, and health deteriorated through the process.

Here, Angela's educational experiences teach us the importance of arming ourselves with knowledge and learning from these types of painful/traumatic experiences. She reminds us that we must seek healthier ways of navigating through the doctorate. With this in mind, Angela also sought out various navigational strategies to respond to the racial/gendered microaggressions. For instance, she used the following tactics listed below (1-10) to guide her through the process.

Responses to Challenge Racial/Gendered Microaggressions

1. She created an *internal support network* with other Native American women on campus.
2. She used *activism*, as an important incentive to ground her during her Ph.D. studies.
3. She took time to *get away* from academia to visit family on the reservation.
4. Angela also used *hobbies* to cope with stress such as exercising, cooking, and drumming.
5. She created *counter spaces* outside the university to heal in body, mind, and spirit.
6. She secured a supportive *faculty adviser* that also respected her tribal interests and Native research.
7. She sought out *good quality colleagues* and friends in the university to navigate through the doctorate in a supportive academic environment.
8. Angela taught other Native students how to navigate through the university system to ensure support and, more importantly, retention for the next generation.
9. She sought to tap into all Native American *funding resources* and *university student services* for financial support, as funding is vital for *economic survival* in the academy.
10. Finally, she took time to rest in body, mind, and spirit throughout the Ph.D. process.

In summary, Angela shared these important strategies in her *testimonio* to guide additional Native American and Indigenous communities regarding the “political realities” of a doctorate degree. It is vital to not “romanticize” the Ph.D. experience, but instead to arm oneself with knowledge in order to strategically navigate through the educational process in a healthy and positive manner. Angela completed her Ph.D. and remains invested in creating change for her Navajo community via teaching, advocating for greater educational opportunities, and conducting social justice research.

Analytical Summary of Sections

This section includes the women in the case study that completed their Ph.D. studies in predominantly white public universities. Women used *conocimiento* as a critical pedagogy that allowed them to use their experiences, knowledge, and painful memories in the service of helping others. With this in mind, they developed new survival skills to heal in a manner that allowed them to reconnect their bodies, minds, and spirits from the lived realities of combat, trauma, and persecution through *conocimiento*. Here, the women also made a conscious transition to leave behind the negative emotions, grief, loss, and trauma that once blocked them from their full potential. Thus, they re-build those emotions with new dreams, hopes, and visions of honoring and understanding profound lived experiences with greater clarity, peace, and responsibility as human beings.¹⁶⁴

The women in this section also reported having to navigate through systematic racism and additional forms of oppression during their Ph.D. The *types* of microaggressions reported by the women were based on their race, ethnicity, class, gender, surname, age, accents, and phenotypes. Additionally, the *contexts* of the racial and gendered microaggressions varied case to case. The contexts of where the microaggressions occurred also varied and included: classrooms, while teaching, in faculty offices, on campus, with faculty, with students, in lecture halls, with colleagues, within departments, and off campus. Additional ways in which institutionalized racism was enacted upon these women included: isolation, hostile academic climates, discriminatory and differential treatment, and violations of university policies/procedures.

The women's responses to microaggressions also varied and included tenets of Third Space Feminism. For example, many women invoked *sitios y lengua* (spaces and languages/tongues), as a subversive strategy to re-negotiate power relations, as they navigated through their Ph.D.'s. Third Space Feminism provides an alternative approach to challenging philosophically and psychologically

¹⁶⁴ Anzaldúa, "Now Let Us Shift," *This Bridge We Call Home*, 543-578.

male-dominated systems of power in history, cultural nationalism, sexuality, and hegemonic discourses.¹⁶⁵ This politicized consciousness allows women to use *sitios y lenguas* to speak, create, and resist from a *strategically* situated space, and disrupt power dynamics associated with dominance and oppression.¹⁶⁶ Some examples of using *sitios y lenguas* include acts of resistance, defiance, advocacy, counterpaces, and activism— thus enabling them to use their voices for change. Many of these resources helped the women navigate through systematic racism, white privilege, and additional forms of oppression while completing their doctorate degrees. Through their use of Third Space Feminism, the women remind us to utilize our experiences and *testimonios* as political acts of resistance to humanize our existence in the academy. Therefore, survival is not an academic skill; it is “learning how to stand alone, [and] unpopular...”¹⁶⁷ Third Space Feminism is aligned with decolonial movements that empower the oppressed and include a critical praxis of social advocacy guided by humanitarian principles.

Furthermore, the effects of the microaggressions included psychological and physiological symptoms that caused harm to the women’s bodies, minds, health, and quality of life at the Ph.D. level. In addition, the women also reported reproductive changes to their bodies and health that include stopped ovulation, irregular periods, extreme PMS, pelvic pain. Two women also reported having miscarriages. The individualized psychological and physiological symptoms reported by the women are listed in the following Table 6.3.

¹⁶⁵ Emma Pérez, “Irigaray’s Female Symbolic,” in *Living Chicana Theory*, ed. Carla Trujillo (Berkeley: Third Woman Press, 1998), 88-80.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ Audre Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House,” in *Feminism and Race*, ed. Kum-Kum Bhavnani (Oxford: University Press, 2001), 89-93.

Table 6.3: The Effects of Microaggressions to Chicanas and Native American Women that Completed Doctorate Degrees

Pseudonym	Psychological and Physiological Symptoms Experienced and Reported	Reproductive Issues	Additional Symptoms Reported
Carmen	Depression, nausea, isolation, vomiting, rapid breathing, chronic stress, panic attacks, chronic anxiety, exhaustion/fatigue, tension/pain in body, weight gain, & increased sickness via infections	Irregular periods Miscarriage	Acne breakouts Kidney infections
Tana	Mild depression, chronic anxiety, insomnia, acute stress, body pain, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, headaches, low self-esteem, immobility, isolation, weight gain (40 lbs.), and clenching of the jaw	Irregular periods, Extreme PMS Pelvic Pain	Irritable Bowel Syndrome & Carpal tunnel syndrome
Irene	Chronic stress, fatigue, physical exhaustion, isolation, tension/pain in body, hyper-vigilance, weight fluctuations, thyroid issues, high cholesterol, addictions (i.e., alcohol), nutritional imbalances, and rapid breathing	Unknown	Acne Thyroid Issues
Sonya	Depression, headaches, chronic anxiety, fatigue, chronic stress, weight loss, loss of appetite, physical exhaustion, tightening of chest, overwhelmed, self-policing, self-doubt, rapid breathing, isolation, health issues, angry, lack of self-confidence, and insomnia	Irregular periods Miscarriage	Overwhelmed Ulcers
Ana	Depression PTSD, flashbacks, anxiety attacks, insomnia, hyper vigilance, fatigue isolation, grinding of your teeth, weight gain (20 pounds), low self-esteem, exhaustion, , chronic headaches, racial battle fatigue, and hospitalization	Irregular periods, Heavy cramping & Missed periods	Diagnosed with diabetes-type two
Angela	Depression, PTSD, chronic stress, insomnia, panic attacks, chronic anxiety, rapid breathing, teeth grinding, fatigue, isolation, pain in body, dissociative disorder, high blood pressure, weight gain, high cholesterol/sugar, and migraines	Irregular periods Stopped ovulation	Pre-diabetic Triglycerides

Summary of Chapter

This chapter examined the educational experiences of twenty-one women in this case study that self-identified as Chicana or Native American women. Their *testimonios* shed light on their racial and gendered educational experiences, as they navigated through racism, white privilege, and complex power relations at the Ph.D. level. Their *testimonios* tell an important politicized narrative, as to how they strategically navigate(d) and survive(d) various types of oppression based on the intersectionalities of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, surnames, age, phenotypes, and immigration status. Their *testimonios* reveal the psychological and physiological effects caused through racial and gendered microaggressions to women's bodies, minds, health, and quality of life in hostile academic climates.

Moreover, in an empirical study conducted by Hurtado and Harper in 2007 pertaining to racial campus climates of four-year, predominantly white institutions, they assert that there were high incidences of racial tension, racial conflict, and prejudice throughout 116 public and private college campuses for Students of Color. In addition, Students of Color also reported that instead of improving college environments or political climates for Students of Color, university spaces used institutionalized racism to “maintain inequalities.”¹⁶⁸ In comparison, this qualitative study on Chicanas and Native American women reveals additional systematic types of racism endured by the women also in predominantly white public universities. First, many women reported navigating through hostile and intolerant academic climates. Second, women reported experiencing differential and discriminatory treatment within their programs, departments, and universities. Third, the women also reported experiencing educational inequities and unequal educational access in comparison to white privileged students and peers. Fourth, women reported various violations to university policies/procedures, as well as violations of Federal and State

¹⁶⁸ Harper and Hurtado, “Nine Themes in Campus Racial Climates,” 7-24.

laws (i.e. Civil Right Act, Title IX, and ADA/504). These five themes will be discussed in depth in Chapter Seven. Further, the women also described systematic racism in higher education as a type of “hazing process” that reinforced white privilege and the unequal distribution of resources that confirms Harper and Hurtado’s assertion that institutional racism is used to maintain racial, gendered, and socio-economic inequities at the doctorate level. The data also reveals that Faculty of Color replicated oppressive structures for Chicanas and Native American women. The women in the case study critiqued this group of Faculty of Color, as self-absorbed, unavailable, problematic, and disengaged from mentoring graduate students. Hence, it is vital to hold all faculties accountable to higher ethical standards, especially within public universities that are mandated by Federal and State laws.

In summary, systematic racism emerged as a consistent theme throughout the data findings, as evident through the psychological and physiological effects of microaggressions reported by the twenty-one women in this case study. The following chapter includes a discussion of the findings based on the research questions that guided this national case study.

CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter includes a discussion of the research questions pertaining to the data findings reported by Chicanas and Native American women in this qualitative case study. The chapter is organized as follows. First, I revisit the three research questions that guided the study. Second, I present the implications for theory, methodology, practice, limitations, and recommendations for future research. Third, I offer some final thoughts in the conclusion. The research questions included:

1. How do racism, and other forms of oppression, impact the educational experiences of Chicanas and Native American women pursuing Ph.D.'s?
2. What are the psychological and physiological effects of racism and other forms of oppression on women's bodies, minds, and health at the doctoral level?
3. What do their *testimonios* teach us about strategically navigating through racism, complex power relations, and white privilege in higher education?

As anticipated the women's racial and gendered educational experiences at the Ph.D. level varied, as there were various institutional challenges reported. Each participant shared their personal *testimonios* reflecting on their educational experiences in higher education.

Collectively, in telling their *testimonios*, they shared an important part of a larger discourse on race, class, and gender, offering educators a better understanding of their struggles, hardships, and triumphs, as they navigated through the educational pipeline.

To answer the above-mentioned research questions, I used Grounded Theory and mixed methods to code and analyze the data for patterns and themes based on forty-two qualitative *testimonio* interviews. In revisiting the research questions, educators and researchers can better

understand how systematic racism, white privilege, and additional forms of oppression impact the educational experiences of underserved Chicanas and Native American women at the Ph.D. level in predominantly white public universities.

Research Question One: How do racism, and other forms of oppression, impact the educational experiences of Chicanas and Native American women pursuing Ph.D.'s?

The above-mentioned research question was designed to better understand the educational experiences of Chicanas and Native American women at the doctoral level. As anticipated, the educational challenges that low-income and working-class women experienced in higher education included institutional racism, white privilege, and complex power relations. Additionally, whether the acts of racism were subtle or blatant, the twenty-one participants in this study experienced and negotiated through the hurdles with resiliency, courage, and self-respect. In this section, I describe several themes relating to how the women experienced systematic racism, as well as additional types of oppression during their doctorate studies.

Some of the types of racial and gendered microaggressions reported targeted women's race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, age, surname, immigration status, and phenotypes. The contexts in which microaggressions occurred varied as the women navigated through various types of hostile, intolerant, and toxic academic climates. Some of the central themes that emerged in the data are based on institutional racism and include isolation, educational inequities, segregation, intentional/deliberate harm, deficit models, microaggressions, lack of support, low-expectations, cultural insensitivity, sexual harassment, intimidation, limited funding opportunities, hostile teaching environments, intolerant learning climates, persecution, retaliatory treatment, violations of university policies/procedures, and violations of Federal/State laws. The above mentioned themes have been organized into five main categories of analyses. To answer

the research question, these themes will be discussed in depth and include: 1) Academic Climates; 2) Differential and Discriminatory Treatment; 3) Unethical Conduct and Intentional Harm; 4) Educational Inequities and Unequal Educational Access; and 5) Violations of University Policies/Procedures and Violations of Federal/State Laws.

In-depth discussion of the five themes identified above will enable educators and researcher to better understand how systematic racism and other forms of oppression impact the racial and gendered educational experiences of Chicanas and Native American at the professoriate level. The in-depth analysis is guided by Critical Race Theory (CRT) to analyze how racism, complex power relations, and white privilege are evident throughout the women's educational experiences. The forty-two *testimonios* in the study reveal types of microaggressions, the contexts in which they occur, and responses used to navigate through them. This next section reveals the systematic racism and additional types of oppression that are endured within academic climates and learning environments by Chicana and Native American Women of Color in predominantly white public universities.

Themes from the Data Findings

I. Academic Climates

Women in the study reported that their academic climates and learning environments were hostile, culturally insensitive, racist, sexist, and intolerant. In some cases, the academic climates were so traumatizing that women reported difficulties attending classes, lectures, teaching, or felt physically ill on campus. Women used terms such as, “battle grounds,” “war-like environments,” “intellectual violence,” “traumatic,” “painful,” “academic violence,” and “combat zones” to describe some of their academic atmospheres within public universities. Additional experiences reported within their academic climates include: isolation, verbal abuse,

character assassination, negative and/or deficit labels, Eurocentric curriculum, lack of support, limited funding, lack of diversity, lack of mentoring, and verbal abuse conducted in private or behind closed doors oftentimes by faculty. Below are some examples based on coded themes from the women's *testimonios*.

1. Women in the study reported being *isolated* and feeling a sense of *invisibility* within their academic climates. The women also reported a sense of *tokenization* within graduate seminars and courses. For instance, Rene and Hettie were often asked to give a “Native American perspective” in lectures and classes.
2. The women reported that their programs, departments, and universities lacked racial and gendered *diversity*. For example, the women in the study critiqued their academic departments for overall lack of diversity in Faculty of Color, student diversity, curriculum, methods courses, community outreach, retention programs, and teaching pedagogies that reflected diversity within their departments and universities.
3. Women reported being subjected to *character assassination*, *sexual harassment*, and *verbal assaults* while working within hostile academic departments. For instance, eight women reported that character assassination caused serious consequences to their academic careers, reputations, and health while in their doctorate studies. The hostile climates also made it difficult to secure supportive faculty and advisors to work with, as well as formulate functioning Ph.D. committees to complete the doctorate degree.
4. Women reported *negative* and *deficit labels* used to alienate them within their departments. Some of the negative labels used by faculty and chairs included “difficult to work with,” “at risk student,” “lazy,” “remedial,” “doesn’t have what it takes,” “drama queen,” “fucken bitch,” and “trouble maker.” These negative and deficit labels were used

as structural forms of oppression to discredit the women within their Ph.D. studies. For example, nine women reported that faculty advisors and chairs had “low expectations” of them regarding their intellectual and academic abilities. Also, three women that *left* their Ph.D. studies were initially admitted as “at risk students” and were afforded minimal faculty support and limited funding resources from the start.

5. The data findings reveal that faculty, chairs, and advisors abused their privilege and power within public universities causing *intentional & deliberate harm* to several women in the study. For example, nine women reported that faculty, advisors, and chairs were verbally abusive, culturally intolerant, retaliatory, and publicly humiliated them. These actions are also described in the study as *unethical conduct*.
6. Finally, the data findings reveal that privileged white students also harassed and bullied the women in the case study via sexual harassment, stalking, and blatant racial/gendered microaggressions.

In short, all twenty-one women in the case study reported experiencing some type of broader intolerant racial climate in their public universities. Hence, Chicanas and Native American women were subjected to systematic racism, as well as additional types of oppressions in their academic climates in their pursuit of the Ph.D.

II. Discriminatory and Differential Treatment

Women in the case study experienced and reported various types of *discriminatory and differential treatment* based on their race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, surnames, immigration status, age and disabilities within predominantly white public universities. Some examples of differential and discriminatory treatment include unequal educational access, unfavorable policies, limited funding, surveillance, segregation, persecution, and retaliations that

white students were not subjected to. These acts of differential and discriminatory treatment were perpetrated by faculty, advisors, and chairs within departments in public universities. The acts of discriminatory and differential treatment varied and include some of the following examples:

1. Women in the study subjected to *discriminatory and differential treatment* stated that *unfavorable policies* were created just for them, but were not applicable to their colleagues. For instance, Liliana was asked to sign a “contract” in order to formulate her Ph.D. committee. However, she was the *only* student asked to sign a contract, which was not policy or procedure in her department. Upon Liliana’s request to see the procedure in writing, this alleged policy could not be produced in writing. Thus, it was created just for her and would have set her up to fail. Further, Liliana responded by challenging the differential treatment by writing all over the contract and ultimately did not sign it.
2. The data findings also reveal a *lack of transparency* in policies and procedure that were changed or created for target women through the push-out process. Many of the target women reported *differential and discriminatory treatment*, as policies and procedures were created and changed just for them to yield negative repercussions. Further, upon request of the policy/procedure, departments could not produce written or documented copies. For instance, Hettie responded by demanding that funding policies be transparent and available to all students, as funding sources in her department favored white middle-class women. Also, Rainy Dawn responded by reporting her department and documenting all accounts of differential/discriminatory treatment. Liliana responded by demanding a copy of the sexual harassment policy.
3. Women reported *differential and discriminatory treatment* based on the allocation of department resources, such as funding, research opportunities, and TA positions. Women

reported having to teach and work in stressful, intolerant, and hostile academic climates for funding. For example, Winuna reported that she was subjected to discriminatory treatment, as a Native American woman, as her funding was revoked after she would not work with an abusive male student. Winuna responded by making an informed decision to quit the TA position and seek external funding resources, thus ending the abuse. Also, Ana was subjected to intolerant acts for refusing to perform unethical data collection on Native artifacts. In Hettie's case, she experienced *differential treatment* based on the *unequal distribution* of funding resources in her predominantly white feminist department.

4. The data revealed a pattern of *differential and discriminatory* treatment pertaining to academic milestones such as written/qualifying exams, preliminary exams, and Ph.D. advancements. For example, five women reported receiving "limited information" for their exams; in comparison to their peers. Lillian reported that Students of Color were disproportionately failed during their qualifying and preliminary exams in comparison to white male students in her male-dominated department. Additionally, Nicomedes and Juanita stated that they obtained "minimal guidance" from their faculty advisors to progress towards their doctorate degrees in comparison to their peers, and thus ended up leaving their Ph.D. programs.
5. The women reported *differential and discriminatory* treatment based on race/ethnicity, class, surnames, gender, and age. Gendered oppressions were reported in various contexts pertaining to sexual harassment, bullying, intimidation, stalking, and threats made within public universities. For example, Lillian reported that she was continually and publicly humiliated by a white male tenured faculty member. Rainy Dawn was persecuted by a

white abusive chair that bullied her to quit. Hettie, Winuna, and Liliana were all subjected to blatant sexual harassment within their departments. Ana was called derogatory/gendered terms, such as “fucking bitch” for challenging racism, as a woman. Tana was continuously engaged in checking white privileged men in graduate seminars. They all responded to overt microaggressions in different ways. Lillian and Hettie responded by reporting the sexist comments. Tana and Winuna engaged and challenged the male student’s white privilege. Rainy Dawn and Liliana responded with acts of resistance and activism.

Finally, differential and discriminatory treatment emerged as a consistent theme throughout the data findings, as women reported being targeted based on their race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, age, disabilities, surname, and immigration status. These institutionalized acts occurred in departments, classrooms, faculty meetings, graduate lounges, while teaching, and on campus.

III. Unethical Conduct and Intentional/Deliberate Harm

Another theme coded from the women’s *testimonios* includes various acts of *unethical conduct* that caused psychological and emotional harm to many women in the study. The unethical conduct varied from verbal abuse, persecution, surveillance, harassment, public ridicule, character assassination, isolation/segregation, bullying, overt microaggressions, intentional/deliberate harm, and retaliatory acts. This unethical conduct was carried out by faculty, advisors, and chairs that abused their positions within public universities. According to the *UC Faculty Handbook on Ethics and Conduct*, “the integrity of faculty-student relationship is the foundation of the University’s educational mission. This relationship vests considerable trust in the faculty member, who, in turn, bears authority and accountability as mentor, educator, and

evaluator. The ‘unequal institutional power’ inherent in this relationship heightens the vulnerability of the student and the potential for coercion.”¹⁶⁹ Below are examples of *unethical conduct* and *harm* reported by the women in the case study:

1. Target women that were singled out reported aggressive acts of *persecution, intimidation tactics, verbal abuse, and harassment* by faculty and chairs that pressured them to leave, quit, or transfer out of their Ph.D. studies. The *unethical conduct* reported was intentional, deliberate, and unethical. For instance, Luna’s faculty advisor continuously verbally abused her causing *harm* to her mental and emotional health. She responded by strategically replacing her advisor. Also, Rainy Dawn’s white chair continuously bullied her to quit and denied her *equal educational access* to resources. She responded by reporting her chair to university officials, and also filed an external grievance with the Civil Rights Office. Liliana experienced character assassination—faculty would not work with her making it difficult to progress toward the completion of her degree. She responded through acts of defiance, continued to seek supportive faculty to work with, and thus did not give up.
2. Women that were singled out for the push-out, reported hostile acts of *retaliations, persecution, harm, and surveillance* for refusing to quit or leave their Ph.D. studies. For instance, Ana was subjected to intentional harm via verbal abuse and persecution, as she challenged gatekeepers in her university. Liliana reported that her department called police and made “false allegations” against her pertaining to her children’s safety. This aggressive act was so personal, as faculty clearly abused their privilege. For Rainy Dawn, her chair informed faculty not to work with her, thus *isolating* her in a public university.

¹⁶⁹ <http://www.ucop.edu/acadadv/acadpers/apm/apm-015.pdf>

However, both women could not be pushed out, as they responded via acts of resistance, activism, and refused to leave.

3. The data findings reveal that women that challenged the *unethical conduct* were subjected to greater hostilities during the push-out process. These women were sent in *endless administrative circles* seeking support and/or intervention within their universities. This pattern emerged in four cases exposing that university agencies did little to nothing to protect or intervene in a timely manner. Therefore, subjecting the women to additional harm via blatant and prolonged microaggressions.
4. The women had to navigate through overt and prolonged racial and gendered microaggressions. Many women reported various psychological and physiological effects such as depression, chronic anxiety, PTSD, stress, rapid breathing, insomnia, high blood pressure, nausea, fatigue, and exhaustion.
5. *Public humiliation* and shaming was also reported by the women in the study. For instance, Luna reported that her advisor verbally abused her and shamed her in front of colleagues. On one occasion, Luna was embarrassed her in front of peers when she asked if she could use the restroom. In time, she responded by replacing her abusive faculty advisor with a supportive and well-respected advisor. Ana reported verbal attacks that were derogatory; she responded by reporting the unethical conduct to her advisor.

These disturbing acts that pertain to *unethical conduct* merit serious attention because they occurred within public universities that are mandated by Federal and State laws. Further, the unethical conduct has also lead to various types of trauma in the form of psychological and physiological harm to women's bodies, minds, and health. The next section reveals educational inequities and unequal educational access reported by the women within public institutions.

IV. Educational Inequities and/or Unequal Educational Access

The women in the study revealed that *unequal educational access* and *educational inequities* based on their race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, age, surname, disabilities, immigration status, and phenotypes was also experienced during their doctorate studies. Some examples of educational inequities include the following:

1. Women reported denial of *equal educational access* (i.e. faculty, advisors, and educational resources) that was granted to white colleagues without restrictions or prejudicial treatment. For instance, three women reported being denied access to respectful mentoring and supportive faculty.
2. Women targeted for the push-out process reported being blocked from advancing towards their Ph.D.'s, as they were denied *equal educational access* to various resources. For instance, Liliana was denied equal educational access to a functioning Ph.D. committee. Also, Juanita and Nicomedes were both denied equal educational access to respectful mentoring. Deana and Joy critiqued departments for their overall lack of diversity via tenured Faculty of Color, students, and curriculum.
3. The women reported *educational inequities* in funding resources based on their race/ethnicity, class, and gender in predominantly white departments. For example, Rainy Dawn and Hettie both reported that their predominantly white departments favored white students in direct comparison to U.S. Women of Color (i.e., African American, Native American, Chicanas, and Latinas), thus funding opportunities were limited for the latter. Additionally, Vanessa was denied equal educational access to health care services for her disabilities, and was consequently sent in endless circles seeking health services mandated through the American Disabilities Act (ADA/504).

4. Target women also reported denial of *equal educational access* to a functioning Ph.D. committee for academic purposes central to publishing, funding resources, and academic research. For instance, Lilibian and Rainy Dawn were denied *educational access* to freely communicate with faculty, as they were both denied access to services. Lilibian responded with activism and coordinated a “hunger strike” in protest. Rainy Dawn responded by reporting her department to the Civil Rights Office outside the university’s jurisdiction and sought guidance from an attorney.
5. Target women reported being subjected to prolonged racial/gendered microaggressions causing negative effects to their bodies, health, minds, and quality of life.

In brief, the data revealed institutional forms of oppression experienced via *educational inequities* based on the women’s race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, age, phenotypes and surnames in public universities. Many women in the study that were denied equal educational access to services sought out additional resources and advocated for equal educational access. The final section includes women’s reported *testimonios* pertaining to violations of university policies, as well as violations of Federal and State Laws.

V. Violations of University Policies and Violations of Federal/State Laws

Many women in the case study also reported being harmed by faculty and chairs that violated university policies, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and Federal/State laws (i.e., the Civil Rights Act, Title IX, and the American Disabilities Act). Several *testimonios* revealed numerous violations under previously mentioned themes: unethical conduct, sexual harassment, segregation, violations of privacy, denial of equal educational access, and differential and discriminatory treatment. Women in the study reported that faculty, advisors, and chairs within departments violated university policies and Federal/State laws to further

marginalize them, as racial/ethnic women. With this in mind, women that challenged these types of institutional violations were often retaliated against, as well as sent in “endless administrative circles” to seek university assistance, intervention, and resources.

Furthermore, according to University Provisions, the university is supposed to prohibit unethical acts of differential and discriminatory treatment based on race/ethnicity, class, gender, sex, and age in higher education under the Civil Right Act of 1964. For example:

Title IX - The Education Amendments of 1972 and Federal Regulations promulgated thereunder prohibited discrimination based on sex in University educational programs and activities.

Title VI - Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits racial and ethnic discrimination in all University programs and activities.

However, despite the Education Amendments of 1972 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the women reported violations to their Civil Rights via acts of *segregation*, as well *denial of equal educational access* to resources in public universities. Here are examples of the violations documented in this national case study drawn from the women’s *testimonios*.

1. Four women reported that their Civil Rights were violated, as they were isolated, *segregated*, and *denied equal educational access* based on their race, ethnicity, class, gender, and age within public universities. Further, the women also critiqued university administrators for failing to intervene or hold faculty, advisors, and chairs accountable in a timely manner. Also, two women responded by consulting with legal experts and were, consequently, prepared to pursue lawsuits.
2. Three women reported that violations pertaining to their Civil Rights were “covered-up” within their universities, as faculty, advisors, and university officials down-played the serious nature of their. Two women responded by filing official discrimination grievances

within their public universities and one woman filed a complaint externally to secure protection through legal action.

3. The women reported that violations were perpetrated by faculty, advisors, and chairs in their departments. Lillian responded by leaving her Ph.D. studies, but wishes she would have consulted with an attorney. Rainy Dawn reported her department and documented all violations. Liliana used activism as a navigational tool.
4. The data findings reveal that universities failed to protect women from *retaliations* in a timely manner. For instance, four women reported that faculty, advisors, and chairs continuously *harassed, isolated, and persecuted* them after reporting their departments. For instance, *Liliana responded* by remaining vigilant and supported by her family. Rainy Dawn responded by seeking legal advice and networking with progressive faculty at the university. Ana responded by reporting abusive faculty and organizing Students of Color on her campus. However, two women decided to leave their Ph.D. studies.
5. In addition, six women experienced aggressive acts of sexual harassment within their public universities, thus violating Title IX. The sexual harassment varied and was conducted by white male faculty, male faculty of color, privileged white male students, as well as university administrators. The women's responses varied case to case. For example, Hettie reported the harassment and stalking to a professor. Whereas Liliana advocated for mandatory sexual harassment training.
6. Further, three women reported that faculty and chairs violated Federal privacy laws by disclosing private information protected under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERBA). Hence, two women responded by reporting the violation to university officials. However, university officials disregarded the claims as "accidents."

7. Three women reported having disabilities in the case study. Thus two were denied access to resources necessary due to their disabilities. This was a clear violation of the American Disabilities Act (ADA). Vanessa responded by demanding access to healthcare to accommodate her disability. Also, in two cases faculty and chairs caused additional harm to the women, despite ADA/504 in public universities.
8. Women that refused to leave or quit their Ph.D. programs were subjected to aggressive microaggressions causing negative impacts to their emotional well-being. Racial battle fatigue was evident in all of the push-out cases.

In conclusion, women that responded to the federal and state violations via acts of resistance, defiance, and advocacy asserted that they were committed to creating change within their universities in order to challenge political injustices. Their *testimonios* provide details, and raw honesty about their hardships, struggles, pain, and triumphs in higher education. Their narratives also inform us of “political realities” at the Ph.D. level and how they play out through systemic racism and additional forms of oppression toward Chicanas and Native American women. Hence, the answer to the research question provides educators and researchers with insight into the oppressive nature of racialized and gendered experiences of Women of Color within predominantly white public universities. This research inquiry is important in understanding the educational experiences of underserved women in the academy and the implications of systematic racism to their overall wellbeing.

The conundrum remains, however, as faculty, advisors, chairs, and university administrators must also be held to higher ethical standards and expectations, as to how they perceive, teach, and interact within public universities. This question was designed to provoke greater discussion and dialogues about how educators, researchers, and policy makers can

engage in these types of systematic oppressions that racial/ethnic women navigate through and challenge throughout the educational pipeline. The next section revisits the second research question.

Research Question Two: What are the psychological and physiological effects of racism and other forms of oppression on women's bodies, minds, and health at the doctoral level?

The case study also engaged in a successful in-depth discussion of the second research question, creating new interdisciplinary scholarship pertaining to the psychological and physiological effects of racial and gendered microaggressions occurring to Chicana and Native American women at the Ph.D. level. The case study revealed the negative effects of systematic racism via microaggressions to women's bodies, minds, health, and quality of life within an academic setting. For example, in a study conducted by Carter and Forsyth, they argue that symptoms such as exhaustion, rage, depression, insomnia, isolation, high blood pressure, resentment, low-self-esteem, and rapid breathing are all indicators of race-based traumatic stress and can be measured through psychological and physiological assessments.¹⁷⁰ However, most race-based trauma studies that have been conducted have been on Men of Color and have failed to examine the same with regards to Women of Color. Further, there is minimal scholarship pertaining to the specific effects to low-income Chicanas and Native American women at the professoriate level. This study has sought to respond to this discursive gap in literature, and shed light on the psychological and physiological attacks on Women of Color scholars.

The study reveals that all twenty-one women reported experiencing subtle to blatant types of racial and gendered microaggressions at some juncture during their doctorate studies. The women in the study described the racial/gendered microaggressions as ranging from prolonged to cumulative exposure, as well as spanning the intensity gamut from subtle to overt types of

¹⁷⁰ Carter and Forsyth, "A Guide to the Forensic Assessment of Race-Based Traumatic Stress Reactions," 28-40.

microaggressions based on race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, surnames, disabilities, age, and immigration status, and phenotypes. The data findings reveals that 19 out of 21 women in the case study developed symptoms from racial and gendered microaggressions, as a result of living and working under prolonged distressing conditions in predominantly white universities. The data findings reveal that systematic racism, race-based trauma, and microaggressions caused negative effects to their psychological, physiological and spiritual well-being. Many women in the study also developed chronic conditions, increased illness, and racial battle fatigue during their doctoral studies as a direct result to prolonged exposure. The women that developed racial battle fatigue also reported increased illnesses and infections such as colds, bronchitis, nasal infections, and viral infections. Their *testimonios* illustrate the circumstances behind their compromised immune systems.

Chicanas and Native American women reported three major changes: 1) Psychological Effects; 2) Physiological Effects, and 3) Physiological Changes related to women's reproductive health. These are included in the following Tables 7.1-7.3.

Table 7. 1: The Psychological Effects of Microaggressions Reported by Chicanas and Native American Women in Ph.D. Programs

Effects Reported	Psychological Symptoms Experienced ¹⁷¹
Depression	18 women reported depression. Some cases required medication, therapy, and health resources.
Anxiety	21 women reported experiencing anxiety.
Panic attacks	8 women reported having panic attacks and 5 required medications.
Stress	21 women reported experiencing stress.
Post-traumatic stress disorder	12 women in the study reported experiencing PTSD, which included flashbacks, insomnia, and nightmares.
Trauma	8 women reported experiencing trauma.
Dissociation	5 women reported experiencing “out of body” experiences to cope with traumatic educational experiences.
Isolation	19 women reported feeling isolated in their Ph.D. studies.
Low self-esteem	13 women reported feeling low self-esteem.
Various emotions	17 women reported various emotions: anger, rage, guilt, unhappiness, fear, sadness, lonely, isolation, pain, frustration, disappointment, etc.
Hyper-vigilance	8 women reported developing hyper-vigilance due to hostile academic climates.
Racial Battle Fatigue ¹⁷²	11 women reported Racial Battle Fatigue (RBF).
Contemplation of suicide	Reported in 1 case requiring immediate intervention and therapy.

¹⁷¹ Dr. Robin Roberts, email message to author, December 2, 2012.

According to Dr. Roberts there is a distinction between ‘mind and body’ or ‘mental and medical,’ thus the above-mentioned symptoms can overlap. For example, depression is psychological, but also has physiological effects, such loss, no appetite, insomnia, weight gain or loss, etc.

¹⁷² Ibid. Racial Battle Fatigue has various symptoms similar to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), as well as some physiological effects.

Table 7.2: The Physiological Effects of Microaggressions Reported by Chicanas and Native American Women in Ph.D. Programs

Effects	Physiological Symptoms Experienced
Fatigue	19 women reported experiencing fatigue.
Exhaustion	13 women reported experiencing physical exhaustion and 2 required hospitalizations.
Teeth grinding/ Locked Jaw	5 women reported grinding their teeth, 1 woman reported breaking her teeth/molars, and 1 woman reported locked jaw.
Rapid Breathing	17 women in the case study reported experiencing rapid breathing.
Nausea and Vomiting	6 women reported experiencing nausea. Also, 5 women reported experiencing vomiting.
High blood pressure	7 women reported developing high blood pressure. They were monitored by physicians and placed on medications.
Pain/Back Pain	16 women reported experiencing pain and tension in their bodies and 6 women in the study developed chronic back pain.
Weight Fluctuations	9 reported weight gain (i.e., 35 to 100 lbs.) Also, 3 developed obesity. 5 women reported experiencing weight loss and loss of appetite.
High Sugar levels	5 women reported that increased blood sugar levels lead to diabetes requiring medication in 2 cases and 1 case of insulin. ¹⁷³
Low sugar levels	3 women reported experiencing low sugar levels and 2 cases lead to fainting spells.
Migraines and Headaches	6 women reported experiencing migraines and 4 women reported constant headaches.
Increased Sickness ¹⁷⁴	8 women reported experiencing increased sickness. (i.e., colds, viruses, bronchitis infections, and nasal infections), as the result of “lowered immunity” systems due to constant stress.
Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)	One woman in the case study reported IBS.
Various Addictions ¹⁷⁵	7 women reported experiencing addictions to sugar, food, medications, cutting, and/or alcohol.

¹⁷³ The data reveals differences in racial/ethnic groups between Chicanas and Native American women pertaining to sugar levels. For instance, fewer Chicanas reported an increase in sugar levels and the development of diabetes and/or weight gain. However, the opposite is true for Native American women, as 3 women in the study developed stage 1 and 2 diabetes and reported higher sugar levels. The data illustrates greater risk in the development of diabetes for Native American women due to higher levels of sugar and weight gain. Chicanas also experienced weight fluctuations, but their sugar levels remained low in comparison.

¹⁷⁴ Didi Hollingsworth, e-mail to author dated December 2, 2012. Professor Hollingsworth asserts that increased sickness, if due to stress is caused by lowered immunity or a ‘depressed immune system.’

The data findings revealed various *psychological* and *physiological* effects reported in the women's *testimonios* based on their racial and gendered educational experiences during their Ph.D. studies. Further, many women in the study described their symptoms as debilitating to their bodies, mental health, and quality of life during the Ph.D. process. Consequently, many women required additional health related resources to recover; these included medication, therapy, and additional health related services. These results merit serious attention, and follow-up study regarding additional responses and resources used to challenge the negative effects to women's bodies, minds, and health in the academy.

Physiological Changes Related to the Reproductive Health Reported by Chicanas and Native American Women in Ph.D. Programs

The data findings also reveal physiological changes reported to women's bodies and health. For example, 16 out of 21 women reported experiencing changes to their physical bodies during their Ph.D. studies, as a result of prolonged anxiety, acute stress, and working in hostile academic climates. Many of the effects reported in this section were also diagnosed by specialists and/or health care providers. The women reported the following physiological changes to their bodies: irregular periods, PMS, chronic pain, pelvic pain, anemia, fibroids, excessive vaginal bleeding, tumors, anemia, fertility issues, polycystic cysts, stopped ovulation, and four women had miscarriages while pursuing their doctorate degrees. Also, in regards to the miscarriages, two cases were diagnosed by a physician as relating to acute stress, however, one case was deemed as inconclusive after genetic testing. As stated earlier in Chapter 6 issues pertaining to women's bodies are rarely ever discussed openly in the academy, but are

¹⁷⁵ Dr. Robin Roberts, e-mail dated December 2, 2012. Dr. Roberts asserts that 'addictions' are both physiological and psychological. For example, it is both a behavior based on physiological cravings, such as withdrawal symptoms and it's a psychological issue.

undeniably important areas of feminist research. The physiological changes reported to women's bodies and reproductive systems are included in the following table.

Table 7.3: The Physiological Changes Related to the Reproductive System Reported by Chicanas and Native American Women in Ph.D. Programs

Effects or Symptoms	Physiological Changes Experienced
Irregular periods	Women described having missed or irregular periods relating to stress chronic anxiety, and hostile academic environments.
Stopped ovulation	Women reported stopped ovulation for months at a time. Also four women stopped ovulating, but not due to their age.
Heavy cramping	Women reported heavy cramping and bleeding leading to two cases of anemia. (i.e., three women reported heavy loss of blood leading to anemia).
Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS)	Many women developed PMS which is a collection of physical and emotional symptoms during a woman's menstrual cycle.
Fibroids	Uterine fibroids are noncancerous (benign) tumors that develop in their uterus, (i.e., three women reported having developed fibroids).
Pain/Abdominal complaints	6 women reported having chronic pain in their abdominal area.
Uterus tumors	Women reported interference with blood flow causing heavy periods, painful periods, and prolonged periods. Three women developed tumors.
Fertility Issues	3 women reported fertility issues.
Excessive vaginal bleeding	9 women reported heavy periods and extreme bleeding.
Miscarriages	4 women in the study reported having miscarriages during their Ph.D. studies.

In summary, the case study clearly sheds light on the *psychological* and *physiological* implications of microaggressions on women's bodies, minds, health, and quality of life, as they navigated through their doctorate studies. The women revealed physiological changes to their

bodies and health through changes in menstrual cycles and reproductive issues. The psychological and physiological effects in the study merit attention and future feminist research.

Furthermore, the research question was answered in-depth and creates new interdisciplinary feminist scholarship regarding the psychological and physiological effects occurring to Chicanas and Native American women in higher education. The objectives of the research question also exceeded my expectations, as I gathered additional data pertaining to the physiological changes occurring to Chicanas and Native American women's bodies and health during their professorial pursuits. Hence, their *testimonios* provide vital information pertaining to the body, mind, and spirit connections—insight that is of high importance for the future protection of women's health in high stress institutions like the academy.

Research Question Three: What do their *testimonios* teach us about strategically navigating through racism, complex power relations, and white privilege in higher education?

In revisiting the final research question, the women's twenty-one *testimonios* are included in this final section to guide the analysis based on experiential knowledge created from their literal theory in the flesh.¹⁷⁶ A theory in the flesh creates a subversive space wherein women can draw from the intersectionalities inclusive of their lived experiences as legitimate in the creation of knowledge. With this in mind, their racial and gendered educational experiences inform how we can strategically navigate through racism, white privilege, and complex power relations in higher education and arrive at positions of empowerment and agency.

This section is organized into four distinct areas based on data gathered from the women's *testimonios*. The first section includes internal university responses used to challenge racial and gendered microaggressions in the academy. The second section includes external university responses used to challenge microaggressions. The third section includes health and

¹⁷⁶ Anzaldúa and Moraga, "Entering the Lives of Others," in *This Bridge*, 18-21

wellness responses used by the women. Finally, the fourth section includes spiritual resources and responses used to heal and reconnect the body, mind, and connections of the spirit. Below are the four major sections to address the research question.

Themes from the Data Finding: A Survival Guide for Students of Color

I. Internal University Responses and Resources

This section includes internal university responses and strategies used by Chicanas and Native American women to strategically navigate through racism, complex power relations, and white privilege during their Ph.D. studies. Each category includes the names of the women and responses used to survive in the academy.

1. Luna created a *counter space* in the university and sought out additional support from social justice scholars. Luna also assumed *agency* and replaced her abusive faculty advisor with a supportive advisor that respected her intellect and supported her research interests.
2. Lulu encourages one to research their Ph.D. program first and to make sure that it is the “right fit” and matches one’s research interests. She also politically aligned herself with supportive faculty, a great advisor, mentors, and respectable colleagues that were open-minded and progressive. Also, Lulu stressed the importance of securing *funding* for the Ph.D.
3. Amelia responded to microaggressions by creating healthy *boundaries* with white privileged women and faculty in her department. She also created counter spaces for Queer Women of Color within her department, so she could navigate through the racism and hostile feminist politics.

4. Rene stated that it was imperative to secure *stable funding* for the Ph.D. and find a *tenured faculty advisor* that will support you throughout the Ph.D. process. Also, if you feel isolated then create a supportive academic community for networking, fun, and to have student interactions with.
5. Vanessa recommended finding a *supportive faculty advisor* that one respects, trusts, and that supports one's educational research endeavors. Also, one should understand the hidden politics of academia, so as to be prepared. Second, Vanessa advised us to seek *financial resources* to secure *economic stability* for the Ph.D.
6. Vanessa also suggested *teaching* diverse courses to strengthen one's "craft/art" in developing a *critical teaching pedagogy* that mentors Students of Color. Also, she emphasizes the significance of valuing the lived experiences of other colleagues. In order to learn from one another, Vanessa advised one build strong alliances with diverse Communities of Color.
7. Rainy Dawn's *testimonio* provides a "tactical survival plan," if one is subjected to a push-out process. She suggests the following internal university actions. First, one should document all accounts of institutional microaggressions (i.e., systematic racism, unethical conduct, segregation, intentional harm, verbal abuse, and privacy violations). Second, she advises scholars to use internal university resources to report violations (i.e., file an official grievance and if necessary also report to external agencies, like the Civil Right Office for protection). Thirdly, one must be informed and seek all policies and procedures in writing. Fourth, the strategic use of activism to lobby internal support from faculty and university administrators is central to remain. Finally, one should consult legal counsel for guidance through the internal university grievance process. Further, she

states that it [the journey toward the professoriate] is a “one-sided procedure” set-up to protect the interests of the university. Accordingly, she also prepared for legal action outside the university grievance process.

8. Liliana’s *testimonio* provides guidance for anyone who suspects attempts at being wrongfully pushed out through sexual harassment, cultural nationalism, and patriarchal dominance. She advocates self-advocacy by using one’s your voice as a pro-active tool. She also stressed that one not sign any policy or procedure if negatively created to enact differential treatment or signing of compromising materials. She also emphasizes the benefits of finding a supportive Ph.D. committee to sustain one’s persistence in the Ph.D. program. Also, Liliana responded to the microaggressions by organizing a “hunger strike” on her campus and publicly exposing the unethical conduct. Liliana never gave up hope and used acts of resistance, defiance, and activism to successfully challenge the push-out process.
9. Hettie and Liliana *advocated for transparency of information* to obtain equal educational access to resources, information, and funding.
10. Women also responded by *protecting* themselves from sexual harassment, bullying, and unethical conduct in a public university by reporting sexual harassment.
11. Those that were subjected to violations of federal and state laws responded by challenging sexual harassment protocol and its lack of efficiency.
12. Carmen’s *testimonio* called for an organized “plan of action” prior to entering a doctorate program. For example, she knew which *faculty advisor* she wanted to work with and strategically matched her educational aspirations with an advisor she felt would help her reach them. Carmen also emphasized the importance of being *strategic* in terms of

knowing when to challenge racism and when to use *silence* as an act of resistance or to avoid burning-out. Carmen created a *counter space* with fellow Chicana scholars invested in creating change via publishing, presenting at conferences together, and for intellectual support at the university.

13. Tana's *testimonio* encourages one to seek out a *supportive faculty advisor* that respects one's academic contributions and intellect; and to seek supportive colleagues, faculty, and friends during the doctorate. Finally, when formulating one's Ph.D. committee she urges one to be sure that all faculty members work well together so as to avoid dealing with politics. For long-term economic survival, she propounds the procurement of funding by soliciting all university resources. Lastly, Tana recommends one avoid battles that are draining to body, mind, and spirit, and instead be strategic by choosing battles wisely!
14. Irene created various university support networks to succeed, as she took time to establish networks that she trusted, such as identifying trustworthy faculty, colleagues, and friends. She secured a supportive faculty advisor, a great Ph.D. committee, and stable funding. Irene also created positive academic spaces with colleagues and Scholars of Color to nurture mutual intellectual growth.
15. Sonya states it is vital to have a *supportive faculty advisor* and to create supportive academic spaces with colleagues that you respect. Also, secure *funding* to help navigate through the economic hardships of college. Do not be afraid to branch out to meet good quality people while in grad school. Finally, be strategic and pick your battles.

16. Angela *testimonio* reminds one of the importance of creating *support networks* with other Native American women in the university to keep feelings of isolation and loneliness at bay. She encourages finding a *faculty adviser* that will respect one's tribal interests and Native research. Third, teaching and working with Native students so that they know how to navigate through the university system is was of pinnacle importance for her. A last strategy she endorses is that one seeks out all Native American *funding resources* and university student services for financial support.
17. Ana states that it is vital to have a supportive tenured faculty advisor that is not afraid of university politics and that can guide you during the Ph.D. process. Also, to create counter spaces with graduate students, as a united front to combat/expose racist practices occurring at top tier research universities. Be strategic, so "master the politics," and navigate carefully. Finally, protect yourself from abusive faculty and gatekeepers in traditional disciplines, especially if there is a history of hostile politics in your department.

In summary, Chicanas and Native American women that participated in the case study utilized various responses, resources, and strategies to navigate through systematic racism, white privilege, and complex power relations at the doctorate level within predominantly white universities. Their *testimonios* provide vital information that can serve as a "survival guide" to help additional marginalized communities create healthier and positive academic environments in higher education. With this in mind, it is imperative to secure various internal university resources prior to entering a Ph.D. program for long-term success.

II. External University Responses and Resources

This second section includes external university responses and strategies that Chicanas and Native American women used to strategically navigate through various types of oppression at the doctorate level in public universities.

1. Luna used her lived experiences growing up in poverty, as sources of *empowerment*. She was determined to use her Ph.D. to advance social justice research for impoverished Latino communities and create change.
2. Lulu used several external networks, such as her family, children, community and a supportive partner, as *positive resources* while pursuing her Ph.D. She also gained internal strength, courage, and determination as a mother invested in creating a better world for her children. Third, she also visited her reservation as much as possible to connect with her family, elders, land, and community to rejuvenate her spirit, energies, and passion to seek positive change for the reservation.
3. Canela connected to various support systems, such as her family, community, students, and work. Canela strategically picked a university close to her home and family. She also stated that she wanted to remain close to her grandmother who was a major source of inspiration.
4. Rene visited family as much as possible (out of state). She was also reminded by her grandmother to go home to participate in ceremonies. Rene was very connected to her family and kept a strong family commitment with them throughout graduate school.
5. Many women also testified to the importance of being *strategic* in picking their battles. In other words, one must know when to speak and when to use silence as a form of resistance and defiance.

6. Women reported that if retaliated against, abused, or singled-out future women scholars must seek immediate intervention to protect their health and wellness. Thus, do not internalize microaggressions; instead seek guidance from close friends, trusted colleagues, and family.
7. Women responded to violations of the Civil Right Act by equipping themselves with knowledge about policies and procedures, as well as external grievance procedures.
8. Winuna reminds one of the importance of having networks of support in place with family, community, as well as tribal members, in order to remain focused on educational aspirations. Her family provided her with positive encouragement, love, and guidance during difficult times. Her strong *connections* to her family, especially her father helped rejuvenate her energies to finish. Winuna also drew strength from her experiences as an activist dedicated to creating change for Native and Indigenous people.
9. Rainy Dawn was determined to use her Ph.D. in the service of change to honor humanitarian principles. She stated that her resiliency and strength came from having a strong working-class family that backed her every move, and having the love and support of close friends. She shared that her family was central to her ability to “survive” the difficult times of persecution, isolation, and segregation.
10. Liliana had strong maternal ties to her mother, *tias*, and elders. She used family woman-centered networks for support, love, and compassion. As a working-class mother, she was committed to creating a better future for her children. Her courage, resiliency, and strong faith guided her during the push-out process.
11. Carmen created external spaces with other Chicanas that nurtured a supportive feminist space for women to publish, theorize, and present jointly at conferences. She stressed the

importance of creating positive academic spaces that also embraced diversity and cultural richness. Further, as an educator she said it was imperative to “pay it forward” by working with marginalized students to create transcendent change throughout the educational pipeline.

12. Tana maintained a close *relationship* with her family in Texas and took time to visit them as much as possible to achieve self-balance. She stressed the importance of remaining connected to her family and fostering a balanced life outside of the academy whether it is through interactions with one’s partner, children, teaching experiences, etc.
13. Irene also organized external support systems to keep her grounded throughout her Ph.D. by staying connected with her parents, family, and home. She viewed her Ph.D. as a “collective family effort,” due to the undying support she received from her family, especially her grandmother.
14. Sonya said to develop long-term healthy friendships with other women that are supportive. Spend as much time with your parents and family for support. Also branch out to good quality friends to talk things out, so issues are not internalized. Finally, spend time with your partner and children to heal and get grounded.
15. Angela also reminds one of the importance and beneficial nature of taking time away from the academy to visit family, loved ones, or to engage in hobbies like exercising, cooking, and drumming. Angela said it was important to invest in *activities* that allowed one to rest in body, mind, and spirit.
16. Ana stated it was vital to remain connected to your Native community, as the university is highly individualistic and in conflict to Native culture and Indigenous ways of life.

Find a balance in these two conflicting spaces while in graduate school. Also, visit family and loved ones back home as much as possible for recovery, love, and understanding.

To summarize, the women in the study used various external university resources and responses to create support networks outside the university. Their *testimonios* teach us the importance of separating from the university in order to reconnect with family, children elders, partners, friends, grandmothers, and extended community. Many women sought comfort and “safe havens” in these types spaces to heal and recover from the various types of oppressions endured in the academy. For long-term survival; it is vital to have support systems to secure a positive and healthy experience during one’s Ph.D. studies.

III. Health Related Responses and Resources

This third section includes health related responses, resources, and strategies that Chicanas and Native American women used to navigate through racism, complex power relations, and white privilege at the doctorate level in public universities.

1. Luna invested in *therapy* and worked diligently to heal from the deeper psychological effects of microaggressions. She also made *nutritional* changes for her body and overall health. For example, she changed her nutritional diet to exclude sugar and refined foods, and actively worked toward increasing her exercise.
2. Vanessa tapped into various health services and university resources to manage her health, disabilities, and wellness. She used *exercise* and *nutrition* to create a healthier nutritional plan during her Ph.D. studies.
3. Vanessa also encourages women to seek out all free resources related to wellness on campus. She also stated that if suffering from a disability one must learn embrace self-advocacy.

4. Rene used mental *health related resources* on campus, such as therapy and health related resources on campus to help her deal with her depression.
5. Canela exercised daily to release internal stressors and anxiety, and detoxed to cleanse her body as health and wellness strategies. She ate healthy and organic foods, and thus avoided processed foods like white products (i.e., sugar, white rice, and white bread). She drank a “vegetable green” drink to help curb her sugar addictions. Finally, she invested in *self-help resources* that tailored her needs.
6. Joy reminds us to be *mindful* and committed of our health, wellness, and bodies while on the educational path. She responded to microaggressions by paying close attention to the psychological and physiological cues experienced in the physical body. She learned to tune into bodily cues that indicated any “unnatural balance” (i.e. digestion, exhaustion, weight changes, acne, fatigue, emotional cues, nutrition), as warning signs to stop and seek self-care through exercise, rest, proper nutrition, sleep, and yoga. Her *testimonio* is a reminder for women to make “empowered choices” that do not compromise one’s health, bodies, or quality of life through the already arduous Ph.D. process.
7. Irene’s *testimonio* reminds one to take time to rest in body, mind, and spirit—especially after completing academic milestones. Irene struggled with exhaustion and acknowledges the importance of allowing one’s body to recover. She also encouraged one to make the time to *celebrate* each accomplishment.
8. Ana said to be strategic in your battles and know when to engage and when to hold back, as it is vital to protect your health and spirit through the process. Also, create a community of support, so you are not alone, as it is easy to get isolated. Seek therapy if

your mental health is compromised. Also, Ana used exercise (cardio classes) to help her release stress, and allow her to have more energy to function.

The women's *testimonios* reveal various health-related responses and strategies used during their Ph.D. studies in order to ensure wellness throughout the doctorate process. It is imperative to keep one's health a priority throughout one's doctoral study. In the same way, one must take advantage of all free and/or affordable health related resources offered within the university such as meditation workshops, nutritionist availability, acupuncture, gyms, and other health care services. By doing so, Women of Color scholars can be proactive in their own long-term wellness in higher education.

IV. Spiritual Responses and Resources

This fourth section includes spiritual responses and strategies that women used to navigate through their doctorate degrees with the intent of healing. The women's *testimonios* reveal that various Indigenous, Eastern, Western, and Native practices were used to rejuvenate their bodies, minds, and spirits from diverse cultural perspectives.

1. During difficult times, Luna called upon her "faith" to guide her through the pain and trauma endured in her Ph.D. program. She *refused* to give-up, thus her resiliency and determination to survive the oppressive system was connected to her strong spiritual grounding. Luna took time to *reflect* and *heal* her body, mind, and spirit with the support of her family, partner, and two children.
2. Lulu used her *faith* in Creator to guide her spiritually through the challenges in the academy. She used this spiritual practice for balance and survival, as she stated that "the degree is not about the individual, but instead the degree is connected to larger

communities.” Her faith served as a strong foundation that guided her through the Ph.D. process.

3. As a self-identified “peace advocate,” Amelia’s work is connected to creating change that humanizes the marginalized experiences of Latino transgendered communities. Thus, her teaching pedagogy was linked to humanitarian principles.
4. Vanessa asserted that on a spiritual level, it was imperative to connect with her various resources, which included Mother Earth, her ancestors, and prayer circles for positive support throughout the Ph.D. process. Also, she advocated for one to learn to stop, reflect, and heal in order to take care of one’s body, mind, and health. Further, she encouraged one to be gentle, loving, and compassion with oneself throughout doctoral study.
5. Rene participated in an interfaith community at the university to sing and pray. She also participated in Native Crow ceremonies, as well as additional cultural ceremonies with Indigenous women while in graduate school. Rene also stated that helping other people gave her comfort spiritually.
6. Canela responded to the racial/gendered microaggressions by utilizing various “holistic practices” grounded in Indigenous resources that honor health, wellness, and healing. She used techniques such as self-reflection, acupuncture, sweat lodges, and ceremonies during her doctorate studies. Further, she also used Eastern Buddhist practices, such as meditation training and breathing exercises to heal her body, mind, and spirit.
7. Winuna is a *survivor* and used her ties to ancestral knowledge and land as sources of empowerment. She rode horses *to heal* from the effects of microaggressions, which

contributed to the rejuvenation of her body, mind, and spirit. As a conscious act of healing, riding in open land made her feel “free” from systematic oppressions.

8. Rainy Dawn used various types of spiritual practices to heal from overt microaggressions. For example, she used acupuncture, meditation, a therapist, healing via prayers, deep tissue massages, and sweat lodge to help her recuperate herself. She also worked with healers and prayer circles, and sought connections to Mother Earth—ocean, land, and mountains—to guide her healing process.
9. Tana’s invoked spiritual resources to heal that had cultural significance. For example, she participated in Catholic ceremonies that honored La *Virgen de Guadalupe* that reconnected her to family, culture, and traditions. She also used *limpias* (cleansings/baths) in water to heal and rejuvenate her body, mind, and spirit.
10. Sonya stated to keep *grounded* in your faith and/or spirituality. Faith is vital for survival, as well as having a believe system guided by faith and hope. Whenever you feel stressed take time to rest, heal, and recover. Thus, invest in yourself and take time for yourself to heal.
11. Ana reminds women to invest in cultural traditions that connect one to tribal ceremonies and rituals. She would drum to fortify her connection to spiritual ceremonies, and used drumming to rejuvenate her spirit.

Summary

The women’s *testimonios* provide important insights into the strategic responses they used to navigate through racism, white privilege, and complex power relations in predominantly white public universities. The four central themes revealed in the case study include: 1) Internal University Responses; 2) External University Responses; 3) Health Related Responses, and 4)

Spiritual Responses/Strategies. Each of these four areas contributes to creating greater educational opportunities for marginalized Students of Color in higher education. Furthermore, the women's responses and strategies can also be used collectively as a "survival guide" to help other Students of Color successfully navigate through systematic racism and institutionalized oppressive hurdles encountered throughout the educational pipeline. These insights can lead to healthier and more balanced approaches to coping with the detrimental effects of gendered and racial microaggressions. The final research question was answered in-depth and provides survival resources for Students of Color to create healthier academic environments throughout higher education.

Implications for Theory

This case study contributes to the theoretical gaps in literature in three ways. First, it sheds light on the marginalized educational experiences of low-income Chicanas and Native American women at the doctorate level. Second, it creates new interdisciplinary educational scholarship pertaining to the racial and gendered educational experiences of women that left or were pushed out of their Ph.D. studies, and therefore contributes to the current discursive gaps in literature regarding this neglected area of scholarship in higher education. Third, the study advances Chicana Feminism by creating knowledge that directly draws from women's lived experiences, and the in-between spaces of the body, mind, spirit connections. These theoretical contributions are interdisciplinary and reposition Chicanas and Native American women as "creators of knowledge," throughout the research process.

In addition, to my knowledge, this dissertation is the *first* national study to document, capture, and reveal the psychological and physiological effects of racial and gendered microaggressions occurring to women's bodies, minds, health, and negatively affecting their

quality of life in higher education. The case study benefits tremendously from the critical raced and feminist epistemological experiences of Chicanas and Native American women, as they navigate through systematic racism, complex power relations, and white privilege in predominantly white public universities. Consequently, the study makes significant feminist theoretical contributions to Critical Race Feminist Theory, and identifies significant theoretical implications for theory in the following disciplines: Ethnic Studies, Women's Studies, Education, and Critical Race Studies.

Implications for Methodology

Using *testimonio* as a method and methodology created a “protected space” for the women to share their personal educational experiences. *Testimonio*, as a methodology, provided a political format to document and preserve the women's stories of resistance, hope, and survival. By sharing their *testimonios* based on memories, pain, and lived experiences, the women underwent a transformative process that allowed them to release some of their painful memories and traumas in a protected space. Many of the women who participated in the study have never before shared their personal *testimonios*; and so, for many this was their first time revealing vulnerabilities and emotional pain through the research process. Therefore, the implications for methodology include acknowledging and honoring silenced political narratives through a qualitative and grounded process of *testimonio*. *Testimonio* guides participants' critical process of releasing, reflecting, and healing through the research process, as informed and active agents for social change. Further, by using *testimonio* as a social justice methodology, we are able to decolonize knowledge and strategically re-assign agency, while simultaneously centering the subjectivity of the oppressed in the research process. *Testimonio* can continue to be used to reposition Chicanas and Native American women as “creators of knowledge throughout the

research process.” In summary, my methodological contributions include pushing *testimonio* to serve as a decolonial healing methodology; *testimonio* creates a space for critical race theorists to engage a method and methodology that honors the process of sharing the political narrative as an empowered act of resiliency, hope, healing, and survival.

Implications for Practice

In order to conduct research that matters, my academic objective was to create social justice scholarship that sought to help low-income Chicanas and Native American women strategically navigate through the educational pipeline with greater educational opportunities and equal educational access, by shedding light on how systematic racism, white privilege, and additional types of oppression exist at the professoriate level within predominantly white institutions. This feminist research inquiry was revealed in various contexts. Further, my plan to transition from theory to practice is three fold: First, I plan on sharing the data findings via conference panels, workshops, publications, and curriculum designed to create an open space for dialogues and discussions regarding the psychological and physiological effects of microaggressions on Chicanas and Native American women in predominantly white public universities. Second, I plan on publishing a follow-up study on the women that were pushed-out of their doctorate studies; their political narratives are vital in understanding issues of retention, lack of diversity, and educational inequities occurring at the doctorate level. Third, it is important to push for educational policy reform that critically addresses the serious implications of hostile academic climates, unethical conduct, educational inequities, discriminatory/differential treatment, violations of policy, and violations of Federal/State laws that take place within public universities that merit serious attention, change, and future research relating to educational policy. The data findings in this national case study, demonstrate that it is imperative to create

healthier and positive academic environments for low-income Chicanas and Native American women scholars on a national level. After all, if we want to create change, it is important for educators, researchers, and faculty to also share their knowledge and wisdom in order to create supportive and respectful networks for Students of Color throughout the educational pipeline.

Implications for Policy

The findings from this dissertation can provide educators, researchers, and policy makers with important information to guide the drafting and reform of educational policy. In applying Critical Race Theory, one could argue that systematic racism, white privilege, and additional forms of oppression are consistently perpetrated against underrepresented Chicanas and Native American women in higher education. Additionally, conversations regarding racial segregation, educational inequities, and violations of the Civil Rights Act, Title IX, and ADA/504 also merit attention and political and legal action. It is important to promote awareness regarding how race and systematic racism are interconnected to systematic inequities evident throughout the educational pipeline for Chicanas and Native American women. One suggestion is to create an educational policy brief illuminating the data findings and, necessarily, revealing the implications of systematic racism and additional types of oppression. The differential treatment and racist attacks playing out at predominantly white public universities clearly violate federal and state laws, and public educational institutions must be held accountable to higher standards. Further, educational reformers must also attend to the systematic problems, that is, unethical conduct, segregation, educational inequities, and violations of federal/state laws, occurring within public universities in order to create ethical and equitable educational opportunities for Chicanas and Native American women in higher education.

Limitations of the Case Study

The limitations in this case study include the following. First, the case study *solely* focused on Chicanas and Native American women, thus excluded additional U.S. Women of Color from the sample. The second limitation is that the study also excluded Men of Color. The third limitation is that the study mostly included “public universities” in the sample. Hence, only one private university was included in the case study. Moreover, my role as a researcher was also difficult at times, due to the “sensitive subject matter,” participants shared in their personal and often painful *testimonios*. Therefore, my role as a researcher also shifted case to case, but in all cases, I did my best to secure a “safe and protected” environment for the women to share their important *testimonios*. However, during field interviews, I also allowed myself to share personal experiences and stories with the women through a collaborative exchange conducted with respect, understanding, and compassion. These challenges were handled to the best of my abilities, as I also learned a great deal from the women’s courage, resiliency, and dedication to the case study.

Recommendations for Future Research

The following recommendations are for future research based on this national case study. More importantly, the call to advocacy in order to create greater educational opportunities for Chicanas and Native American women in higher education without the burden of prejudice, systematic racism, or injustices at the doctorate level. It is imperative to understand the systematic obstacles that Chicanas and Native American women navigated through in order to create pro-active changes that foster positive and healthy academic climates for women within public universities. This research honors knowledge created from women’s lived experiences, memories, bodies, as creators of knowledge. Some of the recommendations include:

1. Conduct a larger sample size study targeting Chicanas, Native American, African American, and Asian American women in higher education to better understand their diverse educational experiences in higher education.
2. Conduct a study on Men of Color in public universities pursuing Ph.D.'s to better understand their educational experiences at the doctorate level.
3. Incorporate a focus group using Delgado Bernal's *cultural intuition* and invite all the participants nationally to take part in a critical dialogue regarding the data findings of this national case study.
4. Undertake a similar national case study with a "controlled sample group" to further understand the psychological and physiological implications of racial and gendered microaggressions to Women of Color in higher education.
5. Create additional racialized and gendered studies that center the educational experiences of Students of Color that were "pushed out" of their studies in order to better understand how to challenge retention issues in higher education.

Hence, in understanding women's racial and gendered educational experiences; educators and researchers can better understand how systematic racism, white privilege, and additional types of oppression impact Chicanas and Native American women in higher education. These recommendations are also based on a political agenda that further addresses issues of diversity, equal educational access, and retention as critical tenets to study in the educational pipeline.

Conclusion: Pedagogy of Faith

This national case study provided an in-depth analysis of the lives of low-income and working-class Chicanas and Native American women who have gone through the educational pipeline and continue to create, write, resist, heal, and contribute to change for generations to

come. All twenty-one women drew upon various strengths, acts of faith/hope, and support to navigate through often-hostile academic climates in predominantly white universities.

The case study was designed to provide insight into to their real and lived “theories in the flesh” reflective of women’s collective struggles, educational experiences, and resiliency to combat racism and additional types of oppressions in the academy.¹⁷⁷ Through their *testimonios*, we are reminded to use our memories, traumatic events, and lived experiences as politicized acts of survival that teach us to be strategic, as we navigate through various challenges in higher education. Literal survival depends on several levels of struggle, such as emotional, physical, cultural, psychological, and spiritual, as we navigate through various types of oppression throughout the educational pipeline. Audre Lorde reminds us that survival is not an academic skill; it is “learning how to stand alone, [and] unpopular...”¹⁷⁸ Many of us stand alone and are continuously pushed outside... Many women are outcast. However, our political and spiritual work of the soul is significant and connected to creating change that honors humanitarian principles. Therefore, through a critical process of awakenings, reflection, healing, and inner transformations, “we reach a spirituality that has been hidden in the hearts of the oppressed people... Our spirituality does not come from outside ourselves. It emerges when we listen to the small still voice within us which can empower us to create actual change in the world.”¹⁷⁹

The women’s *testimonios* teach us the importance of connecting our educational aspirations to contribute to greater educational opportunities for marginalized Communities of Color and the working poor. For example, the women that participated in the case study wanted nothing in return, but participated because they believed, in heart and spirit, that their *testimonios* could be used to help other marginalized communities navigate through the educational pipeline

¹⁷⁷ Anzaldúa and Moraga, “Entering the Lives of Others,” in *This Bridge*, 20-21.

¹⁷⁸ Lorde, “The Master’s Tools,” *Feminism and Race*, 89-92.

¹⁷⁹ Hernández- Avia, “In the Presence of Spirits,” *This Bridge we Call Home*, 519-530.

with human dignity, self-respect, and resiliency. Therefore, their *testimonios* reflect political narratives that are grounded in acts of resistance, defiance, advocacy, and hope.

Hernández-Ávila asserts that through spiritual activism our resiliency comes from a place of love for our families, communities, elders, and people. She states, that “[i]t’s hard to be a human being and deeply painful to be conscious...we do what we do because we love our people, our communities, [as] we are linked through memory to loving family... to grandmothers and grandfathers, [and] to impeccable leaders, organizers, artists, healers, *maestras y maestros*, who gave their lives for the cause of universal peace and justice.”¹⁸⁰ Hernández-Ávila posits that there is a human obligation that we must all carry as educators, researchers, and human beings.

She asserts that:

We also live our lives, and the evidence is in each act we take to end the terror and degradation of genocide, repression, criminalization, starvation of body and spirits, violation of our human rights, people-hating/earth-hating, and racism that remains our people’s punishment for being so powerfully different. So that their/our suffering will not have been in vain, so that every ounce they gave for liberation will count, so that our spirits will draw and give from such strength, we get up; we rise up, in beauty, in dignity, and in conscious freedom...”¹⁸¹

Therefore, it is imperative that we take time to heal, mend our wounds, and again rise up armed with faith to continue to end human degradation for those that struggle in silence. We are part of a new “revolution that begins in the heart and spirits of people.”¹⁸² In essence, armed with *conocimiento*, we strive for emancipatory changes as a conscious, political, and ethical choice in a world that remains intolerant of differences, and for now, remains on fire. Thus, it is my hope as Chicana, Native, and *Indígena* feminists globally that we reject apathy and embrace hope, vision and courage, believing in ourselves and others as we mobilize our inner strengths for the sake of revolutionary change.

¹⁸⁰ Hernández-Ávila, “In the Presence of Spirits,” *This Bridge we Call Home*, 532-534.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 535.



Photo 11: *Raza* Graduation, Dr. Bert María Cueva¹⁸³

Therefore, as women engaged in an intellectual revolution we find ourselves at a crossroads, as we stand at the threshold to re-conceptualize what our identities, histories, activism, political writings, and transformative shifts mean and what they offer humanity in the 21st Century. In the spirit of these radical teachings, I am suddenly reminded of this as I stop to listen to the soft voices that echo in the winds. I hear the great spirits of our foremothers call upon the powers of the four corners of the Earth: East, South, West, and North. Their beauty and power stretches across the sky; and they softly touch my spirit and gently whisper into my ear:

You raise your head to the sky...

May the words and the spirit...

Take root in our bodies, grow, and sprout ears that listen...

Sabemos que podemos transformar este mundo

filled with hunger, pain, and war

into a sanctuary of beauty, redemption, and possibility

may the fires of compassion ignite our hands

sending energy out into the Universe

where it might best be of service

¹⁸³ Photo courtesy of pocho1 of pocho1.com

may the love we share inspire others to act...

We are ready for change...

Si se puede, que así sea, so be it, estamos listas, vámonos.

Now let us shift.¹⁸⁴

The women's personal *testimonios* mirror this important healing process that I define as a "Pedagogy of Faith" that teaches us not to be afraid or silenced for seeking justice; as emancipatory change is a conscious, political, and spiritual choice. We have the right to exist with human dignity, freedom, respect, and compassion for others. I hope this *testimonio* and interdisciplinary research helps others navigate through the educational pipeline armed with knowledge and guided by faith. After all, as educators, we have an ethical obligation to contribute to a better world and invoke our abilities to teach, create, heal, and love in our world that still remains on fire.

¹⁸⁴ Anzaldúa, "Ritual, Prayer, Blessing for Transformation," *This Bridge We Call Home*, 574-576.
Translation: We know that we can transform this world. Yes, we can and it will be done, we are ready, let's go.

APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT FLYER

CRITICAL RACE FEMINIST CASE STUDY



Figure A: *Mirage*, Irene Carranza

Looking for Native American Women & Chicanas in pursuit of PhD's.: For a Case Study in Academia

If you identify as American Indian or Chicana and would like to participate in a case study regarding your racialized and gendered experiences in academia, I would like to hear your story!

Please contact me if you are interested in participating in the study. All inquiries are confidential.

Bert María Cueva

Bert María Cueva, M.A., (Principal Investigator)

Ph.D. Candidate, Women's Studies Department

bcueva@ucla.edu

APPENDIX B: IRB FORM

Written Consent Form

University of California, Los Angeles

Title Project: “*Testimonios* of Native American Women and Chicanas in Academia”

Principal Investigator, Bert María Cueva, M.A.

Faculty Sponsor: Daniel Solórzano, Ph.D.

CONSENT FORM

The following information is provided to ensure that you are informed of the content and purpose of this research. Please read this information. If you wish to participate after reading the information, let me know that you understand the purpose of the study and want to tell your story. Also keep this information sheet for your own records. It contains information about how to contact the researcher for future reference. I will also be using a digital audio recorder to help me keep track of interviews, as well as a more accurate record of your story.

If you do not want to participate, just let me know and we can stop the interview at any time. Your participation is totally voluntary and anonymous. Your name will be omitted from the study and participants can select an “alias” for the study.

Why am I being asked?

You are being asked to be a participant in a research study about U.S. Women of Color. I am a UCLA graduate student who is conducting this study for my dissertation. Your participation is totally voluntarily.

Why is this research being done?

I am interested in collecting the stories of U.S. Women of Color and how they have experienced and survived racism in higher education. The knowledge gained from your stories may help guide the development and future of other People of Color in academia.

What procedures are involved?

After reading this consent form and agreeing to be a participant an interview will be set up. The interviews will take approximately 1-2 hours to complete. You can stop the interview at any time and opt out of the interview as well. Your responses will be anonymous.

What are the potential risks in taking part of the study?

The research has few risks. I will ask you to re-count experiences of racism, which is probably stressful. In the unlikely event that the content of the interview creates emotional distress, please inform me to stop the interview.

Are there benefits to taking part in the study?

There are no direct benefits to you for agreeing to participate in this study. However, your participation may benefit other communities by improving services and awareness for other Students of Color.

What about privacy and confidentiality?

All the information in this survey will be anonymous. No identifying information will be collected. It will not be possible to link your survey or interview responses to you in any way. All information collected from you will be stored in a secure database and locked, thus only available to the researcher. You also have the right to review the recordings made as part of the study to determine whether they should be edited or erased in whole or part. Moreover, when the results of the research are published or discussed at conferences, the information from all participants will be summarized. No information will be included that would reveal the identity of any of the participants.

What are the costs for participating in the study?

You will not be charged to participate in the study.

Can I withdraw or be removed from the study?

You can choose to be part of the study or not. If you volunteer to be in the study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

What are my rights as a research participant?

Completing the interview is voluntary. You have the right to exit the interview at any time without penalty.

Who should I contact if I have questions?

The researcher conducting this study is Bert Maria Cueva. If you have questions, you may contact her directly:

Bert María Cueva, Graduate Student, UCLA Women's Studies Department
2225 Rolfe Hall, Los Angeles, CA 90095 (Graduate Mailboxes)
(310) 845-9709, bcueva@ucla.edu

Daniel Solórzano, Professor, UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information
Moore Hall 2022 C, Box 951521
solorzano@gseis.ucla.edu

Moreover, if you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Office of Protection of Research Subjects at UCLA. The Office is concerned with the protection volunteers in research projects. Below is the information you will need to contact their office:

UCLA, Office of Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS)

10945 Le Conte Avenue, Suite 1401 Peter V. Ueberroth Building
Box 951694, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1694
Phone number: (310) 8257122
www.oprs.ucla.edu

Consent to participate in the study

I have read (or someone has read to me) the above information. I understand my roles and rights as a participant in this research study. I may keep a copy of this form for my records. I am indicating my consent and willingness to participate in this case study by stating:

- I **CONSENT** to participate. I have read and understand the above information. I know that being in this study is my choice. I know that after choosing to be in this study, I may leave at any time. It was recommended to me that I keep a copy of this form for my records.

- I do **NOT** consent to participate in the study.

SIGNATURE OF STUDY PARTICIPANT

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

SIGNATURE OF PERSON OBTAINING CONSENT

In my judgment the participant is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent and possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study.

Name of Person Obtaining Consent

Contact Number

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW SURVEY

Interview Survey/Demographic Information

1. Full name _____
2. Contact Information: _____
 - Current Address _____
 - E-mail address _____
 - Phone number _____
 - Cell number _____
3. Select a pseudonym for the interview process _____
4. Birth date _____
5. Birthplace _____
6. Current Age: optional _____
7. Schooling: names, public or private, degrees awarded, majors
 - a. High School _____
 - b. Community College _____
 - If you are transfer student which community college? _____
 - c. Undergraduate _____
 - d. Graduate School _____
 - e. Other: _____
 - f. Reservation, if so which one _____
8. What is your Ph.D. Department _____
9. What year are you in your Ph.D. Department _____
10. Current occupation(s) _____
11. How do you identify by race or ethnicity: (Circle the appropriate item below).
 - a. Chicana _____
 - b. Mexican-American _____
 - c. American Indian, if so which tribe _____
 - d. Other: _____
12. What is the socio-economic background of your parents? Please mark with an "X"
 - a. Upper class _____
 - b. Middle class _____
 - c. Working class _____
 - d. Below poverty _____
 - e. Other _____
 - f. What socio-economic status do **you** identify with? _____
And why _____

- 13 Estimated debt for the Ph.D. (Approximations)
- Present _____
 - After completion of your PhD _____
 - Are you the *first* member of your family to go to college? Mark with an X
 - Yes _____
 - No _____
- 14 Are you the first member to pursue a Ph.D. in your family? Mark with an X
- Yes _____
 - No _____
- 15 Do you have any additional family members' in college? _____
- If so, who? _____
- 16 Father's occupation _____
- 17 Father's highest level of schooling _____
- 18 Mother's occupation _____
- 19 Mother's highest level of schooling _____
- 20 Did your parents obtain their schooling on the reservation, if so
Which reservation _____

21. What additional institutions have you attended for community colleges, tribal schooling, university, and graduate school? Please include below.

Institution	City and State	Degree
-------------	----------------	--------

OPTIONAL: Would you like to include a favorite quote or passage for your bio?

() Yes () No () Later

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