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**Creating a Critical Pedagogy of Place with  
Marginalized Youth in Barrio Logan**

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Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD

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## **Declaration**

I declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own.  
References to the work of others has been cited and indicated  
throughout.

Angela Gigliotti 17 January, 2019

## **Acknowledgements**

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## **Abstract**

This practice-based research explored possibilities for creating new life narratives through the arts with youth in Barrio Logan, California. The research questions were: How are new life narratives created through the practice of poetry, music and art in the lives of marginalized youth? How can a collaborative curatorial practice be used as a critical pedagogy of place? The questions arose from the researcher's practice as a teacher/curator and artist and were approached using an emergent arts-based methodology. Conversations, in the form of testimonios, and collaborative curation were also used as transformative and disruptive methodologies. Youth identities and making of place were explored drawing from theories of place and concepts of belonging.

Through the work of this practice, a concept termed fugitive space was developed. The notion of fugitive space moved the term fugitive away from the negative connotation to a departure point for escape—rupture. The students, as both participants and collaborators, were encouraged to share alternative stories rather than problem stories often associated with the deficit models used in educational settings. The emphasis was on reflecting, initiating discussions and exposing tensions rather than solving issues. Counter-stories were present in the conversations and offered narratives that disrupted the labels of 'at risk' youths or 'juvenile delinquents'. The writing, performing and sharing of poetry and rap music was central to the telling of these narratives and as a form of collaborative curation. Through the practice of collaborative curation, the students, as artists and activists,

took on the role of critical pedagogues which served to disrupt the hierarchies of power within the gallery space.

The stories, in the form of testimonios, included symbols of Aztlán that occupied both physical and symbolic spaces in Barrio Logan and contributed to the formation of Chicana/o identity. Through the testimonios, conversations that interrogated power structures were initiated with the community and created a place-belongingness. The outcomes of this practice-based research showed that new life narratives and new stories of place emerged forming a critical pedagogy of place and contributed a place-based educational practice that could be used by educators and other youth practitioners. Furthermore, the practice of collaborative curation initiated dialogical encounters that opened a context for the disruption of dominate narratives and the transmission of traumatic memories— a fugitive space.



## Prologue

This prologue to the written thesis is presented as a reflection on my practice as a teacher/curator and artist. I will focus on the possibilities I envision for the methods and methodologies of this practice-based research. It is also a brainstorm on what could emerge from this work as I reflect on what has been accomplished and what could be disseminated to other educators and youth practitioners both within and beyond Barrio Logan.

As I will discuss in Chapter 1, a website was created to document the work of this practice and as a tool to share the practice with my examiners. However, upon completion of the written submission, I began to develop the website as teaching resource and have continued to collaborate with my students in the co-curation of the website. Included in the collaborative practices of designing the website are ethical concerns about content and privacy. The students involved in the practice will be included in decisions regarding what content will remain on the website as it is shared with a wider audience.

As a community resource within Barrio Logan, the website could be used to share the methods of the practice with curators and educators and to encourage them to open spaces for students to share artworks, music and poetry within Barrio Logan. The potential also lays in the methodologies shared on the website that encourage youth practitioners to move beyond the display and performance of the arts to a paradigm of critical place-

based educational practices. The practice of disseminating the methods via the website, is yet another form of social intersection that contributes to the social networks of Barrio Logan by connecting youth, educators, artists, activists and other community members together in meaningful dialogues.

The practices shared on the website of initiating dialogues, as a form of public pedagogy, could be shared with practitioners working in other places/communities outside of the barrio through publications in educational and art journals, conference presentations and social media. The methods of this practice could also be used to engage my students and other artists in conversations beyond their communities by collaborating with curators in gallery spaces outside of the barrio. By doing so, students would have an active role in how they are portrayed in communities outside the barrio. The importance of this form of empowerment is made even more pertinent for immigrant youth who find themselves at the center of both national and international debates.

The work of Osvaldo Sanchez, whose served as artistic director for inSite's Casa Gallina, exemplifies this notion of curatorial practices that serve both the purpose of sharing art in the public domain and on the social actions that impact local communities or as Sanchez explains:

as an enclave generating diverse gestures that might reveal points of both stress (fragility) and malleability

(transformation) in the social fabric of the neighbourhood  
(inSite, 2019).

Other artists working in this vein, which I will refer to throughout this thesis, include the practices of Tim Rollins, Theaster Gates and Suzanne Lacy; it is the authenticity of their works which are sustained contributions to communities that influence my practice and encourage me to continue my work both in the barrio and beyond.

As I reflect on how I might share the place-based practices of this work and the new life narratives of my students I seek contexts, as a form of social collaboration, to share individual subjectivities and am mindful of reductive practices that over simplified the complex life experiences of my students. One such context for future practices could be a cross-border collaboration with artists in both Tijuana and San Diego drawing from the work of inSite since 1992. The artists working with the inSite's Casa Gallina term this type of work as 'synergies', or specific actions that 'generate alliances and creative actions that may influence the community's imaginary or encourage civic consensus for the benefit of the area (inSite, 2019). The work of inSite provides a context to frame the work of this practice as socially engaged art and to engage in the work as public dialogue. The work of my practice-based research shared stories of student activism, as a public dialogue, through personal narratives and art practices and built connections with both activist groups and individual community members.

# Chapter 1: The Research Context

## Introduction

The aim of this practice-based research was to develop a meaningful pedagogy where students could share new life narratives and build empathetic connections. In doing so, I wanted to uncover new stories of place through a collaborative process with my students, in the classroom and in the gallery. As a teacher, researcher and artist my emphasis was on the potentials within this practice rather than the artworks produced.

My initial focus was on the role of art in the lives of adjudicated youth and more specifically on recidivism rates. However, through the research process it became clear that it was the telling of the stories, told through works of art and conversations that held the most possibilities. I began by exploring the use of visual art as a vehicle for new life narratives to emerge however, through conversations with the students many of them shared their interest in poetry, rap and activism. The conversations exposed the importance these forms of art held in their lives. Because of these conversations and the dynamic nature of practice-based research; poetry, rap and activism were included in the practice and led to a broadening of the research questions. I began to develop a method to initiate the telling of the stories with an emphasis on the dialogical encounters that could be created with the public. The research questions explored were: How are new life narratives created through the practice of poetry, music and art in the lives of marginalized youth? How can collaborative curatorial practice be used as a critical pedagogy of place?

As practice-based research, the practice itself was embedded within the research, therefore the purpose was to support the research questions through the practice (Candy and Edmonds, 2018, p. 63). Regarding the production of new knowledges, it was the processes of this practice that offered the most potential. In other words, as Sullivan (2014) states referring to what he terms 'the symptoms of practice', the practice was 'a dynamic structure' that integrated theory and practice (p. 28). The goal of this practice-based research, as a dynamic and fluid process, was to uncover possibilities through the practice. Sullivan (2014) explains that through art-based research, as a reflective process, both the researcher and the researched are changed. In addition, the viewer is 'changed by an encounter with an art object or a research text as prior knowledge is troubled by new possibilities' (Sullivan, 2014, p. 8). The troubling of these possibilities is offered to the community through the sharing of new life narratives and new stories of place.

The other focus of this practice-based research, defining a collaborative curatorial practice, came about not as a new practice but through reflection on what I had already been doing as a curator in art spaces in Barrio Logan. Prior to the start of this practice-based research I had spent several years opening art spaces and organizing an art collective, however I had not reflected on how those experiences influenced my pedagogy. The fluidity of this practice-based research enabled me to bring my teaching practices and gallery work together. I began to imagine how I could work collaboratively with my students, as artists and curators, and

how we could share their stories. As the process developed my notion of the gallery also expanded. Through work in the gallery and in the classroom, I began to create the concept of fugitive space, as both a physical and theoretical space, and which I began to develop as a pedagogical tool.

Within the spaces of this practice the students were encouraged to tell alternative stories rather than problem stories often associated with deficit models. The notion of fugitive space moved the term 'fugitive' away from the negative connotation to a departure point for escape—rupture. The emphasis of the practice, within this fugitive space, was on reflecting, provoking discussions and exposing tensions. As part of this practice-based research, the idea of creating a space of practice was also important as I negotiated the fluxes of the gallery space which served as a fluid boundary between the outside world and the conversations and products produced within. My position as a Chicana gallery owner in Barrio Logan was the first step towards defining a curatorial practice and towards honouring a commitment to my students to hold exhibitions of their artworks.

The curatorial work of this practice-based research developed through a collaborative process and was intended to serve as a means of personal agency for the students. Typically, artwork or performance by youth labelled 'at risk' or adjudicated is presented as such. The artwork is usually prefaced as 'art by at-risk students' or 'prison art'. The work of this practice

included the exhibition of students as individual artists with subjective experiences and not generalized through labels. The collaborative curation of the stories and images presented the students as artists, activists and critical pedagogues. Narratives of cultural and political practices and ritual performances as happenings were told through the artworks. Counter-stories were present in the conversations and offered narratives that veered from the labels of 'at risk' or 'juvenile delinquents'.

Stories from the practice in the form of artworks—poetry, rap, videos, photographs, drawings and paintings, are posted on the website, [www.fugitivespace.com](http://www.fugitivespace.com), as a method to share the practice component of this work. The website is meant to be viewed in conjunction with this written component to support the work. The pages of the website correlate to several of the chapter subsections and are referred to throughout this written thesis. The website is also intended to offer strategies for youth practitioners; especially for those working with youth who have been marginalized and excluded from the school systems. In the remainder of the chapter, I will share my motivations for the research and introduce Barrio Logan as place.

### **1.1 Motivations**

My experiences as a teacher in the San Diego County Juvenile Court and Community Schools over the past two decades played a major role in my decision to seek a practice-based research programme. The impact of my students' stories on my life has been immense; they have guided, inspired,

and motivated me. The accumulation of these stories, especially those of trauma and resiliency, and the need to develop a method to share these stories in narrative form, was a motivation for this work.

The work of Chicana feminist writers and activists also grounds me in place as a Chicana and as a Native American. I draw upon the research of Chicana academics from the 1960's and 1970's who struggled to gain access to graduate education and who continue to monitor the educational pipeline of young Chicanas. The dismal statistics of the academic attainment of Chicanas in the United States<sup>1</sup> is a professional motivation for me because obtaining a PhD would qualify me for a position in higher education, positions held by very few Chicanas.<sup>2</sup> Through this practice-based research, I hope to contribute new tools and methods as I draw upon Chicana feminist epistemologies, such as testimonios and intuition. As a Chicana teacher working and living in the barrio, I bring experiences and personal knowledges to my practice, however I also draw on Candy and Edmond's (2018) definition of 'practice' to connote '*doing* something that extends beyond everyday thinking into actions that may lead to new outcomes' (p. 64). Although I continue to hold my position as a high school

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<sup>1</sup> In 2012 out of 100 Chicana students, 60 received their high school diploma, 11 earned a bachelor's degree, 3 earned a graduate degree and only 0.2 earned a doctorate degree (Perez et al., 2015, p. 3).

<sup>2</sup> 'A report completed by the U.S. Department of Education in 1999 states that in higher education institutions, which includes community colleges and universities, less than 1% of full-time faculty members are Latinas while only 0.4% are full professors, 0.7% are associate professors, and 1.3% are assistant professors' (Maes, J.B., 2010, p. 4).



teacher, as a researcher my goal is to seek new knowledges that go beyond my classroom and that contribute to the fields of education, art and Chicana/o studies.

My experiences as an artist and business owner in Barrio Logan have also influenced this work and served as motivation for this practice-based research. Integral to this is my involvement in the establishment of community art spaces in Barrio Logan, including the management of a large art collective and music venue that closed during the second year of this PhD programme. Soon after closing the collective I opened a new space, Liminal Gallery in Barrio Logan. Seeds Records was also created within Liminal Gallery after the practice exposed the need for a musical recording space for youth within the community. In the following section I introduce Barrio Logan as the physical context of this practice-based research and identify some of the forces of resistance within the community that guide this work. The spaces of this practice include Bayside Community School, Liminal Gallery, Seeds Records and Chicano Park—all places in Barrio Logan.

## **1.2 Barrio Logan**

Situated near the U.S.-Mexico border and as a site of historical achievement in the Chicano Rights Movement (National Park Service, 2017) coupled with the current political and social struggles creates a web of interactions for Barrio Logan. Each of the following subsections introduces a place within Barrio Logan, as part of this web, and how it is

relevant to the political and economic context of this practice-based research. These places hold significance for my students and me and contribute to our sense of attachment and belonging to Barrio Logan. The links to photos in this chapter are offered as visuals to supplement the written descriptions of Barrio Logan and were not part of the practice. The links to artefacts provided in the other chapters are specific to this practice-based research.

### **1.2a El Mercado**

Near the intersection of César E. Chávez Parkway and Main Street, the long-awaited 'Barrio Logan' sign spans the street in front of El Mercado. The ground-breaking ceremony for the sign welcomed Barrio Logan, one of San Diego's oldest communities, to the ranks of other historic neighbourhoods, see figure 1 (<https://www.fugitivespace.com/barrio-logan>). Dominating the northeast view from the intersection sits El Mercado— the centrepiece of the Barrio Logan's revitalization project— comprised of a large supermarket, several retail spaces and low-income apartments. The colourful facades of the buildings are complemented by murals commissioned to local artists and situated throughout El Mercado. Prior to the opening of the supermarket, Barrio Logan was considered a 'food desert' and was ignored by large grocery store chains. One resident commented, 'so the fact that we're sitting in an area that had junkyards, had toxic waste sites, believe it or not, and now we're sitting in a beautiful market that's going to serve the community that it's surrounding, it is a very big deal' (Lawrence, 2013, para. 5).

Revitalization projects, such as El Mercado in Barrio Logan, are typical of community plans under the auspices of 'new urbanism' that, according to González and Lejano (2009), typically have 'a range of housing and retail price levels, including apartments over storefronts, work live lofts, and single-family homes with yards' (p. 2947). The new urbanism includes the goal of 'bringing people of diverse ages, races, and incomes into daily interaction' (The Congress for New Urbanism, 2000, p. 4). However, as González and Lejano (2009) warn, residents of the barrio 'share a geographic and cultural identity and the need to preserve cultural connections and neighbourhood roots in the face of hostile planning practice' (p. 2950). New urbanism and gentrification are significant issues for residents in Barrio Logan; many of whom have been forced to move due to the increase in rents<sup>3</sup>.

Across the street from El Mercado, juxtaposed to the revitalization project's modern apartments, small wooden casitas built in the early 1900s line the street—some more dilapidated than others. They include single-family homes and small business ventures. In front of the houses the sidewalks bustle with pedestrians, skateboarders and strollers. I would argue most of the people are 'inhabitants' as Orr (1992) distinguishes from 'residents' because they dwell 'in an intimate, organic, and mutually nurturing relationship' (p. 130). These relationships include what Orr (1992) describes as a 'detailed knowledge of place, the capacity for observation, and a sense of care and rootedness' (p. 130). This is

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<sup>3</sup> Personal experience.

exemplified in the frequent cultural and political events and the community cohesion and pride in Barrio Logan.

The busy sidewalks contrast the vacant sidewalks in more affluent neighbourhoods of San Diego where the grid structures and alleyways were abandoned in favour of winding cul-de-sacs isolated from the main traffic arteries. Differing from 'inhabitants', 'residents' live in 'an indoor world of office building and shopping mall, automobile, apartment, and suburban house' (Orr, 1992, p. 130). The demise of alleys began in the 1970s and 1980s as the fear of crime increased and the media and police departments associated 'drug dealing, prostitution, and car stripping' as 'likely alley activities' and terms such as 'alley cat' and 'alley life' were used to 'denote inferior classes of people, creatures, and activities' (Ford, 2001, p. 276). However, I believe the alleys in Barrio Logan are lively spaces where informal activities bond neighbours together as constituents of the social net of the place.

### **1.2b Chicano Park**

Chicano Park, located in the centre of Barrio Logan, was recently added to the National Register of Historic Places because of its murals and significance in the Chicano Civil Rights Movement (National Park Service, 2017). In 1970 after community pleas for a park, the City of San Diego tore apart Barrio Logan displacing 5,000 residents to construct the Coronado Bridge on-ramp and granted the space under the pillars as a park. However, soon after granting the land the state announced plans to build a highway patrol station at the site

instead of the park (Berelowitz, 2003). The community immediately began their fight to keep the park. On April 22, 1970 they occupied the land designated for the highway patrol sub-station and stopped the bulldozers, halting the construction (Berelowitz, 2003), see figure 2 (<https://www.fugitivespace.com/barrio-logan>). During their twelve-day struggle the activists began planting trees and building the park. Refusing to give up, they participated in negotiations that ended in success as the city agreed to purchase the land from the state and build the park (Berelowitz, 2003). The park's history represents 'a tactic to counteract external oppression of barrio residents' (Berelowitz, 2003, p. 150). Chicana/o activists' demands for the park also represent what McFarland (2006) refers to as cultural mestizaje, 'our ability to adapt and survive under conditions of colonialism' (p. 940-941).

In the years that followed, the park became a landmark for Chicana/o muralism and remains a famous site as both local and regional artists continue to paint murals on the columns of the freeway underpass (National Park Service, 2017). The artistic expressions of Chicana/o muralists which began in the 1970s are characterized by Berelowitz (2003) as, 'poetic symbols that articulated a proud heritage with a sense of historical identity' (p. 145-146). The murals display binational icons that mix Aztec symbols and contemporary figures in the struggles to further the *la causa*—the cause (Berelowitz, 2003). The park's murals are a form of syncretism combining 'national leaders of an independence movement with prominent media figures, images of Aztlán and devotees to the Virgin of Guadalupe with modern rituals' (Canclini, 2003, p. 279).

As the mythical homeland of the Aztecs, Aztlán, is thought to have extended throughout the present day southwestern United States, and as Berelowitz, (2003) points out, ‘to the activists who fought to regain this mythical homeland, they gave the name Chicano’ (p. 146). Chicano Park continues to be a vibrant place for community gatherings. The annual Chicano Park day celebrates the park’s history and Chicana/o culture. Danza Azteca classes are held weekly in the park *kiosko*, low-rider cars line the streets during events, and cultural celebrations bring Chicanas/os from across the county to attend, see figure 3 (<https://www.fugitivespace.com/barrio-logan>).

Chicano Park also continues to be an important site of political marches and activist rallies.

### **1.2c Harbor Drive**

Due east from the intersection of César E. Chávez Parkway and Main Street, along the southern edge of Barrio Logan, industry scars the landscape and leaves a legacy of environmental health problems. Harbor Drive, gilded with iconic murals and graffiti, runs the length of the barrio. The 10th Avenue Marine Terminal, on the western end, has a staggering ‘1,000,000 square feet of warehouses and transit sheds’ of break-bulk cargo and cold storage (Unified Port of San Diego, 2015), see figure 4 (<https://www.fugitivespace.com/barrio-logan>). The shipping giant NASCCO—employing thousands of people and one of the few shipbuilders in the world (Unified Port of San Diego, 2015), is located on the eastern end of Harbor Drive. These international links in global commerce are significant economic forces in Barrio Logan. These

interconnections to the world also contribute to what Massey (1994) terms a 'global sense of local, a global sense of place' (p. 156) and are examples of the relations of place that extend beyond the borders of Barrio Logan.

Also located along Harbor Drive, are warehouses vacated by ship repair yards and related industries over the past decade. Many of these spaces have been reterritorialized as art spaces and underground music venues. Dear and Leclerc (2003) outline a process of '(re)mexicanization' (p. 9) that creates 'a quiet revolution of hidden informal businesses and...innovative social networks' (p. 9) reminiscent of the processes happening in Barrio Logan. These spaces, such as the large warehouses I managed, offer spaces for musicians and artists in Barrio Logan to practice and perform, and serve as social hubs for those living within and outside the barrio. However, the fate of the industrial zone remains embroiled in politics as big business interests see the possibilities for profit and are challenged by the interests of the residents.

### **1.2d Bayside Community School**

In the shadow of the Coronado Bridge, near the southeast corner of César E. Chávez Parkway and Main Street, a nondescript grey building, Bayside Community School, sits behind a tall chain link fence topped with massive barbed wire. The barbed wire, stubborn and awkward, remains in place as an artefact of by-gone days. Upon closer inspection, a vine from the vegetable garden peeps through the fence, softening the tension. A typical

school sign is purposely absent as students emerge from a rod iron gate—another line of defence.

Our school district was very reluctant to open a community school in Barrio Logan due to the stigma of gang violence that has scarred the community over the past few decades. After numerous pleas to school administration, we were successful in securing a location in Barrio Logan. I have been teaching at Bayside since the program opened in 2012. The students attend school about five hours a day, five days a week<sup>6</sup>. As a community school, we have quite a different setting than the large comprehensive high schools in San Diego County which typically have a few thousand students enrolled per school<sup>4</sup>. There are two teachers and approximately 35 students enrolled at Bayside. Students are often absent due to illness, truancy, incarceration, maternity leave, border congestion and employment. The classes have mixed ages and grades. The students can stay enrolled for as long as needed to earn their diploma; my youngest student is 13 and the oldest is 21. Several of the students attending Bayside are pregnant or parenting and/or living in homeless shelters or in the streets.

Students are referred to Bayside and to other community schools from the probation department, local school districts and social service agencies. School districts refer students who have been expelled, usually due to drugs, weapons, fighting or truancy. Social service agencies refer students

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<sup>4</sup> Personal experience.



for many reasons including pregnancy, mental health issues and homelessness. Most of the students are referred to Bayside after expulsion from traditional schools or upon release from juvenile detention facilities.

The participants in this practice-based research attended Bayside Community School and were adjudicated or were at risk of adjudication. In San Diego County the term adjudication means the youth has appeared in front of a judge and it has been determined that a delinquent act has been committed<sup>5</sup>. Students referred by probation are considered wards of the county and on probation supervision. Statewide in California there are more than 100,000 youth on probation<sup>6</sup>. Probation supervision consists of home and school visits, drug testing, and mandatory counseling. The youth on probation are given restrictions; including house arrest, which requires them to wear tracking devices in the form of ankle bracelets to monitor their whereabouts. In the case of documented gang-members, specific colours of clothing are not permitted and the youth are not allowed to associate with other members of their gang<sup>7</sup>. Re-entry to the county juvenile detention facilities, that include Juvenile Hall, East Mesa and Camp Barrett, is a common occurrence for my students, either for new crimes or most often because of 'dirty' drug tests—testing positive for drug use, see figure 5 (<https://www.fugitivespace.com/barrio-logan>).

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<sup>5</sup> <<http://www.sandiegocounty.gov>> retrieved 10/10/16.

<sup>6</sup> <[http://www.lao.ca.gov/ballot/2000/21\\_03\\_2000.html](http://www.lao.ca.gov/ballot/2000/21_03_2000.html)> retrieved 10/10/16.

<sup>7</sup> Personal experience.

The students at Bayside Community School, although within the same biological age bracket, do not conform to typical developmental categories. Valentine (2000) states these categories 'universalise or oversimplify the complexity of young people's forms of identification and over determine the false boundary between adult and child' (p. 257). The students at Bayside assume adult roles, such as caring for a parent or navigating bureaucratic agencies, immigration proceedings and the juvenile justice system. These roles are specific to the contexts and subjectivities of their lives, not precise social categories based on biological age.

### **1.2e Logan Avenue**

Just east of Chicano Park, the arts district along Logan Avenue, is lined with galleries, many of which are owned by Chicana/o artists. The monthly Barrio Art Crawl and *Pulso del Barrio* radio station, both aimed at community involvement, are part of the new arts district. The local galleries serve an important function by representing the work of Chicana/o artists and curation and ownership by Chicanas/os.

In conjunction with the visual arts, the music scene in Barrio Logan is burgeoning with live music across genres. Hip Hop, Cumbia, Punk Rock, and Reggae are performed by local bands in Barrio Logan venues, studios and parks. In these 'holey spaces' the deejay turntablists move as Wallin (2010) details 'into tactical assemblages' of tracings 'made to stutter, or rather, to repeat with difference' as they 'plot cartographic variations across the habitual grooves of vinyl records in the production of original refrains'

(p.128). I believe the art being produced in Barrio Logan exemplifies the postborder art defined by Dear and Leclerc (2003) as, 'a new cultural aesthetic being created in the in-between spaces, and manufactured from the archaeologies of past and emerging identities' (p. 14). Canclini (2003) compares the border to a stage that 'continues to seduce artists, because what remains undecided there serves as a context for art's uncertainties, its indistinct boundaries' (p. 284), see figure 6 (<https://www.fugitivespace.com/barrio-logan>).

### **1.2f United States-Mexico Border**

The U.S.-Mexican border es una herida abierta where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country — a border culture (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 25).

Returning to Harbor Drive, the bright-red trolley on the Blue Line stops at the renovated Barrio Station, a few stops from the centre of downtown San Diego. Heading south, the last trolley stop is at the border and entrance to Tijuana, Mexico. Many of the students attending Bayside Community School live in Tijuana and wait hours to cross the border each day. The San Ysidro Port of entry that separates Tijuana from San Diego is considered the busiest international border crossing in the world (SANDAG, 2013). *Transfronterizos*, those belonging to families on both sides of the border, can cross the border legally for typical events and celebrations, to work, shop, and visit family, friends and doctors.

However, for those without papers, to cross the border is unforgiving, see figure 7 (<https://www.fugitivespace.com/barrio-logan>). Dear and Leclerc (2003) characterize the border, stating:

...it slices literally through the lives of people who must cross daily for work, is an unforgiving gauntlet for those who seek to cross without papers, and is a ubiquitous, ever-present shadow for everyone else facing the prospect of crossing or not crossing (p. 7).

Unleashed in October of 1994, 'Operation Gatekeeper' was aimed at 'closing the revolving door' in urban border areas, the result has been increased risk and cost for migrants as they are forced to cross illegally in harsh desert regions and rely more on human smugglers (Getrich, 2013). Regarding 'Operation Gatekeeper', Getrich (2013) states, 'Immigrant deaths have skyrocketed, with a marked increase in deaths attributable to such environmental causes as dehydration, heat stroke or hypothermia' (p. 465). For example, between 1994 and 2007 there were 4,600 recorded deaths of migrants crossing in the desert region, although the actual number is estimated to be much higher (Dunn, 2010, p. 2).

All Latinas/o have the potential to be deemed 'illegal' due to racial profiling, thus mixed-status families live in fear of raids. As a result of increased policing and immigration raids parents often get deported leaving their children on the U.S. side of the border, see figure 8 (<https://www.fugitivespace.com/barrio-logan>). Living in the border region

shapes the identities of *nos fronterizos*, as we continuously place ourselves and others on what Bejarano (2007) names the ‘continuum of Mexicanness’ (p. 24). The Urban Institute’s report titled ‘*The Integration of Immigrant Families in the United States*’, cites ‘85 percent of immigrant families with children are mixed legal status families—that is, families where at least one parent is a noncitizen and one child is a citizen’ (Fix et al., 2001, p. 15) —a significant factor in the climate of fear caused by *la migra*, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

The fears of deportation are even more heightened as many students are in limbo regarding their residency status due to the immigration policy turmoil happening during the Donald Trump administration. However, the narratives of activism, poetry and spoken word in this practice-based research are stories of resiliency from those living in the border region.

## **Conclusion**

In the previous sections I introduced this practice, my motivations for completing a PhD and shared some of the cultural and historical contexts of Barrio Logan. The issues and tensions introduced in this chapter are reflective of the work of this practice. Drawing from a theoretical framework, which includes the concepts of place-belongingness, barrio-logos and imprints of trauma, the purpose of this practice is to initiate discussions and expose tensions, as presented in the next chapter. The methodologies and methods, including the use of testimonios and collaborative curation, are introduced in Chapter 3. A survey of socially engaged art and a rationale for emphasizing dialogical encounters rather than aesthetic

value is offered in Chapter 4. Artefacts, as residues of the work as socially engaged art, are analyzed in Chapter 5. This written thesis is concluded in Chapter 6 with sections about the contributions, implications and limitations of the work. As mentioned earlier, links to the website will be provided throughout the chapters as a method to link the written thesis to the practice component of this work.

## **Chapter 2: Theoretical Underpinnings- Place-Belongingness, Barrio-logos and Imprints of Trauma**

### **Introduction**

...the re-creating and re-imaging [of] dominant urban *space* as community-enabling *place*...these community sustaining practices constitute a tactical ethos (and aesthetic) of *barriology* [original emphasis] (Villa, 2000, p. 6).

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a theoretical underpinning for this practice-based research. As a socially engaged artist, I draw upon the concept of barrio-logos to interrogate oppressive forces and open spaces for community enabling practices in Barrio Logan (Villa, 2000). I also locate the pedagogical frame of this practice as place-based and within the paradigm of critical pedagogy (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Duncan-Andrade and Morrell, 2008; Freire, 2000; Gruenewald, 2003).

Drawing upon Giroux's (1991) call for educators to address experiences of everyday life that function to marginalize youth, this practice enables a space for new narratives to emerge that reclaim and remake personal histories both within and outside of the classroom. Cammarota and Fine (2008) explain that as a critical pedagogy it is crucial for students to 'analyze their social context...challenge and resist the forces impeding their possibilities for liberation' (p. 4). Through art and conversations, the students are encouraged to share their stories and analyse their situations, including those forces that impede their aspirations.

Concepts of attachment and belonging, including how these concepts affect community cohesion and solidarity, are reflected in this practice through personal histories and counterstories of place. I will also present the barriological practices of this work as place-based education and to situate this work theoretically (Berelowitz, 2003; Villa, 2000). The practice of creating a space for students to share their stories, as a barriological practice and as a critical pedagogy of place, will be developed further in this chapter. The concept of collective mourning in the wake of violence and oppression (Lacy and Riaño-Alcalá, 2006, p. 99) and Bennett's (2005) emphasis on trauma related art in her book *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art* are also useful in developing this practice as a critical pedagogy of place.

## **2.1 Place-Belongingness**

I have been interested in the concept of attachment to place since my undergraduate studies in geography when I was first introduced to Tuan's (1990) research on emotional relationships people have with places and more specifically to his concept of 'topophilia' as 'the affective bond between people and place or setting' (p. 4). This bond is created through a 'steady accretion of sentiment'; thus, what starts out as mere 'space' becomes 'place' as we give it value and acquire deep meaning through our experiences (Tuan, 1977, p. 33). During the past two decades, as a teacher working with youth in detention centres and community schools, I have witnessed these deep attachments to place, or topophilia, which unfortunately can also result in violent gang activities over the attachment to neighbourhoods, barrios and blocks. The violence, because of these



attachments to place, is analogous to what Manzo and Perkins (2006) describe as the 'shadow' side of place attachment that can 'entrap or create territorial conflicts' (p. 337). However, it is also critical to acknowledge the positive side of place attachment and that the neighbourhoods and barrios are also places of enduring memories and sites of pleasure, comradery, family, culture and love. To omit those qualities distils the 'hoods' and barrios to stereotypical crime ridden places that serve as fodder for moral panics. The narratives of attachment to Barrio Logan contribute to the place-based pedagogy of this practice-based research. Through artworks and music, the students are sharing counterstories that are relevant to their lives and that disrupt the stereotypes of the barrio.

The attachment to place also includes the concept of belonging and is of particular importance to this practice. Belonging as a term can be vague, therefore I specify belonging in the vein of Antonsich (2010) who analyses belonging as both 'a personal, intimate, feeling of being "at home" in a place (place-belongingness) and as a discursive resource that constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion' (p. 64). The concept of belonging is also tied to identity, Frederickson and Anderson (1999) explain that, 'it is through one's interactions with the particulars of a place that one creates their own personal identity and deepest-held values' (p. 22).

These concepts towards place resonate with the ideology of Aztlán. I turn to the argument that Manzo and Perkins (2006) make that through 'shared

emotional ties to places' (p.344) community action and social relationships are strengthened. Through these emotional ties, our loyalty and awareness to our homeland or place is encouraged (Tuan, 1977). In regards this practice, Chicano Park holds historical, political and spiritual significance, and as such, we are emotionally tied to it as a place and through these emotions our identities as Chicanas/os are enhanced.

Shared experiences of change and conflict also contribute to our sense of place-belongingness. Tuan (1977) explains that emotion towards a place draws on and extrapolates from 'the direct experience of the particular parts—when the neighborhood is perceived to have rivals and to be threatened in some way, real or imagined' (p. 171). In Barrio Logan, these forces have been apparent through conflicts over gentrification and threats to the Chicano Park murals by neo-Nazis, both of which have contributed to community solidarity and created opportunities for empowerment. Manzo and Perkins (2006) explain through these types of struggles affective bonds are also made stronger as people are inspired to take action. Offering a space in Liminal Gallery to voice an interrogation of these threats, through the collaborative curations of images and through community events, contributes to a sense of belonging and personal agency and are central to this practice.

## **2.2 Barrio-logos as a Critical Pedagogy of Place**

Stories of belonging and identity, contributing to community action and solidarity, are also barriological because through the stories, and the process of sharing the stories, forces of oppression are interrogated (Villa,

2000). The indigenous concept of Tezcatlipoca that calls for 'critical reflection of self, family, and community' through the creation of 'counter-stories' also contributes to the barriological practices of this work and to the theoretical underpinnings (Romero et al., 2009, p. 218). As a community enabling practice counter-stories are shared that are sources of empowerment because students act on their personal situationality and that of the community.

### **2.2a Place-Based Educational Practice**

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the situationality of Barrio Logan, as a historic site for Chicana/o activism, its location near the border, access to the harbour and proximity to downtown San Diego, together form a complex web of relations. These power relations, are characteristic of what Massey (1994) refers to as a 'power-geometry' (p. 265) and include a history of oppressive political powers that jeopardize the lives of families through immigration policies, increased cost of living, and the retraction of social services. The presence of these hegemonic forces contributes to the research imperative and urgency to use place-based methodologies in this practice-based research.

Resistance to geographic displacement has been a common theme throughout the history of Mexicans in the United States, dating back to the annexation of Mexican territory in the 1840s (Berelowitz, 2003; Villa, 2000). The fight for Chicano Park made Barrio Logan a significant site for Chicana/o resistance and empowerment. Today, resistance to forces of displacement in the name of 'urban renewal' dominate the struggles.

Being situated near the U.S.-Mexican border and in the wake of violence and violations at the hands of law enforcement and the border patrol are themes within the narratives students share. However, within these narratives, are also stories of resiliency, and what Aitken and Plow (2010) characterize as a 're-imagining of the boundaries, borders, events, circumstances and familial relations' of those living in the border region (p. 6). Bejarano (2011) explains as youth living in the border region, they are 'border rooted' and as a form of resiliency they are able to 'resist and confront discretionary, institutionalized and ritualized violence' (p. 5). The 'rootedness' is apparent in the conversations, artworks, poetry and music. The narratives also attempt to convey what Aitken and Plows (2010) term 'revolutionary imaginations' and are 'creative forces, emerging in everyday actions of living and surviving, perhaps more obvious in terrains of tension and antagonism' (p. 3).

The collaborative curatorial practices, as a place-based educational practice and as creative forces, strive to identify injustices and inequalities, and are shared with the community. These forces of resistance need not be attained through formal processes within the institutions, such as schools. They occur, as Cammarota and Fine (2008) argue, 'in "real" settings, through multi-generational collectives, and sometimes among youth alone' (p. 4). The focus of this practice is on the sharing of art practices that take place in spaces of practice, both within and beyond the classroom, and where systems of power are confronted, and forces of resistance are present.

As a barriological practice and thus a place-based educational practice, engagement in the community is crucial. McInerney et al. (2011) point out, the study of place contributes to worthwhile learning experiences that have the potential to transform the lives of youth as they develop a sense of empowerment to take positive action within the barrio. The outcomes of place-based curriculums have educational impacts within and beyond the classroom as students interrogate power structures in their community and within the global context. Gruenewald (2003) explains that 'reading the world radically redefines conventional notions of print-based literacy and conventional school curriculum' (p. 5). The 'texts' of this practice include works of art, poetry, and music, and serve as objects to 'decode', these are 'images of their (the students') own concrete, situated experiences with the world' (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 5). For example, decoding images of the murals in Chicano Park contributes to the formation of our identities as Chicanas/os through conversations about history, activism and the spiritual aspects of our past and present situationality. As concrete lived experiences the conversations also contribute to an embodied sense of place that Tuan (1977) describes as being 'registered in one's muscles and bones' (p. 183).

Experiences of belonging and attachment are also shared in this practice through reflection. Greene (2007) explains that as a form of critical pedagogy reflection should be centred on one's place to gain 'awareness of what it is to be in the world' (p. 35). Reflection, in this practice-based research, is prompted through the methods of conversations and collaborative curations, which will be developed in Chapter 3. The methods of the practice also

attempt to engage in what Freire (1998) terms 'conscientization...as a road we have to follow to deepen our awareness of the world, of facts, of events, of the demands of human consciousness' (p. 55).

### **2.2b Critical Pedagogy of Place**

In this section I outline key aspects of this practice as a critical pedagogy of place. As an aspect of critical pedagogy, the inquiry of this practice is 'critical' and 'connected to an attempt to confront the injustices of a particular society or public sphere within the society' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p.164).

Pointing out that critical pedagogy and place-based education are mutually supportive, Gruenewald (2003) argues for 'a conscious synthesis that blends the two discourses into a critical pedagogy of place' (p. 3). I believe this work, as a synthesis of place-based education and critical pedagogy, forms a critical pedagogy of place and serves as the theoretical underpinning of this practice-based research.

In order for a pedagogy to be critical it must centre on constructing narratives of identity, resistance and transformation (Gruenewald, 2003; McLaren and Giroux, 1990). In addition, as Gruenewald (2003) explains, the focus of a critical pedagogy should be on 'people telling their own stories (reading the world)' (p. 5). The confrontation of injustices is made visible through conversations, art, music and activist practices. Within these conversations the power structures are interrogated as students are encouraged to reflect on their lives and how those structures are present in the community. McLaren (1995) explains it is with the use of narratives that we make sense of 'our

social universe' (p. 89). Furthermore, as critical pedagogues we should seek personal narratives from our students and ourselves because as McLaren (1995) argues, 'not all narratives share a similar status and there are those which exist, highly devalued, within society's rifts and margins' (p. 91). Uncovering these stories on the margins and those stories of place that have not been deemed valuable by the educational systems are important elements of this practice-based research and in the development of a fugitive space.

As a critical pedagogy of place, the practice of careful listening must take place as a method to hear what my students have to say about issues in their lives and for the practice of framing those issues within the larger context of the barrio and beyond. Making this engagement possible is an unconditional dialogue that Freire (1998) terms to 'speak by listening' (p. 104). Drawing from the work of Freire (1998, 2000), to call ourselves critical pedagogues we must pose problems with students or participants and question the systems of oppression together, rather than positioning ourselves as experts (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Greene, 2007, Kincheloe, McLaren, and Steinberg, 2011). This relationship thus becomes 'active and reciprocal' because 'every teacher is always a pupil and every pupil a teacher' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 350).

Supporting the work of this practice is the belief that the worst form of oppression is when those being oppressed 'accept their social status as natural, necessary, or inevitable' (Kincheloe, McLaren, and Steinberg, 2011, p.164). Gramsci (1971) characterised this acceptance of hegemonic powers

as a 'combination of force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally' (p. 248). In doing so, as Gramsci (1971) explains, 'the attempt is always made to ensure that force will appear to be based on the consent of the majority' (p.248). Drawing from the theories of Gramsci, Mayo (2008) explains that 'education is perceived as playing an important role in cementing the existing hegemony' (p. 420). As a teacher working with students who have been excluded from schooling, I have witnessed the role of the school system in cementing the hegemonic powers. Students often voice this role when they arrive at our school after being expelled from their school district. I believe these narratives of failure have also served to perpetuate the internalization of labels placed on them by the school system, such as 'troublemaker', 'juvenile delinquent' and 'dropout'.

Student stories of resiliency, and those that veer from the dominant narratives, interrupt hegemonic forces. According to Kincheloe, McLaren, and Steinberg (2011), 'critical research can be understood best in the context of the empowerment of individuals' (p. 164). In the tradition of Freire's critical pedagogy, Kincheloe, McLaren, and Steinberg (2011) call for dialogues that question and problematize the existing power relations that currently and historically marginalize individuals and groups of people. Regarding this practice-based research, I draw from Rappaport's (1987) definition of empowerment, as 'a mechanism by which people, organizations and communities gain mastery over their affairs' (p. 122). This is manifested in this practice through the initiation of conversations deemed important in the lives of my students and those in the community, a core principal of critical



pedagogy (Tavin, 2003). Through the building of relationships with the community, in the form of conversations, the students as artists, activists and curators are demonstrating a form of empowerment and by doing so they are practicing a critical pedagogy of place.

### **2.2c Fugitive Spaces**

...open our minds and hearts so that we can know beyond the boundaries of what is acceptable, so that we can think and rethink, so that we can create new visions. I celebrate teaching that enables transgressions—a movement against and beyond boundaries (hooks, 1994, p. 12).

Developing the methods of this practice and the concept of a fugitive space, as both a physical and metaphorical space for new life narratives to emerge, I am inspired by the concept of 'transgressions' (hooks, 1994, p. 12). Moving beyond boundaries requires breaking down ontological binaries of social identities and focusing on what students are capable of doing. Within the fugitive space, as an educational approach and as a critical pedagogy, the students are encouraged to escape dominant narratives and problem stories. The space of the gallery is also a place of escape, or a fugitive space, as the roles of artist/curator are redefined and break down hierarchical structures that limit the sharing of community narratives. Thus, the function of the gallery is expanded beyond that of displaying art to one that initiates dialogues with the potential to be transformative.

The theoretical framework of the fugitive space centres on crossing borders and opening spaces. The type of borders crossed, as Giroux (2007) explains, 'are cultural borders historically constructed and socially organized within rules and regulations that limit and enable particular identities, individual capacities, and social forms' (p. 30). The stories, artwork, poetry and music are vehicles with the potential to challenge binary thinking and injustices. The possibilities of crossing both literal and symbolic borders exist within these narratives, which Bejarano (2010) calls 'transformative resistance' (p. 392), as mentioned earlier.

Inspired by the work of Cahill (2008), Cammarota and Fine (2008), Fine and Weis (1996), and White and Epston (1990) narrative practices are used in the form of testimonios (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Huber and Cueva, 2012), and as a starting point for the students to take up the writing of their own personal stories, which I will return in Chapter 3. Stepping aside from deficit theories that position risk factors versus protective factors is vital to this practice. In addition, I draw from Grinberg's (2013) argument that it is crucial for students 'to make visible situations in their lives that are unspoken' (p. 215). The use of narratives in this practice opens a space for students to share their histories and draws upon their own personal experiences as progressive forms of language— visual arts, poetry and song—which are then projected back into the community. The conversations include interactions with artists, activists, law enforcement and the community.

Dialogical encounters in this practice are not limited to conversations. In this practice rap music is used as a vehicle to disrupt dominant narratives and oppressive forces. Through the practice of writing lyrics and recording music, students are encouraged 'to write, speak, and listen in a language in which meaning becomes multi-accentual, dispersed, and resists permanent closure' (Giroux, 1991, p. 53). Rap music is a cultural force in the barrio and as Cleary (1993), explains 'rap has always had a political bent' (p. 77). Abrams (1995) characterizes rappers as 'organic intellectuals' as they create lyrics that reflect the needs of the community and as they 'attempt to construct a counter-hegemony through the dissemination of subversive ideas' (p.3). Chicana/o rappers' discourses, as those associated with African American rappers, question the dominant ideology of America (Delgado, 1995; Saldivar, 1991). Specific to this practice is the synthesis of hip hop culture with themes of Chicana/o pride expressed in lyrics written by the students.

The use of Aztlán, as a 'significant ideograph' in Chicana/o rap and other cultural forms connects 'modern-day Chicanos to an Aztec heritage' (Delgado, 1995, p. 452). The music created becomes a blending of 'indigenous, Mexican, and Chicano elements to reflect the historical experiences and discourses that locate and identify Mexican Americans with Aztlán and Chicano ideology' (Delgado, 1995, p. 452). Thus, as a theoretical underpinning of this practice, the writing, recording and performing of rap music, as a critical pedagogy of place, lays within the fugitive space due to the role it plays in creating counter-hegemonic forces and in the formation of Chicana/o identity.

Liminal Gallery, as a fugitive space, is also a fluid space. This is exemplified in the range of activities and events in the gallery space, contributing to the sense of belonging and making of place in Barrio Logan. These practices in Liminal Gallery, as barriological, re-create and re-image the 'dominant urban space' (Villa, 2000, p. 6). Expanding the idea of the gallery beyond the constructs of the white cube is one example of re-imagining the space as community-enabling. As a fugitive space, the gallery is also a space that encourages escape and rupture—through dialogical encounters, personal agency and as a disruption of power structures. Davalos (2001) points out that barriological practices occur only at 'the cracks and fissures of structural and ideological power' (p. 7). It is within these in-between spaces which could also be described as liminal, that I strive to locate this practice as a critical pedagogy of place.

Drawing from the concept of barrio-logos I also position the open mic sessions at Liminal Gallery as community enabling because through these events a space is offered for the sharing of poetry and music. Themes that emerge at the open mic sessions include social justice and community solidarity. Historically Chicana/o poetry has been closely related to the development of Chicana/o political activism, awareness and militancy (Sedano, 1980). The tradition of articulating these cultural forces has been carried out since the Chicano movement of the 1960s and across genres including poetry, literature and theatre (Delgado, 1998, p. 97). Camangian (2008) explored this potential in his research on sharing that highlighted 'the community cultivation that comes from speaking and hearing the creative written word' (p. 38).

Within the poetry, music and artworks as narratives of resistance, are also imprints of trauma. As a fugitive space, the gallery is not a space for representing the trauma, rather the gallery becomes a space that offers ‘a process of coming into view— of moving out of the realm of traumatic memory through a set of social relations’ (Bennett, 2005, p. 31). The space is neither ‘inside’ nor ‘outside’, but rather is ‘always lived and negotiated at an intersection’ (Bennett, 2005, p. 12). Art in this fugitive space of trauma does not exist as a ‘discrete region but as a rupture within the field of representation or common memory’ (Bennett, 2005, p. 32), in other words it is a fluid space— a liminal space.

### **2.3 Imprints of Trauma**

The artist does not merely describe an inner experience but allows such experience to fold back into the world in a manner that can inform understandings both about the nature of relationships to others and about the political nature of violence and pain (Bennett, 2005, p. 56).

In this section, I will reference trauma in regard to this practice-based research and trauma related art. I begin with a brief overview of the origins of trauma studies and its definition. The work of Bennett (2005) influenced this practice and encouraged me to seek methods to engage visually and create emphatic encounters. Bennett (2005) argues for research that will ‘move our conception of trauma beyond the realm of the interior subject into that of inhabited space’ (p. 151). Through socially engaged art practices, as a critical pedagogy of place, the work of this practice

attempts to move forces of trauma into these inhabited spaces. Applying this concept to the barriological practices of this work, I also turn to Fukushima's (2008) argument that violence in marginalized communities should be conceptualized by such contradiction and duality 'where violence is not merely a site of repression, but also one that includes resistance' (p. 29). The narratives of resistance in this practice are stories of resiliency, protest and new stories of place.

### **2.3a Traumatic Memories**

The origins of trauma studies can be traced back to Freudian psychoanalysis (Luckhurst, 2008; Visser 2011). Freud saw trauma as 'painful experiences that have not been fully integrated into the personality but have been repressed, remaining in the unconscious to resurface in the form of disturbing symptoms' (Visser, 2011, p. 273). Van der Kolk and van der Hart (1995) define trauma as, 'a frightening event outside of ordinary human experience' (p. 172). They also explain that people experiencing traumatic events often find it hard to locate the events in space and time resulting in 'amnesia for the specifics of traumatic experiences but not the feelings associated with them' (van der Kolk and van der Hart, 1995, p. 172). In addition, van der Kolk and van der Hart (1991) point to the 'feeling of helplessness, of physical or emotional paralysis' that is common in experiences classified as traumatic (p. 446). In order for the unassimilated memories to be 'integrated with existing mental schemes, and be transformed into narrative language', the memories must be returned to again and again by the person traumatized (van der Kolk and van der Hart

(1991, p. 447). It is this returning to the traumatic experience, as a crucial aspect of healing, that this practice draws upon as students and others in the community tell their stories. Van der Kolk and van der Hart (1991) explain this as giving the trauma 'a place in his (sic) life history, his (sic) autobiography, and thereby in the whole of his (sic) personality' (p. 448). However, as van der Kolk and van der Hart (1991) explain, it is often the case that people experiencing trauma may go for extended periods of time in which 'they live in two different worlds: the realm of the trauma and the realm of their current, ordinary life' (p. 448).

Bennett (2005) outlines developments in trauma studies research that show how trauma opposes representation and points to Holocaust texts and poetry as being marked by imprints of trauma rather than as narratives of traumatic experiences. What we think of as common memory is not just a form of narrative memory but instead is 'a language that enables such memory to be transmitted and easily understood' whereas another form of memory, 'sense memory, registers the physical imprint of the event...it is always in the present, although not continuously felt' (Bennett, 2005, p. 25). Bennett (2005) shares Dora Laub's argument for the importance of 'witnessing' regarding the inability of Holocaust survivors to describe the events in ordinary or common language. In Laub's view there is a 'need to tell one's story, not simply so that others may know the truth' but so that they themselves can 'come to know and process the experiences' (Bennett, 2005, p. 31).

### **2.3b Trauma Related Art**

The notion of art representing trauma is complicated and as Bennett (2005) warns, reading artwork in terms of pathologies or symptoms of trauma distils the work to an illustrative process. Bennett (2005) describes artwork that is not easily recognized as relating to trauma, in what we would think of in the narrative component or in a particular meaning that we could identify, but rather in 'a certain affective dynamic to the work' (p. 1). Bennett (2005) calls for framing trauma-related pieces as a 'coming into language' (p. 2).

Drawing from these concepts, trauma related works in this practice pose the question of what the artwork, poetry or music itself tells the viewer regarding lived experiences of the artist and memory of trauma rather than attempting to represent the trauma. Positioning trauma related pieces as such opens a space for sense memory and brings the viewer into contact with the image; not by merely presenting something graphic or horrific but through a 'physical imprint of the ordeal of violence: a (compromised and compromising) position to see from' (Bennett, 2005, p. 39). Using Deleuze's sign, memory's affective experience enacts 'a process of "seeing feeling" where feeling is both imagined and regenerated through an encounter with the artwork' (Bennett, 2005, p. 41). In other words, the artworks are a way for the students and visitors to the gallery to reconstruct traumatic memories. Lacy and Riaño-Alcalá (2006) explain through art people may 'find new meanings in the experience' and by doing so 'gain some control' of traumatic memories (p. 98). Through this



practice, which includes dialogical encounters in the classroom, gallery, and recording studio, the goal is to create these empathetic encounters with the works of art, poetry and music.

### **2.3c Non-western Models**

The use of a western model is controversial aspect of trauma studies; Visser (2008) explains, the western model 'does not acknowledge spirituality as a reference point' and denies the 'possibilities inherent in ritual and ceremonial practices' (p. 279). However, Visser (2008) acknowledges that trauma theory's origins in Freudian psychoanalysis can be 'a point of departure that invites further expansion...to enable an openness towards non-western, non-Eurocentric models' (p. 280). Relevant to this practice-based research is the prominence of spirituality in the Chicana/o and indigenous traditions. Drawing from Chicana epistemologies, such as intuition, I attempt to bring spirituality into this practice-based research. Using intuition as a methodological tool is a means to 'move from largely patriarchal ways of seeing the world to learning to listen to our inner voices, to trust our intuition, and to interpret research outside existing paradigms' (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012, p. 518).

Recent research on intergenerational trauma or inherited trauma is also of interest to this practice because of our history as indigenous people.

Pember (2016) states 'trauma experienced by earlier generations can influence the structure of our genes, making them more likely to "switch on" negative responses to stress and trauma' and in turn may lead to high

rates of addiction, mental illness and suicide (p. 3). However, Pember (2016) suggests there is also an existence of a form of 'inherited resilience' as shown in 'native people's ability to maintain culture and sense of who they are in the face of such a traumatic history (p. 4). I believe cultural mestizaje and barriological practices are indicative of this form of inherited resiliency.

Returning to the concept of fugitive space, I am reminded that places themselves can become transformed through violence and pain and evoked through images. The physical extension of traumatic memory has the potential, as Bennett (2005) describes, to fold into space, 'in a way that leaves manifest traces: not simply marks that tell a story of the past, but indications of a lived present, of a mode of inhabiting both place and memory' (p. 70). These traces of trauma within Barrio Logan surface within the narratives student share and within the memories of the community. The permeability of sense memory in the works of art, poetry and music in this practice, as fugitive forces, create imprints of trauma, affective experiences and empathetic connections.

## **Conclusion**

The practice of re-imagining stories of place, which I will develop further in Chapter 3, is essential to this practice-based research as a critical pedagogy of place and as a place-based methodology (Gruenewald, 2003; Somerville, 2010). It is also the praxis of putting theory into action because segregation and repression—all historically present in the barrios, can be

interrogated through stories of place. Furthermore, through the entanglement of these methods, our perceptions are altered.

Through careful listening, as a pedagogical tool, spaces are opened for conversations and bits of untold stories to emerge. The stories and the interactions with the public serve as a critical pedagogy—and more specifically as a critical pedagogy of place. I argue that engaging in a critical pedagogy of place is a source of empowerment for students.

In this practice, the boundaries between school and neighbourhood—between formal and informal learning environments are crossed. Encouraging and valuing the work of students in the community through a place-based curriculum has the potential to create connections between students and other people and organizations within their neighbourhoods, making learning relevant to their lives (McInerney et al., 2011). It also contributes to a sense of attachment and belonging for both the students and the community.

The history of trauma in our community, which includes gang violence, drug addiction and police brutality, make the use of a critical pedagogy of place integral to countering oppression. Gruenewald (2003) warns of 'educational reform policies and practices that disregard place and that leave assumptions about the relationship between education and the politics of economic development unexamined' (p. 3). Exploring the effects of poverty, including the uneven distribution of resources and forces of gentrification in the barrio, contribute to the work of this practice and are vital to nurturing a sense of personal agency in students. The examination of economic development, as a

critical pedagogy of place, is a step towards articulating the forces that have and continue to leave imprints of trauma within the community.

In closing, I return to the spiritual and am reminded of the Mesoamerican moon goddess, Coyolxauhqui, who as legend goes, 'had her body cut up and the pieces buried in different places by her brother' (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012, p. 525). Anzaldúa's reclamation of the myth of Coyolxauhqui offers a vision for researchers as we write and theorize to seek a 'holistic reunification of the bodymindspirit...to reimagine ourselves as scholar-warriors who think differently, recognize alternative forms of knowledge, and engage in spiritual activism with our body, spirit, and text' (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012 p, 525). My attempt to engage in this reunification is by offering a method that opens a space to transmit some of the lived liminalities we face as Chicanas/os. These are stories of crossing physical and mental borders and boundaries.

## **Chapter 3: Emergent Arts-Based Methodology, Testimonios and Collaborative Curations**

### **Introduction**

I begin this chapter by exploring an emergent arts-based methodology and how it is applied to this practice (Ball and Lai, 2006; Gruenewald, 2003; Somerville, 2010; Somerville, 2012). I draw from Chicana feminist epistemologies through the use of testimonio as a methodological tool and as a method of this practice-based research (Brabeck, 2001; Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Saavedra, 2011). The works of Cahill (2008), Fine and Weiss (1996) and White and Epston (1990) support the use of conversations as a method. Collaborative curation is also used in this practice to engage the community in meaningful dialogues and as a method to develop a critical pedagogy of place.

### **3.1 Methodology**

As a practice-based research, the work of initiating conversations and narratives in the form of poetry, visual art, and music are intended to move beyond the aesthetic to a place where art takes on a more profound role. In other words, works of art become vehicles to transmit narratives of resistance and traumatic memories rather than objects that are judged for their aesthetic value. Through new life narratives and new stories of place, this practice explores the use of an emergent arts-based methodology and testimonio. The synthesis of these methodologies guides the design and methods of this practice-based research.

### **3.1a Emergent Arts-Based Methodology**

We derive much of our learning from our experiences in place, and what binds us to places and the life of a place determines a degree of our being in the world (Cannatella, 2007, p. 632).

The place-based methodologies of this practice-based research draw upon what Somerville (2010) terms an 'emergent arts-based methodology' (p. 340) and on Cannatella's (2007) idea of experiences and how they relate to learning and belonging. Somerville (2010) characterizes this arts-based methodology as 'emergent' because it emphasizes 'undoing dominant stories of place (decolonisation) and includes the collective and relational making of new place stories (reinhabitation)' (p. 340). The history of gang violence and moral panics associated with Barrio Logan contribute to the relevance of this practice through the undoing of these dominant narratives.

In her work with Aboriginal people in Australia, Somerville (2010) defines 'place' in terms of both the local—specific and as the metaphysical—imaginary (p. 330). As discussed in Chapter 2, the work of this practice focuses on both the physical places of practice and the theoretical. The physical places include the school, gallery and park, however as practice-based research it is also about the practice itself, within the fugitive space. The fugitive space is a liminal space—an in-between space. Somerville (2010) explains that 'place has come to offer a way of entering an in-between space where it is possible to hold different, and sometimes

contradictory, ideas in productive tension' (p. 330). I situate this practice-based research within this in-between space as I seek multiple versions of place through stories rather than any 'dominant image...that will be a matter of contestation and will change over time' (Massey, 1994). Crucial to maintaining this tension that creates Barrio Logan as a 'place' is the acknowledgement of the subjectivities of the youth and the fluid boundaries of identity and belonging, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Although Somerville's (2010) work focuses on nature and environmental issues, it is her emphasis on 'attachments to our local places' (p. 327) that resonates with this practice-based research. The methods of this work seek stories of attachment and belonging in Barrio Logan and are closely linked to the indigenous philosophy of Aztlán and significance of Chicano Park, both of which will be discussed throughout the remaining chapters.

As an emergent arts-based methodology Somerville (2012) uses artworks to tell stories of place through what she terms, 'the role of art exhibition in the mobilization of knowledge' (p. 86) and through a 'public pedagogy of place' (p. 86). The methods of this practice-based research are emergent because stories are told through works of art and developed by the gathering of images, conversations and community responses (Somerville, 2012). Using collaborative curation creates personal agency for students because they choose the images to display and design the exhibition of artworks. In doing so, as collaborators we discuss the possibilities of initiating public discourses and the ways in which their artworks may

provoke dialogues that trouble the public's knowledges, especially in relation to them as youth in Barrio Logan. Multiple forms of representations of place are created in this practice and make visible stories that are often hidden and that provide alternate views of place.

Ball and Lai (2006) argue that an emergent arts-based methodology 'listens to the locals...by examining texts, artifacts, and performances of local cultural production, and it empowers the local by legitimating local cultural production as literature and art' (p. 261-262). I build upon this notion of listening and acknowledging art production through the development of methods that value and initiate art practices in Barrio Logan. Ball and Lai (2006) also warn of challenges within this methodology including a lack of interest from the students in the local context. As an educator I am familiar with the difficulties of gaining student interest, therefore as part of the research design and as a tenet of critical pedagogy, I am mindful to keep the practice open-ended and student centred. Rather than being assigned particular themes, the students choose the images, videos or other art practices to be shared and discussed.

Adhering to these methodologies, the students selected a variety of forms of art. Somerville (2010) explains that using multiple art forms as an emergent arts-based methodology also requires 'bodily engagement with the materiality of specific local places and the conscious facilitation of the representation of alternative and invisible stories' (p. 340). Conversations,



told through community dialogues and open mics sessions, are forms of bodily engagement characteristic of an emergent arts-based methodology.

Gruenewald (2003) argues that a critical pedagogy of place should 'seek relevant materials by taking into account the interests and practices of local inhabitants, especially when this occurs through dialogue with students' (p. 7). The use of poetry and rap music within the practice, as works of art, is an attempt to engage the students and the community in practices they deem interesting and relevant. Ball and Lai (2006) argue that valuing local art practices within the community contributes to the 'well-being of local communities' and can 'augment the intensity of local gatherings, stimulate discussions about locally relevant issues, or simply provide occasions for locals to gather together in the first place' (p. 279). Respecting and participating in cultural and ritual practices in the community and opening a space for them to be shared is crucial to the work of this practice in the gallery and in the classroom.

The roles within the gallery are fluid. The students take on the roles of artists and curators; in doing so they are engaging in barriological practices that are community enabling. The stories, as testimonios about their cultural history and narratives of political activism in the barrio, contribute to a critical pedagogy of place. Critical to this emergent arts-based methodology is the creation of space for these alternate stories of place to emerge.

### **3.1b Testimonio**

The use of Chicana feminist epistemologies (CFE), in my research design and practice, is a deliberate engagement with methodologies that are experimental and that 'seek out and value immanent lines of enquiry and encourage collective and collaborative practice' (O'Donnell, 2015, p. 34). As mentioned in Chapter 1, I hope to contribute to the work of past Chicana academics who utilize Chicana feminist epistemological tools which include testimonios and intuition. As a response to Anzaldúa's call for methodologies that begin to 'put us back together' (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012, p. 525). I turn to CFE as a process of decolonization, yet as Elenes (2011) explains, it is 'not to recover the silenced voices by using hegemonic categories of analysis, but to change the methodological tools and categories to reclaim those neglected voices' (p. 60). Within the realm of educational research CFE is a 'critical, social justice approach' (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012, p. 516). Delgado Bernal (1998) attributes the development and application of CFE in education to:

...a response to the failure of both mainstream education research and liberal feminist scholarship to address the forms of knowledge and experiences Chicanas bring to educational institutions and research (p. 560).

Building upon the cultural context of Barrio Logan as introduced in the first chapter, this sub-section presents testimonio as a 'critical qualitative methodology' (Pérez Huber, 2012, 378). Pérez Huber (2012) states:

Testimonio is grounded in a collective history of resistance. It is used by non-dominant groups to challenge oppression and brings attention to injustice in an effort to transform it (p. 377).

Brabeck (2001) points to the use of testimonio as a 'verbal journey' of 'injustices one has suffered and the effect these injustices have had on one's life' (p. 3). Yúdice (1991) defines testimonio as 'authentic narrative, told by a witness who is moved to narrate by the urgency of a situation' (p. 17).

Testimonio, as a methodology, has its roots in Latin American human rights struggles and 'is increasingly reshaped and used by Chicana education scholars' (Bernal Delgado et al., 2012, p. 525). For example, Cienfuegos and Monelli (1983), two Chilean psychologists using pseudonyms to protect their identities while working with victims of political repression, reflected on the process of testimonio stating, it 'allows the individual to transform past experience and personal identity, creating a new present and enhancing the future' (p. 46). These aspects of testimonio have been useful in this practice to explore the research questions and open spaces for new life narratives to emerge. Today, testimonio has 'moved beyond Latin American human rights struggles and into academic fields' (Pérez Huber, 2012, p. 379).

As a decolonizing methodology, testimonio inserts my voice as a Chicana and those of my students as 'a form of political agency' (Bernal Delgado et

al., 2012, p. 525). Pérez (2003) explains that testimonio enables 'different possibilities and interpretations of what exists in the gaps and silences but is often not seen or heard' (p. 129). Chicana feminist scholars use testimonio to 'challenge dominant conceptions and productions of theory, knowledge, and pedagogy' (Saavedra, 2011, p. 262). Through her research with students living in the border region of U.S. and Mexico, Saavedra (2011) uses testimonio to explore the experiences of the youth and to share her own story as a Nicaraguan immigrant, teacher and scholar. In doing so, Delgado Bernal et al. (2012) explain that Saavedra calls upon educational research to 'make whole the intellect of bicultural children and recognize the code switching of language and cultures of the border as valuable wisdom and competence' (p. 526). Saavedra's use of testimonio with students deemed deficit by mainstream educational discourses exemplifies 'how scholars can draw on multiple sources of knowledge, including the intellectual, spiritual, and political, to devise decolonizing methodologies (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012, p. 526).

This practice-based research uses testimonio as a method, through the practice of conversations, and as a methodology (Delgado Bernal, 2009; Pérez Huber, 2012). The use of testimonio shares life experiences and 'counterstories' of my students (Pérez Huber, 2012, p. 379). Choosing to use testimonios is also a decision to value the research and knowledges of Chicana feminist scholars.

### **3.2 Research Design**

The participants in this practice-based research are all current or former students at Bayside Community School in Barrio Logan, as introduced in Chapter 1. I also include the community of Barrio Logan as participants of this practice because of their interactions with the students in the gallery. As a form of practice-based research the artworks, poetry and music are intended to serve as catalysts for conversations. Drawing from the work of Freire (2000), the participants are collaborators because it is through their art practices and reflections that we frame issues within the larger context of community as a form of critical pedagogy (Freire, 2000; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011).

I began the formal work of this practice-based research by engaging in informal conversations with my students in the classroom regarding ideas for an exhibition of their artworks. The students were given written consent forms and it was made clear that there were no requirements for participating for any length of time and that they could stop at any point. Initially five students choose to participate and worked on the collaborative curation of our first exhibition. As the practice developed more students participated and we began to plan other events.

A few of the students wanted to take photos and videos in the community and were loaned iPods; others choose to share poetry, drawings and paintings. Minimal direction was given regarding what type of practices to capture. After the images were downloaded, the students were asked to

select the videos or images to include in our public exhibition.

Conversations about their choice of artworks, poetry and images were recorded. I was present during most of the conversations, however a few students also recorded conversations between themselves and other students. Transcripts of recorded conversations were typed and shared with the students. Within the conversations themes began to emerge, such as activism and bullying. The themes fed the process and the new conversations often resulted in the production of new artworks, poetry and music. The conversations were testimonios and the practice of engaging in these conversations will be analyzed in Chapter 5.

As co-curators the students and I planned the first exhibit and selected items to be included. Excerpts from the transcripts of conversations were chosen by the students to hang adjacent to their poetry, photographs, drawings and paintings in the gallery. The intent of sharing the excerpts in the exhibitions was to spark conversations with and among visitors. It is within these in-between spaces of the practice that I envisioned the analysis would take place. Using the excerpts contributed to the unexpected, open-ended nature of the practice and was a method to initiate conversations. The first exhibition remained up during several other events that took place in the gallery space, including film viewings, open mic sessions, and activist meetings. The collection of images, videos, drawings, paintings and poetry, and the conversations that followed as part of this practice-based research began in April of 2015 and continued through May 2017.

### **3.3 Practice-Based Research Methods**

I believe the entanglement of methods—testimonios and collaborative curation, created effective tools for this practice-based research. Cultural intuition is a key aspect of Chicana feminist epistemologies (CFE) and incorporates my experiences as a Chicana in the research process with the memory and collective experience of community, my teaching experience and literature on the topic of research (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). The decision to use these methods arose from personal experiences as a Chicana and from over twenty years of teaching in the San Diego County Juvenile Court and Community Schools. The strategies of seeking alternative stories of place and of individual subjectivities developed through dialogical exchanges some of which I believe were possible due to specific intuitive knowledges derived from my personal experiences.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, after decades of teaching my students' stories have accumulated in my memory, including forces of trauma and oppression. A type of urgency emerges from these experiences that Delgado Bernal et al (2012) describe as 'a sense of political urgency to engage in a decolonizing process and address educational inequalities within Chicana/o communities as a Chicana' (p. 516). This sense of urgency may motivate those from within the community to strive for social change in a different capacity than researchers without the lived experiences within the community and that drop-in artists and researchers may lack even though they have good intentions.

### **3.3a Conversations**

The conversations began with stories or anecdotes surrounding the students' artworks, poetry and music. Morris (2006) stresses the importance of the stories we tell, 'they help us explain who we are and how we feel about others in the present' (p. 208). It was important to keep the conversations in this practice open-ended to avoid what O'Donnell (2015) explains as 'framing of the territory' which has the potential to 'dampen the liveliness and interest' of the conversation by 'prescribing what we wished to discover in advance' (p. 36).

Within the conversations surrounding the artworks, bits of untold stories or pieces outside the problem or dominant story are sought. The intent is for untold stories to arise through conversations and lead to anecdotes that move away from problem stories. These stories can hold moments of resistance and the foundations for new stories about the past and future (Cahill, 2008). The use of conversations is a method to disrupt the linear narratives that students come to define themselves within and those that others attribute to them. Deconstructing such storylines is therefore part of the process of 'decolonization' through which we analyse ways of thinking that injure and exploit other people and places (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 9). In this form, the stories are counter-stories, which often arise from uninvited topics, and that disrupt the problem stories.

Stories also contribute to creating our sense of identity and that identity is kept alive by stories (Cahill, 2008). The stories people tell of their problems



contribute to the problem's survival (White and Epston, 1990). However, stories also carry with them labels we internalize. Drawing from the work of narrative therapists White and Epston (1990) and the research of Cahill (2008) and Fine and Weiss (1996), the method of externalizing the problem was used in this practice-based research. Cahill (2008) describes the technique of 'externalizing the problem' a method to separate the person from their problem story and begin to 're-author' their life (p.22). White and Epston (1990) explain this separation and break from the problem stories enables 'a sense of personal agency' and a 'capacity to intervene in their own lives and relationships' (p.16).

I argue youth practitioners need to rethink the practice of asking students to continually replay their stories as 'victims' and instead listen for untold pieces as openings to depart from the problem stories. This is not to diminish the reality of traumatic events young people have experienced, rather it is a move away from defining themselves as victims. Fine and Weiss (1996) argue that stories of victimization that lack any 'evidence of resistance, resilience, or agency, are seriously flawed and deceptively partial, and they deny the rich subjectivities of persons surviving' (p. 270). The practice of seeking ruptures in the students' problem stories is an attempt to move away from stories of victimization.

Reframing the narratives opens a space for alternative perspectives that step away from the deficit models that often guide research, as explained by Ginwright (2008):

Unfortunately, research and public imagination of young people's lives remain restricted to static conceptualizations of development, rigid frames about work and family life, and distorted notions of behavior, which all fail to capture the mosaic of experiences and textured realities of young people's lives (p. 14).

Opening a space for students to take up the telling of their own stories in the classroom and gallery is a method to combat victimization and contributes to building personal agency. These are often untold stories of resilience and knowledges gained through lived experiences. The use of conversations as testimonios offers a method 'to connect human beings in ways that enable us to bear witness to experiences and struggles of those beyond our own realities' (Pérez Huber, 2012, p. 385). Encounters made through testimonios include the forming of empathetic connections as introduced in Chapter 2 and which will be returned to in Chapter 5.

### **3.3b Collaborative Curation**

Seeking alternative methods that were student centred and reflective led to the collaborative curatorial practices used to explore the research questions. In this section collaborative curation is presented as a method of this practice-based research. To begin, I refer back to the concept of *barrio-logos* (Villa, 2000). Through collaborative curation, as a *barriological* practice, the attempt was to re-image the gallery space. Critical to the practice of collaborative curation, as a method, is the opportunity for the students to take on the roles of curators. The practice of collaborative

curation interrupts the power structures present in the artist/curator relationship (Desclaux, 2016; Muller, 2011). The process of planning an art exhibition begins with discussing the students' visions for the exhibition and plans for the physical layout and production of work required for the event, including designing the flyers and promoting the events in the community and through social media.

The collaborative practice moves beyond the aesthetic and focuses on the interactions with the viewing public through conversations and with the written words, artworks and music. This process of collaborative curation also includes the potentiality within the works of art to engage the viewers in conversations that interrogate the meanings. For example, a few of the students chose videos to share their lived experiences in the community. The video of Alberto III's interactions with a police officer that resulted in his arrest were inadvertently captured by him while narrating a walk in Barrio Logan, (<https://www.fugitivespace.com/video>). The use of video offers a form of representation not often afforded to youth in our local galleries. Harris (2015) explains, video has the 'ability to provide multiple layers of data about subjects and their environments at the same time' (p. 158). Digital technologies also allow for combining visual, audio and text and the 'assembling and re-assembling of different representations' (Somerville, 2010, p. 340). According to Harris, (2015) another strength of video is to 'reinforce the core qualitative tenet of foregrounding the perspectives and lived experiences of the participants' (p. 158).

Actively engaging with the students, as curators, coupled with the methodological tool of testimonio creates artefacts that Somerville (2010) describes as— ‘artefacts of place whose meaning lies in intertextuality, in the conversations created between each of the parts’ (p. 340). Artefacts of this practice work together to create this sense of intertextuality that Somerville (2010) is referring to. As mentioned in Chapter 4, conversations between the students, local artists and activists are often initiated by symbolic images found in Chicano Park and serve as artefacts of the practice. The conversations about their cultural history, the stories of political actions and importance of rituals and ceremonies, contribute to a critical pedagogy of place. This practice also places value on the knowledges and life experiences of the students told through their artworks. Examples of these conversations and artworks, as a form of cultural mestizaje, are shared in Chapter 5.

Within the roles of artist and curator, the goal is to ‘think in context’, as Sullivan (2006) explains, and to create ‘critical artistic encounters that change the way we think about things around us’ (p. 30-31). Collaborative curation entails opening the gallery up to the needs of the community. The gallery, as a contested space, became more than a location for art exhibitions; it was expanded to include a site for open mic sessions, film viewings, activist meetings and served as a recording studio. Within this space new knowledges were created for both the students and for the community as they were given glimpses into the lived experiences of the youth and exposed to issues important to the community.

### **3.4 Ethical Considerations**

I needed first to ask myself, How am I, as a Chicana researcher, damaged by my own marginality? Furthermore, how am I complicit in the manipulation of my own identities such that I participate in my own colonization and marginalization and by extension, that of my own people—those with whom I feel cultural and collective connectedness and commitment (Villenas, 1996, p. 721).

The purpose of this section is to acknowledge and attempt to address the power imbalances and contradictions of my position as a teacher/researcher and Chicana. Villenas (1996) describes this as having ‘a foot in both worlds; in the dominant privileged institutions and in the marginalized communities’ (p. 714). Contemplating these questions is crucial for me as a researcher. Keeping these questions in mind helps me to avoid participating in ‘at-risk’ and ‘problem’ discourses often associated with my students. Legitimizing these discourses and those found in deficit models would further marginalize my students and myself. Distancing myself from these discourses and deficit models is one way I avoid complicity regarding colonization and marginalization of the students and of myself. In addition, I have the responsibility to be an advocate against such practices and to have the courage to voice my abjections when confronted with or in the presence of harmful discourses.

Failing to question my identity and those of whom I am researching with also puts me at risk of perpetuating ‘othering’ as Fine (1994) explains regarding

writing about 'others' as if they were:

A homogenous mass (of vice or virtue), free floating and severed from contexts of oppression, and as if they were neutral transmitters of voices and stories, we tilt toward a narrative strategy that reproduces Othering on, despite, or even "for" (p. 74).

As a practice-based researcher and educator, I must take heed and be mindful of this risk. One way I attempt to avoid this is through the collaboration process. Students read the transcriptions of conversations and choose the excerpts to accompany their artworks. The excerpts also serve as a means of contextualizing their stories and artworks. The practice of collaborative curation interrupts the power structure that places the decisions regarding the collection and display of the art in the hands curator (Desclaux, 2016; Muller, 2011); instead the students have voices as collaborators and curators.

The issue of identity within the practice becomes even more complicated when the contentious role of insider/outsider is explored. According to Serrant-Green (2002), 'there appear to be as many arguments for outsider research as against it, with the same issues able to be raised in support of outsider researcher, as against it' (p. 38). Kanahu (2000) explains that although there are many reasons being an insider may enhance 'the depth and breadth of understanding a population', there are issues in regards to 'objectivity, reflexivity, and authenticity of a research project' when the researcher knows 'too much' or is 'too close to the project and may be too

similar to those being studied' (p. 444). Regarding this practice-based research, I share an experiential base with my students, but I do not feel it is sufficient to position myself fully as an insider. I prefer to see my position as one that meanders, as Dwyer and Buckle (2009) explain:

The notion of the space between challenges the dichotomy of insider versus outsider status. To present these concepts in a dualistic manner is overly simplistic. It is restrictive to lock into a position that emphasizes either/or, one or the other. You are in or you are out. Rather, a dialectical approach allows the preservation of the complexity of similarities and differences (p. 60).

I acknowledge that my role as a Chicana living in Barrio Logan affords me access that other researchers would have a difficult time achieving and offers an openness and level of trust that probably would not have been present otherwise (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). This insider status has posed problems for me as I review the transcripts of conversations with students because there are instances where my shared experiences and common knowledges prevented participants from expressing themselves fully because they knew I had prior knowledge of events and circumstances. Dwyer and Buckle (2009) suggest that to avoid potential pitfalls and concerns researchers considered insiders should use 'disciplined bracketing and detailed reflection on the subjective research process, with a close awareness of one's own personal biases' (p. 58). Annotating transcripts is used as a method to reflect on my own biases present in the conversations.

Nelson (2013) warns that practice-based research often entails work 'with and upon others' therefore it 'may throw up more ethical issues than traditional book-based study' (p. 75). As a critical pedagogical practice, I situate the practice as being 'with' the students rather than 'on' them. The conversations with students, as testimonios, are recorded and transcribed. As we read over the transcripts together, the students choose the excerpts to use in the exhibitions. The use of testimonios honors the knowledge and experiences of the participants and is rooted in the storytelling traditions of our culture. In addition, as Pérez Huber (2012) explains, the use of testimonio as a methodological tool 'acknowledges and draws from foundations of knowledge which exist outside of the academy and within Communities of Color' (p.386), enabling a knowledge production that draws from within the barrio.

I must continue to interrogate my role as a researcher/teacher and keep in mind that as a critical pedagogue 'my expertise is in knowing *not* to be an expert' (Horton et al., 1990, p. 128). Furthermore, as a teacher I do not claim to be strictly a facilitator, I too become a learner as the students share their stories and lived experiences (Helguera, 2011). Integral to the methods of this practice-based research is reciprocity; as a researcher and teacher, I am constantly learning through my students as they share their life experiences. Drawing from the work of Freire (2000):

The teacher is no longer merely the one-who-teaches, but one who is himself (sic) taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach (p. 80).



Acknowledging the resiliency of the students as a form of 'capital' is also crucial to the ethics of this practice. I situate the knowledges of my students as cultural capital and value their subjectivities and alternative stories of place. The knowledges include what Anne De Bruin terms 'embodied cultural capital' (Barrett, 2010, p.8). As embodied cultural capital it is 'the creative abilities, talents, styles, values and disposition' of the students and community that 'emerge from, and relate to artistic production and its deployment' (Barrett, 2010, p. 8). I believe this form of cultural capital contributes to a sense of belonging and attachment as exemplified in the value placed on art in the community and the role it has played in past and present activism. Barrett (2010) explains that the processes of this type of cultural capital works outside of the economic exchange system and includes things such as 'community confidence, pride, cohesion and sense of identity' (p. 8). The methods of this practice, and as a critical pedagogy of place, attempt to share these stories of community pride and identity in Barrio Logan.

Through the pedagogical relationship with the students, I must be constantly listening for counterstories and listening beyond the surface of what is said. Within the conversations I am also listening to what is not said or as Kind (2008) explains, 'that which cannot be said yet tries to be heard' (p. 169). I believe my strength as a teacher and researcher exists in these moments of waiting in the spaces in-between for what is said and not said—not as a passive listener but in silent engagement.

## **Conclusion**

It is also true that to call something “art”, and through it challenge the expected social landscape, is to create a new territory (Lacy and Riaño-Alcalá, 2006, p. 109).

The rationale for developing this synthesis of methods is to honor the knowledges within my community and to offer a space— a fugitive space as a new territory for youth to interrogate forces of oppression and trauma. Through this practice I am also offering a method for youth educators and practitioners that steps aside from deficit models that resemble a see-saw, where risks are positioned versus protective factors. As a critical pedagogy of place, this practice seeks a dynamic version of place that departs from those often associated with the barrio and that takes in consideration the social relations and multiplicities to enable new versions of place to emerge.

Choosing to use these methodologies is my form of activism through research because it incorporates the CFE tools of intuition and testimonios. Anzaldúa (2002) stresses the importance of keeping attuned as we utilize CFE and as we ‘access knowledge derived from inner feelings, imaginal states, and outer events and to “see through” them with a mindful holistic awareness’ (p. 544). Creating empathetic connections with the students and the community through the methods of this research is vital to maintaining a form of awareness and urgency for this work as a form of socially engaged art.

## Chapter 4: Socially Engaged Art

### Introduction

Through the work of this practice I am attempting to create a method to uncover new stories of place and new life narrative as a form of socially engaged art. The practice of other artists inspires me, especially those whose work highlights voices that are often silenced and unheard. The work of Suzanne Lacy has influenced my practice through her use of narratives and the aesthetic experiences she creates (Thompson, 2012). Her 1999 exhibition, 'Skin of Memory', in Barrio Antioquia focused on memories of violence but also on resiliency and joy, themes that are present in this practice (Lacy and Riaño-Alcalá, 2006). Themes of place and violence in her work titled 'There are Voices in the Desert' (Lacy, 1995) also resonate with this practice through the stories shared and the methods used to transmit the forces of trauma.

I apply the concept of barrio-logos to the narratives of resistance, imprints of trauma and spaces of this practice. The narratives, as 'living' imprints, allow 'inner and outer worlds to meet, creating a new relationship' (Froggett et al., 2011, p. 94). The process of creating the new relationships in this practice, as socially engaged art, is intended to challenge the existing power structures and dominant discourses in the lives of youth and to open spaces for empathetic encounters to emerge.

Socially engaged art (SEA), according to Froggett et al. (2011), serves as a vehicle for individuals to engage with the social and as means for the

social to be 'creatively internalised by individuals' (p.94). Providing a detailed description of SEA, Helguera (2011), distinguishes it as 'a subset of artworks that feature the experience of their own creation as a central element' (p. 1) and points to 'its dependence on social intercourse as a factor of its existence' (p. 2). SEA, according to Helguera (2011), 'avoids evocations of both the modern role of the artist (as an illuminated visionary) and the postmodern version of the artist (as a self-conscious critical being)' (p. 3); instead the artist becomes someone who specializes in working with society.

Approaching SEA in such a way may lead many to question whether it falls entirely within the realm of other professions such as social work. However, as Helguera (2011) argues, 'the practice's direct links to and conflicts with both art and sociology must be overtly declared and the tension addressed, but not resolved' (p. 4). The work I engage in with my students lays in this unresolved space as we are concerned not only with the artwork produced but more importantly with the social processes and structures of power that the artworks and narratives arise from.

Also central to this practice is 'careful listening, thoughtful conversations, and community organizing', as Pasternak (2012) attributes to SEA (pp. 7-8). Froggett et al. (2011) describe SEA as being concerned 'with the relational potentials of collective or group based work and the closely intertwined dynamics of reception and production' (p. 23). In Thompson's (2012) survey of the recent developments in SEA he states, 'we have seen

increased growth in “participatory art”: art that requires some action on behalf of the viewer in order to complete the work’ (p. 21). A few other terms Thompson (2012) adds to the list are ‘social practice’, as commonly used on the west coast of the United States and ‘social sculpture’ in reference to the work of Joseph Beuys (p. 19). Bishop (2012) goes on to state that she refers to the practices as ‘participatory art’ since it implies that many people are involved and because it avoids the ambiguities of the term ‘social engagement’ (p.1). I prefer to use the term socially engaged art (SEA) because it is within the ambiguities of the social interactions that this practice is situated. I will return to the tensions surrounding SEA later in the chapter.

I draw upon Helguera’s (2011) argument that although SEA and social work may seem quite similar they have different goals. Helguera (2011) points to the goals of social work including those of bettering humanity, social justice and a focus on human relationships. In contrast to this, socially engaged artists may agree with these goals and values, yet choose to create work that ‘ironizes, problematizes, and even enhances tensions around those subjects, in order to provoke reflection’ (Helguera, 2011, p. 35). The SEA of this practice aligns with these goals because we are not trying to solve issues rather we are initiating discussions and exposing tensions. In his introduction to SEA, Helguera (2011) encourages drawing upon several disciplines. The work of this practice-based research draws from several fields including trauma studies, narrative therapy, and Chicano studies.

The following section provides a brief introduction to developments within socially engaged art. In section two, I place SEA within the historical context of the Chicano Rights Movement. The section titled, "Tensions", provides some concerns and debates within the field of socially engaged art. In the remaining sections, I argue for the importance of the dialogical and apply it to the concept of fugitive space which I am developing through this practice-based research.

#### **4.1 The Route**

Kester (2004) ties the origins of activist art practices to the reform movements of the late 19th century in the United States and the United Kingdom. The practices of artists in the 1960s and 1970s challenged the hierarchical systems within the world of fine art and within the 'conservatism of the museum and the commodification of art' (Kester, 2004. 126). The result, according to Kester (2004), was that artists began to engage 'audiences in the spaces and routines of their daily lives' (p. 126) and to address the notion that institutions of high art alienated the economically disadvantaged. Ashford et al. (2006) explain that during this period artists-as-activists sought out practices they thought would change the world through creating 'a larger dialogue about the liberation of pleasure' and "we" became part of their art practices (Ashford et al., 2006, p. 60). The power of dialogue is central to my practice as SEA as I will develop further throughout this chapter.

The second generation of activist artists in the United States, according to Kester (2004), was spurred by political protests that erupted in the 1980s in reaction to Ronald Reagan's foreign policy, the antiapartheid movement, AIDS activism, and 'the revulsion at the market frenzy surrounding neoexpressionism, with its *retardaire* embrace of the heroic male painter' (p.126). These times were very influential for me as a college student living in Berkeley, California in the 1980s. I experienced first-hand the merging of art and activism by participating in protests against apartheid, the nuclear arms race, and injustices in Central America and was active in the Punk Rock movement; all of which I consider SEA. One collective exemplifying this fusing of activism and art was *Artists' Call Against U.S. Intervention in Central America*, a group of 'writers, artists, activists, artist organizations, and solidarity groups that began in New York in 1983' (Ashford et al., 2006, p. 68) and who 'collectively produced over two hundred exhibitions, concerts, and other public events over a period of twelve months' (Ashford et al., 2006, p. 68).

The 1980's also saw a number of neighbourhoods undergoing gentrification in the United States, 'a process in which the alternative space acted as both victim and accomplice' (Kester, 2004, p. 127). Many of the neighbourhoods experiencing gentrification in the 1980s were also sites of opportunity for socially engaged artists (Kester, 2004) and resemble the processes currently taking place in Barrio Logan. The notion of spaces that act as both victim and accomplice resonates with my experience because, although the art collective I co-established and

managed for several years was influential in a re-imaging of Barrio Logan, we became victims of our own accomplishments when our rent was increased by 30%.

The processes of gentrification are articulated in the artworks, photos, poetry and videos the students share and in the conversations that follow. For example, the students shared pictures they took during a protest against an event organized by realtors who wanted to promote their presence in Barrio Logan. The realtor's event was titled 'A Better Block' while the protesters' signs stated, "Better Block for Who?" to question who was benefiting. Due to increasing rents, residents of Barrio Logan are being pushed farther east or across the border where the cost of living is much lower. This is a harsh reality for many of my students who have moved to Tijuana with their families and who cross the border to attend school and work in San Diego. I will return to this social context in Chapter 5 regarding families being forced out of Barrio Logan and to the activist practices surrounding the issue of gentrification.

Alongside the processes of gentrification came the art boom of the 1980s with the emergence of graffiti and neoexpressionism. Artists, such as Keith Haring, surfaced as 'the authentic voice of New York street life' (Kester, 2004, p.128). Included in this modern avant-garde discourse was 'an appetite for tokens of exoticism or for what is seen as the more authentic and visceral experience represented by racial or class difference' (Kester, 2004, p. 127). This is pertinent to the new galleries opening in Barrio



Logan as a result of gentrification. Several of the new spaces are Chicana/o owned however, many are owned by affluent people from outside the barrio. This influx of wealthy outsiders has caused tensions, some of which unfortunately have become violent, reminiscent of conflicts occurring in the Boyles Heights neighbourhood of Los Angeles (Miranda, 2016).

As a teacher, business owner and resident I live within the barrio, however I have also had the financial option of living elsewhere, something not afforded to all residents. Kester (2004) describes this sort of tension as voiced by Tim Rollins of K.O.S. (Kids of Survival) in the 1980s when Rollins moved to the South Bronx and began long-term collaborative youth projects. Kester (2004) goes on to state, it is significant that Rollins felt he:

...had to rethink not just what his art looked like but also the social context in which it was produced and even where and how he would live. At the same time, the fact that residing in the South Bronx was always a choice for Rollins marks the gap that continued to separate him from his young collaborators (p. 128).

The gap as described above is crucial to my work and to the entanglement that keeps me mindful of both my connection to the community and cultural roots, yet at the same time, I am cautious of all that accompanies my privileges.

The next phase of SEA in the United States occurred in the 1990s as art funding began to shift from supporting art to supporting social issues (Kester, 2004). The MacArthur Foundation exemplified the shift when they changed their guidelines to specifically favour organizations based in the communities (Kester, 2004). During the 1990s, it was frowned upon for corporations to buy expensive artworks, so they began funding projects that were considered educational and that involved the community (Ashford et al., 2006).

The 1990s were also marked by conservative rhetoric that attributed poverty to 'moral inferiority' rather than the 'systematic structure of capitalist labor markets and investment decisions' (Kester, 2004, p. 132), making welfare a prime target. In the United States books, such as the *Book of Virtues* (1994), by former Secretary of Education William Bennett, called for the private sector to solve social problems through the building of character rather than the government, offering a 'moral pedagogy' (Kester, 2004, p.132). This influence of social policy was reflected in the art of the time as the role of the artist became blurred with the work of reformers and that of social work (Kester, 2004).

As a new teacher during the 1990s, I experienced the influence of these trends from mandated standards, high stakes testing and organizations coming to 'save' my 'at-risk' students through the guise of art. I became sceptical as one group after another came in, offered a brief programme, and left; the benefits to my students seemed minor yet the money paid out

to the individuals as community service providers was great. These experiences are akin to what Ashford et al. (2006) describe as ‘the dark side of community-based practices...take the artist, drop him or her into a housing project, take a picture with people of colour, get your funding, move on’ (p. 63).

In regard to recent movements in SEA, Thompson (2012) characterizes the practices as ‘growing and ubiquitous’ (p. 19). He suggests that rather than being an art movement, the social practices of artists today ‘indicate a new social order—ways of life that emphasize participation, challenge power, and span disciplines’ (Thompson, 2012, p. 19). The collaborative curatorial practices of my work are a form of SEA because the subject matter is political and social with the goal of engaging the community, highlighting injustices and attempting to bring about change (Helguera, 2011).

The social and political nature of the events at Liminal Gallery are inspired by the work of another socially engaged artist, Tania Bruguera, whose projects, such as, ‘*Immigrant Movement International*’ in Queens New York, are long-term and are creating what she calls ‘political situations’ as a method to affect social change (Nobles, 2012, p. 2). As part of ‘*Immigrant Movement International*’ there are film screenings addressing human rights, poet marathons and legal workshops; all of which have been requested by the community (Nobles, 2012). Through activist practices and events at Liminal Gallery, my students are participating in

SEA because as they are engaging with the social and as Helguera (2011) explains, it is this 'dependence on social intercourse' (p. 2) that makes it socially engaged.

I draw upon SEA practices, such as those that created works of arts in response to the murders of the 43 students in Ayotzinapa, for the teachers murdered in Oaxaca and in the practices of community gardens and radio broadcasts in Barrio Logan. These forces are present in the art, conversations and images of this practice-based research including those that challenge police brutality, gentrification, racism and deficit models of 'at risk youth'. Included in these forces are those that maintain ties to our ancient cultures such as the Day of the Dead rituals—all narratives of resistance within my notion of fugitive spaces and inherent in barriological practices in the community.

#### **4.2 Barriological Practices**

During the late 1960s, the Chicano Rights Movement in the United States was gaining momentum and included the work of artists working as activists (Berelowitz, 2003). Chicana/o artists became important to the struggle, 'for it was they who created poetic symbols that articulated a proud heritage with a sense of historical identity' (Berelowitz, 2003, p. 145). Chicana/o artists and activists created posters and prints for political actions and engaged in dialogues in response to the Chicano Rights Movement (Davalos, 2001). Important cultural movements formed during this period, such as, *El Teatro Campesino*, inspired by the labour unrest

led by Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez (Dear and Leclerc, 2003). These were pivotal times for Chicanos, including my family, many of whom were farm workers. The symbols of the United Farm Workers and Chicano Civil Rights Movement created an iconography distinctive to our cultural roots in Aztlán. Chicana/o artists of the 1960s began to:

Expand the idea of Aztlan to include themselves as a separately identifiable, though connected generation. They thus created a place-based identity and history, distinguishable from Anglo-American iconography and roots in Europe (Dear and LeClerc, 2003, p.13).

The place-based identity as articulated in the artistic and political movements of the 1960's and 70s formed distinctive features of the Barrio. Images of political protest and of Aztlán are found throughout Barrio Logan in the form of murals, paintings and music, see figure 9 (<https://www.fugitivespace.com/cultural>). Conversations between the students, local artists and activists are prompted by these symbols and images in the murals. The conversations about our cultural history, the stories of political actions and importance of rituals, such as the sweat lodge ceremonies, which are still being practiced in the park contribute to a place-based identity.

The students' activist practices are shared in the gallery as a form of activist art drawing from Avgitidou's (2013) definition of activist art, as art which 'attempts to provoke reaction and engagement or aid a community or a specific group of people' (p. 1). During the years spanning this

practice-based research, several major events resulted in political protests, including the election of Donald Trump for president, incidents of police brutality, and neo-Nazi threats to the murals in Chicano Park. As a collaborative curatorial practice, videos, photographs, and spoken word from protests at Chicano Park and at the U.S.-Mexican border were shared at Liminal Gallery. The conversations that followed drew from theories of critical pedagogy because the conversations were student driven and relevant to the lives of those in the community (Freire, 1998).

The conversations, as a critical pedagogy of place, also included the re-telling of stories of place that decoded images from the students' lived experiences in the world (Gruenewald, 2003). For example, a few of the students shared images of their work with a local activist group, '*People Over Profits*', see figure 24 (<https://www.fugitivespace.com/forces-of-resistance>). The group advocates and protests for prisoners' rights and against the profiteering rampant in the prison system. This issue was relevant to the students because of the high prevalence of private prison furlough programs in Barrio Logan and because of the large number of Chicanas/os that are incarcerated. This was also relevant in their lives because many of them have been incarcerated themselves and/or have family members in prison. In conjunction with the activist group and as a collaborative curatorial practice, we held events at Liminal Gallery to support the work of group. The events provided a space for people of all ages to come together to organize for protests and share in the struggles faced by families affected by the prison system's inhuman practices, such

as solitary confinement. The coming together was done through open mics, musical performances and informal gatherings.

During one of the student exhibitions, photos were shared from a rally in support of the state-wide hunger strike by prisoners against the use of solitary confinement in California State prisons that involved nearly 30,000 inmates (Queally, J., 2015). The photos depicted the faces of prisoners held in solitary confinement cells called the SHU, Security Housing Unit, see figure 25 (<https://www.fugitivespace.com/forces-of-resistance>).

Prisoners who are documented gang members can be held indefinitely in the SHU, a practice not isolated to adult prisoners because California is one of the last remaining states to continue solitary confinement for juvenile inmates (Queally, 2015). The photos were instrumental in initiating conversations with people visiting the gallery. Before visiting the exhibition, many of the visitors were unaware of the conditions faced in solitary confinement and of the hunger strike and the demands of those participating. The photos also initiated conversations among the youth and a few community members who had been held in the solitary confinement, the SHU, for long periods of time while serving prison sentences, see figure 32 (<https://www.fugitivespace.com/forces-of-resistance>).

It is the initiation of these conversations, as barriological practices, which re-create and re-imagine the gallery space as community-enabling. The artworks, spoken word, videos, and music within the gallery space served as catalysts for dialogues between the viewers and artists. The attempt

was also to create a space for interrupting the power structures. For example, one of the students was painting at the gallery when his probation officer came to meet with him. The meeting between the student and probation officer in the gallery space had quite a different dynamic than the usual location of school or the probation department; spaces where the probation officer easily exerts his power. The meeting at the gallery put the probation officer in the position of a visitor or interlocutor. The student showed the probation officer his paintings and momentarily inverted the power structure. The student-as-artist was allowing the probation officer into his space and sharing his version of the U.S.-Mexico border, transmitting his forces of resistance. The probation officer was not aware of the student's passion for painting and thus a new narrative emerged that stepped aside from the problem stories of drug use, truancy, gang involvement and others that are the typical conversations between officer and ward. It is in this 'new social order', as Thompson (2012) depicted of SEA that opens spaces both physically and theoretically as new forms of knowledge arise. As a critical pedagogy, this 'happening' informed future interactions because both the probation officer and student gained new knowledges as a result of the disruption of their roles.

### **4.3 Tensions**

The debates surrounding SEA include the role of aesthetics and use of collaboration. Bishop (2006) argues that as socially engaged artists seek to re-humanize 'a society rendered numb and fragmented by the repressive instrumentality of capitalism' (p. 2) a situation is created:



...in which such collaborative practices are automatically perceived to be equally important *artistic* gestures of resistance: There can be no failed, unsuccessful, unresolved, or boring works of collaborative art because all are equally essential to the task of strengthening the social bond (p. 2).

Bishop (2006) explains she is sympathetic to these ambitions but argues that it is crucial to analyse and discuss SEA critically as art. It is the privileging of the ethics over the aesthetic that trouble Bishop (2006). I agree that the aesthetic should be discussed and analysed in works of SEA, but I don't place the value of aesthetics over the ethics in this practice. Within the curatorial processes I am developing, as a fugitive space, I collaborate with the students and offer my opinions and support. We may not always agree on the aesthetics of the works of art, however the tensions contribute to the actual practice. The work of this practice and the tensions in these in-between spaces are moments of resistance and serve as barriological practices as we re-imagine the products of their art practice.

Another tension is the risk of exploiting communities and participants involved in SEA projects. Helguera (2011) explains that long-term relationships are needed to avoid what he calls 'symbolic interaction' (p. 13). Furthermore, Helguera (2011) states that artists whom have a deep understanding of their participants and those artists who have worked in a particular community for an extended period time do the most successful SEA projects. I believe the fact that I have lived and worked in Barrio

Logan for a long period of time helps me to avoid symbolic interactions. The love and respect I have for my students and community has developed over many years and has been instrumental in my ability to access stories and images.

Helguera (2011) outlines the risks of SEA practices by artists who are inexperienced in working within particular communities and 'uninterested in immersing themselves in the universe of the community, with all its interests and concerns' and which he warns could convey a feeling by the participants that they are being used by the artists (p. 48). Helguera (2011) explains regarding the artist's genuineness of interest in communities:

...these are not traits that can be created artificially, and their existence is a true indicator of whether an artist is suited to working with communities: it may be impossible to truly learn from others without true curiosity about their lives and ideas (p. 48-49).

Also addressing the risks of exploitation, Kester (2004) points to examples of socially engaged art practices in which the artist functions 'as a kind of tourist of the disempowered, traveling from one side of poverty and oppression to the next' (p.122-123). Crucial to the practice and the longevity of this work is my belief in the power of collectively generating transformation as a cumulative process.

#### 4.4 Dialogical Aesthetic

It is the nature of dialogical projects to be impure, to represent a practical negotiation (self-reflexive but nonetheless compromised) around issues of power, identity, and difference, even as they strive toward something more (Kester, 2004, p. 123).

I turn to the dialogical practices of this work, as a form of SEA that is exemplified in what Kester (2004) explains as a 'shift from a concept of art based on self-expression to one based on the ethics of communicative exchange' (p. 106). The communicative exchange in this practice is the transmitting of forces of resistance and imprints of trauma in addition to self-expression.

Within the space of the dialogical the attempt is, 'to reconnect art and lived experience as a *social process*' (McGonagle, 2007, p. 6) where the artworks are a vehicle for sharing these social elements. Kester (2004) further elaborates on his position of the 'dialogical aesthetic' stating:

In conventional aesthetic experience, the subject is prepared to participate in dialogue through an essentially individual and physical experience of "liking".... In a dialogical aesthetic, on the other hand, subjectivity is formed through discourse and intersubjective exchange itself (Kester, 2004, p. 112).

The negotiation of content within this practice arises through conversations with the students as they express their lived singularities. The priority is placed on the 'contexts for conversation' (Meban, 2009, p. 33). Thus, the conversations in these in-between spaces become part of the body of work as SEA. The process continues as viewers enter the gallery space and engage with the works of art in the form of poetry, drawings, photographs, video and music.

The dialogical is also about challenging and disrupting common perceptions. This is exemplified in a project developed by Suzanne Lacy, Annice Jacoby and Chris Johnson titled *The Roof Is on Fire (1994)*:

Latino and African American teenagers were able to take control of their image and to transcend the one-dimensional clichés promulgated by mainstream news and entertainment media (Kester, 2004, p. 5).

The roof-top dialogues led to other collaborations including conversations with the local police department (Kester, 2004). Lacy's work aligns with my interest in moving beyond stereotypical images of Chicano youth and in acknowledging their individual stories. According to Kester (2004), Lacy's work and that of other avant-garde artists challenges 'the deadening representational conventions of academic art' (p. 6) and instead reveals, 'the experimental specificity of the world around them' (p. 6). Kester (2004) also encourages 'challenging the assumption that avant-garde art must be shocking or difficult to understand' (p. 9). Including the everyday life stories as a critical pedagogy of place creates an 'exchange and dialogue rather

than a single, instantaneous shock of insight precipitated by an image or object' (Kester, 2004, p. 12). However, I also agree with Bishop (2012), that 'unease, discomfort or frustration – along with fear, contradiction, exhilaration and absurdity – can be crucial to any work's artistic impact' (p. 26) because through these feelings tensions arise that led to conversations and contribute to the practice.

Active, careful listening is also pivotal to this practice. Kester (2004) refers to Italian philosopher Gemma Corrado Fiumara's argument that 'we must begin to acknowledge the long-suppressed role of listening as a creative practice' (p. 107). Stories and anecdotes of trauma weigh heavily in conversations with my students and require a listening-centred approach:

Art that is rooted in a "listening" self, that cultivates the intertwining of self and Other, suggests a flow-through experience which is not delimited by the self but extends into the community through modes of reciprocal empathy (Meban, 2009, p. 37 citing Gablik, 1995, p. 82).

Through listening as a creative practice, I am able to build trust and empathetic connections with my students. These empathetic encounters are moments I hold most dear within my teaching and art practice.

Creating these encounters is also part of this practice as SEA. I am inspired by the work of Theaster Gates especially his creation of the *Listening Room* in the Dorchester Project that houses a record collection and 'has served both spirited and didactic functions, facilitating listening

parties and DJ events' (Gates, Dorchester Projects). One purpose of opening Liminal Gallery was to provide a space that encourages the didactic functions attributed to the Dorchester Project. The work of the Verbal Arts Centre in Derry, Northern Ireland also serves as a model for the use of the gallery as a space for community storytelling and poetry readings (Verbal Arts Centre, 2016) and as a method for sharing personal narratives of trauma that move traumatic experiences into the realm of common memory, as explained in Chapter 2.

The narratives of community in Barrio Logan, such as those in Northern Ireland, are also narratives of trauma, as discussed in Chapter 2. As narratives of trauma they can be vehicles for building empathetic encounters and connections. I draw upon the work of Bennett (2005) and her application of Deleuzian concepts to the *work* of art in relation to trauma. Bennett (2005) defines empathy as a 'conjunction of affect and critical awareness' that forms the basis of 'an empathy grounded not in affinity (feeling for another insofar as we can imagine being that other) but on a feeling for another that entails an encounter with something irreducible and different, often inaccessible' (p. 10).

Another artist whose work centres on dialogues and conversations is Manglano-Ovalle. His work with youth and neighbourhood residents resonates with my practice and is an example of the possibilities of creating empathetic connections through socially engaged art (Kester, 2004). Manglano-Ovalle's practice is also relevant to my practice in Barrio

Logan because it involves video projects in Mexican-American communities and confrontation of racist stereotypes (Kester, 2004). The collective, *Street Level Video*, arose out of Manglano-Ovalle's work, and according to Kester (2004), 'was important in helping to create new forms of identification among gang members and residents' (p.118). Echoing this work, one intention of our exhibition was to highlight narratives that step aside from the dominant discourses of labelling young Chicanos as gang members and the police brutality that ensues. *Street Level Video* collective is still operating in Chicago and has expanded its range of programmes, elucidating the notion of 'after life' that Kester (2004) also attributes to Lacy's work with youth in Oakland and as 'an important feature of dialogical projects' (p. 118).

## **Conclusion**

People who talk about revolution and class struggle without referring explicitly to everyday life, without understanding what is subversive about love and what is positive in the refusal of constraints, such people have a corpse in their mouth (Vaneigem, 1983, p. 26).

I chose the opening quote by Raoul Vaneigem, a key theorist of the Situationist movement, because I believe it reflects the work of this practice through the attention to the everyday life in the barrio, my affection for Barrio Logan and to the spaces I offer both physically and metaphorically through the concept of fugitive space. Providing a space outside the elitist establishments in San Diego for artists and musicians to

exhibit and perform is essential to this practice. The work is especially important as SEA within the community because of the lack of spaces of practice and opportunities for youth to exhibit and curate art. The flux of the gallery space also contributes to the rationale of the work because it allows for new opportunities, such as the development of Seeds Records and open mic sessions.

Owning and operating a gallery, as a Chicana, within the community of Barrio Logan, also enables what Dear and Leclerc (2003) explain as 'a very different exhibition practice...when Mexicans and Mexican-Americans put themselves in charge of the collection, display, and interpretation of art' (p.15). In this social space, as barriological practices, the students share their new life narratives and counterstories of place on their own terms, as Chicanas/os, and in doing so they are disrupting oppressive discourses that have been constructed overtime and that have served to perpetuate their marginalization. Through the collaborative curations and conversations that follow, we are maintaining our Chicana/o oral traditions and building a sense of community belonging and attachment. In the following chapter, I will analyse this practice as a method and as a critical pedagogy of place.



## **Chapter 5: Creating a Fugitive Space- Analysis of the Practice**

### **Introduction**

As a starting point for analysis and for developing the concept of fugitive space, I begin by exploring how the work of this practice contributed to the making of new life narratives and how it served as a critical pedagogy of place. The analysis draws upon Massey's (1994) concept of place as a 'double articulation' where any talk of place takes into account 'the construction of the subjects within them' (p. 8). As a practice-based researcher, I use the method of testimonios to explore the construction of youth identities and to open spaces for encounters that move beyond problem stories and focus on the singularities and unique contexts of youth.

Testimonio is grounded in the history of Chicana/o resistance to challenge oppressive forces (Saavedra, 2011) and according to other researchers it provides a tool for individuals to transform past experiences and create new life narratives (Bernal Delgado et al., 2012; Pérez, 2003; Pérez Huber, 2012; and Saavedra, 2011). In this practice, the telling of these narratives, as constructions of identities, contributed to a critical pedagogy of place. Through the testimonios dominant narratives of both identity and place were disrupted and stories of resiliency and perseverance emerged. This disruption served as a double articulation because new narratives of both identity and place were told through the testimonios. The new stories of place included stories of community empowerment and activism rather

than stereotypical stories of poverty and violence. The disruption of these narratives began with the process of externalizing the problems youth face and opening a space for untold stories to surface.

The aim of this practice was not to capture and transmit real experiences rather it was through empathetic connects that the works of art, including poetry and rap, would create affective experiences to inform our thinking as practitioners. Active listening, as a reciprocal practice, built empathetic connections between the students and myself, as researchers, and the community. The methods of the practice also contributed to the strengthening of cultural identities, belonging and attachment to place.

### **5.1 Externalizing the Problem and Untold Stories**

The intent of this work, as socially engaged art, was to uncover fragments of experience and encourage the telling of new stories. In the classroom, this was done by enabling time and space for students to write, perform and discuss poetry. At Liminal Gallery, this was accomplished through open mic events and at Seeds Records it was done through writing and recording music.

As presented in Chapter 3, Cahill (2008) reminds us it is the stories we tell that create our sense of identity and the stories also carry with them labels that are internalized, such as, 'abused victim', 'troublemaker' or 'dropout'. According to White and Epston (1990) the stories people tell of their problems also contributes to keeping the problem stories alive. The work

of this practice offers a method for youth practitioners to listen for moments of resistance as rupture points for stories of personal agency and to step away from deficit theories that position risk factors versus protective factors. This method opens a space for stories that reflect the strength, resiliency and problem-solving abilities of youth deemed 'at risk'.

Drawing from the techniques of narrative therapist Michael White (1990), the method of externalizing the problem was used to encourage students to move away from the dominant narratives and problem stories (White and Epston, 1990). As presented in Chapter 3, the intention of this method is to create a break from the problem story and separate the person from the story (White and Epston, 1990). The problem becomes separate from the person rather than a defining factor. This practice includes recognizing verbal labels students often place on themselves and those that others use to identify them. The two poems on the "Externalising the Problem" page (<https://www.fugitivespace.com/externalising-the-problem>) are offered as examples of the practice. The poems were written in a poetry workshop in my classroom, during which, we discussed the practice of externalizing problems as a way for the students to separate themselves from labels and problem stories. Instead of doing this practice 'to' them, it became a practice that we engaged in collaboratively.

The poem, "Untitled", was written by Antonio when he was released from a juvenile detention centre after serving a sentence for smuggling drugs across the border. Instead of quitting school and staying in Tijuana, where

he earns money as a professional boxer, he chooses to wait in line for several hours each day to cross the border and attend Bayside Community School. The first line of the poem states, "*I made a mistake*" and confirms that he "*is not a mistake*". These words articulate the concept of externalizing the problem. In the last several lines of the poem, Antonio compares what he has been through to the struggles of a boxer who must not stop and who takes the hits but stays on his/her feet.

The narratives, which in this case were in the form of poems, often depict moments of resistance and can be foundations for new stories of past, present and future to emerge. As an educational practice, listening to these narratives of resistance is the beginning of a disruption of the problem stories. Dwelling on these ruptures rather than the past problem stories does not diminish the reality of traumatic events experienced but initiates a move away from students defining themselves as victims. White and Epston (1990) explain that this process of breaking away from the problem stories enables 'a sense of personal agency' (p.16) because the power lays within the person to tell share alternative stories and to separate themselves from past problems. The telling of the stories, as testimonios, is a source of empowerment as the students take up the writing of their own stories.

The other poem, titled "My Mind" (<https://www.fugitivespace.com/cultural>), was written by Ricardo, a student who has been struggling with a methamphetamine addiction since he enrolled in our school five years

ago. His poem articulates the practice of telling an alternative story as a form of empowerment. At the time this poem was written, over three hundred days had passed since Ricardo had used crystal meth. His new life narrative is voiced throughout the poem as a testimonio. In Ricardo's words he has demanded a change and has held his resolve, "*I release you, But not just, release you but, Demand you to leave*".

These new narratives, created by Antonio and Ricardo, disrupt and challenge their problem stories and labels as 'juvenile delinquent' and 'drug addict'. Through the reflective practices of writing the poems both Antonio and Ricardo shared new life narratives. These poems are artefacts of the practice because they are examples of how the practice is used as a method to externalize the problem stories as voiced in the students' resolve not to be defined by their past.

Essential to uncovering these unspoken stories is the practice of careful listening or as Freire (1998) reminds us that as critical pedagogues we must learn to 'speak by listening' (p.104) so that we are not leading the conversation but instead making sure the students' voices are heard. As teachers, pressures of classroom management and curriculum may cause us to cut short conversations with students. Stepping away from my work as a teacher to embark on this PhD programme offered me the time to reflect on these practices and to be more deliberate in listening to my students and recognizing that often what is not said contributes to the narrative.

Conversations as a method of this practice raised a critical awareness of issues in the lives of the students through the telling of untold stories, or as Grinberg (2013) explains, it makes visible situations that are often unspoken. For example, in the poem titled “The Streets” (<https://www.fugitivespace.com/poem-as-testimonio>), Geno voices his determination to take action through his words, ‘*I stood still too long*’. Geno’s poem led to a conversation about his struggles and to local resources for teens who are homeless. Conversations prior to this poem did not reveal that he had experienced homelessness, nor did they enable a space for the student to transmit the forces of trauma he had endured due to his complex life experiences. In this instance, poetry offered a safe, or what I term a fugitive space, for Geno to share an untold story, and created an empathetic connection. The next section continues to explore the potentials of this practice in youth identity and making of place using poetry as testimonio.

## **5.2 Poem as Testimonio**

The use of poetry as a vehicle to transmit narratives of resistance, testimonios and trauma is presented in this chapter as artefacts of the practice and as an educational approach for working with marginalised youth. The practice of writing and performing poetry holds much potential for new life narratives or counter stories to emerge, as research by Barbieri (1995) and Clark-Alexander and Larkin (1994) found. Research on teen poetry also suggests that writing poetry can serve as an outlet for teenage expression and operates as a means for teachers to gain insights

into the struggles and anxieties faced by their students (Clark-Alexander and Larkin, 1994; Hart, 2001).

The poetry workshops in my classroom used a 'circle of respect' with seats placed in a circle, as the physical arrangement; and as a theoretical space, it was a space free of ridiculing and where all voices would be heard (Camangian, 2008). The ground rules for the circle of respect were established in the classroom and at the gallery prior to the onset of reading and discussing poetry. All the poems referenced in this section are posted on the webpage, (<https://www.fugitivespace.com/poem-as-testimonio>).

The poems were written during classroom poetry workshops or outside the school and performed at open mic sessions at Liminal Gallery.

In her research on the use of poetry with girls, Barbieri (1995) found poetry can serve as a means of 'breaking the silences that can suffocate adolescent girls' (p. 135). The two poems written by Tanya are examples of breaking silences through poetry. The poems led to difficult conversations and ones that were uncomfortable especially because of her life experiences which included several arrests for prostitution.

Camangian (2008) reminds us, 'as teachers, we need to learn...to become comfortable with the discomfort that may arise when listening to urban youth articulate their interpretation of reality' (p. 52). It is important to note here that I am not analysing what Tanya said through the words of her poem rather how the poems served as vehicles for testimonios to emerge.

Another topic of youth identity that emerges in the poems is that of machismo. Relevant to this practice-based research is the 'rigid constructions of Chicano masculinity' that reproduce oppressive conditions (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012, p. 531) and that form a stratum that poetry and art practices can disrupt. The writing of poetry can be a means to contest these constructions of Chicano masculinity which surface in attitudes and behaviours that male students are encouraged to follow and that often results in a silencing of women (Pratt, 1995). The disruption of these attitudes occurs within the circle of respect during classroom discussions, during open mic sessions and in conversations with the audience during student exhibitions.

As critical pedagogues, students are encouraged to use writing to make their voices heard and resist oppressive forces that work to silence them. The repression of being silenced is more pronounced for Chicanas. The importance of writing in the taking up of our own stories as Chicanas has been proposed by other researchers including Chabram-Dernersesian (1999), Nieto-Gomez (1976) and Sánchez (1977). Sánchez (1977) argues that the act of writing for Chicanas holds the potentials for change and is 'a refusal to submit to a quality of silence that has been imposed on her for centuries' (p. 66). Elements of these forces of silence linger in our lives as Chicanas even decades after the Chicano Movement began. Nieto-Gomez (1976) pointed to a sexist philosophy within the Chicano Movement which accused Chicanas as dividing the movement and that called for women to 'maintain traditional roles and preserve the culture' (p. 99). Chicanas have



a history of writing as a form of opposition to forces that pressure them to abandon their aspirations.

Contesting this silencing, as women through writing, is a form of resistance as hooks (1989) reminds us, 'our words are not without meaning...they are an action—a resistance' (p. 28). Through writing, Chicanas can create 'waves of disturbances that establish woman's humanity, agency and worth' (Arredondo et al., 2003, p. 2). The poem titled, "Chicana" written by Marisol voices the pressures she feels as a Chicana and how she perceives society deems her, "*they assume so much, school dropout, pregnant at 15*". Through her words, Marisol as a woman and more specifically as a Chicana, is disrupting dominant narratives and stereotypes of women which are perpetuated through television, film and media that 'homogenize and codify experiences of Chicanas' (Arredondo et al., 2003, p. 1-2).

Poems, as testimonios, are also 'artefacts of expertise' because as Kelly (2001) states, poems offer glimpses into the students' lives as they are 'becoming adults, becoming a citizen, becoming independent, becoming autonomous, becoming mature, becoming responsible' (p. 30). As becomings, the poems do not necessarily offer a resolution in the form a new life narrative. Clay (2010) distinguishes the poem from the narrative as going beyond; the poem 'is not moving towards the clarification that readers might desire, or towards any revelation, either of which might be reasonably expected in a narrative' (Clay, 2010, p. 47). Instead, it is the

potentials inherent in the process of writing, discussing and performing the poetry that is significant. Dylan Thomas (1966) affirms he 'always leaves holes and gaps in the works of a poem, so that something that is not in the poem can creep, crawl, flash, or thunder in' (p. 202). Maybe that which is *not* there may have the potential to spark new life narratives? However, recognizing this requires careful, thoughtful listening as described in previous chapters. Examples of this practice were present in conversations with students regarding the poems "Gang Life" and "My Life". Neither of the poems express a specific resolve for change, yet within the poems are moments of resistance that hold potentials to begin conversations and reflections on possibilities for the future; which may eventually lead to new life narratives.

The poem "My Life", was written by Fernando soon after returning to our classroom after surviving a gunshot wound. A few years prior, Fernando had survived a near fatal stab wound to his neck, both injuries were a result of gang violence. Fernando's words may not reflect a desire to stop his gang involvement, however as a youth practitioner who has known Fernando for several years, I recognized that an opening for a conversation was offered through his words. The first line of Fernando's poem, "*This pain that I feel, it hurts cause it's real*", led to a conversation about the risks he was taking. I asked Fernando how his latest close call with death had affected him. His response was, "*I have to handle my business now 'cuz I have a baby coming soon and I have to make money*". Our conversation went on to discuss the risks of making money illegally

and how his incarceration had been costly to his parents, not to mention the grief they experienced from his close calls with death. The stab to his neck and gunshot wound have earned him respect in his gang, yet when I asked him about his plans after graduation he seemed interested. After I explained that the school pays his college tuition, a smile came across his face and he muttered the words, “*yeah, I would like to do that*”. Fernando’s response offered a small movement or as Deleuze (1995) described a ‘molecular becoming’ and one that allowed ‘something to escape’ (p. 19). The ‘something’ that escaped in our conversation was the possibility that Fernando had an interest in attending college, something that future conversations could be built upon.

Forces of trauma were also present in these conversations because of the life experiences of the students and in the memories the poems triggered for me, including the death of past students to gang violence. These affective experiences create empathetic connections between the poet and the reader or audience. The empathetic connections are not attempts at understanding what it is to feel as the artist does, rather they are openings for new perspectives and more thoughtful ways of engaging to emerge, especially when coping with trauma.

As a collaborative curatorial practice, excerpts from conversations about the poems were chosen by the students to share with the community in the gallery space. Diego chose the following excerpt to accompany his

poems in Liminal Gallery because of the power of poetry in his life and because of the conversations he hoped it would spark.

*“I use poetry when I am feeling down or when I am about to do something stupid. It helps me think better. When you read my poems some of it might relate to you, or not, but that’s up to you...Poetry influenced me a lot because there are a lot of people out there that are afraid to say what they mean, so that’s why I do poetry because people that read my poems, they can relate and it might help them to start doing poetry too and they might write stuff that relates to other people too”*  
*(Diego, 12 May, 2016).*

As a method of this practice and as collaborative curation, open mic sessions at Liminal Gallery opened a space for voices in the form of spoken word (poetry) and rap to be heard in the community and as a means to create empathetic connections. The idea for the open mic sessions arose from student requests as a mode for expressing their grief after a truck drove off the bridge and killed several people below in Chicano Park; unfortunately, it was a tragedy several of them witnessed. The public performance of the poetry and rap was a method for those affected by the trauma to process the experience even though ‘the physical imprint of the event’ will always be present even if not continuously felt (Bennett, 2005, p. 25).

As part of the listening audience, I experienced imprints of this trauma during the open mic session following the tragic accident at Chicano Park. Samples of audio recordings from this open mic event are on the website (<https://www.fugitivespace.com/open-mic>). The following excerpt is from a journal entry I made after the first open mic session.

*... Jim began by reading a poem about immigrant deaths as a result of operation gatekeeper which resonated with Angel's painting of the border hanging behind him...Alberto was the last one to get up and stood in front of photos hanging on the wall of him with the Brown Berets. His spoken word expressed sorrow and anger for what had happened and included the pride he felt for our community because of the way they cared for the victims' families. His poems also expressed his struggles with addiction...The forces of all the poets were very powerful. The poems, although unintentionally, served as narratives for the images hanging in the room.... walking through Chicano Park on the way home I saw Diego and told him we had missed him at the open mic (his poems and drawings filled the middle room of the gallery) he apologized and said he had fallen asleep and just woke up. My intuition told me he was using crystal meth again...the damage meth has done in our community somehow is what I was left with by the end of the night and was what awoke me in the early hours as I wondered what the space, the 'gallery', could serve as.*

Fisher (2005) and Jocson (2005) both cited, through their research, the value of using spoken word as an outlet for youth to voice frustrations and obstacles in their lives. The open mic sessions at Liminal Gallery opened a space for students to transmit their rap and poetry in what Camangian (2008) calls a 'critical voice' where they found 'the power to be heard, felt and understood while communicating transformative ideas in ways that effectively impact and challenge listening audiences' (p. 39). The poem titled "Gentrification Cultivates Mass Incarceration", was performed as spoken word by Miguel and exemplifies the transmission of this critical voice, (<https://www.fugitivespace.com/poem-as-testimonio>)

*"I wrote this poem to empower the community, right now my varrio<sup>8</sup> is being affected by gentrification and as someone who understands the problem I'm bringing knowledge of it to my neighbours. I understand that we can only achieve social change through the power of numbers"*

*(Miguel, 20 October, 2016).*

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The poem titled, "Borderland Ice Cream", on the following page voices the realities Miguel faces as an undocumented young man living in San Diego, California. Although still in high school, Miguel is legally an adult and could be deported by ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) at any moment.

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<sup>8</sup> *Varrío* and *barrio* are often interchanged, in Spanish the 'b' sounds like a 'v'.

### **Borderline Ice Cream**

*Disintegrate the molecule that made man illegal in their own  
Land*

*Chased by green trucks ICE but not the one that  
Takes away the big hot sun*

*It's the ones that made us leave behind our present  
Lives*

*Duck from the light as we follow the North Star*

*In the age of division we are brutalized by men driving quads  
With dogs hunting us like trophies*

*The brown pride in my skin is a calamity a monstrosity  
Punished by legal slavery*

*The desert of no man's land traps hopeful spirits  
Unfortunately in this crevice of the world*

*Heat doesn't pass free passes to those without water*

*That's why we march in the presence of our moon*

*So that spying satellites think we just a burning bush*

*As the ICE gang goes to sleep*

*We over run the wall*

*Like birds we made it back to our land*

*With instinct in my blood we follow the calling in the stars*

*(Miguel, 6 May 2017)*

In the following excerpt Miguel explains why he wrote *Borderline Ice Cream*:

*“I wrote this poem to shine light on the legal slavery created from the privatisation of immigration detention facilities that takes place thanks to the 13th amendment loophole that allows slavery to be a legal punishment. Triggering an incentive for detaining immigrants to be used as inventory to collect money from taxpayers by transferring and overbooking the detention time of detained people” (Miguel, 6 May, 2017).*

The open mic sessions also led to the development of a physical space for recording poetry and rap. The idea for opening a recording studio grew from conversations with students regarding the lack of spaces for young people to record music; and especially spaces to record free of charge. I was also inspired by Theaster Gate’s (2016) *‘The Listening Room’* in Chicago as a space for music embedded within the community, as introduced in Chapter 4. After the open mic sessions at Liminal Gallery, I decided to purchase equipment and create a recording studio, Seeds Records. In this sense the fugitive space was fluid and offered an opening that led to Seeds Records to support local youth in Barrio Logan with the production and recording of music, most of which was in the form of rap and more specifically, Chicana/o rap.



### 5.3 Rap as Testimonio

Rap, as an element of hip hop, was created on the streets of the Bronx, New York during the late 1970s (Rose, 1994; Tyson, 2008). With cultural similarities to poetry or spoken word, rap is the lyrical delivery of Hip-Hop and contains narratives of resistance (Camangian, 2008). Relevant to the critical work of this practice, I draw from Rose's (1994) explanation that, 'hip hop attempts to negotiate new economic and technological conditions, as well as new patterns of race, class, and gender oppression in urban America' (p. 22). I argue that rap is a form of testimonio drawing from the notion of testimonios as narratives of resistance (Bernal Delgado et al., 2012; Cienfuegos and Monelli, 1983; Pérez, 2003; Pérez Huber, 2012; and Saavedras, 2011). Furthermore, as Saleeby (1996) argues, rap music is a source of strength; it embodies narratives, personal stories, and culture— all characteristics of testimonios.

As a youth practitioner I believe it is essential to acknowledge and respect rap music because of its popularity among youth and as a source of strength and potential growth. Furthermore, rap holds importance for youth as a 'cultural medium' (Tyson, 2008, p. 2), especially for African-American youth (Dyson, 1996; Rose, 1994) and Latino youth (Delgado, 1998; Smitherman, 1997). The writing and recording of rap music at Seeds Records is central to this practice because of its significance in the lives of the students. Through this creative process students draw from their experiences and aspirations to write the lyrics. As a critical pedagogical tool, rap holds potentials for creating a 'critical social consciousness'

(Camangian, 2008, p. 38). In addition, as Tyson (2008) claims, 'rap music might be the most effective medium to date for exchanging ideas with youths from diverse backgrounds' (p. 2).

The conversations, as in-between spaces in this practice, exist between the writing and performing of the music and are moments of resistance as students discuss issues facing themselves and others. The audio versions of the raps referred to in this section are posted on the webpage, 'Rap as Testimonio' (<https://www.fugitivespace.com/seed-records>). Seeds Records is a fugitive space and as a barriological practice we re-imagine the products of their art practice through conversations and through the writing and recording of their music. There may not be resolution within the lyrics of the rap, as discussed in the previous section regarding poetry. In the rap titled "Starvin", Nate voiced the struggles and temptations he continues to face as a young father. This was reflected in conversations with Nate.

*"When I was younger I had to do what I could to make money, my mom couldn't, I was on my own. I could still make money selling dope now, it's easy, but I have a daughter to take care of now. I don't want to get locked up, so I have to keep my job and stay clean" (Nate, 20 April, 2016).*

The writing and performing of the rap music contributed to a critical consciousness through the process of interrogating and reflecting on personal knowledges. Camangian (2008) points out it is the relevance to these daily struggles that makes a difference in the work we do as youth

practitioners because youth are often 'turned off' by methods used to 'improve their lives' (p. 53). I believe encouraging the writing and recording of rap music is a valuable method to avoid the apathy I have witnessed towards programmes students view as irrelevant to their lives.

Much of the music recorded at Seeds Records could be characterized as Chicano rap due to the ideologies, symbols and use of bilingual lyrics (Delgado, 1998). Chicano rap uses 'cultural and ideological elements to empower Mexican Americans' (Delgado, 1998, p. 95) and is a mode of resisting cultural destruction and holding on to elements of Mexican culture or Aztlán while modifying with Chicano ideology (Batalla, 1996; McFarland, 2006). This syncretism of Chicano and Mexican culture in Chicano rap is reflected in the students' lyrics and offers testimonios of life in the barrio. The rap titled "Black Snake", by Alberto III, includes several elements of Chicano rap including reference to Aztlán, (<https://www.fugitivespace.com/seed-records>). The *Black Snake* refers to the Lakota prophecy about a black snake that would desecrate the sacred sites of the Lakota, poison the water and then destroy the Earth (Pauls, 2016). The 'black snake' that the protesters were fighting against on the land of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe was the Dakota Access oil pipeline. The lyrics are in the form of a freestyle because they were not written prior to being recorded and do not follow a traditional rap pattern of bars and verses (Garrett, 2013). The written form of the lyrics came about through a dictation of the recording as an artefact of practice.

The rap, “Narco Journalists”, by Ricky also reflects the political nature of Chicano rap, (<https://www.fugitivespace.com/seed-records>).

Through his lyrics, Ricky shares the tragic circumstances of journalists covering the drug trade in Mexico and that of other journalists abroad.

Morrell and Duncan-Andrade (2002) explain that rap music can encourage others ‘to further their own knowledge of urban sociology and politics’ (p. 89). As a form of critical pedagogy, through conversations with Ricky he explained why he wrote the rap. This is demonstrated in Ricky’s words below:

*“A lot of people don’t know why we don’t get much news about the drug trade in Mexico and most are too worried about their own problems to worry about what is happening all the way in Syria, so I wanted to write a rap that made people think about these issues” (Ricky, 26 August, 2016).*

## **Narco Journalism**

*Narco journalism down in México  
narco journalist reporters without borders  
on the front line with Ernest and Martha  
and the rebel soldiers in México with da cartels in Bolivia  
with Evo and da coccaleros,  
shot in the Pulitzer public service medal riding la bèstia trying not to let go  
murder wrote in terrorist threats and death notes  
there's no such thing as freedom of the press in Nuevo Laredo,  
narco journalism down in México gotta keep the governments in check  
with written words from one writer to the next  
got to give respect where it's deserved  
like Hunter S on an electric typewriter  
run the risk of dying right alongside da freedom fighters,  
and da truth is surrounded by liars  
but it rises like a Phoenix from da fire when it comes down da wire.*

*Citizen journalism in Aleppo,  
battling propaganda and delusions of grandeur  
with the guns of the Contra in the jungles of Uganda,  
cut down more trees build more coffins  
make war not love and make more war orphans  
and the dust from all the bombs creates the moonscape with the refugee  
fleeing to escape before it's too late  
tears and blood run down the concrete, who's watching  
product of the cold war like Kalashnikovs in Compton,  
Russian mob men, media moguls,  
ain't as strong as cell phones in the trenches,  
Citizen journalists in the war zone behind the fences,  
memoirs of the last days,  
Olympic stadiums in Bosnia being used as mass graves  
ashes to ashes the city looks like an ashtray,  
it's a Saturday on a bloody Sunday for the ones that stayed  
praying to whatever god they believe in,  
waiting to be saved and one day there'll be a country for old men,  
women and children seeking revenge against the system,  
who's the hero and who's the villain? (repeat)*

*(Ricky, 26 August, 2016)*

Ricky and the other rappers identify injustices and inequalities through their lyrics. In doing so, they are also contributing to a new story of Barrio Logan, one that includes their personal narratives in a remaking of place and one with the potential to disrupt dominant narratives of the barrio. Drawing from the work of Fisher (2005) and Camangian (2008), who both found benefits of using Hip Hop and spoken word to draw from students' own experiences, the recording studio is offered as a fugitive space for youth to interrogate the oppression structures in their community and personal lives. I argue that the collaborative curatorial processes of writing and recording at Seeds Records is relevant in the lives of the youth because it is not detached from their daily struggles and it creates narratives of resistance.

#### **5.4 Making of Place and Belonging**

Rather than being one sort of thing—for example, physical, spiritual, cultural, social—a given place takes on the qualities of its occupants, reflecting these qualities in its own constitution and description and expressing them in its occurrence as an event: places not only *are*, they *happen* (Casey, 1997, p. 27).

The work of this practice attempts to tell stories of place in Barrio Logan as happenings. The practice draws from the place-based methodologies of Somerville (2010) and Gruenewald (2003) in the re-inhabitation and making of new place stories. The practice of telling new stories of place, as presented in this chapter, is what Gruenewald (2003) terms 're-

inhabitation' (p. 4). Through a critical pedagogy of place, students enacted the process of re-inhabiting Barrio Logan as they pursued actions to improve the lives of those living in the barrio (Gruenewald, 2003) and which in turn contributed to their sense of belonging and attachment. Returning to the notion of belonging, introduced in Chapter 2, the stories as testimonios share a 'place-belongingness' (Antonsich 2010, p. 64) that is personal and that is transmitted through dialogical encounters. Through the construction of belonging, narratives of identity and resistance emerge as a critical pedagogy of place (Gruenewald, 2003; McLaren and Giroux, 1990).

The stories of place-belongingness in this section are also practices of cultural mestizaje and activism. The place-based identity articulated in the artistic and political movements of the 1960's and 70s formed distinctive features of the barrio (Dear and Leclerc, 2003). To residents of Barrio Logan and other Chicana/os across the United States, Chicano Park is a significant place because of its concentration of Chicano mural art and its legacy as a site for activism. In addition, conversations between students and local artists and activists are spurred by the symbols and images in the murals. Furthermore, these conversations are what Lacy and Riaño-Alcalá (2006) describe as the maintenance of 'cultural practices that allow people to adhere to some form of collective identity even when their worlds are shattered by violence and loss' (p. 100). I argue that conversations with the students, as SEA, create a critical pedagogy of place because they are contributing to a sense of identity and personal agency by

maintaining the oral traditions of the community. It also places value on knowledge and life experiences of those deemed deficit by the school system and other institutions.

Cultural and political images cover the murals of Chicano Park. Much of the iconography found in the murals reflects the place-based identity of Aztlán that distinguishes Chicano art and has been passed down through generations. Dear and LeClerc (2003) explain that:

The idea of Aztlán began as a local, place-based cultural and artistic philosophy, but later became the catalyst for a nationwide political movement for social change. It continues to have lasting impact on the production of art in the Californias (p. 13).

Jarman (1998) explains that murals can be instrumental in reclaiming place for the community through politicising a place and thus creating a new type of space. According to Jarmin (1998), murals are painted in specific locations and meant to be seen at those fixed sites at the specific place. Jarman (1998) goes on to explain that the significance is increased through semiotic dynamics, as the images of the murals take meaning due to their specific location and in turn that location has a different significance because of the presence of the murals. The photo, see figure 12 (<https://www.fugitivespace.com/cultural>), was shared by Chris during a conversation with him, as a product of the place-based identity of Aztlán and as an example of site specificity of the murals, he explains:

*“This mural is about the pollution and sickness that the junkyards have brought to Barrio Logan, lots of people got*



*sick from poison from junkyards and the mural is a symbol of the protest against the junkyard companies, there used to be even more junkyards than now with old cars and other stuff” (Chris, 30 October 2016).*

The photo of the mural and conversation with Chris, as artefacts of the practice, are also examples of cultural mestizaje as they tell the story of protest in the barrio and as Licona (2012) states, as a critical pedagogy the practice does not disregard ‘the knowledges that have come before in terms of times and spaces as traditional, generational, indigenous, and local through everyday stories of lived practices’ (p. 134). Emotions are also present in these conversations, as Tuan (1977) explains, we draw upon our experiences, especially those that are perceived as threats, such as depicted in the mural with its slogan, ‘*Barrio Si, Yonkes No! (Barrio Yes, Junkyards No!)*’, see figure 13 (<https://www.fugitivespace.com/cultural>).

The site specificity of murals in Chicano Park is evident in the images and slogans that reference the history of the park, activism, solidarity with the United Farm Workers Union and other events important to the Chicano Movement alongside symbols of Aztlán. Chicano Park’s location in San Diego, California locates it in Aztlán. Through his work with the Brown Berets of Aztlán, (<https://www.fugitivespace.com/copy-of-brown-berets>), Alberto III learned about the slogans on the murals and as a place-based pedagogy he shared the stories with the community in the gallery through his photos and excerpts of conversations, as testimonios.

*“Back in the day when the Brown Berets were fighting together with other activists to take the land to have the park... they wanted to make it go all the way to the bay because we lost the land on the bay when the shipyards moved in and took the land” (Alberto III, 7 November, 2016).*

The murals also contribute to a sense of place belonging derived from the symbolic attachment Chicanas/os have for the park. These attachments develop from the historical and cultural significance of Chicano Park as a site of political victory through the fight for Chicano Park and through the iconic images displayed in the murals. Bell (1999) describes a discourse performativity where particular activities create attachment to place or belonging, such as the political protests, rituals, and celebrations held at Chicano Park. These activities all contribute to the performativity and thus contribute to its place-belongingness. Within the stories and artworks of this practice are narratives and memories of cultural and political practices that create a sense of Barrio Logan as place through the making of place as happenings.

Ritual performances, as happenings, also contribute to the making of place and are a form of cultural mestizaje. The place-belonging and sacredness of Chicano Park is exhibited in ritual performances, such as the weekly Danza Azteca, sweat lodge ceremonies and annual Dia De Los Muertos celebrations. The photos and videos from Dia de Los Muertos celebrations in the park are examples of these practices

(<https://www.fugitivespace.com/copy-of-making-of-place>). Fortier (1999) describes the importance of rituals in the creation of a sense of identity and belonging. The alters and ceremonial songs and dances performed on Dia de los Muertos are examples of these embodied, ritual expressions that cultivate a deep feeling of identity and belonging. The pictures and videos, which were taken by the students, were shared in the gallery during the students' exhibition to depict the ritual practices held in Chicano Park and to encourage conversations regarding the cultural significance of these practices as Chicanas/os.

The artefacts, as testimonios of activism, serve to counter forces of oppression and to fight what Kincheloe, McLaren, and Steinberg (2011) argue is the worst form of oppression, where people are so oppressed that they think it is inevitable and natural. As a critical pedagogy of place, the methods of this practice work to disrupt 'the way belief systems become internalized to the point where individuals and groups abandon the very aspiration to question or change their lot in life' (Burbules and Berk, 1999, p. 50). The purpose of using collaborative curation was to expose oppressive forces through art exhibitions, conversations, informal gatherings and open mic sessions. Through the practice of sharing the narratives of resistance, it was also what Gallop (2002) explains as a 'circuit that passes through different individuals, exchanging anecdotes and theory, in writing and in the flesh' (p. 164).

Lastly, I turn to the border. The border is a dominant fixture for those of us living in San Diego and others along the southwest edge of the United States. This is even more crucial in these hostile times during the current Donald Trump presidency. However, as artists the border also seduces us as Dear and Leclerc (2003) argue, it is here that elements of both worlds fuse. I am very interested in this concept and want to explore this through art practices, especially because of the growing number of students I have that cross the border each day to come to school and others that have been left in limbo. During these unsettling times, many students wonder how their future will unfold as they await immigration legislation. These decisions will result in their freedom to stay in the United States, where they have spent most of their lives, or in the risk of being deported. These are questions students must ponder as they seek legal status as Dreamers<sup>9</sup>. The testimonios from students who cross the border each day and from those who never cross because they are deemed illegal, are also stories of belonging. These are testimonios within the fugitive space, as the students negotiate place as border dwellers and migrants in the physical and metaphorical spaces within Aztlán.

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<sup>9</sup> The DACA programme affects an estimated 700,000 young people, called 'Dreamers' who entered the US without documents as children. An executive order by former President Barack Obama in 2012 protected the 'Dreamers' from deportation and provided with work and study permits. At the time this was written the status of the 'Dreamers' was in limbo under the Trump administration (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-41128905>).

## **Conclusion**

The collaborative curatorial practices began with listening to the students and planning the art exhibitions. The notion of active listening was crucial for the collaborative practice both to ensure the exhibition had the potential to engage youth in issues relevant to their lives and to empower them as artists and curators. The practice also included the disruption of the roles of curator and artist. Edmonds et al. (2009) state that the artist's focus is on 'issues that influence practical decisions about how the work is made or modified in order to successfully realise the vision or intention' (p. 143), whereas the curator 'is primarily concerned with facilitating the encounter between the artwork and the audience' (p.143). Regarding this practice-based research, the students were positioned as both artists and curators; they were not only concerned with what was being produced but were also concerned with how the audience would interact with the works. The practice of collaborative curation was also a method for the taking up of the writing of their own stories.

The methods of this practice contributed to the formation of the fugitive space as it offered new possibilities for conversations and enabled openings for narratives to be shared with the community. The works of art within the fugitive space of this practice were narratives of resistance and stories of resiliency, protest and re-habitation of place. The dialogues, as part of a collaborative curatorial process, focused on confronting inequalities. The art exhibitions, open mic sessions and community

gatherings, as barriological practices, expanded the function of the gallery as it opened a space for community dialogue and testimonios.

The attempt of this analysis chapter was to use the artefacts of the practice to support the methods and answer the research questions. The artworks of this practice, in the form of poetry, rap and visual arts, were presented as vehicles for new life narratives to emerge. The use of testimonios and collaborative curation was developed as an educational approach and more specifically as a critical pedagogy of place.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion- Contributions, Implications and Limitations**

### **Introduction**

As a conclusion to the written component of this practice-based research, this chapter reflects on the contributions, implications and limitations of the work.

Within this practice, Barrio Logan as place was the educational context for a critical pedagogy of place that was intergenerational, involved the community and existed in real-life situations. The aim of the practice-based research was to develop a meaningful pedagogy where students could share new life narratives through art practices and conversations in the form of testimonios.

The testimonios contributed to a new story of Barrio Logan, one that included a remaking of place, and to the building of empathetic connections.

Furthermore, the practice of collaborative curation initiated dialogical encounters that opened a context for the disruption of dominate narratives of the individuals and of Barrio Logan— creating a fugitive space.

The questions explored through this practice-based research were: How are new life narratives created through the practice of poetry, music and art in the lives of marginalized youth? How can collaborative curatorial practice be used as a critical pedagogy of place? The artefacts of the practice, as residues of socially engaged art, supported the research questions and showed that new life narratives and new stories of place emerged forming a critical pedagogy of place.

## **6.1 Contributions**

The significance of this practice was not in the aesthetic value of the artworks produced, rather it was on the dialogical encounters created through the artworks. In doing so, the purpose was to provoke a new way of seeing and understanding through the methods and outcomes (Sullivan, 2006). The use of intuition to seek openings for new stories to emerge was also essential to the practice. In addition, as Bowers (2001) reminds us, through the processes of resistance and confronting oppressive forces we should also call upon traditional cultural forces. Utilizing intuition and testimonios was a way of drawing from indigenous practices which are valued in our community.

The use of intuition as a pedagogical tool is an important contribution of this practice. As teachers we engage in conversations with students daily, however the pressures and responsibilities in the classroom often distract from our ability to focus. The methods of this practice-based research centre on thoughtful listening that values intuition and enacts reflection on what is said. Drawing from our intuition deepens this reflection and enables us to focus on that which is said, but also on that which is not said. Therefore, one of the intended contributions is to motivate teachers to draw upon their intuition and listening as a pedagogical tool. The practice of careful, active listening draws from the narrative techniques of White and Epston (1990) and is crucial to the creation of a fugitive space.

This practice-based research contributes a method to open spaces for students to begin taking up the telling of their own stories. As an



educational approach for youth practitioners, this practice offers methods to uncover stories that veer from problem stories youth are often asked to retell and instead seeks new stories or new life narratives. One of the contributions of this work is the practice of externalising the problem; through narrative methods the problem becomes separate from the person. This practice also draws from the work of other researchers who argue for stepping away from deficit models, especially the work of Cahill (2008), Fine, (1994), and Fine and Weiss (1996). The artefacts of this practice, in the form of artworks and testimonio, support the argument that the factors used to label students 'at risk' are often the same factors that serve as sources of resiliency and ability to problem solve. Counter-stories of place and narratives that disrupted the labels of 'at risk' youths or 'juvenile delinquents' were present in the artworks, poetry, music and testimonios.

The work of this practice, as socially engaged art, contributes barriological methods for work in community spaces within the barrio through the creation of dialogical encounters between the youth and the community. As presented in earlier chapters, the arts-based methodology of this practice also included new stories of place, which Gruenewald (2003) calls a re-inhabitation and what hooks (1992) defines as a decolonization that is 'a process of cultural and historical liberation; an act of confrontation with a dominant system of thought' (p. 1).

Through the collaborative curation of the stories and images, the students were positioned as artists, activists and critical pedagogues.

The conversations held in the informal community space of Liminal Gallery, as barriological practices, re-imagined the gallery for the purpose of dialogical encounters rather than merely a space for exhibiting artwork (Villa, 2000). These dialogical encounters also contributed to the remaking of stories of place that characterize a critical pedagogy of place.

Furthermore, as Chicana owned spaces, Liminal Gallery and Seeds Records contributed a form of cultural mestizaje; Peralta (2010) states, the preservation of 'cultural, political, and economic self-determination can only be achieved through control of the spaces Chicanos occupy' (p. 27).

Re-imagining the gallery as a community enabling space also contributed a method for collective mourning. Within the gallery, forces of violence, oppression and trauma were transmitted as a form of collective mourning during art exhibitions, activist meetings, and open mic sessions. These practices also carried out the indigenous tradition of passing stories on in the flesh. Within the fugitive space this was carried out through the bodily engagement of spoken word and rap music.

## **6.2 Implications**

The use of testimonios and intuition, both of which are Chicana feminist epistemological tools, is a starting point for the process of decolonization and an implication of this practice-based research. The synthesis of these methods and the development of the fugitive space as a concept supports

Delgado Bernal's (1998) argument that mainstream educational research has failed to address 'the forms of knowledge and experiences Chicanas bring to educational institutions and research' (p. 560), this work is a step towards challenging that power structure. Through the methods of this practice and as an implication of the work, people were encouraged to question their positions in society and explore how their aspirations are impeded. Merging place-based educational practices with critical pedagogical practices also offers a method to disrupt the internalization of hopelessness and instead engage in curricular practices that shift the typical teacher-student power structures. I believe these methods offer a strategy to combat student apathy. The students take on the role of collaborators and provoke conversations with the community, and as a result personal agency is created and is an implication of this practice.

The artworks were not intended to necessarily solve issues rather the emphasis was on reflecting, initiating discussions and exposing tensions. The stories of activism, told through artworks and testimonios, exemplify the Chicana/o Indigenous concept of *Tezcatlipoca* that calls for 'critical reflection of self, family, and community' through the creation of 'counter-stories', as introduced in Chapter 2 (Romero et al., 2009, p. 218). The testimonios shared by the students reflected cultural pride in being Chicana/o and included forces of resistance to defend the barrio.

The desire to preserve the barrio is not only apparent in artworks and activist practices of my students but is a dominant theme of other artists

and a topic of conversations, poetry and music in Barrio Logan. These testimonios, which include symbols of Aztlán, occupy both physical and symbolic spaces and contribute to a sense of belonging, attachment and community solidarity. As a barriological practice, the methods of this work hold the potential to re-image community spaces, honour indigenous practices and value the oral traditions of our culture.

The methods, as an educational approach, also serve as an alternative to deficit models often used in school settings; instead the work of this practice values the life experiences and knowledges of the students. Thus, one of the educational implications was to uncover the possibilities provided through the practice. One such possibility is that through engaging in these methods both the researcher and participants are changed—the teacher and the students, and the viewer of the works of art are also changed, as stated in chapter 1. The change is via an encounter with the artworks and prior knowledge is ‘troubled by new possibilities’ (Sullivan, 2014, p. 8). As a barriological implication, this troubling is a community enabling practice because new stories of place and new life narratives are offered that interrogate oppressive forces in the barrio.

The methods also offer strategies for students to re-create memories on their own terms and as an attempt to move traumatic experiences into a common language that can transmit these forces as a means of processing them. The use of testimonios also inspired me to reflect on my own past experiences and problem stories and to wonder how I carry

trauma. Maybe the stories I need to share most are ones I do not have the courage to share. These are the stories that hold me in what Bennett (2005) terms, 'the grip of sense memory', haunted by memories that 'resist cognitive processing' (p. 57). Is it through art that I may find a common language to share these memories and revisit the stories that escape through the broken skin of my sense memory?

### **6.3 Limitations**

I begin this section by stating that the methods of this practice were not intended to be limited to working with youth in San Diego or specifically with Chicana/o youth. I acknowledge there are aspects that could be considered limitations. I am aware that my position as a teacher in the Juvenile Court and Community Schools gives me an autonomy that other teachers may not have, especially in the current climate of standardized testing that limits the curriculum options, and which could be considered a limitation of these methods. I am fortunate to have the freedom to create curriculum that is relevant to the lives of my students and that draws from indigenous practices.

Another factor that could be considered a limitation is the level of the student interest in poetry and rap. As a teacher working in juvenile detention facilities and community schools, I have been using poetry and rap as pedagogical tools for many years and my students have great interest in both art forms. Although this practice focused on poetry and rap, the same methods could be used to engage students in other art forms.

However, as stated in Chapter 3, rap music's popularity among youth across the world makes it a valuable pedagogical tool that crosses all racial and socio-economic boundaries.

The site specificity of this practice-based research could also be considered a limitation. The political and socio-economic forces of repression that affect the lives of my students contributed to the urgency and relevance of creating a critical pedagogy of place. Furthermore, teachers and students from locations without the historical and cultural significance of Barrio Logan may not be as motivated by place-based practices. However, I believe students in any neighbourhood have the potential to engage in activities that better their community and that interrogate power structures on a local and global scale. Being a practice-based researcher, living in the same neighbourhood as my participants, added to the motivation for the research in this specific location; I too hold a sense of belonging and attachment to Barrio Logan.

The collaborative curatorial methods of this practice could be viewed as another limitation. Although I attempted to be explicit with the methods, the collaborative curatorial practices may be much different for teachers working strictly in a school site. However, even if access to community gallery spaces are not available, teachers could use the methods within the school setting. Testimonios and collaborative curation could be used by teachers in spaces within the school in the form of student art

exhibitions, open mic sessions and other forms of practice that engage the community and create empathetic connections.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

The artefacts of this practice enhanced tensions around subjects important to the lives of those living in the barrio. The narratives, within the fugitive space, served as testimonios to the lived experiences of the students. Their lived identities were not static; they were moving and changing, as is the sense of place and belonging that is fluid and changes over time.

The practice, as socially engaged art, inhabited both physical and theoretical spaces, in what I refer to as the fugitive space. The physical space of the practice included Liminal Gallery as a community space, the recording studio of Seeds Records, Bayside School and Chicano Park. Within the theoretical spaces were the dialogical encounters that confronted oppressive forces and contributed to creating a critical pedagogy of place. Within this fugitive space were movements away from problem stories that the students are often asked to retell, and instead new life narratives emerged.

The afterlife of my practice-based research, in other words, my work in the field after this PhD programme, will continue both within and beyond the classroom. The work of socially engaged artists, especially Lacy (1995) and Gates (2016), as referenced in earlier chapters, will continue to serve as a motivation for my practice. I am especially interested in the idea of

creating community spaces, akin to the ones Gates (2006) has done through his work with the Dorchester Projects and the Listening Room. Although on a much smaller scale, I believe the work accomplished through this practice in opening the spaces of Liminal Gallery and Seeds Records is in the vein of those projects.

My identity as a teacher has been influenced by this practice-based research. Although I have been teaching and active within my community for over twenty years, especially through the arts and activism, the process of undertaking a practice-based research enacted a critically reflective process that I had never experienced. The time away from my teaching and home during periods of study in London were also important because it provided time to process how theory and practice were entangled in this practice-based research and how my work as a teacher could be different. I look forward to continued engagement in these practices as a classroom teacher, curator and artist. I will also continue to offer these fugitive spaces in the community for youth and other artists and musicians.



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