

“Hasta La Raiz”! A Sentipensante Testimonio Defending the Teaching of our “Mother’s Gardens” and Ethnic Studies in the Central Valley, Califas

Nora Cisneros, California State University, Bakersfield

Abstract

This sentipensante testimonio draws from Sentipensante Pedagogies (Rendón, 2009) and Chicana Feminist Epistemologies & Ontologies (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Lugones, 2010) to honor the relationships and emotions that are excluded from higher education, including in retention evaluation and promotion (RTP) processes. This multimodal sentipensante testimonio is a coalescence of writing narratives—specifically essay, memoir, and incorporates song lyrics—in the structure of an academic text. The sources for the sentipensante testimonio are drawn from my pedagogical reflections and extensive first year evaluation and rebuttal statements. Through this sentipensante testimonio, I share my own teaching journey, linking my mother’s stories to the larger social-geographic-political context of Ethnic Studies in Central California.

Keywords: Chicana Feminist epistemology, testimonios, sentipensante, evaluations

Introduction

Yo te llevo dentro
Hasta la raíz
Y, por más que crezca
Vas a estar aquí.
– Natalia Lafourcade, Hasta La Raiz

Guided by my heritage of a love of beauty and a respect for strength—in search of my mother’s garden, I found my own.

– Alice Walker, 1983, *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens: Womanist Prose*

I open with my mother in this reflection about my teaching because many of the relational practices that we Women of Color write about are indeed our mothers’ stories. In *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens*, Alice Walker illuminates the heritage that her mother’s labor and faith had on her own tenacity as a writer. This past semester I became acutely aware of the depth of my mother’s influence on how

and why I teach. As my mom enters the fall season of her life, she is still planting seeds of inquiry and care in me. I take her questions as a guide to share with you the most important bloom during the first semester in the Central Valley: my students.

- Adapted from the introduction I wrote for my first year Retention Tenure Promotion (RTP) narrative

These three opening quotes intimate the complicated, racialized, and gendered emotional work that Women of Color engage in as they cultivate creativity and education. Women theorists, mothers, aunties, teachers, singers, writers, and artists from across the borderlands have recovered the dirt, mosses, roots, stems, leaves, and other approximations of love and beauty that bloom within them/us as gardens. The quotes above illuminate the gardens that nourish me as a professor and, collectively, are part of my *sentipensante* testimonio. I offer that a *sentipensante* testimonio is a written testimonio that privileges the body-mind-spirit in academic writing and builds on the tradition of resistance in Ethnic Studies by naming the relationships that are formative in our lives as educators. My *sentipensante* testimonio illuminates how my mother's words supported me while I challenged a teaching evaluation that sought to diminish Ethnic Studies pedagogies.

The first quote situates Mexican singer Natalia Lafourcade's song, "Hasta La Raiz," which I kept in my playlist's constant rotation on my long drives from Los Angeles to Bakersfield to teach Ethnic Studies in California's Central Valley. Lafourcade's soft voice kept me calm through the minacious and foggy Tejon Pass. "Hasta La Raiz" is full of intimate huapango riffs focused on her country of Mexico. Like many immigrants, I find that music is comforting and helps me stay connected to my home communities of Mexico and Califas.⁶⁶ My weekly round trip commutes became the space and time where I would allow the complex feelings of teaching Ethnic Studies in a politically conservative campus to exist alongside my curated "Chicana & Mexicana Chingona" playlists. The commutes became akin to what Anguiano et al. (2022) term a sonic counterspace, or "an affirming auditory realm that is comprised of emotional, psychological, and physical space activated through intentional listening practices" (p. 67). In this sonic counterspace, I listened to music that connected me to my mother, daughter, son, tias, primas, and comadres. However, when Lafourcade's song usually came on, I immediately thought of my mother. She is the primary root from which my resistance tendencies bloomed.

I borrow the second quote from Dr. Alice Walker's (1983) groundbreaking work, *In Search of our Mother's Gardens*, a book about Black women and their genealogies of creativity and survivance. Walker's words remind us that Black women carry a heritage of strength deep within from past, present, and future generations of women. Walker offers us glimpses of these gardens through essays about her encounters with, among others, Zora Neale Hurston, and Coretta Scott King. Indeed, this article's title alludes to Walker's book and LaFourcade's song—both accompany me on my long commutes to visit my mother and teach in a new tenure-track role. I respectfully borrow from Walker's *Gardens* to uplift the stories from women in my life that help ground my creativity and resistance as an Ethnic Studies professor. This aligns with how Latinx/a/o communities impart knowledge and sensibilities through storytelling (Garcia et al., 2021; Montoya, 1994).

⁶⁶ Califas is a term of endearment for California that reflects Chicana/o/x activism and pride in California and draws on the title for 1982 conference co-organized by Eduardo Carillo in "Califas: Chicano Art & Culture in California."

I re-crafted the third quote—an excerpt from my RTP narrative- to demonstrate that my teaching of Ethnic Studies is not simply guided by my many years of academic expertise and teaching but is also grounded in the faith and tenacity learned from my mother. In foregrounding my familial, literary, and creative relations, my RTP narrative challenged neocolonial ideologies that undermine how teaching in higher education can be deeply affective, humanizing, and relational experiences (Ohito & Nyachae, 2019; Pérez Huber & Cueva, 2012). Most RTP teaching evaluations place an extraordinary amount of importance and weight on quantitative student surveys, which by design cannot capture in depth transformative learning that happens in Ethnic Studies classes. Thus, in my evaluation materials, I offered a teaching narrative that explained my own educational philosophies and Ethnic Studies pedagogies. My narrative also uplifted the affirming student comments that are often overlooked in teaching evaluations. As such, this *sentipensante* testimonio exposes how Ethnic Studies teaching challenges power within higher education institutions and is rooted in grounds of resistance across generations.

To that end, this manuscript weaves the context for my *sentipensante* testimonio—specifically in teaching Ethnic Studies as a first-year, tenure-track, Latina faculty member—alongside the words of my mother, and invites Ethnic Studies professors to *sentitestimonear* to show how profound transformative Ethnic Studies looks and feels like—*hasta la raiz!*

Context for my *Sentipensante* Testimonio

My mom: “Y dime, quienes son tus estudiantes? Como son? . . .”
(Translation: Tell me, who are your students? What are they like?)

These were two of the first questions my mother asked me in the beginning of the fall semester. She had just settled in for her weekly round of chemo and wanted me to tell her, in detail, about my students and what it was like to be a teacher to those students. This was not the first time she asked me about my students, nor was it too early in the semester for her to ask about them. The unspoken expectation is that I would know early-on who my students were as people. Who are they? What are their stories, the places they call home, and aspirations? What ails and inspires them? Who do they care about? These are the kinds of questions she wanted answers for and that I had already learned were important for me as an educator. She pressed me to describe the campus and students, — smiling when I tell her about all the Spanish chatter I hear when I enter classrooms. Every detail seems important to her; this does not surprise me. She was my first teacher and always modeled connecting with young people as a prerequisite for learning.

I share with her that most of the students in my classes come from backgrounds like my own: many are the first in their families to attend a university (first-generation), are the children of immigrants or immigrated to the U.S. as children, and some must travel challenging commutes to reach campus (they hail from across Kern County). Some students who identified as Central American discussed their families’ strong presence in warehousing jobs, often laboring in very unsafe working conditions.

Mom: “Esos detalles de tus estudiantes, no son solamente detalles. Es todo para los jovenes. Como se identifican y de donde son sus familias, lo es todo.”

(Translation: Those details about your students are not just details. That means everything to young people. How they identify and where their families come from can mean so much to people.)

- excerpt from my first year Retention Tenure Promotion (RTP) narrative.

Latinx Education in the Central Valley

Understanding the educational context of California's students is central to this *sentipensante testimonio*. The exchange with my mother and I about my students that opens this section was part of my teaching narrative and it underscores the need to affirm and respond to Latinx students' diverse identities, both hallmarks of instructing Ethnic Studies (Sleeter & Zavala, 2020). My teaching prioritizes students' intersectional identities, taking into consideration their economic precarities, and the political economy of Kern and Bakersfield. Geographically, Kern is the state's third largest county. Some of my students come from across Kern County, most hailing from Bakersfield. As of 2023, 68% of Kern County students enrolled in kindergarten through 12th grade were Hispanic or Latino; white students comprised 20% of the county's K-12 population and Black students were five percent (Livinal, 2024). Latinx K-12 students living in rural parts of Kern face unique challenges within their educational trajectories and family lives (Puente et al., 2023; Sawyer et al., 2021). The inequities that Central Valley students experience yield the need for student centered pedagogies in higher education (Puente et al., 2023). My *sentipensante testimonio* seeks to address these needs.

One such documented issue in Kern is the lack of equitable and high-quality formal education for vulnerable populations. For example, English language learners and migrant students experience above-average dropout rates: English Learner students at 16.3% and Migrant students at 7.5% (Kern County Network for Children, 2021). Many Latinx undergraduate students from rural and rural-adjacent cities confront the financial burden of paying for college tuition without receiving sufficient monetary support from their families (Nelson, 2016). Inequitable outcomes continue beyond bachelor's degree attainment, as low-wage warehouse jobs are presented as optimal employment opportunities for graduates (Pavin, 2023). Teaching Ethnic Studies is necessary to critique the racist capitalist logics of productivity, exacerbated by the growing-polluting-sickening warehousing industries in the Central Valley (CV), California. It is important to note here that local educators and activists for Ethnic Studies in Kern County have been at the forefront of the fight against mass polluting warehouses and the oil industry as the expansion of these industries hurts students' health and aspirations.

Latina Faculty

I want to acknowledge the projects that have been published by and about Women of Color in academia, which are inclusive of Latina faculty, and have provided the foundation for this *sentipensante testimonio*. In *Still Searching for Our Mother's Garden's: Experiences of New, tenure-Track Women of Color Faculty at "Majority Institutions"* (2011), the contributors chronicle the discriminatory experiences of those marginalized and "othered" in academia, as well as the various practices and methods that junior faculty engage in to survive working and progressing in various academic institutions. Collectively, the contributors encourage Women of Color in academia to

confidently and creatively share their experiences in writing that, in turn, amplifies the tending of their gardens.

Latina faculty's barriers to tenure are similar to the most barriers for women in academia: disproportionate underrepresentation of tenured senior faculty models for mentoring and support (Machado-Casas et al., 2013), constant undermining of our expertise and competence in our teaching evaluations (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012; Niles & Gordon, 2011; Téllez, 2013), and cultural taxation (Padilla, 1994) in areas of service and teaching. "Cultural taxation" is a term coined by Amado Padilla; it describes the unique burden placed on ethnic minoritized faculty in carrying out their responsibility to service the university. Téllez's (2013) powerful testimonio illuminates how she navigated institutional barriers during her first years as a tenure track professor while holding her multiple positionalities—a Latina junior faculty and single mom. Her critiques on the lack of transparency for the tenure and review process and on the meager empathy for her caretaking roles allow us to understand the acute institutional stressors that contribute to the high attrition of Latina faculty. Mickey et al. (2023) argue that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the faculty evaluation processes require recalibration or reformation to enact a more contextualized and humanizing approach to professor evaluation in ways that center equity for women faculty and faculty of color.

Lastly, Lorgia García Peña's (2022) book, *Community as Rebellion: A Syllabus for Surviving Academia as a Woman of Color*, was an incisive and inspiring literary lifeline for me as I was rewriting my RTP narrative into a sentipensante testimonio. García Peña offers that Ethnic Studies is the subversive academic field of practice that is necessary to recenter our humanity in higher education. Indeed, given the requirement to implement Ethnic Studies across the 23 CSU campuses—the second-largest public university system in the US—requires that we examine and understand how Women of Color faculty, and in particular Latinas, resist institutional aggressions and, in the words of García Peña (2022), a "rebel in community" (p. 98).

Sentipensante Pedagogies: A Framework for a Sentipensante Testimonio

My sentipensante testimonio—as expressed throughout this manuscript in various quotes, narratives, and song lyrics that privilege my relations and emotions as an educator—highlights the utility of testimonios constructed within Sentipensante Pedagogies and Chicana Latina Feminisms. Primarily, I offer that a sentipensante testimonio is based on Dr. Laura Rendón's (2009) empowering work, *Sentipensante Pedagogy*. This pedagogical model is guided by "a nondual epistemology and ontology, [that] is based on integration and consonance, representing the union of sensing and thinking" (p. 142) in education. Sentipensante comprises two Spanish words: sentir/sensing and pensante/thinking. According to Rendón, a Sentipensante Pedagogy allows for a fuller and more humanizing embodiment of teaching and learning that prioritizes validation, connectedness, intuition, mind-body-spirit and challenges the dominant but harmful agreements of mainstream schooling. Mainstream schooling's privileged agreements are separation, competition, perfection, neglect of validating relationships, and monoculturalism, among others (Rendón, 2009). In most higher education programs, instruction often focuses on the acquisition of major area skills, with less emphasis on the integration of emotions and the construction of critical and reflective thinking. This separation between feeling and thinking can limit the comprehensive development of students in higher education. Dr. Rendón's book illuminates various case studies of educators engaging sentipensante pedagogies in their daily work.

Here I pause and acknowledge, as Dr. Rendón did in her book, that the origins of *sentipensante* as a cultural framework are situated in Latino America's agrarian and political activists in the second half of the twentieth century. The origins of *sentipensante* are noteworthy for me because the time and geopolitical conditions of *sentipensante* are akin to those that birthed testimonios in Latino America. I also acknowledge that the origins of *sentipensante* emerge from the worldviews of Indigenous coastal fisher communities, as the concept was adapted to sociology through participatory research. More specifically, *sentipensante* as a cultural framework emerged in the works of Colombian sociologist and developer of participatory action research, Dr. Orlando Fals Borda (1925–2008). Dr. Fals Borda was clear that he did not invent the word *sentipensante*; that a coastal fisherman pointed out to him that he and all his fellow fishermen were *sentipensantes*. He meant that that their hearts and minds worked together and were central to their existence, labor, and leadership. In the early 1970s, Dr. Fals Borda and his colleagues collaborated with Indigenous and coastal communities throughout Colombia to prepare accessible materials for labor and organizational leadership.

In Latino America, decades after Dr. Fals Borda's seminal works of participatory action research and *sentipensante* sociology were published, the concept of *sentipensante* permeated public education—most known as “Educación *sentipensante*” (Espinosa & Derby, 2014). There are many interpretations and implementations of Educación *sentipensante*, specifically in Colombia, Venezuela, and Mexico. Across the board, both teaching and learning are simultaneously emotional and intelligent experiences and that a *sentipensante* education framework allows for educators to critically think through the power dynamics and impact of educational practices (Milano, 2022; Robayo Corredor, 2021). Educación *sentipensante* asks:

What emotions are permitted, and which emotions are not permitted in public spaces and in learning spaces? Which subjects are expected to suppress their affective experiences and who is allowed to express themselves? What should we do with the feelings that we experience daily about this world, about others, and about ourselves? Who writes these prescriptions over our emotions? (Robayo Corredor, 2021, p. 43)

This history and context of *Sentipensante* provides the opportunity to consider *sentipensante* testimonios as generative and synchronous tools for Ethnic Studies educators.

Chicana Feminist Epistemologies, Ontologies & Testimonios

Chicana feminisms are generated in the lived and documented realities of Chicana women in the U.S. whose experiences are shaped by historical legacies and manifestations of settler colonialism, patriarchy, and white supremacy (Reyes McGovern, 2023). In part, Chicana feminisms emerged from U.S. social justice movements and critiques of them, including the Chicano and the Civil Rights Movements (Anzaldúa, 1987; Castillo, 1995). Chicana Feminisms also emerged from the labor, teachings, storytelling, and acts of resistance Of Chicana mothers, grandmothers, tias, sisters, Primas, neighbors, and elders in urban and rural communities. Chicana feminisms are also deeply inspired from the activism, writings, and arts within Black Feminist movements (Collins, 2000; hooks, 1981).

An “epistemology” is a framework or theory for specifying the constitution and generation of knowledge about the social material world (Pérez Huber, 2010). Drawing from Chicana feminist activists’ and writers’ experiences and her own lived experiences, in 1998 Dolores Delgado Bernal theorized how Chicana feminist perspectives could be infused into educational research, offering a framework she termed a Chicana feminist epistemology (CFE) (Delgado Bernal, 1998). CFE recognizes Chicana and Latina foundations of knowledge as critical to the resistance, awareness, rebelliousness, and creativity inherent in the teaching that Chicana and Latina women do (Cruz, 2006; Delgado-Bernal, 1998). This is crucial to the research process due to the histories of erasure generated by colonial practices (Pérez, 1999). Delgado Bernal positions CFE as a lens to acknowledge women as knowledge holders and change agents. CFE is foundational to a sentipensante testimonio.

A Chicana Feminist ontology’s interrelation with education epistemology informs sentipensante testimonio. As Chicanas, our “knowing” is intimately tied to our “being” in this world. The reflection and study of our beings, within and beyond bodily forms, has often been an after-thought of Chicana Feminist Epistemologies. Inviting ontological dimensions in our discussion of CFE also invites feelings, thoughts, questions, and intuitions that affirm our bodies, spirits, minds, and souls to navigate genuine participation in our teaching of Ethnic Studies. Ontology insists that emotion is vital to systematic knowledge of the material world. A feminist ontology, then, rejects binary and oppositional notions of the self and its relationship to the body, mind, and emotions (Lugones, 2010). These perspectives provide the foundations for creating sentipensante testimonios that unite the embodied experiences of teaching. Epistemological-ontological questions that emerged for me as a Chicana Feminist Ethnic Studies educator include:

- What does it mean to teach Ethnic Studies?
- Where is the justice in this project/assignment?
- What does love feel like in teaching my students?
- What is gendered in this faculty evaluation and how?
- What are the realities for teaching and learning Ethnic Studies?

Testimonios

I first experienced testimonios in the early 1990s during community gatherings at the Catholic church my family attended in Inglewood, California. In those weekly gatherings, I learned the application of testimonios in fostering interconnectedness, agency, and feminist sensibilities. Most of the testimonios I’d experienced were spoken by women who immigrated to Los Angeles from southern Mexico and Central America. They shared the perils they faced as women in their respective countries, the dangers that led to their displacement. They shared the names of pueblos shattered by the violence, of relatives that disappeared, and of the children they painfully left behind. The personal storytelling varied in length, themes, and description; all the women who spoke used their entire bodies to communicate their testimonio. As they talked, they held up their hands in defiance, moved around the congregants to ensure they were heard, and often held themselves or each other as they grieved their losses. The solidarity built in sharing testimonios would be the impetus for the community’s organized opposition in 1994 to Proposition 187. Also known as the “Save our State” initiative, it sought to require police, healthcare professionals, and teachers to verify and report the immigration status of all individuals. Our church was one of many

religious communities in Los Angeles led by immigrant women that organized fiercely against the initiative.

Decades later, as a graduate student, I came across testimonios in the multimodal writings of Indigenous, Chicana, and Latina women, specifically in the fields of politics, education, and feminisms (Burgos, 1983; Latina Feminist Group, 2001; Pérez Huber, 2010). The Latina Feminist Group (2001), a formation of Latinas in higher education, engaged testimonios as a feminist research methodology that elevated the lived experiences of Latinas in education; their experiences were written and narrated for others to collectively witness and be empowered by. Similarly, I learned that CFE was foundational for the methodological approach of testimonio, where participants willingly share their struggles and resistances within the context of oppressive institutional structures, events, and experiences (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Pérez Huber, 2021). Dr. Lindsay Pérez Huber delineates the genealogy and formation of testimonios as an anti-imperial and decolonial methodology rooted in Latina America with a collective goal to develop movements of agency and solidarity (Pérez Huber, 2010; Reyes & Rodríguez, 2012). For Pérez Huber (2021), *testimonios*:

- 1) Reveal the injustices caused by oppression, and the structural conditions that lead to those injustices.
- 2) Challenge dominant Eurocentric ideologies that undergird the research process and are embedded in Western knowledge production processes.
- 3) Validate the experiential knowledge of People of Color.
- 4) Acknowledge the power of human collectivity through emancipatory strategies of healing and revealing, rooted in the histories and memories of Communities of Color.
- 5) Remain committed to racial and social justice and ultimately work toward dismantling and transforming oppression and injustice.
- 6) Acknowledge a sense of political urgency and consciousness needed to address x, y, and z.

Testimoniando Hasta El Rebuttal!

She spent too much time teaching on Chicana Latina women
– adapted from a student opinion survey.

Strengths of this class were that the professor treated us like we were already capable scholars and leaders. She taught us to see ourselves with more power and to trust that we know things while also encouraging us to learn from other people and from different authors . . .
– adapted from a student opinion survey

While these remarks illuminate the diverse responses and learning experiences stated by predominantly Latinx and first-generation students in my introductory Ethnic Studies course, most of the comments I received affirmed my teaching and my course's content. There were a couple of opinions—such as the first comment—that strongly suggested how challenging it was for students to center women in their studies of race, ethnicity, and class. These comments motivated me to further uplift texts from Women of Color in my classes, especially as no gender nor feminist studies courses were taught in my department at the time. As a seasoned educator, I am not surprised by students' resistance to centering women's words and perspectives. It is not

uncommon that female instructors are heavily criticized for including women and gender in their courses, and this is often described as them imposing a personal bias (MacNell et al., 2015). I addressed the diverse and challenging student opinions directly in the teaching narrative I wrote for my first-year review process, as I had been advised to do so by tenured faculty mentors. I also sought to disrupt the so-called objective and heavy focus on student opinion survey results prioritized in the evaluation process. The comments made by members of my review committee suggest that the minor amount of negative student comments were more important than the affirming student comments or the social justice driven class curriculum and projects.

The rebuttal statement that I wrote to my committee was not a direct challenge to their conclusion (“meets expectations”). It was intended to intervene and set a precedent underlining that teaching, service, and scholarship in Ethnic Studies must be assessed using different metrics. My rebuttal statement informed them of the hallmarks and metrics in teaching Ethnic Studies and I made a strong case for not being a *basica profesora* (i.e., “meets standards”): I never missed a class, wrote countless letters of recommendation, developed new course proposals, secured grants for our new Ethnic Studies curricula, and so forth while handling a heavy teaching load (100+ students). I performed these tasks of labor and love with a heavy heart as well, knowing my mother was fighting a cancer that knows no remission. Like many Ethnic Studies educators and community activists, I know my work matters and no university metric is capable of justly accessing all that we do. My *sentipensante testimonio* is an act of rebellion and resistance as well as a documentation of the unseen labor that I undertook as an Ethnic Studies educator.

Closing

“Ten confianza y esperanza de que todo saldra bien! Tus raizes son fuertes y la cosecha sera justa. Adelante y envialo!” (Have faith and hope that all will be well. Your roots are strong, and the harvest will be just. Send it in!)

– voicemail message from my mother, encouraging me to submit my rebuttal letter.

When you grow up with a parent who is not particularly loquacious and is never trivial, what they say to you in person (or leave in a voicemail) is indelible. My mother and I grew closer during my doctoral studies when I became a mother. Not only did she help care for my children during that time in my life, but she also began to divulge more stories about her own childhood and family. I realized then what a radiant storyteller she was. Even now, she continues to nurture the rebellious teacher in me, reminding me to defend my teaching of ethnic studies. Indeed, her voicemail nudged me to submit my rebuttal statement to the committee.

My *sentipensante testimonio* expands to the paucity of testimonios from early career professors committed to growing Ethnic Studies as life-making spaces within academia. While the goals of diversity, equity, and inclusion are promulgated by the passage of AB 1460 (Ethnic Studies requirement) across California State University (CSU) campuses, those goals will not be realized if the retention and evaluation processes misunderstand, marginalize, or undermine Ethnic Studies values and practices. My ultimate hope is that Ethnic Studies educators—in the present or in futurity—use *sentipensante testimonios* not only to deepen the affective components of their teaching, but also be able to affirm from their own relations, riffing on Alice Walker’s (1983):

Our mothers and grandmothers, some of them: moving to music not yet written. And they waited . . .

References

- Anguiano, J. G., Uriostegui, M., Gussman, M., & Kouyoumdjian, C. (2022). Sonic counterspaces: The role of music in the Latino college experience at a predominantly White institution. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 21(1), 67–81. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192720905802>
- Anzaldúa, G. (1987). *Borderlands/la frontera: The New Mestiza*. Aunt Lute Books.
- Burgos, E. (1983). *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia*. Editorial Argos Vergara.
- Castillo, A. (1995). *Massacre of the dreamers: Essays on Xicanisma*. Plume Books.
- Collins, P. H. (2003). The politics of Black feminist thought. In C. McCann & S. K. Kim (Eds.), *Feminist theory reader: Local and global perspectives* (pp. 318–333). Routledge.
- Delgado Bernal, D. (1998). Using a Chicana feminist epistemology in educational research. *Harvard Educational Review*, 68(4), 555–583.
- Delgado Bernal, D., Burciaga, R., & Flores Carmona, J. (2012). *Chicana/Latina testimonios: Methodologies, pedagogies, and political urgency*. Taylor & Francis Group.
- Espinosa, G, & Derby, R. (2014). Una escuela sentipensante para el reconocimiento y práctica de los derechos humanos. *Rastros Rostros*, 16(30), 95–104.
- García Peña, L. (2022). *Community as rebellion: A syllabus for surviving academia as a woman of color*. Haymarket Books.
- García, N. M., Salinas, C., & Cisneros, J. (Eds.). (2021). *Studying Latinx/a/o students in higher education: A critical analysis of concepts, theory, and methodologies*. Routledge.
- Gutiérrez y Muhs, G., Flores Niemann, Y., González, C. G., & Harris, A. P. (Eds.). (2012). *Presumed incompetent the intersections of race and class for women in academia*. University Press of Colorado.
- hooks, b. (1981). *Ain't I a woman: Black women and feminism*. South End Press.
- Kern County Network for Children. (2021). Important facts about Kern's children. <https://kern.org/kcnc/wp-content/blogs.dir/4/files/sites/21/2021/08/2021-Important-Child-Facts.pdf>
- Latina Feminist Group. (2001). *Telling to live: Latina Feminist Testimonio*. Duke University Press.
- Livinal, R. (2024). Kern County, a “microcosm” of California, sees major education leadership changes. <https://www.kvpr.org/local-news/2024-04-16/kern-county-a-microcosm-of-california-sees-major-education-leadership-changes>
- Lugones, M. (2010). Toward a decolonial feminism. *Hypatia*, 25(4), 742–759.
- Machado-Casas, M., Ruiz, E. C., & Cantu, N. E. (2013). Laberintos y testimonios: Latina Faculty in the Academy. *Educational Foundations*, 27(1-2), 3+.

MacNell, L., Driscoll, A. & Hunt, A. N. (2015). What's in a name: Exposing gender bias in student ratings of teaching. *Innovations in Higher Education*, 40, 291–303. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-014-9313-4>

Montoya, M. E. (1994). Mascaras, trenzas, y grenas: Un/masking the self while un/braid-ing Latina stories and legal discourse. *Chicano-Latino Legal Review*, 15(1), 1–37.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2018a). Digest of education statistics. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_104.20.asp

Nelson, I. A. (2016). Rural students' social capital in the college search and application process. *Rural Sociology*, 81, 249–281.

Niles, M. N., & Gordon, N. S. (2011). *Still searching for our mothers' gardens: Experiences of new, tenure-track women of color at "majority" institutions*. University Press of America.

Ohito, E. O., & Nyachae, T. M. (2019). Poetically poking at language and power: Using Black feminist poetry to conduct rigorous feminist critical discourse analysis. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 25(9–10), 839–850. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800418786303>

Padilla, A. M. (1994). Ethnic minority scholars, research, and mentoring: Current and future issues. *Educational Researcher*, 23(4), 24–27. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1176259>

Pavin, R. (2023). Kern County is poised to become warehousing's next frontier. *The Los Angeles Times*. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2023-12-19/kern-county-california-warehouse-industry-next-frontier>

Pérez, E. (1999). *The decolonial imaginary: Writing Chicanas into history*. Indiana University Press.

Pérez Huber, L. (2010). Beautifully powerful: A LatCrit reflection on coming to an epistemological consciousness and the power of testimonio. *The American University Journal of Gender, Social Policy & the Law*, 18(3), 839–851.

Pérez Huber, L. (2021). Testimonio as a critical race feminista methodology in higher education. In N. M. Garcia, C. Salinas, & J. Cisneros (Eds.), *Studying Latinx/a/o students in higher education: A critical analysis of concepts, theory, and methodologies* (pp. 164–174). Routledge.

Pérez Huber, L., & Cueva, B. M. (2012). Chicana/Latina testimonios on effects and responses to microaggressions. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 45(3), 392–410.

Puente, M., Nuñez Martinez, M., Rios Arroyo, D., & Torres, S. (2023). Rural Latinx students' spatial imaginations of their college choices: Toward a student understanding of "rural-serving institutions" in California's San Joaquin Valley. *Educational Science*, 13, 660. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13070660>

Reina Rosero, A. M. (2024). Semillas del sentir y pensar: Integración de la educación sentipensante en la primera infancia colombiana. *Boletín Redipe*, 13(4), 56–69. <https://doi.org/10.36260/rbr.v13i4.2110>

Rendón, L. (2009). *Sentipensante (sensing/thinking) pedagogy: Education for wholeness, social justice and liberation*. Routledge.

Report on the Status of Women + Girls in Kern County. (2020). The Kern Community Foundation.

Reyes, K., & Rodríguez, J. (2012). Testimonio: origins, terms, and resources. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 45(3), 525–538.

Reyes McGovern, E. (2023). Storytelling with Nepantla: A portrait of one Mexican American teacher's literacy practices. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 22(2), 613–623. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2020.1799378>

Sawyer, A., Rosales, O., Medina, O., & Sawyer, M. T. (2021). Improving schooling outcomes for Latinos in rural California: A critical place-based approach to farmworkers history. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 20(2), 106–119.

Sleeter, C. E., & Zavala, M. (2020). *Transformative Ethnic Studies in schools: Curriculum, pedagogy, and research*. Teachers College Press.

Télez, M. (2013). Lectures, evaluations, and diapers: Navigating the terrains of Chicana single motherhood in the academy. *Feminist Formations*, 25(3), 79–97. <https://doi.org/10.1353/ff.2013.0039>

Walker, A. (1983). *In search of our mothers' gardens: womanist prose*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.