



*Truth-Telling, Ritual Culture, and Latino College Graduates in the Anthropocene*¹

Ryan Evely Gildersleeve, University of Denver

Abstract

This article seeks to trace the cartography of truth-telling through a posthumanist predicament of ritual culture in higher education and critical inquiry. Ritual culture in higher education such as graduation ceremony produces and reflects the realities of becoming subjects. These spaces are proliferating grounds for truth telling and practical wisdom. Using Latino graduation ceremonies as a backdrop, the ritual transforms the Latino college student into the Latino college graduate via the ritual practice of the Latino graduation ceremony represents parrhesia in the actual process. The cartography of truth-telling illustrates how critical methodology and methodologist can engage in parrhesia.

Keywords: *Anthropocene, Latino higher education, ritual culture, parrhesia*

In this essay, I seek to trace a cartography of truth-telling and practical wisdom through a posthumanist entanglement of ritual culture in higher education and critical inquiry. Every spring, thousands of Latinos gather with family and friends in celebration of educational achievements that are simultaneously normative and exceptional, mainstream and subaltern, positive and negative. These extreme dichotomies are insufficient to describe the intra-sections of each upon another. As such, I intend to describe some of the variable axes through which assemblages of Latino college graduates emerge.

The emplacement of Latinos in American higher education is significant to excavate as Latino families face historic discrimination along racialized, colonized, economic, and ethnic lines of flight. Erstwhile, American higher education has been propagated by design as an answer to inequality—the great equalizer and the confirmer of individual uplift for the meritorious. Yet, as social institutions, colleges and universities are as likely to reproduce the very inequality and inequity that its subjects might seek to mitigate. Ritual culture, such as a graduation ceremony, reflects and produces the realities of becoming-subjects and becoming-socialities. As will be illustrated, such spaces can be ripe and ravenous grounds for truth telling and practical wisdom as they engage the onto-epistemological work of posthumanist critical inquiry.

1. Part of the research reported in this article was made possible with support from the Spencer Foundation for Education. Spencer Foundation Grant #201300010.

Practical Location Coordinates I: Division I Sports Arena on a Public University Campus in California during Commencement Weekend

Close to 200 graduates enter the arena. They are accompanied by almost 400 parents or grandparents who escort them from one end of the floor to the other, then students are ushered into their seats as *madres y padres y abuelas y abuelos* find their way back to family and friends in the stands. Parents and grandparents move across and betwixt the two worlds of college graduation and *la familia* today. They march to Edward Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance* alongside their children. Their children's march represents the traditional transitory state between student and graduate. *Los Padres'* march represents the connection between sacrifice, struggle, achievement, and opportunity. Aztec dancers take to the floor of the arena, drumming and dancing ancestral performances of celebration. Latino graduation ceremony has begun, and *la familia* is at its center, even as they circumscribe the graduates in the arena.

Practical Location Coordinates II: Public Green Space on a California Community College Campus during Commencement Weekend

About 70 or so family members and friends sit sporadically around an outdoor amphitheater as 40 or so graduates line-up along the perimeter of the green space marking the amphitheater's center. Two tents dissect the green space with a podium and microphone standing on a single riser in between them. Edward Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance* broadcasts from a simple stereo connected to a mobile outdoor audio amplifier. About 10 or so faculty members, administrators, and special guests enter the amphitheater first, marking the beginning of the ceremony with a traditional commencement processional. The 40 or so graduates follow. Each group finds their seats under one of the two tents. Two current students serve as the masters-of-ceremonies. They approach the podium and welcome the audience.

“¡Bienvenidos a Graduación de Latinos de Coastal Community College!”
 “Welcome to Coastal Community College's Latino Graduation!”

The ceremony continues along a traditional line of flight, following a typical commencement ritual's agenda: greetings to family and friends, acknowledging the faculty, a few remarks from the College President, a keynote speech from a well-known member of the community (in this case, a member of the community college district board), the reading of the names of the graduates as they each walk across the stage and shake the President and the Keynote speaker's hands, and closing remarks from the two emcees. With only the President's and Keynote Speaker's remarks as exceptions, everything else is spoken in Spanish first, English translation second.

The ceremony overall strikes a tone of humility. The student organizers (representatives from two Latino-centric student organizations on campus) take responsibility for set-up, take-down, and the transition from ceremony to reception. The families and friends of graduates listen respectfully despite the piercing brightness of the sun beating down on them and the semi-humid conditions for mid-May along the California central coast. Most participants—graduates, family, friends, or speakers – are wearing nicer, but not quite fancy or flashy, clothes. It's what I might expect to find walking out of church tomorrow morning.

The Latino Caste and American Higher Education

It has long been established that Latinos are underrepresented in American higher education (MacDonald, Botti & Clark, 2007). While gains have been made in the gross number of Latinos attending a U.S. postsecondary institution (Hernandez & Lopez, 2004), these increases do not begin to reach parity with the Latino population nationwide (Oseguera, Locks, & Vega, 2009), nor does parity promise equity. Of the Latino students who begin postsecondary study, roughly 15% complete a bachelor's degree, and only 2.9% ever go on to complete a terminal degree (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Research also makes clear that systemic problems in policy (Nuñez, 2013), practice (Zarate & Burciaga, 2010), and research (Oseguera et al., 2009; Saunders & Serna, 2004) contribute to the perpetuation of Latino underrepresentation and differential achievement measurements attributed to Latino communities.

Research on college and university climates and cultures demonstrates that Latinos face historic hostilities on campus (Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solorzano, 2009). These hostile environments are instantiated by both explicitly racialized incidents such as thematic fraternity parties that parody Latino cultures (DeSantis, 2012; Jaschik, 2013) as well as subtle racial microaggressions (Solorzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005) such as repeated failure of a professor to pronounce Latino students' names correctly. However, the hostile campus environment is built by more than interpersonal relations. Systemic advantage to historically traditional "campus life" (e.g., fraternities/sororities, homecoming events, NCAA athletics, etc) means that Latinos must assimilate (Tinto, 1993) into a white normativity of college experience or assume an oppositional subject position (Gloria, Castellanos, Lopez, & Rosales, 2005). The racialization of college experiences can be found in the academic realm of institutions as well. Academically focused events on campus regularly reify the white normal and the Latino "other" (Gusa, 2010). For example, "Poetry Night" vs. "Latin American Poetry Night." Ethnic studies programs and departments regularly find themselves arguing for survival and/or status more-so than other scholarly traditions (Nicol, 2013).

Historic underrepresentation, systemic achievement differentials, and hostile campus cultures are reflections of how Latinos become emplaced in US postsecondary education. Latino students are not prominent in the nation's top tier research universities or liberal arts colleges (Lopez, 2005), law or medical schools (Kidder, 2003). Even in states with larger Latina/o populations, such as Arizona, California, and Texas, Latina/o students are underrepresented in the state flagship institutions in Tucson, Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Austin (Almanac of Higher Education, 2015). These patterns become inverted when examining Latina/o enrollments at open access and less-selective institutions. Latina/os are overrepresented in America's community colleges (Martinez & Fernández, 2004; Kurlaender, 2006), often the most under-resourced institutions (Padron & Marx, 2013). Finally, Latino graduates are less likely to be persist through STEM majors and more likely to complete traditional social science and/or humanities courses of study (Dowd, Malcom, & Bensimon, 2009).

The point here is not that community colleges are bad for Latino students, nor that the humanities are less desirable than engineering. Rather, the point is to illustrate that as an artifact of becoming Latino college students, Latinos become emplaced in particularized academic positions, both interculturally on campus and intellectually in the academy. Some scholars have suggested that the Latina/o class in America gets configured into a Latina/o caste in education (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Gildersleeve, Cruz, Madriz, & Melendrez-Flores, 2015; Ogbu, 1978).

The Anthropocene as a Context for Inquiry

There is growing and widespread recognition that we now find ourselves in an epoch referred to as the Anthropocene. It recognizes that *homo sapiens* exert geologic force—that is, humankind has marked the Earth in recognizable and immutable ways. There are social consequences and implications from such science. The Anthropocene forces us to recognize that “human beings are transformed by, and transformative of, the world in which we find ourselves” (Graham & Roelvink, 2010, p. 320). The Earth is a requirement for us to be human. Therefore, if humans transform the world, and if humans exhibit forces as consequential as those we typically name “natural” (e.g., hurricanes, earthquakes, meteorites, etc.), then what we know as “nature” is only that which we invent. We make nature, discursively and materially. Put another way, the human-nature divide disintegrates. Onto-epistemologically speaking, the world might be understood as a situation of our becoming-nature.

Some philosophers suggest that the very core of human subjectivity has been rocked by the onset of the Anthropocene. Rosi Braidotti (2013) and Roberto Esposito (2004/2008) each theorize posthumanist subjectivity focusing on what they call *zoe*—the Greek term for “life” itself. In the social realm, wherein *zoe* intrasects² with material governmentalities (e.g., neoliberalism), *zoe* transforms into *bios*—a particularized population, or type of *zoe*. These are the effects of biopower (Foucault, 2008), a form of power exercised to manipulate and control biology, in a communitarian sense. Biopower is the government of life, and it contrasts with sovereign or disciplinary power, which sought to control death. According to Esposito (2004/2008), the *bios* that wielded *Anthropos*—the human subject of the modernist project, is no longer plausible. *Anthropos* marked the moment wherein life became human life—a posturing of life that was autonomous, exercised its own disciplinary power over itself (largely via sovereign power yet referred to as free will), and enjoyed *freedom* vis a vis the emerging democratic political paradigm.

In an interesting twist, the Anthropocene, and humankind’s status of becoming-nature, marks an ontological situation wherein as the epoch centers the influence of humankind, we simultaneously witness the death of *anthropos*. As humankind now must recognize its participation *as nature* (rather than fighting, forecasting, responding, or relinquishing to nature), we also must contend with the truths proffered by the post-structural and postmodern theorists regarding human subjectivity – its fractured, temporary, mediated, mutable, and historical epistemologies (Foucault, 2008; Deleuze & Guatarri, 1987; Derrida, 1978; Baudrillard, 1981; Lyotard, 1984). Thus, an array of posthumanists point to divergent yet interconnected earth processes and systems as they intrasect with people. Braidotti (2013) summarizes three broad-yet-overlapping (and incomplete) lines of flight: becoming-earth, becoming-animal, and becoming-machine. Meanwhile, other posthumanist thinkers target the relationship between the emergent subject and late capitalism, arguing that humankind can only now be known as the valorizing subjectivation of capital accumulation (Lazzarato, 2013; Esposito, 2008; DeLanda, 2006/2013). Further, thinkers such as Jane Bennett (2010) argue that all constructs, as we know them, are merely (and complexly), assemblages of *things*. Thus, *things* matter and exert power in self-organizing ways (Bennett, 2010; Braidotti, 2013).

2. The terms “intrasect” and “intrasectuality” stem from new materialist philosophies and post-qualitative research conversations to indicate that rather than layering *on* meaning, such as commonly denoted by the *intersection* of social processes, the engagement of multiple social processes builds new meaning—or at least the opportunity thereof—by threading through one another, social processes change each other. See Barad, 2007.

My point in describing the Anthropocene as a context for inquiry is to recognize that *parrhesia*, while grounded in an ethic of truth-telling, must be understood within this ontological turning point of the anthropocene, which begs researchers to recognize the non-anthropocentric becomings of social processes, practices, and locations. Put simply, human perspective is not enough to capture the complexity of assemblage-building and assemblage-transformation. The deterritorialization/reterritorialization of society from racist, nativist, classist, and sexist paradigms into more emancipatory and democratic ethics of being and becoming must wrestle with the Anthropocene and its attendant social/political consequences.

Notes on Parrhesia: Politics of Truth Telling

According to Dyrberg (2014), “*Parrhesia* refers...to the politically engaged person who as an authority or as a critic of authorities is trustworthy and speaks truthfully” (p. 67). The political dimension should not be undermined. *Parrhesia* is a politics in itself; it can find expression in the transformation of the population, ontologically, in relation to self and other. This political *parrhesia* is not epistemological. As an ontological approach to knowing the population (e.g., knowing/becoming-Latino college graduate), *parrhesia* is “intertwined with the attitudes and decisions of individuals based on an assessment of their trustworthiness as well as their boldness and courage when it comes to deciding and acting” (Dyrberg, 2014, p. 67). *Parrhesia* then, is enacted in particularized situations. Truth, is enacted, rather than demonstrative. In this configuration, the *truth* in truth-telling is practiced, not known. It organizes ways of living and being, politically—it is produced as a way to govern and traverse Foucault’s three axes of human activity: relation to things (knowledge), relation to others (power), and relation to self (ethics) (Dyrberg, 2014). The rituals that constitute the Latino graduation ceremony rely on a politics of truth and truth-telling in relation to education, to other Latinos and other graduates, and to the becoming college graduate.

Parrhesia and democracy are linked inextricably—*parrhesia* reveals the tension between the ideal of democracy, of constitutional equality, and the material experience of democratic power, with all the inequality produced from such an exercise. Democracy’s messiness can be captured in *parrhesia*, and from capture, significant intervention or remediation can be generated. *Parrhesia* is an inside-out politic. It relies more heavily on the output of political decision-making, rather than the input—how to act on risk and possibility rather than how to build consensus or to cull the favors of the mainstream. It is a responsibility that counters the populist tendencies of democratic practice. Yet it simultaneously counters any totalitarian/authoritarian tendencies of those who are untrustworthy to tell dangerous truths. “It is a political approach to truth, for which frankness, timing, courage, personal integrity and indeed, the forming of the self as a citizen, a political being are defining features” (Dyrberg, 2014, p. 67). Thus, it must be culturally predisposed to believability yet willing to be discomfiting in the same moment. *Parrhesia*, as a political approach, recognizes that culturally-relevant engagement need not be mutually exclusive to cultural (and especially political) critique.

As Foucault (2010) explained:

It is a practice which rests its reality in its relationship to politics. It is a practice which finds its function of truth in the criticism of illusion, deception, trickery, and flattery. And finally, it is a practice which finds the exercise of its practice in the transformation of the subject by himself and of the subject by the other. (p. 353-354; as quoted in Dyrberg, 2014).

The Latino graduation ceremony, as a ritual practice, transforms the Latino college student into the Latino college graduate; the becoming-Latino Community transforms into the becoming-Latino celebration. Such transformation, via the ritual practice of the Latino graduation ceremony, constitute parrhesia in process and effect, simultaneously, both/and.

Parrhesia works to examine and call out institutional context directed by the various systems in which they reside, and also questions levels of individual autonomies that direct behavioral technologies employed by all institutions (Dyrberg, 2015). As a political approach, *parrhesia* affords opportunities to speak truth-to-power in ways that repressive power relations find difficult to avoid. Institutional structures, therefore, can be held accountable in a politics of truth whereby the population exceeds the organization. In illustration, the Latino graduation ceremony affords a cultural context from which truth-telling can emerge as a becoming-institution—the university becoming-Latino, even if temporally bound to the moment of the keynote address or the parent participating in the processional. As Dyrberg (2014) states:

Parrhesia is a means to ensure and facilitate the autonomy of oneself and others...a form of power that is not geared to secure the other's submission but to enhance his or her capabilities—an argument that could also be applied to collective entities in the political community" (p. 80).

The becoming-community of Latino graduates and families and friends collectively secure autonomy of their selves as an academically accomplished community, without engaging in the zero-sum game of haves and have-nots. Put another way, the Latino graduation ceremony recognizes the historic achievement of Latinos in higher education without diminishing the achievements of others (i.e., white, upper-middle-class Americans).

Practical Location Coordinates I, Continued: Division I Sports Arena on a Public University Campus in California during Commencement Weekend

As per tradition in graduations, there are speakers and speeches. Today, these are each made in Spanish and translated into English. No one is really left out of the listening experience, but rather than privileging those who grew up learning in English-only environments, the ancestral (*and* colonial) language of Spanish sits in providence over the auditory realm. Speeches at graduations traverse inevitably predictable themes: hard work, opportunities to better their family and society, gratitude for the experience made possible by the University, and of course, a lot of congratulatory platitudes for the achievement of the graduates and whatever their next steps may become. These themes in and of themselves are fairly normative.

When spoken from the subject-position of Latino graduates, Latino leaders, and/or Latino faculty members, they transpose epistemologically into a resistant strain or new discursive riff on the old reliably institutionalized refrains.

You have worked harder to succeed in a system that was not designed for you.

Your hard work is only made possible by the hard work of your parents: in the fields, in the factories, in the office buildings after-hours.

The opportunities in front of you are not for you alone. They are for Latinidad. They are for those who came before you and those for whom you've cleared the path.

You came to this institution seeking a degree. You leave with an education. Not just from the classroom, but from the survival strategies you developed to face those who didn't believe in you. To succeed where no one like you had succeeded before. To show them that no matter how you got here, you deserved your seat.

From these epistemological renderings, the traditional discourses of hard work are transposed into struggle and sacrifice. Those of opportunity are transposed into responsibility. Discourses of gratitude can be reconfigured into resentment or spitefulness. Congratulations become benedictions. These discursive acts fracture the nicely rounded expectations of what an institution of higher education was built to provide. Jagged fractures emerge in the institutional narrative of what a college degree means, represents, and promises.

Unlike institutional commencements, where individual students' time walking across the stage is measured by their steps between shaking hands with administrators and the length of time it takes the announcer to say their names, at Latino graduation, every graduate is afforded 10 seconds at the microphone.

Gracias mi Madre y Padre. Mi Abuela y Abuelo. They were denied the chance to go to college. I share this with you.

We are Chicanas marching on our homeland today. Today, we take back the lands that have always been ours.

I can't wait to put my education to use as the only Latino out of only 5 recruits from this university to a Fortune 500 firm.

For my daughter, who gives me the best gift everyday, her love. I stand here today to inspire her.

These mini-speeches cultivate a space and flow that can carve deeper into the fracture of the normative graduation ceremony. So deep, perhaps that an ontological move can be made. These mini-speeches cut deeper than epistemological renderings of what it means to graduate; they build a new theory of being Latino as a college graduate. In effect, these mini-speeches decode the normative expression of the predictable graduation themes and contribute to a newly formed becoming...the Latino college graduate.

The Latino graduate is fashioned through the intra-section of the university, as designed and administered by faculty, staff, students, state policy, and broader market forces, and the cultural heritage of *la familia*, as designed and administered by parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, cousins, the *tienda* down the street, the *taqueria* around the corner, and the *Iglesia* on Sundays, and the broader socio-politico-economic interests of human capital. The Latino graduate, ontologically, becomes additive to the status quo. The Latino graduate, as produced through these intra-sections, does not disrupt the capitalist accumulation of the neoliberal academy.

Practical Location Coordinates II, Continued: Public Green Space on a California Community College Campus during Commencement Weekend

Coastal Community College meets the requirements for designation as a Hispanic Serving Institution by the federal government and therefore is eligible (and receives) Title V funding from the U.S. Department of Education. Such funding is meant to promote the access and retention of Latinos in degree-seeking programs at public colleges and universities. At Coastal Community College, these funds have increased the academic advising and tutoring services available to students. The College itself is 36% Latino, mirroring the surrounding county. The county-wide median income is around \$53,000/year. However, a majority of Latinos in the College's geographic catchment area come from an historically Mexican migrant farmworking town, Berryville (a pseudonym), which is about 12 miles south of the main Coastal Community College campus and whose residents are approximately 85% Latino.

The keynote speaker, Señora Ramos is a member of the College's board of directors. She is "of the community": a long-term city councilwoman from the migrant town south of campus, a native of the area, a member of the Latino leadership of the greater coastal area. Sra. Ramos also graduated from Coastal College some 30 years ago, and went on to the local state university for her bachelor's and master's degrees. Her speech, while inspirational, focuses on the ability of all Coastal College students' ability to raise up from their communities and therefore raise their communities up in the process.

Your families sacrificed so that you don't have to make the same sacrifice.

Your struggle continues the struggle of your community.

Your responsibility is to improve upon yourself and your families and your community.

Your accomplishment is only as important as the difference you make in your life economically and in the economics of your family.

These sentiments evoke a common refrain of the graduation narrative—particularly when addressing non-dominant communities. Pick yourself up. Abscond state responsibility for your conditions and circumstances. Take responsibility for making life better.

This narrative, while relatable via mass media representations of American life, does not reflect the realities of the Coastal College graduates. For most, the sacrifice of their families is their own sacrifice. The average age of Coastal College graduates is 30. It is common for students to be parents. It is normal for students to work multiple jobs while struggling to persist through their curriculum, whether seeking a two-year degree, a credential, or to transfer to a four-year baccalaureate institution. The struggle that Coastal College students continue is not a new chapter, but rather the same or the former chapter of migrant farmworkers in Central California. This keynote speaker's narrative emplaces the Latino Graduate of Coastal College squarely into a neoliberal agenda wherein the Latino Graduate must now ascend into the designated social class performance prescribed her.

Notes on Parrhesia: (Public) Pedagogy of the Self

As personal practice, *parrhesia* can be understood as an intra-section of the political and the praxis of the individual. Burck (2009) sees the use of parrhesia as a tool for democratic education principles, a form of praxis when used as a dialectical instrument. Burck sees possibility in parrhesia to transgress boundaries as truth-telling principles develop learners of democracy. Tamboukou (2012) argues that educational parrhesiastics are both truth speakers and part of the “powerful other” (p. 861), therefore they can shape the institution during times of academic, social, or political change. In this sense, parrhesia might be understood as teaching-and-learning principles for the self while taking action in the public. Put another way, the individual parrhesiaste engages a public pedagogy of the self. Indeed, Peters (2003) focuses on parrhesia as the conduit to Foucault’s technology of the self, and likens it as constitutive of a foundational standard for education. As a requirement for parrhesia, competence is assessed by the congruence between one’s speech, thoughts, and actions. For Peters, parrhesia within educational contexts links directly to the progression of democratic imperatives. Educational parrhesiastes address biopolitics.

As a tool for securing democracy, parrhesia must engender effects. As a discursive tactic, parrhesia interrupts current dominant discourse, addressing social injustices and political arenas. (Kennedy, 1999). Yet, Huckaby (2007) points out that parrhesiastes’ level of engagement in truth telling is always in direct proportion to the freedom of their relative roles/titles, particularly in institutional contexts. The Latino graduation ceremony, therefore, supplies a necessary, if liminal, space wherein the freedom of the Latino college graduate can manifest in parrhesiastic activity. For, parrhesia is a momentary cauldron wherein a metamorphosis of political discourse happens. Catalytic, risky moments or situations where truth is sought become parrhesiastic acts when one harnesses her freedom or autonomy to speak truth (Tamboukou, 2012). To conceive of the Latino graduation ceremony as parrhesia – as a public pedagogy of the self—is to recognize the affordances of parrhesiastic actors not only tell the truth for the sake of their own self, but for the benefit of the greater public good.

The Latino Caste and American Higher Education, Refracted

Despite the warm, enthusiastic, and historic achievements celebrated in Latino graduation ceremonies, the Latino College Graduate is ensnared in the neoliberal project of American progress and higher education. Most Latinos in higher education attend open access institutions, like the community colleges, that reify the notion that their only plausible contribution to the biopolitical project of higher education—ostensibly individual uplift—requires them to target their own families and communities as part of the problem, rather than a source of the solution. While the Latino College Graduate can emerge, ontologically, and become reified—or valorized—via the ritual culture of the Latino Graduation, this becoming-subject compels a continuation of the neoliberal project through which the Latino College Graduate is only made possible by divorcing the *Latinidad*, by leaving *Aztlan*. In essence, the Latino Graduation Ceremony becomes as much a memorial for *Aztlan* as it is an annual renaissance.

Post-location Coordinates: a Capitalist Sports Complex Occupying Anthropocene of Aztlan in Springtime of the year of 2015 (Two Days before University Commencement)

The decor on the walls of the structure has been organized in such a way as to advertise a series of chain restaurants, big-box stores, military contractors, and the occasional consumer service-center, each of which are merely local instantiations of multi-national corporations. Banners hang or fly from various apparatus in the complex, each representing an athletic achievement attributed to the institution. The University's name, mascot, and major donors are well-represented in signs, photos, and displays throughout the complex. This is a place of winners—champions. The acoustics are such that loud noise gets louder and begets even louder noise. This is a space for celebration.

The celebrations that are normally held here are primarily for men. And usually white men, with the support of Black men, but rarely Black leadership. This is a sports complex after all. It is an extension of the National Collegiate Athletic Association and its nearly one billion dollars of annual revenue. This place is a cauldron of high-stakes D1 athletics. It is the storied space of campus leaders, icons, lore, and aspiration. This place represents the university not only to its students, faculty, and staff, but it's local neighbors, community, and broader constituents. This place *is* the university to the millions who tune in on cable networks like ESPN and ESPNU or watch sporting events live on local channels broadcasting in HD on a monthly, weekly, sometimes daily basis. This place is emblematic of global capital's flows through our social institutions. It is a space for capital accumulation.

Not so long ago, yet, prior to the Anthropocene, perhaps, this space did something else. Different materials were gathered here. Different people gathered them. Different kinds of noise were made. At one point in time, this space was not made from U.S. dollars. It was made from cultural practices that marked the space as *Mexican*. Or perhaps Chicano. Or perhaps Tongva. Not so long ago, yet so very far away.

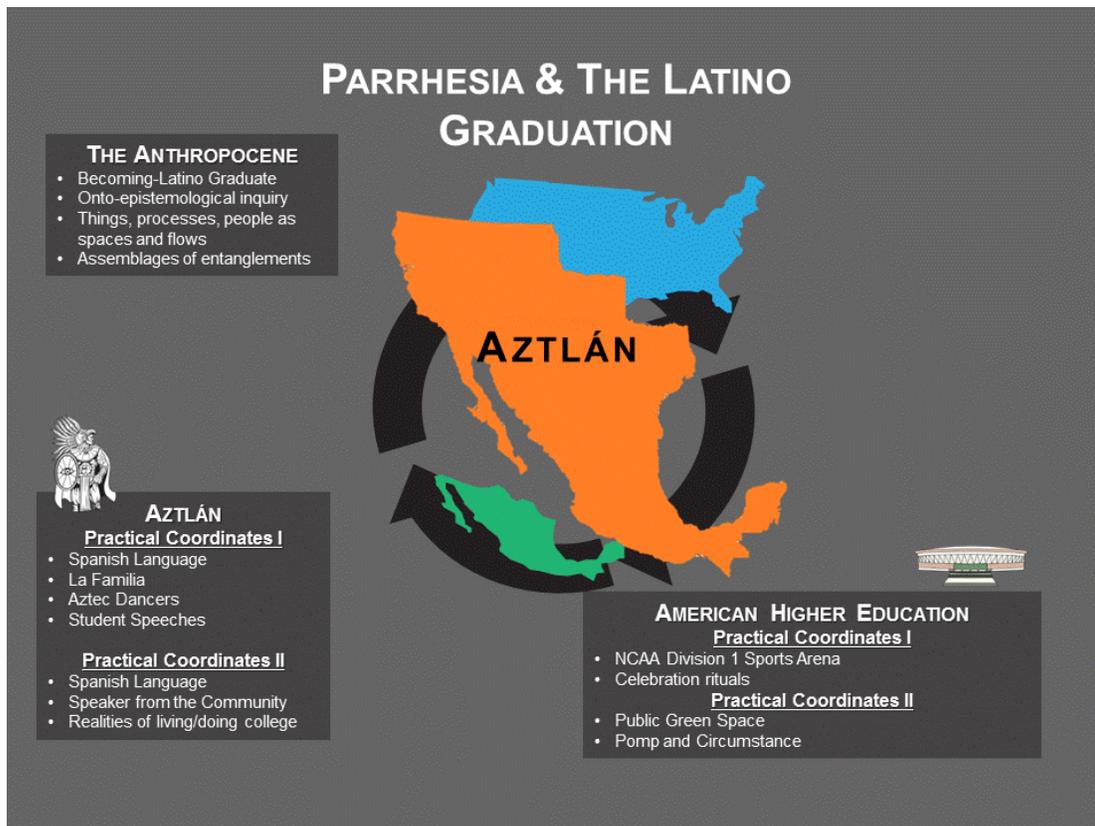
Where the sports complex now stands as an ode erected in honor of the neoliberal capitalist regime that has taken over American Academe, the space remains contested. While occupied, the people of Aztlan have organized. Their ancestral materials have been gathered. Their contemporary materials have accumulated. While there now sits a giant structure dedicated to preserving the accumulation of capital on behalf of the University, the space becomes a colonized resistance in the form of Aztlan for one afternoon each year.

Reflective Summaries

At request of the guest editors, I have included a conceptual figure (next page) to illustrate the cartographic analysis I sought to undertake in this essay. *Aztlan* occupies a primacy of space, centered in the figure, yet emerging from the inter-mixing of the practical coordinates underneath the broader context of the Anthropocene.

While onto-epistemological processes might emerge through the smooth slides across slowly developed fractures, much like the flows of water over rock over time, the figure is arbitrarily, *rough*. It is rough both in its aesthetic sense of graphic design, as well as in its metaphoric use, for parrhesia in posthumanist inquiry can be less of a smooth ride down a rockslide that emerged from centuries of productive erosion, and more of a jagged, rocky, disturbance and displacement from what has become normative over time. Thus, practical coordinates can be traced to the rising *Aztlan* imaginary as well as the neoliberal American higher education enterprise (nee

institution). While neither exist in zoe (i.e., pure life), each somehow build into the *bios* of the posthuman and build out the emergent *anthropos* of the becoming-Latino Graduate.



This paper sought to trace a cartography of truth-telling and practical wisdom through a posthumanist entanglement of ritual culture in higher education and critical inquiry. The cartographic goal was to trace the contours of a claim about staking claims—that claim-staking is generative critical activity to stem from inquiry focused on an analysis of power/knowledge and that such claims can provoke the very shocks to thought necessary to engender new configurations of plausibility in the everyday lives of the planet. Theoretically, the paper relied on my synthesis of posthumanist philosophy and the revival of Foucault’s concepts of biopolitics represented largely in his lectures translated into English and published since 2008. More pragmatically, I used the backdrop of my critical inquiry into ritual culture and Latinos in American higher education (Gildersleeve, 2015) to illustrate subtle yet significant shifts from a more procedural notion of critical inquiry into a productively entangled critical engagement of truth-telling, consistent with the productions of parrhesia theorized by Foucault, yet reconfigured in recognition of the false human/non-human dichotomy of modern discourse.

Put simply, I used my current inquiry into Latino Graduation Ceremonies in Higher Education to illustratively work-through how critical methodology (and methodologists) might engage in parrhesia, taking my cue from its four pillars as synthesized by Kuntz (2015):

1. an engaged analysis of the past
2. a recognition of how historical ways of knowing and being implicate the present
3. a determination to point a way forward towards a more socially-just future
4. a contextually grounded sense of value rationality.

My cartographic presentation of parrhesia at work took as its departing coordinates three fundamental assumptions about critical methodological work, two underlying characterizations of contemporary global action, and the particular activities of ritual culture produced through Latino participation in American higher education:

Critical Inquiry:

1. Critical inquiry *intervenes*. Intervention is fundamental to the *critical* task of knowledge. Intervention occurs across and betwixt epistemological and ontological planes in order to engender disruptive knowings/becomings—work referred to as territorialization/deterritorialization by Deleuze and Guattari (1987).
2. Critical inquiry is generative. To be critical is to create anew concepts and plausible becomings from the deconstruction of normative, governing, grand narratives that shroud imminent possibilities (or fractures) from their interventive potential (Kuntz, 2015).
3. Critical inquiry is constituted in the intra-action of the material and discursive, obliterating the arbitrary dichotomy of these epistemic differences. Through materialization, discursive understandings are fashioned. Simultaneously, discursive (re)constructions disrupt any semblance of fixity or knowing-ness assumed in materiality. Through their intra-section, the universe is made knowable (Barad, 2007).

Global (inter)Action:

1. We live, work, and know the world as complicit producers of the Anthropocene. In a scientific sense, the anthropocene is our current geologic period—one in which humans are the primary agents of affect and effect on the planet—we have as much power over geologic change as anything else, if not more-so.
2. Such science forces us to socially grapple with the consequences of human agency not as separate from nature, but constituent *and simultaneously* constituting of nature. Put more simply, we invent nature, with every decision we make socially and politically regarding how we choose to understand it.

Ritual Culture and Latinos in Higher Education:

1. The narrative renderings presented in this essay were crafted using analyses from my inquiry focused on Latino graduation ceremonies in higher education (see Gildersleeve, 2015). Fieldwork included multiple visits to 11 campuses, interviews with 34 respondents, and participant-observation of 8 Latino graduation celebrations.
2. The Latino Graduation Ceremony, therefore, emerges from populist, yet dissident, subjectivities and can, in a sense, provide a biopolitical response to the dominant institu-

tional governmentality that precludes Latino participation in social life. Simultaneously, producing truth from such populist biopolitical resistance requires a keen attention to historical, contemporary, and plausible future contexts, as shaped by the conditions of understanding and know-ability construed through the practice and production of the Latino Graduation Ceremony itself.

Thus, my posthumanist analysis of ritual culture and Latinos in American higher education leads me to argue that the Latino Graduation Ceremony engenders parrhesia through the situated practice of its actants and actors. Parrhesia emerges from political assemblages of ritual practice, as well as from the individual assemblage of the becoming Latino graduate who produces the parrhesiastes positioning through a (public) pedagogy of the self.

Bibliography

- Almanac of Higher Education 2015. (n.d). Retrieved May 1, 2016, from <http://chronicle.com/section/Almanac-of-Higher-Education/883/?cid=almanac15>
- Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Baudrillard, F. (1981). *Simulacra and Simulation*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Bennett, J. (2010). *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Braidotti, R. (2013). *The Posthuman*. New York: Polity.
- Burck, K. (2009). Parrhesia as a principle of democratic pedagogy. *Ohio Valley Philosophy of Education Society*, 40: 71-82.
- DeLanda, M. (2006/2013). *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity*. New York: Bloomsbury.
- Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1987). *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Derrida, J. (1978) *Writing and Difference*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- DeSantis, N. (2012). Photo of offensive costumes lands Penn State sorority in hot water. *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://chronicle.com>.
- Dowd, A.C., Malcom, L.E., & Bensimon, E.M. (2009). Benchmarking the success of Latino and Latina students in STEM to achieve national graduation goals. Los Angeles, CA: University of Southern California.
- Dyrberg, T. B. (2014). *Foucault on the Politics of Parrhesia*. New York: PalgravePivot.
- Dyrberg, T. B. (2015). Foucault on parrhesia: The autonomy of politics and democracy. *Political Theory*, 1-24.
- Esposito, R. (2004/2008). *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Foucault, M. (2008). *The birth of biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France, 1978-1979*. Springer.
- Gándara, P. & Contreras, F. (2009). *The Latino Education Crisis: The Consequences of Failed Social Policies*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Gildersleeve, R. E. (2015). Ritual culture and Latinos in American higher education. Paper presented at the annual conference of the Association for the Study of Higher Education in Denver, CO.

- Gildersleeve, R. E., Cruz, C., Madriz, D., & Melendrez-Flores, C. (2015). Neoliberal futures and postsecondary opportunity: Janet Napolitano and the Politics of Latina/o College Choice. In P. A. Perez & M. Ceja. (eds.), *Higher Education Access and Choice for Latino Students: Critical Findings and Theoretical Perspectives*. New York: Routledge.
- Gloria, A.M., Castellanos, J., Lopez, A.G., & Rosales, R. (2005). An examination of academic nonpersistence decisions of Latino undergraduates. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 27(2), 202-223.
- Graham, J. K. & Roelvink, G. (2010). An economic ethics for the Anthropocene. *Antipode*, 41, 320-346.
- Gusa, D.L. (2010) White institutional presence: The impact of whiteness on campus climate. *Harvard Educational Review*, 80(4), 464-489
- Hernandez, J.C., & Lopez, M.A. (2005). Leaking pipeline: Issues impacting Latino/a college student retention. *Journal of College Student Retention*. 6(1), 37-60
- Huckaby, M. F. (2007). A conversation on practices of the self within relations of power: For scholars who speak dangerous truths. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 20(5): 513-529.
- Jaschik, S. (2013) At 3 colleges, party themes or costumes offend many. *Inside Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://insidehighered.com>.
- Kennedy, K. (1999). The ethics and tactics of resistance. *Rhetoric Review*, 18(1): 26-45.
- Kidder, W.C. (2003) Struggle for access from Sweatt to Grutter: A history of African America, Latino, and American Indian Law School Admissions, 1950-2000, *Harvard BlackLetter LJ*, 19,1.
- Kuntz, A. M. (2015). *The Responsible Methodologist*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.
- Kurlaender, M. (2006). Choosing Community College: Factors Affecting Latino College Choice. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 133: 7-19.
- Lazzarato, M. (2013). *Governing by Debt*. Pasadena, CA: Semiotext(e).
- Lopez, J.D. (2005). Race-related stress and sociocultural orientation among Latino students during their transition to a predominately White, highly selective institution. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 4(4), 354-365.
- Lyotard, J. (1984). *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- MacDonald, V.A., Botti, J.M. & Clark, L.H. (2007). From visibility to autonomy: Latinos and higher education in the U.S., 1965-2005. *Harvard Educational Review*. 77(4).
- Martinez, M & Fernández, E. (2004). Latinos at community colleges. *New Directions for Student Services*, 2004(105), 51-62.
- Nicol, D.J. (2013) Movement conservatism and the attack on ethnic studies. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, doi: 10.1080/13613324.2016.7292794
- Núñez, A.M (2013) Achieving equity for Latino students: Expanding the pathway to higher education through public policy. *Journal of Educational Administration*. 51(1), 95-97
- Ogbu, J. (1978). *Minority Education and Caste: The American System in Cross-Cultural Perspective*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Oseguera, L., Locks, A.M., & Vega, I.I. (2009) Increasing Latina/o students' baccalaureate attainment: A focus on retention. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*. 8(23), 25-33
- Padron, E, & Marx, A. (2013). Community colleges: Separate and unequal. Community colleges are being asked to do way more with less. *U.S. News & World Report*. Retrieved from

- www.usnews.com/opinion/articles/2013/05/23/community-colleges-need-more-funding-for-services-they-provide.
- Peters, M. A. (2003). Truth-telling as an educational practice of the self: Foucault, parrhesia, and the ethics of subjectivity. *Oxford Review of Education*, 29(2): 207-223.
- Saunders, M., & Serna, I. (2004) Making college happen: The college experience of first-generation Latino Students. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*. 3(2), 146-163.
- Solorzano, D.G., Villalpando, O., & Oseguera, L. (2005) Latina/o undergraduate students in the United States: A critical race analysis of their educational progress. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 4(3), 272-294.
- Tinto, V. (1993). Building community. *Liberal Education*, 79(4): 16-21.
- Tomboukou, M. (2012). Truth telling in Foucault and Arendt: Parrhesia, the pariah, and academics in dark times. *Journal of Education Policy*, 27(6): 849-865.
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2015). *The Condition of Education 2015* (NCES 2015–144), Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Zarate, M.E., & Burciaga, R. (2010). Latinos and college access: Trends and future directions. *Journal of College Admission*, 209, 24-29.
- Yosso, T.J., Smith, W.A., Ceja, M., & Solorzano, D. (2009). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate for Latina/o undergraduates. *Harvard Educational Review*, 79(4), 659-786

Dr. Gildersleeve received his PhD from the University of California-Los Angeles. He has a particular interest in supporting Latin@ (im)migrant families. A critical qualitative methodologist, he is interested in theorizing a materialist inquiry that informs social policy for more democratic post-secondary institutions. These lines of research connect in their contributions to understanding what it means to seek social opportunities as democratic participants in an increasingly global society.