Sacred Purpose:

Indigenous Teachings Informing Pedagogy of the Eagle and the Condor

by

Ricardo A. Medina

San Diego State University and Claremont Graduate University

2014

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Abstract

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Through a qualitative inquiry of four Indigenous elders, this study explores sacred purpose. Sacred purpose, within Indigenous wisdom and teachings, acknowledges the sacredness of purpose viewing it as an individual’s reason for being here; it is the individual and collective responsibility to find and use each individual’s sacred purpose; and above all else purpose keeps us connected to all things sacred. Similarly, within Western research, there is the construct of purpose in life and it has shown significant implications for our lives consisting of psychological adjustment and well-being, resilience, personal development, identity development, hope, life satisfaction, empathy, gratitude, pro-social moral action and civic engagement, generosity, substance abuse recovery, meaning in life, and more.

This study utilized an Indigenous research design and through the conversational method it gives voice to four Indigenous elders and uncovers the principles, derivations, stories, teachings, and themes of sacred purpose. Additionally, this study inquired into how sacred purpose can guide the development of a curriculum within educational domains and how it can be conceptually and methodologically actualized within the frameworks of the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor.
The four Indigenous elders of the study were Angelbertha Cobb, Roberto Cintli Rodriguez, Grace Sesma, and Jerry Tello. Conversations with the elders were transcribed and organized into two formats: condensed stories/conversations and thematic grouping, also referred to as codices. The elders’ teachings, suggested that sacred purpose is: multidimensional, fluid, complex, relational, about one’s responsibility to learn and teach, it is about passing on cultural treasures (music, art, dance, teachings, customs, song), it is about balance, it is about healing, it is about lived experiences, it is about personal gifts/talents/passions, it is about listening to the guidance of the ancestors and it is about living life as a ceremony.

Findings from this research also suggested that sacred purpose has implications for education, adolescence, and for transformational healing. Curriculum emerged as a result of the elders’ conversations, serving to spark dialogue about ways in which sacred purpose could be used in traditional and non-traditional educational domains.
Conocimiento: Locating Myself in this Research

Mitakue Oyasin, Chiokoe Utessia, Cualli Tonali, Greetings. My name is Ricardo Medina and I come from a journey of re-indigenization, where the lessons that I hold dear to my heart are from this land - from a Maiz epistemology, Chicano movements, Yaqui traditions, and teachings rooted in Mexica and Lakota ways. This is just a little about me and there is much more to share in order to understand this relational role that I walk with this research.

Conocimiento, is a process of knowing ourselves, being with and reflecting on what we feel, think, and believe. This section of the dissertation is my opportunity to introduce myself, in a traditional way that has been passed on to me by my late elder, Jose Montoya. Though not typical within a dissertation format, this process bridges the worlds of Indigenous and academic cultural protocol and form.

This way of conocimiento is relational; it initiates a focus in building confianza (trust), and allows the development and maintenance of sacred relationships with all relatives interconnected in this work. It provides legitimacy, honoring ancestral teachings that have been passed on, and presents the community responsibility that I carry with this work. I provide this section to introduce myself and be transparent about my life’s journey, my bloodlines, my cultural influences, and my starting place.

I was born to Cesar and Lilia Medina in San Diego, California. The bloodlines of my family are from Mexico. My dad was born in Calexico, CA and my mother in Los Angeles, CA. Today, I call myself Chicano embracing the social, political, and cultural complexities that exist around me and within. Equally important, I have made it one of my life’s sacred purposes to recover, reclaim, retrace, and honor the traditions, stories,
and footsteps of my Indigenous ancestors – Yoeme, Maiz, Chicano. It is through this intentional journey, that for the past twenty years I have pursued a life of re-indigenization - efforts in my daily walk reclaiming the indigenous wisdom and spirituality that have existed for generations in my ancestral lineage. On my path I have recovered numerous teachings, songs, stories, and lessons that have now become integrated into my “life’s ceremony.” Within this journey of re-indigenization, my ceremonial family has grown consisting of a Chicano Indigenous community in San Diego, but also inclusive of relatives in all directions – North, South, East, and West. My commitments and responsibilities to Redstone Sun Dance and to the Izcalli’s Men’s Circle and Temezcal (sweat lodge) consistently engage me in a daily walk that is surrounded by ceremony and Indigenous ways of being. It is through these ways, the honoring of Indigenous wisdom and spirituality, and my commitment or “palabra” (word) within the Chicano Indigenous community, that allows me to assert myself as a Chicano Indigenous scholar, activist, and educator.

My exposure to Indigenous methodologies and research agendas within academia only occurred recently. It was close to 6 years ago, in the beginning days of my doctoral program, where some of my first professors - Dr. Alberto Ochoa, Dr. Lourdes Arguelles, and Karen Cadiero Kaplan - challenged me to analyze literature, research, and frameworks that were non-traditional and Indigenous-based. Their teachings sparked a fire within that led to the questioning and challenging of the academic paradigm which has intentionally and historically excluded non-Western epistemologies. This exposure along with the support from these specific professors ultimately triggered a new way of
thinking about the roles and responsibilities that I carry within the academic institution as an Indigenous scholar activist.

In addition to my life as a doctoral student, I have been a teacher for the past twenty years in the community that I grew up in. Within this time I have had the opportunity to struggle alongside my students (6th – 8th grade) experiencing the intentional and unintentional effects of the educational system. Not only did I grow up in and experience this same system, but now teaching in it has allowed me to understand how it functions, how it wounds, how it oppresses, how it controls, how it creates and perpetuates false teachings, etc. But I have also realized that this educational system was and is a human invention, and therefore it can also be transformed. I want to be a part of this transformation; it is my sacred purpose.

So putting all of this together, what I’d truly like to portray within this area of conocimiento, is that this research on sacred purpose is from the heart. It is connected to my sacred journey and it is my hopes for creating a better tomorrow. This research about sacred purpose is my responsibility to seven generations; a teaching that comes from the elders and it is the belief that the way we live our lives today, and while we are alive, must impact seven generations to follow. This research is my understanding that we are placed on earth to be the caretakers of all that is here- the plants, the animals, the elders, the women, and the children.

Within this conocimiento I present myself, my understandings, my intentions, and my visions. Ometeotl, ancestors, elders, and relatives - I ask for permission to present this work in a good way, from the heart, and for the people.

En Lak’ ech
Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by acknowledging and thanking the Creator, the ancestors, and all of my relations. In living and learning in the Kumeyaay territory, I would like to acknowledge the traditional caretakers of this land. I would also like to acknowledge all of the directions for the energies and the teachings: To the South… To the North….. To the West…… To the East….. To Tata Sol….. To Mother Earth….. And to the center where I stand.

To my mother and father, Lilia and Cesar Medina. You are my first teachers. You have taught me so much in life and your support, love, sacrifices, prayers, and bendiciones have pushed me to be a better human being. You have always encouraged me to pursue this road of education and I have realized that this doctoral degree was your dream for me. I am thankful that both of you had the opportunity to physically experience its culmination and see a fulfillment of your sacred purpose. I can’t forget to say thank you for your daily support with the kids - Picking them up from school and the numerous ways you have helped. You have both been amazing parents and grandparents…. I dedicate these last six years to you.

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your life and for your selfless spirit. I love you Tina, you are my other me, my En
Lak’ech.

To my three children - Elena Izcalli, Cuahtli, and Cruz – you are all amazing and the honor I have in being your father completes my sacred purpose. You have learned to adapt to my timelines, you have found ways to see beyond the hours and hours that I have spent on my computer, and you have loved me unconditionally through the ups and downs of this research. Each one of you has a sacred purpose that is beyond what I can offer to this world. Your spirits are powerful, your hearts carry beauty, and your minds are full of a youthful wisdom. This research – the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor and sacred purpose – is for you. I dedicate it to you, your generation, and to your future generations. I love you and I promise to always water your sacred purpose, as you have always watered mine. Thank you!

To all my relatives (all those who have walked with me on this journey) – my brothers, my nephews, my nieces, my in – laws, my aunts, my uncles, my good friends, my Izcalli circle, my SUNDANCE family, the Circulo de Hombres, my MCLA team, all of my students - Thank you for all of your words of encouragement, your support, and the daily love. It is our relationships that have challenged me to push forward. Thank you for welcoming me, acknowledging me, and giving me an honored role in the spaces we share.

To the elders of this research (Mamma Cobb, Maestra Grace, Maestro Jerry, and Maestro Cintli) – Thank you for offering the stories, teachings, wisdom, love, acknowledgement, abrazos…. Thank you for trusting me with this work. It has been an honor sharing a part of you with the world. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of
your sacred purpose. I cannot thank you enough for everything your lives represent. I
give you my palabra that I will always carry your teachings with love; for the betterment
of our communities and for the hopes of different tomorrows.

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responsibility that we all carry to love the children, honor them, and live our lives to
benefit them.
Let us all continue to build new pyramids for our communities and may our daily
steps impact the lives of seven generations to follow.
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Today our communities continue to face the on-going complex challenges that are rooted in a long history of colonialism and oppressive forces driven by social, political, and economic exploitation. Ways of being, ways of thought, relationships, institutions, systems, and ecosystems are all in need of a paradigm shift. Through academia, the arts, and community-based efforts, many individuals, including educators, researchers, scholars, policy makers, and community activists, have attempted to tackle these issues and reconstruct new tomorrows. So what has worked? And what has failed? How have we attempted to help our communities?

Tello (personal communication, June 11, 2013) described three approaches which have been utilized in order to solve the multiple layered problems that exist within our communities. The first approach is attempting to solve problems while working within the status quo. This method does not claim to transform structures and entities, and its main focus is to get more people into the system in order to provide a more diverse representation. For example, in order to solve the problems of the Chicana/Chicano/Latina/Latino community, this approach calls for the placement of more Chicana/Chicano/Latina/Latino mayors, police chiefs, teachers, social workers, etc. However, this approach falls short because the system continues to be toxic. The values within this system are still fear-based, individualistic, materialistic, and they are about productivity, compliance, conquering, control, and the reinforcement of the status quo (J. Tello, personal communication, June 11, 2013).
The second method is what Tello referred to as “band-aiding.” In general, band-aiding consists of quick, ineffective, short-term approaches to help “heal.” Keep in mind, the Western construct of healing relates to, “What is your symptom? Now let me give you something to alleviate it.” The problem with this is that band-aiding still maintains the status quo and doesn’t work to “heal,” but serves the purpose of making individuals and systems compliant (J.Tello, personal communication, June 11, 2013).

Also within this second approach is “rescuing.” This consists of individuals, independently or collectively, attempting to provide support services in order to assist the many individuals and/or systems that are in need of help. The intentions of rescuing are positive, and the methods have even been productive at times. However, the overarching consequences of rescuing has equated to a generation of burnt out, stressed, and over-exhausted teachers, social workers, therapists, etc. due to the countless hours of attempting to rescue. Unfortunately, the sad reality within the method of rescuing is that despite all the efforts and hard work, the problems of our communities are increasing and getting more complex (J.Tello, personal communication, June 11, 2013).

The last method, according to Tello, which can be utilized in order to address the complex problems of our communities is “transformational healing.” It is this method that has the greatest implications for our community and society as a whole. Transformational healing utilizes a non-Western framework, and though there is lengthy discourse around the intricacy of this approach, the most critical element of the method is simply recognizing that everyone you see (in your home, classroom, school, community, country, world) is sacred, has a sacred purpose, and within them is everything they need in order to heal.
Therefore, in an attempt to create revolutionary change, educators, researchers, policy makers, and community activists must be open to looking beyond the methods of working within the status quo, band-aiding, and rescuing; they must seek to engage the process of transformational healing. This process of actualizing transformational healing begins with a key research step in the direction of “sacred purpose.” Indigenous wisdom acknowledges the sacredness of purpose as an individual’s reason for being on planet earth; it is both the individual and the collective responsibility to find and use each individual’s sacred purpose; and above all else purpose keeps us connected to all things sacred (Coyhis, 2008; Medina, 2012; Olman, 2011; Tello, 2010).

Sacredness, within the term sacred purpose, refers to the intimate relationship and responsibility that individuals share with the earth. This concept, embraced by Indigenous wisdom, is foreign in Western ways of thought. The term sacred in Western perspectives is specialized and restricted to one area of life – religious activity. However, within Indigenous teachings, the concept of sacredness is a reminder that everything in the universe – all forms of life – are interrelated, interdependent, interconnected. *Mitakuye Oyasin*, a phrase in the Lakota language, translates that we are all related. *En Tloque Nahuaque*, in Nahuatl, also means that all is connected and interrelated. These teachings present a harmony with all forms of life - other people, animals, birds, insects, trees and plants, and even rocks, rivers, mountains and valley.

The term sacred purpose, though rooted in an Indigenous epistemology, shares some common ground with the Western construct known as purpose in life. Purpose in life is referred to as a personally meaningful commitment (Bronk, 2011) or an individual’s intention to accomplish something positive that is both important to the self
and directed at making a difference in the world beyond self (Damon, Mennon & Bronk, 2003). Western research of the 20th and 21st century illustrates that purpose has significant implications for our lives, which consists of psychological adjustment and well being, resilience, personal development, identity development, hope, life satisfaction, empathy, gratitude, pro-social moral action and civic engagement, generosity, substance abuse recovery, meaning in life, and much more.

Though we find similarities between sacred purpose and purpose in life, there are clearly some striking differences. Simply, the explicit inclusiveness of the word “sacred” within sacred purpose roots the concept in Indigenous knowledge, transformational healing, and overall it provides a discourse representing a non-Western epistemology.

The intent of this dissertation was to further explore sacred purpose by giving voice to indigenous elders so that they could share their stories, teachings, and understandings of this construct. Secondly, the intent was to examine these teachings of the elders in order to contextualize and actualize sacred purpose into educational spaces. It was a key hope for this research, that by giving voice to the elders and by contextualizing their teachings of sacred purpose into education, it could serve to engage a transformational healing approach (J.Tello, personal communication, June 11, 2013) and ultimately improve the quality of lives for indigenous youth, youth at large, their communities, and society as a whole.

A qualitative indigenous research paradigm was central to the methodological design of this study. Research as such incorporates the values and beliefs of Indigenous communities in its design, methods, and analysis (Lavallee, 2009). In addition, data dissemination is handled in a way that is appropriate for the community. There are other
Some criteria include: The core values, beliefs, and healing practices of the Indigenous community are incorporated throughout the research; the research must develop an ethical relationship with the community; the research equally involves all partners in the research process and recognizes the unique strengths that each brings; the research topic is of importance to the community; the researcher’s personal growth is an important end product; and there must be an involvement of our elders because they carry the traditional teachings, ceremonies, and stories of all our relations (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003; Lavelle, 2009; Smith, 1999).

Within this research design the actual technique of collecting data must also be respectful of and include indigenous protocols, values, and beliefs that are important to the specific community. The method I utilized for this study was the conversational method (Bishop, 1999). This qualitative approach, namely the collection of stories and teachings of indigenous elders, explored the definitions, constructions, and derivations of sacred purpose among four selected Indigenous elders in the Southwest of the United States (U.S.).

The stories and conversations of Indigenous elders gathered for this research yielded a condensed story. What this means is that after hours of conversation and a lengthy amount of transcription, each elder’s complete conversation was condensed and presented in story form. This method honors the interpretive, oral traditions of Indigenous culture, as the oral story telling tradition is congruent with an Indigenous paradigm because it is relational and serves a deep purpose as a means to help others (Kovach, 2010). These condensed stories were found to serve two purposes; they provided voice
to the elders’ teachings, stories, and understandings, of sacred purpose. Additionally, the condensed stories were contextualized and actualized for educational domains as an integral part of the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor (Medina, 2012).

The pedagogy of the eagle and the condor articulates the reunion of the heart and intuition (condor) with that of the mind that seeks the use of science (eagle). Prior to the present study, the research on the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor attempted to utilize Indigenous knowledge and teachings of sacred purpose as both were critical elements within the developments of the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor. In working with this pedagogy it became clear that sacred purpose needed further analysis, understanding, and exploration. So, this present work uncovers sacred purpose more deeply as a result of the conversations with the Indigenous elders. The stories, teachings, and conversations of the Indigenous elders allowed for the creation of themes and concepts which ultimately informed the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor. This implementation and understanding of sacred purpose within pedagogy of the eagle and the condor impacts, improves, and molds the pedagogy so that it offers transformational healing approach geared towards the educational system, but also open to individual’s and systems searching for healing and balance.

I have been an educator in elementary and middle school settings for over fifteen years working in the community that I grew up in. I have had an opportunity to experience firsthand the oppressive educational system that Chicana/o students face; a system that has historically failed individuals and communities, and one that has been physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually damaging. Today we find pedagogies, curriculums, and educational settings failing to meet the needs of students, mechanisms
for oppression and stratification, and ultimately they are distant in providing the truly needed transformational elements that will heal, develop, change, and empower the lives of students. In addition, subtractive education (Valenzuela, 1999) occurs in these schools, “divest[ing] youth of important social and cultural resources, leaving them progressively vulnerable to academic failure” (p. 3).

As a result of being exposed to these settings and conditions, and experiencing it as both a student and now a teacher, I have realized that it is within my sacred purpose to wholeheartedly struggle for the development and design of a revolutionary humanistic educational model that can offer individuals a sense of purpose, interconnectedness, and a means to holistically transform their lives, their families, their communities, and their world. Though schools have historically perpetuated colonialism and have been rooted in a Eurocentric paradigm, I believe education today has the capacity to be reinvented. And I believe that pedagogy is at the heart of this reinvention. Hooks (1994) reminds us that pedagogy is sacred. “Our work is not merely to share information but to share the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students” (p. 13).

**Statement of the Problem**

In our society people do not learn how to take care of each other, but in contrast are here to survive at all costs and at each other’s expense if necessary. “To survive we must sell our products or our skills or our labour or our souls, no matter what the degradation to ourselves and others, or to the natural environment” (Miller, 2000, p. 59). Palmer (1983) argues, “For over a century, atomism, individualism, and competition have been institutionalized in our society and in our schools” (p. xiv). Like that of the past, today’s dominant educational agenda does not serve humane purposes, but it is rooted in
the need for mastery, efficiency, security, competition, and personal gain. This educational paradigm elicits individualism, and ultimately schooling continues to cause long-lasting wounds.

There are multiple areas of concern regarding the current educational discourse around reform. Despite some shifts within the past fifty years of education in the United States, policy and reform have distorted the very purpose of school in our society as educators and policymakers have been preoccupied with high stakes testing and statistically-based assessments. “Our culture and education system has become obsessed with acquisition and achievement” (Miller, J. 2006, p. 1). With few exceptions, the educational system has approached a time where the focus rests entirely on standards and standardization. Schools arguably have become less interested in being places that develop a lifelong love of learning, and have moved away from the development of critical thinking (though slowly resurging), curiosity, creativity, motivation, technology, invention, innovation, the arts, happiness, health, social consciousness, open mindedness, and global awareness. Overall, it is fair to say that we have a historical context of schools as engaging such aspects of life at different points of time, and though education has not always been equitable, these elements have been present despite what is happening today in our classrooms.

S. Mitra (Hole in the Wall Education, 2013) also argues that today’s classroom spaces, pedagogies, and curriculums have remained the same for thousands of years despite the numerous advances from building design, invention of paper and pencils, invention of math manipulatives, and the numerous technological inventions. For example, our school system still relies on memorization, we still build classrooms for
twenty-five to thirty students, we still have classroom settings where there is one teacher providing all of the instruction, we still have teachers who say, “sit still,” or “listen carefully,” we still have challenges in putting good teachers in specific areas, and the list goes on and on. Ultimately Mitra points out that schools that once served communities and society made sense given the context, and now we have a model of education that does not serve the current global society. He argues that schools need a curriculum of BIG QUESTIONS, pedagogy of self-organized learning, examinations where children can talk, share and use the Internet, and a new assessment system (Hole in the Wall Education, 2013).

Further, the culture, structure, and organization of our educational settings continue to be ineffective and oppressive (Olson, 2009). Through false notions of intelligence and the shape and depth of our curriculums, schools continue to indoctrinate students to support an imperialist white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy (hooks, 2003). There are also concrete concerns about the relationships teachers are unable to establish and sustain with their students, finding these relationships to be distant from dialogue and lacking mutual recognition. In an ethnographic study investigating school failure in urban areas, Lee, Smith, Perry, & Smylie (1999) found that a lack of personal relationships with teachers were one of the main reasons students drop out. Looking deeper into this study, findings indicated that teacher-centered classrooms, perceived racism and discrimination against students, teacher apathy, and a lack of care and high expectations were all contributing factors to low achievement of students in urban schools.
Equally detrimental, an overwhelming majority of today’s pedagogy is rooted in what Paulo Freire (1993) calls the banking system; an approach that expects students to consume information fed to them by a teacher in order for students to memorize and store it. The end result of the banking system is passive learning and ultimately education without personal and social agency. Freire (1993) argues that the dangers of this pedagogical approach perpetuate oppression and the inability of students to be able to address and change the quality of life within micro and macro levels of our society.

Despite the many more overwhelmingly complex issues affecting today’s educational system, Paulo Freire reminds us that, “different tomorrows are possible,” (1997, p. 55) and because education as we know is a human invention, there is hope for the future. Because educators have “dared to study and learn new ways of thinking and teaching, so that the work we do does not reinforce systems of domination, of imperialism, racism, sexism or class elitism…” counter pedagogies have been cultivated (hooks, 2003, p. xiv). Within these counter pedagogies comes the realization that education has the capacity to be about finding ourselves and our role in the world, about “healing and wholeness…. about empowerment, liberation, transcendence, about renewing the vitality of life” (Palmer, 1983, p. 18). Research and the development of pedagogies encompassing these elements are critical to the personal and institutional transformations that are needed today.

Therefore, this dissertation attempts to address these problems of today through a transformational healing approach (Tello, personal communication, June 11, 2013), by uncovering the teachings of sacred purpose. Sacred purpose, rooted in an Indigenous epistemology but similar to the Western construct of purpose in life, refers to the
understanding that every individual has a significant reason for being alive; this purpose is a responsibility and is based on an intimate relationship with the earth and an individual’s existence. The Western construct, purpose in life, has proven to hold significant implications found to impact and affect one’s psychological adjustment and well being, resilience, personal development, identity development, hope, life satisfaction, empathy, gratitude, pro-social moral action and civic engagement, generosity, substance abuse recovery, meaning in life, and more.

One core focus/goal of this dissertation was to further explore sacred purpose, via this Indigenous epistemology, which is the heart of the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor (see Figure 1). The teachings, stories, definitions, and perspectives of sacred purpose were explored more deeply through conversations with four Indigenous elders in order to understand its conceptual and methodological practicality. Not only in regard to this framework, but the exposure of sacred purpose in Indigenous communities and Western academia will seek to address an absent construct in literature and a philosophical imperative that is losing accessibility in indigenous communities.

Therefore, today we experience a need in research to uncover the teachings, stories, definitions, derivations, and understandings of sacred purpose so that it can be operationalized into the context of education as well as other domains. These teachings, operationalized and actualized within pedagogy of the eagle and the condor, seek to facilitate a non oppressive educational and Socratic process which strives to address the social, economic, and political injustices at micro and macro levels utilizing the unification of Indigenous wisdom and today’s way of thought.

**Purpose of the Study**
This study had a dual purpose: First, this study was wholeheartedly about giving voice to Indigenous elders regarding their stories, teachings, and understandings of sacred purpose so that these teachings, stories, and understandings could be uncovered and shared. Its second purpose was to operationalize and contextualize the definitions, stories, and guiding principles of sacred purpose according to the indigenous elders in order to guide the development of a curriculum that promotes sacred purpose within the context of education and through the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor (Medina, 2012). By adding on to Indigenous knowledge and teachings of sacred purpose it could be used as a transformative tool to approach today’s educational system and the needs that exist for personal healing and systematic balance.

To accomplish these goals, a qualitative Indigenous research methods design was utilized. Smith (1999) clarified that an Indigenous research design varies from other research methods in that it addresses specific questions such as “what is deemed worthy of researching, what questions are asked, how they are asked, and how the data are analyzed.” Qualitative data was collected through the conversational method (Bishop, 1999; Kovach, 2010). The data, namely the conversations and the collection of stories and teachings, explored the definitions, constructions, derivations, and stories of sacred purpose among four Indigenous elders.

**Research Questions**

The main research questions that guided the study were: What are the principles derived from Indigenous elders that can guide the development of a curriculum that promotes sacred purpose?

Sub – Questions that examined the main research question included:
1. What is sacred purpose and its guiding principles?

2. What stories/teachings/themes of sacred purpose can be identified by Indigenous elders and how do they see the stories/teachings/themes actualized?

3. How does sacred purpose, according to Indigenous elders, contribute to adolescent development?

Conceptual Framework: Pedagogy of the Eagle and the Condor

For the past four years I have been working to develop and conceptualize a fluid framework called the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor (see Figure 1). The name of this framework alludes to the Indigenous prophecies of the eagle and condor energies. According to the Mayan prophecy of the eagle and the condor, human society decided to go on two very different paths thousands of years ago. The eagle metaphorically symbolizes the path of the mind, science, technology, industrialism, and masculinity. The condor represents the path of the heart, intuition, oneness, and balance – all Indigenous principles. When the eagle and the condor went their separate paths, it was prophesized that in 1492 the eagle people would become so powerful that they would drive the condors into extinction. In looking deeper into this prophecy, Indigenous people represent the condor spirit whose teachings, generally speaking, have been dormant since 1492. The prophecy now suggests that after five hundred years the eagle and the condor have the potential to once again unite, fly together, dance together and be in harmony. This balance/harmony calls for a level of social consciousness that seeks a psychological and cognitive development directed at creating and sustaining justice in our collective lives.
As a Chicano Indigenous educator, scholar, father, and community activist I felt that the prophecies of the eagle and the condor truly aligned to all aspects of my life. As a result it became clear that it represented the fundamental basis of a pedagogy representing the struggle for different tomorrows calling for the presence of Indigenous knowledge and ultimately a unification/balance within the educational system. When developing the conceptual framework of this pedagogy, significant questions arose such as how does a school system, which has ultimately been the root of oppression and harm for Chicana/o Indigenous youth, become a source of healing?; How can a pedagogy engage students in the development of an academic identity?; How can a pedagogy challenge individuals to seek their purpose for being and the sacred reasons for their existence?; How can it challenge students to seek the solutions needed for community healing and development?; How can a pedagogy create a conceptual framework validating a students’ culture, utilizing a sense of cultural intuition (Romero, Arce, & Cammarota, 2009); and how can schools “create an authentic caring educational environment that is constructed upon appreciation and respect for the Chicana/o community, its culture, and its historic struggle for educational equality (Cammarota and Romero 2006; Duncan-Andrade 2008; Gonzalez 1997; Sanchez 1997; Spring 1997; Valencia 2002, 2005; Yosso 2006)” (p.220).

The pedagogy of the eagle and the condor operates through the lens of an Indigenous paradigm and incorporates a mixing of pedagogical practices consisting of strong teacher/student/community relationships (Pedagogy of Hope – Duncan-Andrade, 2009), critical dialogue, consciousness, and praxis (critical pedagogy -Freire, 1993), Critical Compassionate Intellectualism Third Dimension (Romero et al., 2009), and
Holistic Education (Miller, Karsten, Denton, Orr, & Ketes, 2006). The majority of the elements and components within the pedagogy of eagle and the condor have been articulated, defined, and operationalized by past research and researchers. Much of these pedagogical elements have been a hallmark in establishing critical dialogue, consciousness, and praxis, ultimately countering hegemonic forces, which have historically driven social, political, economic, and spiritual oppression. In addition, Indigenous research,
Figure 1. Pedagogy of the eagle and the condor conceptual framework.
methodologies, and frameworks have also been uncovered, developed, and implemented by indigenous researchers despite its intentional exclusion and accessibility in Western academia.

Overall, the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor is the re-emergence of Indigenous principles to counter today’s dominant oppressive school system that produces inequality. Just as important, it was never my intention to provide a commodity that can be controlled or possessed by educational institutions. The pedagogy of the eagle and the condor is about offering teachings that can be accepted as a living process and can be absorbed and understood to create unity, balance, democratic ways, and the caring for one another (Battiste, 2002).

**Roots of the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor.** Pedagogies utilizing an Indigenous paradigm have the capacity to offer a way to understand the world without harming it. This form of knowledge has utility, relevance, and implications for me as an educator who shares a Chicano Indigenous background with my students. It counters Western hegemonic forces and it serves as a platform to understand, acknowledge, and solve today’s situations, problems, and crises that affect all people especially Indigenous communities. Battiste (2002) informs us that Indigenous knowledge today is an act of empowerment by Indigenous people and therefore its teachings provide more relevance, validity, and congruence for Indigenous people rather than using a Eurocentric epistemology. Battiste stated:

> Indigenous scholars discovered that when they tried to use European knowledge to unravel the challenges faced by their people, they met with contradiction and failure, and they began to question the supremacy of Eurocentric thought. In their quest to help their people, Indigenous scholars and professionals turned to ancient knowledge and teachings to restore control over Indigenous development and capacity building. (p. 5)
The pedagogy of the eagle and the condor is wholeheartedly rooted in an Indigenous philosophical worldview and belief system embodying a fluid, nonlinear and relational (Kovach, 2005) understanding. It embraces a theory and practice that is aligned with living alongside the land, and is experiential, holistic, and evolving. An Indigenous paradigm reminds us that our ways of understanding are all informed by relationality, or in other words, the belief and embodiment that we are all related or En Lak’ech (you are my other me). Ways of understanding cannot be owned, but in contrast are shared and belong to a group. An example symbolizing an Indigenous paradigm is taught through the medicine wheel. Though the medicine wheel carries cultural teachings that differ between indigenous people, it serves as a symbol and tool to signify interconnectedness.

The circle represents infinite life, whereas the four quadrants can represent teachings such as the four races: black, white, yellow, and red. The teaching here is that all races are equal, all are related, and all are interconnected. The story of one cannot be understood outside of the story of the whole. Another teaching of the medicine wheel concerns health and well-being. Health is the balance between the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual: the four quadrants of the medicine wheel. Health also involves balance with others (family, community), with the environment, and with Mother Earth. Balance is sometimes depicted through interconnecting circles. (Lavallée, 2009, p. 23)

An Indigenous paradigm also addresses ways of doing and truly analyzes what is valued. In this case an Indigenous value system honors dreams, ancestor stories, and experiences that are communicated, generated, and regenerated. Observation is highly respected and is based on being in the world and the intentional process of listening, talking, observing, and thinking. In addition, knowledge from the elders is honored. Elders are an important part of Indigenous people because of the traditional knowledge
that they share. “They carry the traditional teachings, ceremonies, and the stories of all our relations” (Lavellee, p. 24).

In most cases, the common understanding of utilizing an Indigenous paradigm as the operating lens encompasses reciprocity, respect, equality, responsibility, survival and protection, and spirit and integrity. In utilizing the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor, the focus and hope is to explicitly address healing, mobilization, transformation, and decolonization on many levels, which Smith (1999) suggests of Indigenous research. Smith’s perception of Indigenous work indicated that it should take into consideration survival, recovery and development, which are conditions and states of being, through which indigenous communities are moving all with the intent and focus on self-determination.

The pedagogy of the eagle and the condor utilizes an Indigenous paradigm not only as a means for self-determination, but also as a means to preserve, maintain, and restore Indigenous traditions and cultural practices. In utilizing an Indigenous framework, it provides a relevant discourse validating the perseverance, maintenance, and restoration of Indigenous knowledge or forms of inquiry. Also, by utilizing an Indigenous paradigm it serves to revitalize and regain physical, psychological, and spiritual health.

All in all, the persistent climate of today’s dominant educational agenda is rooted in the need for mastery, efficiency, security, competition, and personal gain. It is a paradigm of individualism and competition which have been institutionalized in our society and in our schools” (Palmer, 1983, p. xiv). There are other areas of concern regarding our current educational discourse consisting of an obsession with acquisition
and achievement (Miller, 2000); schools focus on the rapid familiarity of facts, names, places, formulas, and skills rather than becoming places encouraging lifelong love of learning, critical thinking, curiosity, creativity, motivation, technology, invention, innovation, the arts, happiness, health, social consciousness, open mindedness, and global awareness. As a result of this mechanistic system and various social, political, and economic forces, the education system perpetuates and introduces levels of oppression to indigenous students (including Chicana/o students). And as a result of colonialism and years of internalized trauma, today’s indigenous youth have lost critical teachings from the elders.

**Indigenous teachings.** Specific Indigenous teachings are documented within the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor. These Indigenous/spiritual ways of being blend in with all components of the framework and exist in every part of the pedagogy. Table 1 elaborates more specifically on these Indigenous principles: *La Educacion: Teachings of the Ancestors* (J. Tello, personal communication, 2011), *En Lak’ Ech* (Raza Studies Curriculum Tucson, Arizona), the Four *Tezkatlipokas* (Gonzalez & Enrique Acosta, 2006), *Temachtiani*, Indian Education (Cajete, 2000). All of these teachings and principles weave together to present themes such as compassion, community, reflection/introspection, mindfulness, healing, lifelong learning, reciprocal relationships, identity, oneness, cultural relevancy, ecological understanding and interactions, respect, honoring the elders, positive action, lifelong responsibility, inner and outer consciousness, and acknowledging other ways of knowing and learning. These teachings and principles relate to the spiritual understanding of the natural law given by the creator. They are processes of reciprocation that create accountability for the people and they are
Table 1

*Indigenous / Spiritual Principles*

| La Educacion: Teachings of the Ancestors (Tello, 2011) | 1. You are a blessing, regardless of what has gone on in your life, how you have been treated or what you’ve been told, YOU are a blessing. 2. You have a Sacred Purpose. Within you are gifts that were sent to you in this world to fulfill. Use your Sacred Purpose to contribute in a positive way to the world. 3. Everything that has happened in your life, positive or negative, is a lesson. Learn from them all, vibe on the positive experiences and let the negative ones go. 4. Pay attention and live life with gratitude because the teachings, teachers, and blessings will avail themselves if you stay open to, acknowledge, receive, and incorporate them. 5. Give back because life is a circle and peace begins one piece at a time and each have our own piece to give back to the world. |
| En Lak’ ech (Raza Studies, Tucson, Arizona) | Tú eres mi otro yo / You are my other me. Si te hago daño a ti / If I do harm to you, Me hago daño a mí mismo / I do harm to myself; Se te amo y respeto / If I love and respect you, Me amo y respeto yo / I love and respect myself. |
| The Four Tezkatlipokas (Gonzalez, N. & Enriquez Acosta, T., 2006) | 1. *Tezkatlipoka*—self-reflection -We must vigorously search within ourselves, by silencing the distractions and obstacles in our lives, in order to be warriors for our *gente* and justice. 2. *Quetzalkoatl*—precious and beautiful knowledge - Gaining perspective on events and experiences that our ancestors endured, allows us to become more fully realized human beings. We must listen to each other and our elders with humility and love in order to hear the Indigenous wisdom in our hearts. 3. *Huitzilopochtli*—the will to act- As we grow in consciousness, we must be willing to act with a revolutionary spirit that is positive, progressive and creative. 4. *Xipe Totek*—transformation- Our source of strength that allows us to transform and renew. We must have the strength to shed the old which may hinder us, while embracing and accepting our new consciousness in order to transform the world. |
| Temachtiani Maintenance of control and discipline; walks with word; positive character and attitude; sense of responsibility for the *comunidad*; respect for one’s elders; interest and knowledge of one’s *cultura*; desire to die a heroic death rather than to die without having made a serious effort to help your community. |
| Indian Education (Cajete, 2000) | 1. Community 2. Knowledge of your technical environment – In places that you occupy for long periods of time (school, home, work) you must understand and interact with this environment. 3. Visionary and Dream Tradition – One learns through visions and dreams 4. Mythic Foundation – Viewing the world through mythic traditions 5. Spiritual Ecology – Oneness |
the unifying vocabulary and basis for collective action which no matter the sphere (social, economic, or political) are fueled by the spiritual center.

**Critical pedagogy.** Within the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor (Figure 1), critical pedagogy is utilized specifically focusing on Freire’s problem-posing framework (Freire, 1993). In discussing the problem-posing framework, Freire shares that “education is a practice of freedom opposed to education as the practice of domination.” Therefore critical pedagogy engages people to critically analyze “the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation” (p. 64). And this is possible through the problem-posing framework of critical pedagogy.

Freire (1993) emphasizes the significance of participants engaging in dialogue that is both an individual and collective responsibility. “If it is in speaking their word that people, by naming the world, transform it, dialogue imposes itself as the way by which they achieve significance as human beings. Dialogue is thus an existential necessity” (p. 69). And in such, dialogue can serve as an act of naming the world, which is an act of creation and re-creation, a symbol of profound love, a process of critical thinking, and a message of hope.

Moving beyond dialogue, Freire also outlines the problem-posing framework as a commitment to praxis and one which truly reflects a struggle for humanization. This praxis specifically is a result of critical consciousness, dialogue, and a communion of the people. Therefore, the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor encompasses Freire’s problem posing framework because it truly serves to transform, balance, and mitigate oppression. It engages a pedagogy where the participants dialogue, name oppressive
forces, and organize a praxis towards liberation. It moves beyond individualism, epitomizes community, and calls upon the need for well-established relationships. These well-established relationships are found at the core of the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor and it is their reciprocation that shapes human beings in and of the world.

**Pedagogy of hope: Developing and sustaining reciprocal relationships.**

Focusing on relationships, pedagogy of hope is a theoretical component of the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor that informs three different types of teacher–student relationships: audacious, material, Socratic (Duncan-Andrade, 2009). All three of these relationships encompass authenticity, love, compassion, dialogue, reflection, dedication, and persistence. These relationships are critical and serve as another approach to providing a relational focus within the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor.

Audacious hope, according to Duncan-Andrade (2009), refers to the interactions with students (specifically youth) that are truly about interconnectedness and the opportunities to confront and radically heal the suffering of our kids. Audacious hope is about boldly standing in solidarity with those who are suffering. It challenges educators to “defy the dominant ideology of defense, entitlement, and preservation of privileged bodies at the expense of the policing, disposal, and dispossession of marginalized ‘others’” (Duncan-Andrade, 2009, p. 190). This same hope is Delpit’s (1995) argument that educators cannot treat students as “other people’s children” (Delpit, 1995) but on the other hand must view “their pain is our pain.” Overall, audacious hope embraces the belief that all children are amazing, important, and matter to the community.

Material hope refers to providing students with the resources to “deal with the forces that affect their lives” (Syme, 2004, p. 3). Material hope in this sense is providing
students with quality teaching, which consists of an academically rigorous pedagogy geared toward social justice. Duncan-Andrade (2009) adds on to this concept when he asks, what good is education if it does not lead its students toward liberation and additionally what good is education if its students are unable to produce growth across assessment measures such as grades, social development, test scores, and student engagement? Within material hope, not only is curriculum critical, he also argues that these relationships require educators and the community to provide material resources to individuals such as jackets, food, books, computers, etc.

Lastly, Duncan-Andrade (2009), presents Socratic hope, which taps into when Socrates said, “An unexamined life is a life not worth living.” Socratic hope is also an extension of Malcolm X’s quote, “The examined life is painful.” “Socratic hope requires both teachers and students to painfully examine their own lives and actions within an unjust society and to share the sensibility that pain may pave the path to justice” (Duncan-Andrade, 2009, p. 188).

As educators, we must take great risks and accept great challenges if we are going to be effective in urban schools. We must confront our failures and know that no matter what we do in our classrooms, there will still be forms of social misery that confront our students. This kind of self-reflection will be painful, but it is necessary all the same. (Duncan-Andrade, 2009, p. 189)

Overall, the pedagogy of hope truly enhances the development and sustainment of reciprocal relationships. These relationships are critical within a pedagogy, and it is the reason why the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor utilizes pedagogy of hope. These relationships, and how they are developed and sustained, have been found to change the lives of students and teachers. Various outcomes of pedagogy of hope, such as parallel activism (Martin Hill, 2000), counter a hierarchy of oppression and it embodies a united
goal of social justice and healing to achieve intellectual, spiritual, and emotional liberation.

A holistic education. Another one of the main theoretical components employed within the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor is holistic education. Encompassed at the heart of this theory is teaching and learning that reconnects young people to their emotional, physical, intellectual, and spiritual wholeness (Miller, 2000). Holistic educators believe that education must start with a spiritual conception of a human being and the process of education must include the whole child, whole human being, or whole person. The whole person contains several essential elements: intellectual, emotional, physical, social, aesthetic, and spiritual (Miller, 2000, p. 38). The pedagogy of the eagle and the condor, rooted in an Indigenous epistemology, pushes these elements of holistic education. This pedagogy, as a result of the holistic education framework, reinforces knowledge and learning, and suggests the following: it should be experiential; it should focus on the outer and inner person; it is diverse and should embrace all people and their ways of knowing; it is not secular; it is inherent in and connected to all nature, its creatures, and to human existence.

The holistic education paradigm at one point morally critiqued American society and argued that people needed to be “less preoccupied with material wealth and more concerned with developing their inner, spiritual resources”(Miller, 2000, p. 44). The pedagogy of the eagle and the condor utilizes this same critique de-emphasizing material wealth over spiritual enlightenment and like the holistic education framework, it challenges us to nurture and foster a transformation within education. This
transformation should shift from an intellectual focus to an emphasis on the whole person.

**Critical Compassionate Intellectualism Third Dimension.** Another essential theoretical component that moves outward beyond the three frameworks of critical pedagogy, pedagogy of hope, and holistic education (see Figure 1), is critical compassionate intellectualism third dimension (Romero, Arce, & Cammarota, 2009). In the design and development of the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor’s conceptual framework I found critical compassionate intellectualism third dimension to be very rich in pedagogy and have transformative potential and application. Not only was it designed utilizing similar constructs (critical pedagogy, critical race theory, and a Chicana/o Indigenous epistemology), it was also developed for students who share the same demographics as my students. The pedagogy of the eagle and the condor strives to embrace in almost all areas, the six key constructs of critical compassionate intellectualism third dimension: blossoming of intellectualism (*xinachtli*), pedagogy *de los barrios* (Duncan-Andrade, 2008), students as creators of knowledge, collective and individual agency, organic intellectualism, and academic and personal transformation. Following is an explanation of the six key constructs of critical compassionate intellectualism.

The blossoming of intellectualism or otherwise known as *xinachtli* refers to the appreciation and validation of students and the knowledge that they bring.

*Xinachtli* is a Chicano Indigenous epistemology/concept/principle meaning a process of nurturing the *semillas* (seeds) of knowledge. In this way the teacher along with students and parents create an authentic educational environment that is developed with appreciation and respect for the Chicana/o community, its culture, and its historic struggle for educational equality (Cammarota and Romero
Xinachtli encompasses a critical approach that requires the students to analyze their own epistemology and ontology.

Pedagogy de los barrios was a pedagogy developed by Duncan-Andrade (2008) which taps into Freire’s problematization and tri-dimensionalism (Freire, 1993).

Pedagogy de los barrios was a result of the students’ critical intellectual engagements taking place in both the barrio and in the school. This form of tri-dimensionalization is really a third space that is created in the classroom and a “convergence of the barrio and the institution.” And it is this third space that has the capacity to create transformations in both the educational institutions and in the homes of the students.

Students as creators of knowledge, another element of critical compassionate intellectualism third dimension, focuses on students constructing knowledge in contrast to simply being in need of the knowledge that the institution has to offer. As the students reconstruct their epistemologies and ontologies as Chicana/o students, and when they articulate them they find that they have a new perception of who they are, what the world is like, and how they can contribute positively to society. These positive contributions to society are about collective and individual agency, which is brought out in this pedagogy and also known as Huitzilopochtli. Huitzilopochtli, a Nahuatl word, once again utilizes a Chicano Indigenous framework and continues to provide validation of the students’ culture. Huitzilopochtli calls upon the students to give of themselves especially in situations of social justice and re-humanization.

The last two elements of critical compassionate intellectualism third dimension that are included in the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor is organic intellectualism
and personal/academic transformations. Organic intellectualism refers to the notion that individuals from the barrios, ghettos, and the reservations seek to be intellectuals as a result of the construction and reconstruction of consciousness and identity. As a result of this organic intellectualism, personal and academic transformations occur. “This understanding could transform their lives and help them engage their epistemology today and transform the ontology they will carry into tomorrow” (Romero, et al. 2009, p. 231).

Pedagogy of the eagle and the condor calls upon critical compassionate intellectualism third dimension and its six key constructs: blossoming of intellectualism (xinachtli), pedagogy de los barrios (Duncan-Andrade, 2008), students as creators of knowledge, collective and individual agency, organic intellectualism, and academic and personal transformation. All of these components utilize Indigenous teachings, prioritize a transformative pedagogy, and engage students, parents and teachers in an understanding that will help them to change oppressive systems and settings.

**Condor teachings and practices.** As the conceptual framework (see Figure 1) continues to extend outside the circle, condor teachings are presented. This level of the framework presents pedagogical examples, and Table 2 and Figure 2 outlines what these specific teachings look like. These teachings address educational settings and instructional strategies. Many of the condor teachings consist of mindfulness and reflection in classroom settings, inquiry based approaches to learning, and domains that are open, dynamic, and present an experiential style to teaching and learning. The pedagogy of the eagle and the condor personifies these condor teachings in order to construct a classroom community rooted in Indigenous ways and a balanced approach.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condor Teachings</th>
<th>Art is used to connect to deeper learning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Open, dynamic process</td>
<td>• Dialogue is encouraged</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Community process</td>
<td>• Ancestry/Identity acknowledged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Group sharing</td>
<td>• Timelessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cooperation</td>
<td>• Each person’s way is honored</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Generosity is valued</td>
<td>• Focused on learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Relationships are honored</td>
<td>• Inquiry based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Helping others is a goal</td>
<td>• Knowing ourselves allows us to know the planet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Observation and thinking</td>
<td>• Ecological consciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teacher is facilitator</td>
<td>• Mystery is often more appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Humility is important</td>
<td>• Old ways may be more important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Each person is honored</td>
<td>• Leaders advise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Chaos is a balancing and positive force</td>
<td>• Internal assessment is important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Equal power relations</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Socially conscious ideologies</td>
<td></td>
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<td>• Mindfulness</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Sacred purpose</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Everything is a teaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Sacred space</td>
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<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>Explanation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sacred Center</td>
<td>Also called an altar and used as space to honor relatives, ancestors, elements of life, and precious gifts. A blanket is set up in the center of the room. Individuals place items on the blanket for the duration of the class period. Items may consist of pictures, candles, art, teachings, gifts, plants such as flowers, sage, etc. Individuals have an opportunity to share out what they offered to the Sacred Center.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Way of Council/Speaking from the Heart</td>
<td>Small group talking circles that require participants to discuss personal feelings moving beyond the mind and speaking from the heart. Participants take turns speaking utilizing a talking stick and practice active listening skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introspection/Reflection</td>
<td>Individuals are given many opportunities throughout class periods which allow for reflection. Journal writing and practices of mindfulness facilitate this process of reflection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honoring the Ancestors</td>
<td>An elder from the community is invited to open the first class with a welcoming and an acknowledgement of the ancestors and relatives that guide each individual’s daily journey. This individual typically shares words, teachings, and experiences that honor the 7 directions that connect us all: Women, Children, Elders, Animals, Mother Earth, Father Sky, and Ourselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honoring the Directions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindful Walk</td>
<td>Students walk in silence being mindful of each step on the earth, focusing on their breath, and focusing on being present in the moment. This walk works best in nature and could be as short as a 10 minute walk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meditation/Visualization Practices and Experiences</td>
<td>Seek community individuals who have experience in leading meditation/visualization processes. This process can be effective in the analysis of one’s sacred purpose and/or the analysis of one’s research agenda.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Tradition/ Story Telling</td>
<td>Opportunities for individuals to share their life stories. Stories allow each individual to acknowledge their critical moments in life and to experience a sense of belonging and community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Relationships (Conocimiento)</td>
<td>It is one of the intentions of a community process to develop relationships amongst all of the individuals. The relationships encourage individuals to support, facilitate, mentor, and guide each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rites of Passage</td>
<td>Honoring transitions in our lives specifically to signify culmination, new opportunities, stages of life, growth and development through ritual/ceremonial based presentations focusing on connecting to the spiritual/emotional</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2. Condor practices.*
Figure 2 also presents instructional and pedagogical strategies that can be utilized in classroom/education settings. These condor teachings engage Indigenous processes and methods in order to balance a very Western approach to education. They can be adapted and modified by participants in order to fulfill the expectations and restrictions of a variety of settings.

**Reconstructing the framework.** As an educator I have had the opportunity to implement and share the fluid frameworks of the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor. Students, educators, and community members have shared powerful reflections in regard to this pedagogy and its ability to seek transformation. Through these implementations and discussions I have been able to experience the pedagogy’s gaps, challenges, and points of entry that need further development.

In an unpublished pilot study (Medina, 2012) and a paper presented at the American Educational Research Association, I had the opportunity to analyze and implement the pedagogy of eagle and the condor with middle school students. I found that the pedagogy developed and facilitated Indigenous principles such as *En Lak’ech*, student teacher relationships, critical consciousness, critical praxis, intellectualism, enhancements in empathy, compassion, cultural identity, and some elements of youth purpose. Being interested in the construct of purpose in life, I implemented another pilot study comparing these same middle school students to another group of students not exposed to the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor, analyzing levels of purpose (Western construct). I found that students who had been exposed to the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor showed a stronger sense of purpose.
It is here, in my experiences and struggle, where I began to reflect on my own life in order to make some critical improvements to the framework—the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor. Through my life I have found that my sacred purpose has been instrumental in my healing, development, recovering, survival, mobilization, decolonization, re-indigenization, and transformation. Though missing from our society as a whole, I have been fortunate to realize that being able to find, explore, and be aligned with my sacred purpose has been a critical element of my existence. Like the teachings of J. Tello (2008) he shared that sacred purpose is “the most significant element of our spiritual being that keeps us balanced and well-rooted” (p. 3). Therefore the implications within the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor seeks to explore a foundational element that challenges individuals/systems to question their reason for being and the roots of their sacred purpose.

**Definition of Terms**

*Sacred purpose*: rooted in a socio-psychological perspective of knowing and is referred to as an individual’s significant reason for existence; connected to creation and the original teachings related to our responsibility on earth; it is a collective and individual responsibility; and it is the most significant element of keeping an individual balanced and well-rooted (Tello, 2008). One’s sacred purpose is rooted in the indigenous belief system of relationality where all life is interconnected and therefore sacred purpose refers to one’s sacred reason to add and contribute to this world.

*Elder*: identifiable members within a community who possess strong levels of lived experiences, Indigenous knowledge, wisdom, teachings, stories, and additionally individuals who are committed to the sharing and passing on of Indigenous ways of life.
Indigenous elders are recognized as informal/formal leaders within their various communities, they are active in their daily practice of Indigenous ways, living alongside the land, and sharing a lens of respect, reciprocity, and obligation to all around them.

Chicana/o: a chosen identity with community-based values, engaging an indigenous, ethnic, political, social, cultural identity, and a non-assimilationist mentality. Has strong roots from the Chicano Movement with Mexicans of the United States who wanted to express a new self-identity.

Indigenous Knowledge: Encompasses empirical observation, traditional teachings, and revelation (Brant-Castellano, 2000). Empirical observation is a representation of “converging perspectives from different vantage points over time” in real-life situations and settings (p. 24). Traditional teachings consist of knowledge passed down through generations. Revelation is knowledge acquired through dreams, visions, and intuition—all coming from the spirit world and ancestors.

Indigenous Research Method Design: A community-based approach that incorporates the values and beliefs of Indigenous communities in its design, methods, analysis, and data dissemination (Lavellee, 2009). Additionally, it encompasses an Indigenous research framework, develops an ethical relationship with the community, involves the elders, and utilizes Indigenous protocols.

Maiz – based Teachings: Rodriguez (personal communication, July 16) shares that maiz-based knowledge is part of a lived experience, rather than limited to myth-legend; it promotes an identity not based on war or conquest, but on that which defines a large part of the continent: maiz. Some maiz-derived concepts are En Lak’ech (You are
my other self), *Panche Be* (To seek the root of the Truth), and *Hunab Ku* (Grand Architect of the Universe).

*Maestra/o*: A formal title for teacher, teacher/elder, teacher/wisdom carrier

*Codex (Singular)/ Codice (Plural)*: A Western way of saying, “frameworks;” codices are visuals with conceptual and theoretical content which in the case of this research are the “footprints that lead from the past and into the future” (Rodriguez, 1998, p. 24).
CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Introduction

Since the intent of this study was to explore sacred purpose, perceived by indigenous elders, this review of literature serves to analyze the present and past constructs of purpose in life within both Western and Non Western paradigms and the overall importance of purpose in life within individuals. Indigenous knowledge refers to purpose in life as sacred purpose - the belief that each one of us has a significant reason for being here. “When you find your [sacred] purpose and hold it deep in your heart, then whatever you do in your life will flow like a canoe moving down a river” (Coyhis, 2008, p. ix). Sacred purpose teaches us that every individual is born with a specific, unique purpose in life and this sacredness is connected to creation and the original teachings related to our responsibility on earth. According to indigenous teachings, sacred purpose embraces a collective and individual responsibility; an individual is connected to all living things and through equality each have a role to perform in creation by virtue of the gifts bestowed upon that person (Clarkson, Morrissette, & Regallet, 1992).

Western viewpoints offer a discourse of purpose in life describing it as “an enduring, personally meaningful commitment to what one hopes to accomplish or work toward in life” (Bronk, 2011, p. 32). Many authors have attempted to define purpose, and it continues to vary and be used interchangeably with meaning and life goals or aims (Damon, Mennon & Bronk, 2003). Frankl (1946) referred to purpose as an individual’s longing and search for why someone’s life is worth living. Crumbaugh and Maholick (1964) envisioned purpose as “the ontological significance of life” (p. 201). Inclusive of
the various but similar definitions, there appears to be a growing agreement among researchers that purpose represents an individual’s intention to accomplish something positive that is both important to the self and directed at making a difference in the world beyond self (Damon et al., 2003).

In analyzing sacred purpose and the Western construct of purpose, there are clearly some similarities and distinctions. It is the intention of this review of literature to share both paradigms because both provide a background and an understanding for the importance of purpose within adolescence and in today’s schools (inclusive of indigenous students who have the right to inherit these teachings). With that said, this review of literature will attempt to examine some brief representations of sacred purpose within an indigenous context, while keeping in mind that sacred purpose is a term relatively unidentified in today’s literature and discourse. Additionally, this review of literature shares a Western viewpoint of purpose and key research from the 20th and 21st century. Next this review of literature leads in the direction of adolescence, and the importance and powerful implications of incorporating purpose in educational practices. Overall, this literature review serves to inform an analytical, historical, conceptual, and research based understanding of sacred purpose and purpose in life so that one understands its implications within the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor, with adolescent populations, and within education.

Sacred Purpose

Even though the term sacred purpose is not specifically defined in literature, there is much common ground about what it means within an indigenous context. The term “sacred,” according to indigenous teachings, refers to the intimate relationship and
responsibility that individuals share with the Creator, the earth, and all of our relations. Sacredness is about “a living and dialectic relationship to the earth” (Clarkson et al., p. 21). In connecting these concepts, sacred purpose refers to the understanding that every individual has a significant reason for being alive; this purpose is a responsibility and is based on an intimate relationship with the earth and an individual’s existence. Tello (2010) described sacred purpose as the belief that children come into this world with a sacred reason to add and contribute to this world. “When born, children are sacred. They come from a sacred source and in that in itself they come into this world in a sacred way; they come with a sacred purpose in their spirit” (Tello, 2010, Track 1).

Christine Quintasket (Dove, 1994) a traditional Salish women from the 1800s argued “Everything on earth has purpose, every disease an herb to cure it, and every person a mission” (p. x). Accordingly this is the Indigenous theory of existence. Battiste (2002) stated, “creation endows people with sacred gifts that emerge in different developmental stages of their lives, slowly enabling them to find their places in the great cosmos and in their national traditions and ethos” (p. 15). Chief Robert Tall Tree (2010), based on teachings of the elders, shared:

On the day you were born the whole world knew you existed and in that moment when you were given your first breath you were also given a set of instructions that were placed within your Heart for safe keeping. These instructions were in the making for hundreds to possible thousands of years and they were designed for not only your happiness but for your well being.

Saahiilthit (Gerry) Oleman, an elder of the Stl'atl'imx Nation discussed sacred purpose and referred to it as the gifts that were bestowed upon us by the Creator; it is the individual and collective responsibility to find and use these gifts. He explained that as human beings, when we're coming through we pick up a gift or gifts [from the Creator].
Some people have more than one of course, and our purpose in life is to find them and then to use them (Oelman, 2011).

Coyhis (2008) stated:

It is no accident when we are good at something. Sometimes when we are good at something, we just do it without really knowing it is a gift with a purpose. But as soon as we sense that this is our gift from the Creator, then how we use it changes. We get a different feeling when we are using our gifts to support our families, to give back to the community, and to help our brothers and sisters walk their own journeys. When we use our gifts in a good way, our talents will naturally grow. (p. 9)

Oleman also discussed the ancestral traditions and responsibilities around sacred purpose that have existed for thousands of years:

People would isolate themselves from their families in order to go out to find the teachings of their sacred purpose. It would be a sacrifice….. and the whole intent of it was to find your way, to find your gift and to master those gifts and start to live them on a daily basis. Then your life is going to feel full. If you do not find your gift, you're going to suffer. It's the same for every human on the planet; the ones that don't find their gift are suffering. (Oleman, 2011)

Cohen (2002) similarly spoke of a specific African indigenous tribe where when a woman knows that she is pregnant she isolates herself with a few friends. Together they pray and meditate until they hear the song of the child. “They recognize that every soul has its own vibration that expresses its unique flavor and purpose. When the women attune to the song, they sing it out loud. Then they return to the tribe and teach it to everyone else.” The tribe continues to sing this song at birth and through significant times throughout the individual’s life. If the individual commits a crime or is faced with serious challenges, the tribe also encircles the individual and sings this song. The song is a remembrance of identity and of one’s sacred purpose in life.
Coyhis (2008) also described sacred purpose as a personalized song; “every warrior has a song written in his or her heart and that song must be sung before you die or your soul forever remains restless” (p. 32). Coyhis argued that it is an individual and collective responsibility to seek an individual’s “song” in order to fulfill the “blueprint” (p. 7) of why you were born. Coyhis (2008) stated:

Your blueprint of why you were born, what you are to become, and the character you need to develop to express your [sacred] purpose is written inside of you. Inside every human being is the innate knowledge of its own well being.

The bee has a purpose…..
The flower has a purpose…
The salmon has a purpose…
The plants each have a specific purpose….
The wind has a purpose…
The rain has a purpose….
The Clan has a purpose…..
The Ceremonies have a purpose…..
You have a purpose, too.
You have a purpose!!! Your birth was not an accident. (pp. 7-8)

James Hillman discussed the concept of sacred purpose and referred to it as the acorn theory (1997). Though Hillman and his writings are not categorized as indigenous literature, his concept of the acorn theory is rooted within a non-Western paradigm. The acorn theory supported the idea that our lives are formed by a particular image, just as the oak’s destiny is contained in the tiny acorn. The acorn theory argues that each person comes into the world with something to do and to be. The theory says we enter the world with a calling. Hillman (1997) stated:

There is an individual image that belongs to your soul. The same myth can be found in the kabbalah. The Mormons have it. The West Africans have it. The Hindus and the Buddhists have it in different ways — they tie it more to reincarnation and karma, but you still come into the world with a particular destiny. Native Americans have it very strongly. So all these cultures all over the world have this basic understanding of human existence. Only American psychology doesn’t have it. (par. 23)
Along this same construct, Carillo, Goubaud-Reyna, Martinez, & Tello (2007) alluded to sacred purpose as a seed planted in each individual, supported by the science of genetics. “Within the integrity of the seed that becomes the child, is that child’s true self and purpose. The seed must be embedded in the soil that has the organized purpose of seeing-to the destiny of the seed and seeing-after (caring for) the seed, as well as seeing-the-seed-through (protecting) any hard times.” (p. 17). Tello, in the above explanation, refers to the soil that nurtures the seed or one’s sacred purpose. “To see-about all this the soil’s own purpose must be seeing-fit to assuring the seed will see its destiny which nourishes the purpose from which the seed comes from” (p.7).

Sacred purpose can be traced to the stories of numerous indigenous people around the world. Here on the American continent Nahua teachings and stories exist that remind us about the importance and significance of sacred purpose. Tello (2008) referred to sacred purpose as destino and shared the story of “La Llorona” (The Crying Woman), which goes back to a time before the Europeans invaded what we know today as Mexico:

At this time, there were a number of prophecies, visions, and omens foretelling the arrival of the Spaniards, and one of these omens was that of La Llorona. The people heard a weeping woman, night after night. She passed by in the middle of the night, wailing, and crying out in a loud voice, “My children, my children, where will I take you, my children?” At other times, she cried, “My children, my children, where are my children?” The Indigenous reference of this crying woman is Cihuacoatl, an ancient earth goddess, whose principal role was to care for the children. During the time of the European invasion, it has been documented that one of the main preoccupations of the mothers was their fear of “losing” their children. The fear was a literal fear of losing them to death or torture by the invaders, but more importantly, that the children would lose their “spirit,” their destino, or [sacred] purpose in life connected to their people. The essence of knowing one’s destino was seen as the most significant element of keeping balanced and being well-rooted. (Tello, 2008, p. 3)
Along with stories, the Aztec Calendar reminds us of our sacred purpose. It analyzes each individual’s purpose not as a lifetime journey but as an everyday task.

Mazatzin Aztekayolokalli (personal communication, June 13, 2012) stated:

Everyday has a purpose and a reason for being, with a cosmic mission to be accomplished while it lasts. Every 24-hour period has its guides and influences that must nurture and fortify to ensure its fulfillment. [We know this] after thousands of years of careful observation and patient study, our grandfathers of ANAUAK (the ancient Mexican homeland that expands from Nicaragua up to Canada) developed a system that enabled them to identify and isolate these influences. And they called these their respectable companions. With this in hand they learned to respect everybody and everything that surrounded them, bringing harmony and peaceful coexistence with and within ILUIKATL (the cosmos) which was the foundation for all their amazing achievements.

Aztekayolokalli suggested the individual responsibility is to utilize each unique guide and influence occurring every 24 hours stated within the Aztec Calendar in order to fulfill our purpose within that time.

Today, the teachings of sacred purpose are not only limited in research but are also becoming less shared in indigenous communities. These communities face many complex challenges that are a result of a long history of colonialism and today’s oppressive forces driven by social, political, and economic exploitation. Carillo et al. (2007) argued that “the total disequilibrating impact of La Conquista (the conquest), of destroying a harmonious, interdependent identity and replacing it with oppressive relations, was violent” (p. 10). The indigenous scholars reinforced that “The end result of this distortion is shame, losing face, resulting finally in total psycho spiritual amnesia of one’s true spirit” (p. 11).

Coyhis (2008) suggested that individuals cannot learn and embrace their sacred purpose unless “wounds are healed,” (p. 32) wounds that are a result of intergenerational trauma.
As American Indian and Alaska Native people, many of us experience what is called intergenerational trauma. This means that the hurt of being colonized and oppressed by another people back in historical times was passed down. It was passed down from our great, great grandparents, to our own grandpas and grandmas, and right into our own family and the community we grew up in. If we were hurt in this manner, we have to decide to go on our own healing journey to heal the wounds we received from this historical trauma as Native people. These wounds are keeping us from finding and singing our Song [sacred purpose]. (p. 32)

As stated, finding one’s sacred purpose is not always accessible and easy to find, develop, and withstand. Literature suggests that individuals, especially indigenous youth and emerging adults, are confused with the discourse of sacred purpose as a result of dominant Western viewpoints and priorities. Hillman (1997) recognized that many indigenous and non-indigenous people within our Western culture fail to accept and imagine the teachings of sacred purpose. “[Western] culture has no theory of this at all. [Western] culture has the genetics and the nature theory. You come into the world loaded with genes and are influenced by nature, or you come into the world, are influenced by the environment, and are the result of parents, family, social class and education.” Hillman also argues that our culture entices competition and challenges individuals to find out how they can become a part of the economic system instead of engaging individuals in self growth, understanding, and finding out what is good for the soul.

Ultimately, the teachings of sacred purpose are significant and critical; it is an individual’s reason for being here and connected to all things sacred. Indigenous scholars, researchers, and knowledge keepers have much to contribute to the field of sacred purpose. Its awareness, facilitation, and development within indigenous communities present powerful implications. There is a larger need for future research on sacred purpose with indigenous youth. According to indigenous elders, the fundamental
teachings of sacred purpose serve as a critical inheritance and a source of great healing and balance for future generations. Coyhis reflected:

One of our Indian prophecies from a long time ago says that at a time of great healing, young people with old spirits would be born with hearts of wisdom so they may serve and give back to their people. In this time for all of us on the Earth, the youth are being asked to find their true purpose. When you, the youth, search for sacred purpose, the old, wise spirits you were born with will be activated. It won’t happen until you undertake this journey. (2008, p. vii)

The Western Study of Purpose

Despite the absence of sacred purpose in today’s literature, a similar Western construct known as purpose in life has existed and is emerging in current research. Literature from the 20th and 21st century indicate that purpose in all forms has significant implications for our lives consisting of psychological adjustment and well being, personal development, hope, life satisfaction, empathy, gratitude, agency, substance abuse recovery, and providing meaning in life in one’s work.

Similar to Indigenous traditions, Western culture has analyzed the human experience and shared an examination of ontology for thousands of years. Existential philosophy emerged among many Greek philosophers. Jeffries (1995) defined existential philosophy as the philosophy or theory of existence and suggested that the term “is theoretically applied through the philosophical inquiry into the meaning or purpose of individual human existence” (p. 7). An example is the philosopher Plato, who in his Myth of Er, provided the belief that each person comes into the world with something to do and to be. The myth says we enter the world with a calling. Many philosophers of the 19th and 20th century, including Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Camus, and Sartre, also addressed certain themes that related to the meaning or purpose of individual existence.
Much later, in 1959, Victor Frankl, a holocaust survivor, opened up new
discourse, research opportunities, and initiated a developing theoretical framework
around the concepts of purpose in life and meaning. Frankl put meaning and purpose on
the map as he argued that these were the factors that forged his heroic struggle and
survival of Nazi concentration camps (Jeffries, 1995).

During Frankl’s internment as concentration camp inmate, he wrote about his
experiences. He observed that those inmates who held purposeful belief systems were far
more likely to survive the camp’s hardships than those who simply tried to endure the
harsh conditions (Frankl, 1946). Frankl established much insight in regards to purpose
and meaning in life, and was the first Western psychologist to theorize existentialism.
Frankl’s conceptualizations of meaning in life and existentialism were expanded to
become a huge branch of psychotherapy known as Logotherapy. Frankl (1946, p.121)
expressed:

Logotherapy…….. focuses on man’s search for such a meaning. According to
Logotherapy, this striving to find a meaning in one’s life is the primary
motivational force in man. This meaning is unique and specific in that it must and
can be fulfilled by him alone; only then does it achieve a significance which will
satisfy his own will to meaning.

Rosenbaum (2012) shared the three principles of Logotherapy: “1. Life has
meaning under all circumstances, even the most miserable ones. 2. Our main motivation
for living is our will to find meaning in life. 3. We have an inalienable freedom to find
meaning” (Slide 33).

Within these constructs of existentialism, Frankl also referred to a condition
where an individual may experience boredom, apathy, loss of joy in living, and a lack of
motivation to continue the struggle for survival as a result of existential frustration or the
lack of purpose and meaning (Florian, 1989). He coined this condition the existential vacuum. Researchers (Frankl, 1959; Hutzell, 1990) suggested the conditions of existential vacuum can lead to aggression and antisocial behaviors, depressions including mood disturbances and anxiety, and lastly addictions that are physiological and psychological.

Researchers and practitioners have continued to become increasingly interested in the field of purpose as a result of Frankl’s work. Many have attempted to define purpose in the past and have introduced multiple constructs surrounding purpose such as meaning, life goals, aims, sparks, etc. W. Damon (2008) conducted in depth research on purpose and posed questions such as, What exactly is purpose? How can we know it when we see it? Purpose according to Damon is a goal, however it is more far reaching and more complex than to have a good time or to score a goal in a game. He referred to purpose as “one’s reach out to the world beyond the self and where the individual implies a desire to make a difference in the world.” True purpose, according to Damon’s work (2008), is an ultimate concern and answers critical questions such as Why? Why am I doing this? Why does it matter? Why is it important for me and for the world beyond me? Damon chose this definition of purpose in order to distinguish it from other constructs such as meaning:

Purpose is a goal of sorts, but it is more stable and far-reaching than a low-level goal. Purpose is a part of one’s personal search for meaning, but it also has an external component, the desire to make a difference in the world, to contribute to matters larger than the self. Purpose is always directed at an accomplishment towards which one can make progress. (Damon et al., 2003, p. 121)

One example of a construct similar to purpose is meaningfulness. Meaningfulness relates to living a life of meaning and fulfillment. According to Robert
Emmons (1999), discusses the notion that as far as we know humans are the only meaning-seeking species on the planet. Therefore living a meaningful life is an activity that is distinctly human. In his book, Wellsprings of a Positive Life, Emmons argued that highly important goals provide a sense of meaning and purpose in one’s life. And ultimately without goals, life would lack purpose. However, not all goals provide meaning and purpose in life. Emmons, like Damon (2008), clarified that some goals are trivial, shallow, and have little capacity to contribute to a sense that life is meaningful. Ultimately, purpose moves beyond the pursuit of goals making it important to self and moves beyond to a cause greater than self and a life worth living.

Literature and specific researchers have shown that purpose has utility and provides powerful implications associated with an individual’s psychological adjustment and well-being, personal development, identity, hope, life satisfaction, generosity, recovery from substance abuse, meaning in life, and more. Additionally, researchers have also been engaged in the examination of religion and how it relates to purpose.

Debats (1998) found that there are positive beliefs and emotions that purpose promotes and these play a vital role in promoting psychological health. Mascaro and Rosen (2005), in studying college students, found that purpose has a unique relationship with and can predict levels of hope and depressive symptoms. “Individuals with high levels tend to have fewer symptoms of depression, to be more characterologically hopeful, and to be more likely to be experiencing states of hope [compared to] individuals with low levels” (p. 1003).

Other studies have clearly identified purpose as a key indicator of well-being (Ryff, 1989; Wong(a), 1998; Ryff and Singer, 1998). Ryff created a purpose in life sub-
scale, showing that high levels of purpose was associated with a strong subjective sense of well being (Keyes, Shmotkin, & Ryff, 2002; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Seligman’s book, Authentic Happiness, also links purpose with subjective well-being. Bronk (2008) discussed Seligman’s book focusing on happiness and purpose stating, “Pursuing a purpose involves aspects of both the good life and the meaningful life, and in this way purpose indirectly links to subjective well-being” (p. 36). He continued:

According to Seligman, there are three primary paths to happiness. The first route to happiness involves experiencing as many of life’s pleasures as possible. This will result in short-term happiness. The other two routes produce longer lasting, deeper forms of contentment. The second, also called the good life, involves becoming deeply involved in those activities in which one excels and losing oneself in the process, and the third, the meaningful life, involves pursuing a path in which a cause or an institution supplies a sense of belonging to something greater than oneself. Pursuing a purpose involves aspects of both the good life and the meaningful life, and in this way purpose indirectly links to subjective well-being. (p. 36)

Bronk, Hill, Lapsley, Talib, and Finch (2009) also identified having a purpose in life is associated with greater life satisfaction in adolescence, emerging adulthood, and adulthood. The conclusions of this study shed light on the important role purpose plays in healthy human development. Pearson and Sheffield (1974) found that individuals having high levels of purpose are likely to be individuals characterized as extroverts and are more likely to enjoy social situations. They explored the concept of “involvement” and how it could result in the formation of a life purpose.

Purpose also gives people a cognitive frame of reference that he or she is leading a positively valued life-framework or life-goal (Battista & Almond, 1973). Other researchers have indicated that purpose motivates individuals to pursue their goals (Reker & Wong, 1988; Maddi, 1967). Once these life goals are in place, a sense of purpose
motivates one’s current behavior in the direction of obtaining his or her envisioned future goal-states (Baumeister, 1991).

Additionally, a strong sense of purpose draws attention to prosocial moral action and civic engagement. Shek, Ma, and Cheung (1994) found that high scores on the Chinese Purpose in Life (PIL) correlated positively with measures of prosocial behavior and negatively with measures of antisocial behavior. As far as generosity, Crandall and Rasmussen (1975) found that commitment to other people is beneficial to finding one’s purpose in life. Noblejas de la For (1997) analyzed drug addiction and purpose while utilizing Maholik’s PIL and found that overcoming drug addiction produces significantly higher purpose scores and predicted altruism and positive change within the individual. McAdams (2001) and his study utilizing three complementary scales of generativity, a related construct to purpose, found that higher scores on the scales of generativity correlate with greater involvement in social and political activities.

Empirical research has also demonstrated that a lack of purpose and meaning is associated with boredom, depression, disengagement, and suicide. Fahlman, Mercer, Gaskovski, Eastwood, A, and Eastwood, J (2009), in utilizing a quantitative and longitudinal study, suggested that a lack of life meaning and purpose is an important factor in producing feelings of boredom. Newcomb and Harlow (1986) established that there is a connection between a sense of purpose and an individual’s level of depression. They also found that a lack of purpose leads to a greater usage of drugs among females and suicidal ideation among males. Other empirical research demonstrated that a lack of meaning is predictive of depression and disengagement (Reker & Wong, 1988; Wong, 1998). Additionally, Crandall and Rasmussen (1975) found that individuals who lacked
purpose in life, based on the PIL, showed a tendency towards suicide and hedonistic value orientation.

Ellis and Smith (1991) examined the relationship between spiritual well-being and attitudes toward suicide while utilizing Frankl’s conceptualization of purpose in life. The study was conceptually related to purpose in life and it expressed that a lack of purpose leads to giving up on life.

Related to disengagement, depression, and negative lifestyles, researchers also connected alcohol and drug use/recovery with purpose. Brown, Ashcroft, & Miller (1998) explored purpose in life as an aspect of alcoholism and recovery comparing ethnic groups. Similarly, Schlesinger, Susman, and Koenigsberg (1990) compared women alcoholics suggesting a relationship between purpose in life and alcohol dependence. Padelford (1974) found a significant negative relationship between drug involvement and PIL scores. Whereas Waisberg & Porter (1994) investigated the positive relationship between having a purpose in life and recovery from alcohol dependence. All of the above researchers adopt Frankl’s framework that remind us that a lack of purpose leads to maladaptive behaviors.

Other researchers have looked towards religiosity and its association with purpose. Robbins & Francis (2000) found that purpose in life is significantly related to religiosity. This study explored over five hundred undergraduate students from church related colleges of higher education and found that the majority of students in the sample affirm a sense of purpose in their lives. French & Joseph (1999) analyzed religiosity and its association with happiness, purpose in life, and self-actualization. It was found that having a purpose in life is a mediating factor between religiosity and happiness. In
analyzing Australian adults, Francis & Kaldor (2001) found a significant relationship between religiosity and purpose in life through a random sample of 1,021 adults. The results of their study shared that religion remains a significant predictor of purpose in life within the Australian population.

Much of this research finds that the reason for the development of purpose as a result of religiosity is due to the optimal balance between commitment to the well being of self and the well being of others, which is many times produced in religious communities. In addition, religion may aim to address the fundamental questions of meaning and purpose in life through its beliefs, teachings and rituals. All in all, the intent of including these studies on religiosity and purpose is to indicate the important role that purpose plays for individuals in various settings.

**Adolescence and Purpose in Life**

Many studies have examined the years of adolescence and have recognized it as an opportunistic time period. Developmentally, adolescence is the proper time period in life to begin to make choices about what kind of person to become, what kind of life to lead, and what to dedicate their adolescent lives to. Pearce (1998) argued three important characteristics of adolescents: they have a great expectation that something tremendous is supposed to happen in their lives; around the age of fifteen or sixteen, they have a feeling that some greatness exists within them; and there is an intense longing within them. Erickson’s (1968) 8 stages of psychosocial development provided a perspective on adolescence as well, suggesting that it is a time where there is a conflict between identity and role diffusion. During this stage, adolescents are in search of an identity that will lead them into adulthood. Adolescents make a strong effort to answer the question "Who am
I?” Erickson adds on to adolescence by explaining that purpose is an effective means of helping to resolve a young person’s identity crisis.

In knowing about this highly reflective and opportune time period for our youth, media and corporations also tend to use this as an opportunity to capitalize and market to them. Today media is filled with a glamorization of consumerism, wealth, and materialism; ultimately this focus within media can lead to the confusion of young people distorting their purpose in life. Kessler (2000), an educator, mentioned that many adolescent students do not even think to ask questions relating to purpose and meaning in life due to the commercial media. She argues that the media perpetuates the distortion of meaning through the flood of images on television, film, video games, and the internet. These multiple messages confuse adolescents so that they look for beauty and meaning in the external rather than the existential search.

Unfolding research continues to support that positive youth development occurs when adolescents have purpose and is problematic when individuals lack this construct. In a study on purpose in life (Damon, 2008) 1,200 young people between the ages of 12 and 26 were surveyed inquiring about how today’s youth are finding – or not finding – purpose in their lives. The results, even though at the time not complete, indicated that 20% of the young people were “purposeful;” the term purposeful was defined as individuals who have found something meaningful to dedicate themselves to, who have sustained this interest over a period of time, and who express a clear sense of what they are trying to accomplish in the world and why. At the other extreme from purposeful, there were the “disengaged,” in which 25% of the young people were categorized as such. Disengaged, or in other words non-purposeful, represented individuals who show
no signs of seeking anything remotely purposeful. They have no long-term goals and they may celebrate a “let-the-chips-fall-where-they-may” orientation to the future.

In addition to purposeful and disengaged, Damon (2008) also identified dreamers (25%) and dabblers (31%); dreamers were defined as individuals that have purposeful aspirations but they have taken few steps to act upon those aspirations, and dabblers signified individuals that have actively tried out a number of potentially purposeful pursuits, but without a clear sense of why they are doing so or whether they will sustain these interest into the future.

In analysis of this study, one clear finding suggested that there is a huge importance for parents, teachers, and adults as a whole to address purpose with adolescents. Damon (2008) summarized:

Purpose in life can be facilitated and developed; we should not leave such discoveries to chance. Individuals who understand and are aware of purpose are more likely to survive and thrive. They have formulated clear aspirations for their future. They are strongly motivated, full of energy, optimistic, and they are happy. In addition, these individuals are compassionate and many times agents of change as political leaders or advocates for social justice. On the other hand, individuals who lack purpose in life are more likely to aimlessly drift. They are characterized by indecision, confusion, and ambivalence. They could face depression, lack of connectedness, and feel a sense of emptiness.

Research in clinical psychology has linked youth purpose in life to psychological health. Zika and Chamberlain (1992) found that students are less likely to be depressed, hopeless, or anxious if they have identified a life purpose. Similarly Reker, Peacock, and Wong (1987) indicated that students with purpose are better able to cope with developmental crises. Additionally research has shown that there is a positive relationship between having identified a purpose in life and the overall physical health and well being in students. “Students having an identified purpose in life may not feel
the need to attend to their temporary crises with the use of alcohol and drugs, and are more unlikely to use these substances” (Reker et al, 1987, p. 46). Bundick and Tirri (2013) studied youth purpose and positive youth development in students from the United States and Finland. Findings from the studied showed that purpose is a key promotive factor of positive development in adolescence.

Gurian (2009) utilized the lens of purpose in life with adolescent males. He believed that males, now more than ever, are showing a loss of a purposeful boyhood and manhood. Millions of them are losing interest in areas such as school, service to others, care for family, responsible and honorable work, and the search for a successful life. Many are maturing late, if ever, and for many there is a sense of entitlement which paralyzes their efforts to grow up. Some engage in criminal activity in order to fill a void, and he argued that video games are creating a false sense of success where boys are spending two to three hours a day playing violent video games. According to Gurian, video games are taking the place of things of actual worth, such as homework, service work, chores, athletics, contemplation in nature, and worship in community.

Additionally Gurian tapped into brain research and made the point that inside every male’s brain is the drive to be purposeful and heroic. His research strived to show that our culture under-nurtures this intense drive in males and this outcome is not intentional, but perhaps a result of our society’s focus in other areas outside of youth purpose. And therefore Gurian believed that our culture absolutely needs boys to grow up on time, and find their purposes in life. Within his writings he has identified seven science-and research-based principles that ultimately assist parents in facilitating life-purpose in males.
Benson (2008) created the term SPARKS and argued the importance of SPARKS in the lives of teens. He defined SPARKS as the “hidden flames in kids that light their proverbial fire, get them excited, tap into their true passions; they motivate and inspire; they can be musical, athletic, intellectual, academic, relational; they can get kids going on a positive path, steering them into making a difference in the world and away from self-defeating or dangerous paths; and SPARKS when they are known and acted on, help youth come to the life-changing insight that ‘my life has a purpose’” (p. 2).

All in all, Benson believed that SPARKS have the power to change the course of a teenager’s life for the better. “Allowing young people to follow and develop their sparks can open up other dimensions inside them that they didn’t even know were there” (p.12).

In some of the most current youth purpose research many studies seek to analyze who are the adolescents that show high levels of purpose and what qualities and characteristics make up their daily lives. Bronk, Finch, and Talib (2010) presented in-depth interviews establishing the prevalence of purpose among a sample of high ability adolescents and compared it to the prevalence of purpose among a sample of typical youth. This was the first empirical study of purpose among high ability youth. In this case results revealed that high ability youth were NOT significantly more likely to commit to pro-social purpose than were more typical adolescents (p. 142). On the same token, researchers found that “particularly strong academic abilities are NOT required or even preferred for the pursuit of purpose” (Bronk et al., 2010, p. 142). Bronk (2005) supported this same conclusion that youth with high levels of purpose varied widely in terms of their academic achievement. Bronk et al. (2010) explained all of these results as such:
Educational settings specifically designed to cater to the needs of high ability youth may send an implicit message that students should be highly concerned with promoting their own welfare and best interests. That is the aim, after all, of the special schools they attend. This tendency may help explain, in part, why high ability early adolescents espoused self-oriented aims earlier than more typical youth and why high ability youth failed to demonstrate purpose more often than typical youth. Of course, these settings could be altered to more intentionally foster purpose and a pro-social concern for matters beyond the self. (p. 142)

Malin, Reilly, Quinn, and Moran (2013) explored youth purpose in a qualitative, cross sectional study of four age groups (6th grade, 9th grade, 12th grade, and college sophomores or juniors). The results suggested that development of purpose in adolescence is not a linear process, as young people lose and gain for different dimensions of purpose at different times. There is a developmental story of purpose which occurs during transitions within stages of adolescence. This research provided specific findings arguing that “middle school youth desired to be empathic; high school youth focused on finding a role to engage their purpose; high school graduates focused on re-evaluating their priorities through transitions; and college students focused on developing pathways to support their purpose” (p.1).

Bronk and Finch (2010) also analyzed youth with purpose and compared them to youth with meaning, and to youth with neither purpose nor meaning in their lives. The study found that “young people who were drawn to long-term aims, that could have an impact on the broader world, represented the same young people who were most likely to be searching for and to have identified a purpose for their lives” (Bronk & Finch, 2010, p. 42).

Researchers have argued that committing to an inspiring purpose in life is also an important component of healthy identity development for adolescents. Bronk (2011) analyzed eight highly purposeful youth in order to better understand how identity and
purpose develop together. The findings indicated that purpose helped foster identity formation, identity formation reinforced purposeful commitments, and purpose and identity are overlapping constructs. Bronk concludes:

Fostering a sense of purpose among students is also likely to facilitate identity formation. By helping young people identify and foster the skills needed to work toward issues that inspire them, parents, educators, and others concerned about young people’s welfare will also be helping them develop a positive identity, which is key to psychological well being. (p. 42)

Bronk’s (2011) study also shared the narratives of these eight purpose exemplars and their testimonies provided more understanding into each individual’s uniqueness with regard to their purpose. One individual of the study was involved with the building of wells in Uganda, which started as a personal inquiry but later led to the development of a non-profit organization. Another participant was involved in the development of oil recycling centers, which sprouted as a result of environmental science classes held at the university. The participant shared, “In order to make positive change in the world, find something you are passionate about and then take the steps to act.” Bronk (2011) found that all of these exemplars of purposeful youth were able to connect passion with pro-social aim and did not give up in the face of difficulty.

Damon et al., (2003), in a look at beyond-the-self conceptualizations of purpose, argued that, “Young people who express purpose, in the sense of a dedication to causes greater than the self, show high degrees of religiosity, consolidated identities, and deeper senses of meaning than those who do not experience purpose. In addition, the value of purpose to the self continues well beyond the adolescent period—indeed, throughout the rest of the life-span” (p.8). Purpose in life can serve as a powerful source of long term
motivation, which ultimately impacts the directionality of young people’s lives (Damon et al., 2003; Damon, 2008; Benson, 2006).

Overall the examination of the past research confirms that purpose in the lives of adolescents is salient and important. Research has argued that purpose is available to all youth regardless of their demographic categorization (Damon, 2008). However, demographic categories can constrain or enable what purposes are possible for youth to pursue, which purpose they select for themselves, the context in which they engage their purposes, and the social norms they use to evaluate their progress (Massey, Gebhardt, & Garnefski, 2008). Therefore, past and current research calls upon the responsibility that our society faces reinforcing the need to assist adolescent populations in the enhancement and development of their purpose in life.

**Developing/Enhancing/Facilitating Purpose in Educational Practices**

The purpose of education, traced in Western literature for centuries, continues to be articulated within today’s discourse. Perspectives about education and its purpose vary and the arguments include: to provide individuals with the necessary tools so that they can function in everyday life; to prepare students to be able to fully participate as in the democracy of this country; to address the anxieties of social disorder; to make advancements in technology and all levels of intellectual commerce; to provide equality among social classes and upward mobility; to develop individuals who are able to participate fully in today’s industry and the workforce; to provide moral instruction in developing well rounded young people. Nevertheless, very little of today’s discourse revolves around the school’s role to develop and foster purpose within youth. Purpose in
life pedagogies, without a doubt, are lacking and are less of a priority in today’s schools. Damon (2008) argued:

Students need schools that are more than test-prep training grounds. They need schools that stir their imaginations and give them a chance to discover their deepest and most enduring interests. During their crucial formative years, they need schools that help them decide what kind of person they wish to become. Ultimately, they need schools that provide knowledge, mentoring, and encouragement that will help them identify their own moral north star, a compelling purpose to guide them through their journey in life. (pp. 172 -173)

R. Kessler, in The Soul of Education, reaffirmed that adolescence is a time when big questions begin to surface with “volcanic urgency.” She said that, “Questions about meaning and purpose in their lives are so deep” (p.58). She offered a viewpoint that questions why educators rarely welcome “big questions” into the classroom. “What are the consequences for students when schools exclude their quest for meaning from the curriculum”(p.60)? Kessler goes on to mention that if students lack meaning and purpose in their lives, then they are less motivated to learn. And as a preventative factor for loss of meaning, teachers must help students to find their own motivation. Renate and Geoffrey Caine (1997) are quoted “Deep meanings are the source of most intrinsic motivation….They are the source of our reasons to keep going even when we do not understand”(p. 112).

Bundick, Yeager, King and Damon (2009) suggested that when adolescents think about what they want to accomplish in life, they may see how their lives are meaningful and as a result be more inspired to learn so that they can be equipped to make a contribution and pursue their purpose in life. In tracing back to the research on adolescent development, Erickson (1968) reminded us that the adolescent identity asks the question “who am I?” And in looking beyond “who am I?” educators should also address the
development of purpose in life by asking the question “what am I here for?” “Both purpose and identity processes may be related and lead some young to experience heightened eudaimonic well-being and show enhanced motivation to learn” (Bunidick et al., 2009, p. 6). Damon (2008) also supported this research and argued that promoting purpose may lead to successful youth development by preventing the problems of “drift” and listlessness, signaled by the high rates of high school dropouts (Brown, Moore, & Bzostek, 2003).

As analyzed in comparison to other psychological constructs, it is clear that purpose does not develop on its own. It must be discovered, fostered, pursued, enhanced, realized, and actualized with the support of caring adults in a variety of realms. Here it becomes clear that schools play a significant role in being the most critical developmental domain in the lives of youth (Eccles & Roeser, 2011).

Research has challenged schools to provide engaging curriculum that is relevant to each student’s purpose and as a result gains will occur in student achievement (Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008; Fredericks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; National Research Council and the Institutes of Medicine, 2004). When students take on a purpose in life and connect it to their daily lives, schoolwork and academia encompass a certain relevance that acts as an important source of achievement motivation (Damon, 2009). Simmons (1950) found that clearly purposeful undergraduates tended to value intellectualism, responsibility, and self control. These values were found to engage students in maximizing their success and allowing them to reach their educational goals. In educational settings it was also found that identifying a purpose in life is linked to a student’s desire to be actively involved in social situations and leadership roles (Tinto,
Tinto suggested that student involvement supports higher retention rates and purpose therefore has implications in our schools. Yarnell (1971) similarly argued that students experience enjoyment in planning and organizing events, and therefore, the development of a purpose in life may provide salient solutions to factors such as high school drop out rates, achievement gaps, etc.

There continues to be a depth of research regarding purpose and psychological correlates, however research about instructional and social supports with regards to purpose development tends to be lacking. Only recently have researchers analyzed the social supports in the environment that help shape purpose. Moran, Bundick, Malin, and Reilly (2013) conducted a study of youth’s perspectives of social support as it is related to pursuing one’s individualized life aims. They found that family support of a youth’s purpose was foundational. However, school was a social support that was also found to be a critical domain. Youth with purposes were more likely to perceive and integrate support, and school was a place that clarified the “compass” aspect of purpose.

Bundick & Tirri (2013), in a current paper, explored the role that school teachers have in fostering purpose. Through a survey, researchers sought to better understand the role of teachers toward promoting purpose and the benefits of purpose toward a broader positive youth development. Findings indicated that teachers have the capacity to foster purpose especially through particular competencies. These competencies included: teaching for the understanding of the importance of one’s engagements (Teaching why a lesson/task is important); teaching for future planning (Teaching how to plan for the future). When students learned the importance of a task or lesson, they were more likely to identify with a life purpose as well as be more goal-oriented. When students perceived
teachers to teach them to plan for their futures, they were more likely to be goal-driven. In the end, Bundick & Tirri (2013) stated, “It is incumbent for teachers to serve to enhance their capacity for relationships with their students marked by knowledge and supportiveness of each students goals” (p. 31).

Koshy and Mariano (2011) presented emerging data that also argued the significant role that teachers play in the development of purpose. But in addition to teachers, Kerperlman and Pittman (2001) found that purpose was enacted depending on being able to find peers with similar goals who provide useful, expectations, feedback, and opportunities to engage. Again we find school as a potential place to foster these relationships for the support of each individual’s purpose.

Mariano, Going, Schrock, and Sweeting (2011) studied youth purpose and the perception of social supports among African-American girls. Forty-six middle school girls from the southeastern United States were a part of the research showing how society’s institutions and social sources like parents, peers, and school, support purpose among minority girls. The findings articulated that “African–American girls in this study experience the same types of purpose forms as adolescents of other ethnic groups” (p. 933). The findings of the study also showed that “social supports does indeed impact adolescent purpose and highlights the central role of the school context in influencing purpose” (p. 936).

D. Shamah (2011) researched high school students from a rural community and found that communities play a significant role in supporting, facilitating, and providing youth with opportunities that foster a strong sense of purpose. Shamah found that out-of-school activities and community based activities, along with work experiences were all
important for developing a strong sense of purpose. Additionally, Shamah discussed the role intergenerational dialogue and the impact of intergenerational relationships had in fostering purpose. This study on rural communities and levels of youth purpose presented the argument that it is less about a community being rural or urban, but more about the opportunities (activities inside and outside school, employment, relationships, and dialogue) that exist within a community for youth.

In addition to social supports, Koshy and Mariano (2011) addressed the need to uncover the instructional opportunities that teach specifically for purpose which are absent from academic journals. There has been minimal research on potential interventions that develop a strong sense of youth purpose within educational settings. Dik, Steger, Gibson, and Peisner (2011) studied “Make Your Work Matter” which is a new brief intervention designed to help adolescents explore, discover, and enact a sense of purpose in their early career development. Within this intervention students engaged in a three-module-lesson activity intended to cultivate purpose. There was no significant measures found when analyzing purpose, however Make Your Work Matter paves the way for larger-scale trials of purpose-promoting intervention strategies.

Pizzolato, Brown, and Kanney (2011) attempted to analyze interventions fostering purpose, and through this research study they examined the role of purpose and internal control as a mechanism for positive youth development and academic achievement. The intervention aimed to improve perceptions of control and purpose, and it included 209 low-income high school students and engaged them in seven dialogue sessions. Utilizing an intervention rooted in relationships and dialogue, the findings indicated that it is possible to enhance a student’s sense of purpose through a short-term intervention. The
intervention increased a student’s level of purpose, internal control, and led to better academic achievement. Pizzolato, et al., (2011) shared, “targeted interventions focusing on both purpose and internal control may serve as a potential means of fostering academic achievement among youth in high risk academic environments” (p. 85).

In support, much of the current research regarding interventions simply calls for dialogue opportunities regarding purpose. Bundick (2011) found that just by giving the participants of his study a survey regarding purpose, it seemed to raise their level of purpose. Mariano (2011) discussed other practical ways that educators can support youth purpose in and outside classrooms. Schools can provide numerous opportunities for students in introducing and enhancing youth purpose through: action research projects, games, collective plans of action, service activities, community purpose development, helping students connect their personally meaningful goals with contributions to something greater than themselves, apprenticeships, extracurricular activities, and more. Educational settings can provide the venue for these discussions, events, and ideas, and more importantly schools can place youth in positions of responsibility, leadership, and decision making in order to promote an ownership and personalization of youth purpose opportunities.

Educators have the capacity to implement this purpose curriculum. As such, Koshy and Mariano (2011) reminded us how academic subject matter can integrate purpose into curriculum through purpose driven discussions, experiential and service learning opportunities, and goal directed activity engagement with like minded peers and adults. Bundick (2011) provided another method of introducing purpose by engaging students in reflective exercises and discussions in the classroom related to purpose.
Bundick argued that these opportunities increase purpose, goal directedness, and greater life satisfaction.

Barber, Mueller, and Ogata (2013) added to this conversation by analyzing volunteerism as purpose with youth in educational settings. Their longitudinal study examined factors that showed whether adolescents participating in civic engagement activities would report similar participation six years later. Results found that individuals who participated in a combination of voluntary and school required community-based civic activities were more likely to continue to be engaged in these activities six years later thus promoting volunteerism in the school setting as a means of fostering youth purpose. Damon et. al. (2003) framed purpose as indicative of continued long-term participation in community engagement activities and this study implies that purpose is more likely to be seen among individuals who constructively use their time, engage in traditional civic minded activities (or in individual sorts of activities), and that it is best cultivated through volunteer activities with the support of school.

Other research about the development/enhancement/facilitation of purpose in educational settings introduces concepts such as optimal experience and flow theory. Optimal experience is a deep sense of enjoyment that is long cherished and that becomes a landmark in memory for what life should be like (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Optimal experience relates to purpose because when educators align students with their sense of purpose, then the students have more of a potential to experience optimal experiences in school. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) provided information on two different kinds of experiences: Autoelic and exotelic. “Autotelic derives from Greek words auto – self and telos meaning goal. Therefore, autotelic is a self contained activity, one that is done not
with expectation but simply because doing it is the reward. Exotelic is done for external reasons only” (p.69). Schools are places that overwhelmingly tap into exotelic experiences and like Csikszentmihalyi stated, “so much of what we ordinarily do has no value in itself, and we do it because we have to do it, or because we expect some future benefit from it” (p. 69).

Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, and Whalen (1993) provided support by stating that when people enjoy a specific activity and are not distracted by external considerations, they will keep doing it longer and will approach it more creatively than if the same activity were extrinsically rewarded and not under the person’s control. If students are given an opportunity to enhance and develop purpose in schools then learning could potentially become engaging and rewarding. Csikszentmihalyi affirmed that “the best moments in our lives, are not passive, receptive, relaxing times; the best moments usually occur when a person’s body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile” (pg.6). Therefore educators have the potential and ability to provide a curriculum that stretches students minds and allows them to tap into their purpose in life, ultimately creating flow, optimal experiences, student engagement, and a love for learning.

Past and current research in the area of youth purpose indicates that more research is needed on how educational institutions foster various types of purpose in young people. Equally important, research now is able to shift in multiple directions as the term education and educational settings is being redefined and transformed. Today we are finding that the term education can no longer be perceived through the same curricular, pedagogical, and spacial lens that has been utilized for the last two centuries. S. Mitra
has challenged the paradigm which argues that students learn only from the direct instruction of a teacher. His research coined minimally invasive education, utilizes the “power of collaboration and the natural curiosity of children to catalyze learning” (Hole in the Wall Education, 2013). Additionally, advocates of Independent Project schools also show us that curriculum can be 100% student driven, created, implemented, and assessed. Therefore, the varieties of definitions and examples of education and educational settings allow the introduction, implementation, development, and facilitation of youth purpose to take on new and innovative ways.

**Bringing Together Purpose**

Purpose in all its forms, a Western perspective or an indigenous concept, has implications for new tomorrows. It connects us to our true reason for being here, and has implications for healing and healthy development in our communities. From research and ancient teachings we know that purpose is experienced by people of all walks of life including various ages, ethnicities, academic levels, genders, and purposes, all of which take on a variety of causes.

Ultimately, we are challenged with the knowledge that purpose is a critical teaching, serving as ancestral wisdom, a form of medicine necessary for positive growth, healing, and revitalization, and if provided in schools it offers personal and academic transformations. Additionally, we are challenged with the gaps in research related to sacred purpose- its definitions, derivations, stories, and implications; youth purpose and how it is developed as a result of interventions and social supports; youth purpose and how it is developed and implemented within the changing paradigms of education and educational settings.
CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Study Design

Addressing the lack of literature and data concerning sacred purpose as it relates to Indigenous knowledge, adolescence, and the educational system, this dissertation set out to give voice to Indigenous elders and their stories, teachings, definitions, and derivations all in regards to sacred purpose. Additionally this research set out to further operationalize and contextualize these teachings to inform the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor and to guide the development of a curriculum within educational domains.

I utilized a qualitative Indigenous research methods design and it is the type of design that incorporates the values and beliefs of Indigenous communities in its design, methods, and analysis (Lavallee, 2009). There are additional criteria for Indigenous research which include: The core values, beliefs, and healing practices of the Indigenous community are incorporated throughout the research; the research must develop an ethical relationship with the community; the research equally involves all partners in the research process and recognizes the unique strengths that each brings; the research topic is of importance to the community; the researcher’s personal growth is an important end product; and there must be an involvement of our elders because they carry the traditional teachings, ceremonies, and stories of all our relations. Every single element of the above criterion were addressed and utilized within this research dissertation.

In addition, indigenous research also holds accountable the dissemination of data so that is appropriate for the community. As the case of this research dissertation qualitative data was collected through the conversational method (Bishop, 1999; Kovach,
This qualitative data, namely interviews and the collection of stories and teachings, explored the definitions, constructions, and derivations of sacred purpose among four Indigenous elders. Conversational method utilizes open-ended, semi-structured interview questions to gather data where the participant and researcher co-create knowledge. Kovach (2010) informs that the purpose of this approach is to gather knowledge based on oral story telling tradition congruent with an Indigenous paradigm. “It involves a dialogic participation that holds a deep purpose of sharing story as a means to assist others. It is relational at its core” (Kovach, 2010, p. 42).

To make meaning of the data, I employed 2 processes: condensed conversation and thematic coding. The reason for using this form of qualitative data was to provide a deeper understanding and a more holistic picture of the study and it reflected a more Indigenous approach to knowledge sharing (Kovach, 2006). Indigenous scholars within and outside the Canadian context have referenced the use of story, through conversation, as a culturally organic means to gather knowledge within research (Thomas, 2005; Bishop, 1999).

The phases of this study included: 1: Pre – Entry Phase: Acquiring access to Indigenous elders; 2: In Phase: Acquiring Entry and trust; 3: Through Phase: Conversations with elders; 4: Beyond Phase: Conceptualizing input from elders to construct curriculum principles of sacred purpose; and 5: Constructing Phase: Thematic Phase. Table 3 outlines how the design of the study was structured in order to obtain data to answer the research questions at each distinct phase in the study. The table outlines the content of each phase, the procedure implemented, and the outcome of each phase.
### Table 3

**Study Design**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
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</table>
| **Pre-Entry Phase (1): Acquiring Access to Indigenous Elders** | • The sharing of this research in various circles (academic & ceremonial)  
• Gathering a list of elders based on criterion sampling: gender balance, geographical, community identification, embodiment of indigenous epistemology, axiology, ontology, close travel proximity to researcher, understanding and knowledge of sacred purpose  
• Indigenous protocols  
• Brief communication and introduction of myself (my “*palabra*”) and the research agenda | • Four consenting Indigenous elders who meet all criteria.  
• Contact and association |
| **In Phase (2): Acquiring Entry and Trust** | • Formal introduction of myself (my “*palabra*”) and the research  
• Communication through conversational method in the form of phone calls, emails, in-person  
• Indigenous protocols | • Established trust and access to conversations |
| **Through Phase (3): Conversations with Elders** | • Meetings with elders using conversational method (time flexible)  
• Main Research Questions – What are the stories /teachings/ elements of sacred purpose  
How does sacred purpose, according to Indigenous elders, contribute to adolescent development?  
How can the teachings/elements of sacred purpose, based on the conversations with elders, be actualized in education? | • Conversation/Interview transcripts  
• Re-checking with elders on accuracy of conversation |
Table 3 (continued)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beyond Phase (4): Conceptualizing Input</td>
<td>• Condensing the stories</td>
<td>• Each conversation was shortened and the most relevant teachings were</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from Elders to Construct Curriculum</td>
<td>• Analysis for themes</td>
<td>identified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principles of Sacred Purpose</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Thematic coding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructing Phase (5): Thematic</td>
<td>• Elder agreement of thematic codes.</td>
<td>• Finalized thematic codes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Elder agreement of story manuscripts</td>
<td>• Finalized retelling of stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Elder agreement of condensed stories</td>
<td>• Finalized condensed stories</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>Big Questions</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are the themes and elements (as a result of the coding processes and the reflective researcher narratives that were defined) accurate and are you in agreement with them being reflections of sacred purpose? Are you in agreement with the accuracy of how the stories have been recorded? How can the main coded themes and stories be operationalized in the context of education?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration of Qualitative Results</td>
<td>• Triangulation of results</td>
<td>• Conceptual Model of themes - Codices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement of Qualitative Results</td>
<td>• Elder agreement of visual model</td>
<td>• Discussion</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Implications</td>
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</tbody>
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Table 3 reads as follows: The first column indicates the phases of this research study (Pre-Entry, In Phase, Through Phase, Beyond Phase, Constructing Phase). The middle column of Table 3 explains the procedures included within the phase. For example, within the Pre-Entry Phase I was required to find four Indigenous elders who met the criterion while utilizing Indigenous protocols. Lastly, the column titled,
“Outcome” is straight-forward; it indicates the overall outcomes of the phase and the outcomes of the procedures.

Pre-Entry Phase 1: Acquiring access to indigenous elders. For this phase, co-researchers were purposefully selected to provide data related to the research questions of this study (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2003). The target population studied were Indigenous elders living in Southern and Northern California and/or surrounding states and countries. Criterion sampling was utilized and based on the following:

- Gender
- close or somewhat close travel proximity to researcher
- variety of geographical locations
- community identification as a significant elder and holder of Indigenous knowledge; and these elders must embrace and practice an Indigenous epistemology, axiology, and ontology. *Note: Elder is not defined by age, but by community identification as such.
- Familiarity and willingness to share teachings about sacred purpose

Elders were selected by gender in order to ensure a balance of perspectives and also it is within Indigenous protocols and epistemologies to always represent a balance of both female and male nations. Due to travel expenses and a limited timeframe, I was limited in my selection of elders to individuals living in somewhat close proximity. However, despite close proximity, elders lived in different geographical locations in order to gather diverse perspectives from individuals of different lands/areas/barrios/neighborhoods/regions.
Additionally, I used word-of-mouth communication among relatives and various academic and ceremonial circles in order to brainstorm a list of strong research candidates. To be considered for this research, participants/indigenous elders had to be identifiable within the community as individuals who possess strong levels of Indigenous knowledge, wisdom, teachings, stories, life experiences, and additionally individuals who are committed to the sharing and passing on of Indigenous ways of life. Not only were these Indigenous elders to be recognized as informal/formal leaders within their various communities, but they also needed to be active in their daily practice of Indigenous ways, living alongside the land, and sharing a lens of respect, reciprocity, and obligation to all around them. The last criteria was that the Indigenous elders needed to be familiar with the concept and construct of sacred purpose, and be open to passing on the teachings regarding it.

This process of acquiring research participants was a very complex task. It took time, it required travel, it focused on relationships and trust, it relied on effective word-of-mouth communication, and it was influenced by my lived experiences and understanding of indigenous protocols which have been a result of twenty years of actively re-immersing myself into indigenous epistemologies, ways of life, and ceremony.

When I initially began the process of acquiring elder’s names for this research, I was able to gather a handful of suggestions from various conversations. Due to the many relationships that I have nurtured throughout my journey of re-indigenization, I contacted guides, teachers, and mentors who were extremely helpful in suggesting research participants for the study. At one point in Phase 1 I had a list of nine elders who fit the
criteria for the study. As anticipated, the list of potential elders was funneled down for various reasons. Two of them lived far into Mexico and one lived in Canada, and I decided to eliminate them as potential participants because I was unable to travel to these locations due to travel expenses and a lack of time; another 2 elders were from Northern California and even though they overwhelmingly met the criteria, I was unable to acquire their participation - health was a factor for one of them and I couldn’t get into contact with another despite multiple attempts.

In the end, and after an extended amount of time and patience, I was able to finalize four Indigenous elders who all fit the criteria of the study, agreed to the terms of the research, and who had so much to offer in regards to sacred purpose. The participants for this study were (listed alphabetically): Angelbertha Cobb, Roberto Rodriguez, Grace Sesma, and Jerry Tello.

Angelbertha Cobb currently resides in Sacramento, California. She is a respected elder and teacher of the Mexica traditions as well as the mother of nineteen children. She was born in the Sierras outside of Puebla, Mexico. Recognized as well as a community leader, she has organized around issues related to equality for the Mexican and Chicano community, and she has dedicated her life to teaching others about culture. Through this process, she founded and directed her own Danza Azteca group and she continues to teach in the community and in the university about the history, philosophy, stories, and the true artistic treasures of the Mexica people.

Roberto Rodriguez, currently resides in Tucson, Arizona, however he was born in Aguascalientes, Mexico. He is recognized in the community (specifically Tucson) as an elder, wisdom carrier, and spiritual/political activist. Though still recognized as a
Chicano Indigenous Elder, Roberto Rodriguez focuses his identity around being an hombre de *maiz* (Man of corn), and a good portion of his work has focused on *maiz* teachings. He is also a published writer, educator, scholar, and researcher with contributions in the areas of education, youth development, race and identity, indigenous research, immigration, violence and torture victimization, and more.

Griselda “Grace” Sesma was born in Mexicali, Baja California, Mexico and is Mexican of Yaqui and Kumiai ancestry. She is acknowledged in the community as a “*maestra*;” she is a *curandera* who carries and passes on the teachings of healing and medicine. Her teachings today are rooted in the Mayan Mexica and Zapotec traditions. Grace is not only a *curandera* but also takes on many diverse leadership roles in community outreach and social action programs.

Maestro Jerry Tello traces his lineage back from Agua Calientes and Chihuahua, Mexico, to San Antonio, Texas and then raised in South Central Los Angeles. He remembers his grandmothers and mother using traditional medicine to heal their family and community, which he now recognizes as the beginning of his teaching. He today is an internationally recognized author and expert in various areas including trauma, culturally based healing, rites of passage, fatherhood, family strengthening, community peace and mobilization and culturally based violence prevention/intervention issues. He published articles, curricula, children’s books and cd’s to include a CD on Recovering your SACRED PURPOSE. He is also recognized for his efforts in passing on Chicano Indigenous Based teachings. He is the co-founder of the National Compadres Network (established in 1988), the director of the National Latino Fatherhood and Family Institute and directs the Sacred Circles Center in Whittier, California.
Phase (2): Acquiring entry and trust. There were many preparations and protocols that needed to be addressed within the study. Formal contact had to be established where each co-researcher was provided with a briefing on the study which included a short narrative and brief contextual statement behind the research question, as well as the actual research questions. Additionally, I provided a more in-depth introduction of myself focusing on my work in the community and the positive relationships that I have developed and nurtured in academic and ceremonial domains. Lastly, a cultural protocol of offering tobacco (or other gift) to the elders took place. Within Indigenous protocols I have always been taught that elders are critical wisdom carriers within our communities and their lived experiences are sacred teachings and lessons for us all. Their understandings and sometimes even their age, align them strongly with the Creator and with the surrounding sacred elements. When you meet them you offer them love, a gift of tobacco/sage/copal. This offering is a sign of reciprocity, which happens when one is asking or requesting something of someone. In this case it was respectful and appropriate to offer tobacco as something in return for their participation and sacrifice to the study’s development. All of these factors, as well as others, provided stronger relationships with my co-researchers and specifically deeper levels of trust with each other.

Phase (3): Through phase: Conversations with the elders. Once the co-researchers were selected, I traveled to a mutual agreed upon location in order to conduct the conversations/interviews. In most cases I traveled to the co-researcher’s home as is aligned with cultural protocols. This was an attempt to make the conversation/interviews easily accessible and in an environment that was comfortable for the elder. Nevertheless,
the co-researchers had the ability to choose and dictate their expectations for the place/space where the conversation took place.

Within Indigenous protocols I have always been taught that elders are critical wisdom carriers within our communities and their lived experiences are honored teachings for us all. When you come across an elder you offer them a greeting, a gift of tobacco/sage/copal, you make sure that they are comfortable, and you offer them your patience, ears, and humility. With every conversation I made sure to honor this protocol.

Though some variation occurred at times, the process and procedures within this phase were consistent. I began each conversation/interview with a thank you statement directed at the co-researcher. I assured that the elders felt comfortable, safe, and I offered them my patience, active listening, and humility. I also guaranteed that there would confidentiality if needed. I engaged with the co-researcher in the conversational method in order to collect data. This method is congruent with an Indigenous paradigm and Kovach (2010) further suggested this method is to “shift the power of the researcher in controlling the research process and outcome” (p. 82), and allow for greater co-researcher voice. I utilized open-ended, semi-structured interview questions to gather data so the co-researcher and myself could co-create knowledge. Questions during the conversations consisted of various reflections based on sacred purpose. At times the conversational questions were modified so that these questions were appropriate for each qualitative method. More specifically, these questions were used to guide ongoing conversations and focused on the elders’ stories, teachings, definitions, derivations of sacred purpose, how sacred purpose contributes to adolescent development, and how the teachings and elements of sacred purpose can be actualized in education.
The conversations were very much a combination of reflection, story, and dialogue. In order to promote ongoing conversations, I allowed as much time needed for the elders to respond. I did not make a co-researcher (elders) respond, and only had them give their input if they were comfortable doing such. When I felt that the co-researcher had representative answers to the questions, we then moved onto further questions. At the end of each conversation I mentioned to the elders that if they had anything else to add and explain, they could write it down and/or call in the case that they had some ideas they were unable to express within the conversation. I then thanked them for participating and the conversation was culminated in various ways, but most commonly with the sharing of a meal, coffee/tea, etc. During this time, personal connections continued to be established exploring topics unrelated to the research such as family, ceremony, politics, philosophy, etc.

The collection of data within this qualitative portion of the study was audio recorded and I took notes in a journal. The four elders gave informed consent regarding the recording of each qualitative session. Audio recording assisted me in obtaining all appropriate information and accurately transferred all of the participants’ voices for transcription.

**Beyond Phase (4): Conceptualizing input from elders to construct curriculum principles of sacred purpose.** Data from the conversations were shaped into two methods of analysis: coded themes and condensed stories. All conversations were transcribed into word processing files. Once transcribed into these files, I engaged in the process of “identifying the qualities and themes manifested in the data” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 51). In identifying themes, I drew upon the tradition of transcribing, reading,
reflecting, identifying themes, re-reading transcripts, and then creating themes to allow the stories to speak. I used an open coding process. The presentation of findings in thematic codes (codices) reflected an analysis of the entirety of the data from the original verbatim transcripts. “Grouping themes is useful because it illustrates points of commonality further identifying common themes from this research and also makes it really obvious that it is undisputed” (Kovach, 2010, p. 44). In addition, I utilized this thematic grouping process because from a pedagogical perspective it made the data more transferable to the education context and to the pedagogical frameworks.

The other form of data analysis consisted of the creation of condensed stories. I used the original verbatim transcriptions to create condensed conversations of the data. Condensed conversations were an attempt to ensure that the teachings of the elders were flowing, authentic, and provided voice. Kovach (2006) recommends this method of qualitative analysis as “It is a traditional approach to using stories as a means for teaching and presenting data, and in this way it allows for the reader to interpret the conversation from their own vantage point and take the teachings that they need” (Kovach, 2010, p. 45). Kovach (2006) also argues that this format of analyzing data reflects a more Indigenous approach to knowledge sharing. “Presenting conversations in their organic form as stories allows the reader to engage with the ideas, form their own interpretative perspective, and find their own teachings from the conversations” (Kovach, 2006, p. 97).

I decided to utilize both thematic coding and condensed stories because it was useful to have knowledge organized in a couple of ways that offer the research different entry points to engage it. Smith (1997) discusses methodologies and stresses that it
doesn’t need to be an either/or situation. My approach to present the conversations in story form, and to present the data in thematic groupings was a way of modeling my dual epistemology as an indigenous scholar-researcher.

**Constructing Phase (5): Thematic.** During this phase I had the opportunity to once again share dialogue/conversation with the co-researchers. Much of the same protocols and procedures took place similar to Phase 3 such as words/gifts of gratitude, the conversational method was utilized, and our relationships strengthened even though these conversations took place via phone and/or email. The main difference of this phase, in comparison to the previous phase, was that there was a focus on analyzing and approving the condensed stories that were created as a result of the conversation transcripts. This phase ensured that the condensed stories were concurrent with what the co-researchers wanted to share. Additionally within this phase there was also the approval of the codices, which were composed of the themes that emerged from the condensed stories. Elder approval of these teaching tablets as well ensured that this research was concurrent with what the research participants wanted to share.

For the most part, the process of sharing the data with each co-researcher and the process of gaining feedback was the same for each co-researcher. After analyzing the collected data (a process described in the Beyond Phase) each elder was mailed and/or emailed the transcripts, condensed stories, and codices. Each were given time to review this collection of data and were instructed to call, write, and email me any feedback. All feedback was taken and reevaluated at the data integration phase.
Credibility and Reliability

In utilizing qualitative methods it was significant to establish both credibility and reliability in order to conduct quality research. Mertens (2005) indicated that when establishing credibility, the researcher must demonstrate internal validity with correspondence between the participants’ perspective and how the researcher portrays their viewpoints (Mertens, 2005). During conversations, I attempted to obtain the co-researchers’ perspectives by providing them with long periods of time, and multiple questions and prompts in order get the participants to discuss, respond, and engage in authentic conversation. The co-researchers decided the duration of these conversations; the conversation simply ended or transitioned when the elder felt that the question and/or prompt had been sufficiently addressed. During these sessions, I used summarizing and clarifying statements to ensure that I was accurately capturing the participants’ voices and intentions.

Additionally, I provided the co-researchers with a copy of the condensed stories and themes from the conversations for their perusal after compiling them in textual format. I sought approval of this collected data to ensure that they were concurrent with what the co-researchers wanted to share. By including this step, the approval of the thematic codes, codices, and condensed conversations, it allowed me to ensure that I was portraying the co-researchers’ voice in a way that was credible and reliable.

Throughout the research process, I also kept a journal that reflected my thoughts, feelings, and reactions so as to better expose, acknowledge, and monitor my personal views and biases. I reviewed the personal journal with an academic colleague to mitigate the impacts of my personal experiences and biases on the data.
As a result of engaging in an Indigenous methodology, there were also some other checks enacted to ensure credibility. In an attempt to show community accountability, I debriefed with other Indigenous scholars throughout the process, both formally and informally, in order to ensure that the research and methodology was done in a “good way.” This step was highly critical because it allowed the research to continue under the umbrella of Indigenous research. It basically means, that no matter the outcome, I could rest assured knowing that I held myself accountable with integrity towards respect, reciprocity, and responsibility.

**Ethical Issues**

I, as the researcher, submitted Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocols to CGU for research with human subjects. This research was considered low risk as all of the participants were voluntary, they were asked to sign a consent form, and all of the participants were adults. Participants received consent forms describing the voluntary status of this study and outlining the guaranteed rights that they had as participants. Participants were given the opportunity to read transcripts, coded themes, and the condensed conversations and given the opportunity to make changes. I asked the participants if they would like to have their names included or if they wished to remain anonymous. They were all given the opportunity to terminate their involvement in the research at any time. The research did not cause any physical discomfort and I provided for cost associated with the research. Participants were not paid but were given small gifts as this is cultural protocol. I kept the data in a secure place, a locked cabinet and/or password-protected computer. The only person who had access to this data (journals and transcripts) was myself, with the exception that each participant had access to his/her data.
which I sent to them. Findings from the study were to be presented during my dissertation defense and after to the community in various forms.

**Researcher’s Resources**

During the initial phase of the study and throughout, I was able to acquire elder trust, participation, and strong relationships for various reasons: my intention of conducting research to benefit my community; my understanding of Indigenous research; my lived experiences around Indigenous ways of being and ceremony; and my grasp of Indigenous protocols. These critical factors allowed me to gain the trust and permission of the co-researchers and overall community. Additionally, because I have developed a rapport with many elders and ceremonial circles (as well as being a Sun Dancer), the co-researchers of this dissertation may have had a deeper level of trust (*confianza*) which ultimately may have allowed them to be more candid and authentic in their responses during our conversations.

Nevertheless, it was also critical for me to keep in mind that simply as a researcher and a doctoral student, a power differential may have existed that could have affected the candidness of the conversations with the co-researchers. I had to continually be aware of this power differential and therefore, it was critical that co-researchers understood that my role during this study was aligned to Indigenous methodologies. The elder, regardless of academic titles, clearly was the teacher and acknowledged wisdom carrier.
CHAPTER 4

Presentation of Findings - Elder Conversations

Introduction

Four Indigenous elders (co-researchers) were selected to be a part of this research dissertation. They were selected based on various criteria consisting of: gender; close or somewhat close travel proximity to researcher; variety of geographical locations; community identification as a significant elder and holder of Indigenous knowledge; they embraced and practiced an Indigenous epistemology, axiology, and ontology; they had a familiarity with and willingness to share teachings about sacred purpose.

The participants in this study included the four elders:

Jerry Tello
Angelbertha ‘Mama’ Cobb
Roberto Cintli Rodriguez
Grace Sesma

Qualitative data was collected through the conversational method (Bishop, 1999; Kovach, 2010). This qualitative data, namely interviews and the collection of stories and teachings, explored the definitions, constructions, and derivations of sacred purpose among these four Indigenous elders. The conversations consisted of hours and hours of dialogue for more than two hundred fifty pages of transcription. Since the research could not incorporate all of this data, I utilized subjectivity in order to explore specific concepts and create it into condensed stories and thematic grouping (eventually codices).

This chapter presents all of the elder conversations. It is organized by elder, and for each one I describe my preparation for our meeting, the teachings each one shared
presented in condensed story and as excerpts from our conversations, and I conclude each with how we parted ways. At the end of this chapter findings are also presented as themes in the form of codices.

**Researcher Trust, Entry, and Preparations: Maestro Jerry Tello**

Maestro Jerry Tello was the first elder that I heard use the words sacred purpose. It was during a training for teachers in 2008 and his presentation triggered much reflection and challenged me to look further into the topic. However, this was not the first time I was exposed to Jerry Tello’s work. I have been utilizing his frameworks, curriculum, and teachings around male youth talking circles (*Hombre Noble*) since 1998.

Gaining entry and trust with Jerry Tello, to some extent, was rather simple. He is visible and accessible in various domains including the Internet and email. I composed an email consisting of an introduction of myself and a basic outline of my research agenda. I sent the email and soon received a confirmation that Maestro Tello would be willing to participate in the study.

There are probably various factors that allowed me to gain entry and trust with Maestro Tello, some including: my *palabra* (level of respect from the community, based on my commitment to youth), my involvement and commitment to sacred ceremonies and families (Redstone Sun Dance, *Izcali Escuela de La Raza*, Peace and Dignity Journeys), my relationships with others who are good friends with Maestro Jerry Tello, and my past interaction with him in the forms of brief emails, Facebook post, and public presentations. But he also shared that he was open to participating in this research because of his intention to pass on the teachings to the next generations and that I approached the research with “good intentions and in a humble way.” I include this
information because it is a reminder that Indigenous research requires strong interconnected relationships, trust, honesty, patience, and good intentions especially with highly sought out elders.

Because Jerry Tello lives in Los Angeles, and in somewhat close proximity to me, I was able to meet with Maestro Tello three times. Our conversations lasted typically an hour and a half, due to the time constraints of Maestro Tello’s busy work schedule. We met at Sacred Circles Center and we also met at his house. Once again within the protocols of Indigenous research, I offered Maestro Jerry some tobacco for his participation. Throughout the visits I also brought him a few different gifts as a gesture of my gratitude. I include this reference to gifts because I want to be transparent about my gratitude, appreciation, and understanding that when we ask for something (especially from our elders) that there is reciprocation – when we take, we also give. What follows is a condensed conversation of my time with Maestro Jerry Tello in regards to his teachings, stories, understandings, and guiding principles of sacred purpose. There were close to sixty pages of transcription, however the transcripts that follow provide an introduction to Maestro Jerry Tello’s teachings of *Ixtli* and *Yolotl*, (which is only one of 4 aspects) specific to sacred purpose fulfilled.

**Jerry Tello’s Teachings of *Ixtli* and *Yolotl*: Sacred Purpose Fulfilled**

RM: So Maestro, can you tell me how your understanding of sacred purpose first came about?

Maestro Tello: As a child I would sit in the presence of my *abuela* (grandmother) as each morning the first thing she did was she connected with the creator. She said her prayers, she turned all of her *santitos* (saints), she lit her candles, and then she would, it’s
almost as if she would gather that spirit. She gathered it, like she was holding it in a
bundle and she brought it over to where I was and in her hands she would give me a
bendición (blessing). She funneled it to me. She inoculated me. “Here mijo (son), let me
connect you because I know that when you get up, you may forget to do it. Let me do it
for you.” The teachings of my abuelita (grandmother) and her blessings each morning
served to acknowledge that each individual is a blessing and has a sacred purpose. And
she connected us, like plugged us in, reminding us that it was true, that concept that if all
of us come from the Creator, then we are still connected to the creator. If we are messing
up or we are not messing up and we are acting right, it -the sacredness and our sacred
purpose- is still there some place. We are sacred. And these same teachings I received
from my mother and other elders as well.
RM: Sacred, that is powerful? I have the same stories, Maestro. Of my abuelita doing
the same; connecting our sacredness through an altar, candles, each day. The elders were
always good at reminding me as well of this. So, how does purpose evolve from this?
Maestro Tello: (Pause to reflect) It’s like when you light some sage, and you see the
smoke. You don’t question what the smoke is going to do. If you light the sage, if you
light the two sacred elements - duality. The sage is earth and the fire is grandfather sun.
So when you light duality, when you put together duality, interconnect duality, you get
creation. Well, what is that smoke for? It is for a reason. You may not know the reason
right away, or you may have intention for the reason but there may be additional reasons,
but you don’t question that there is a reason. In the same way when a child blesses this
world, before the child even arrives here, movement has already happened. In the
mother, sometimes the father. Many times in other people. So purpose has already manifested. It is already... *movimiento* (movement) is already happening.

RM: So we have two concepts here, sacred and purpose? Are these connected or should we perceive them as separate.

Maestro Tello: Sacred purpose is multidimensional. It is physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, about the before, and about the after. Sacred purpose is that you have a lot to rely on. Guidance from energies around you. Knowledge within you. It’s not about intelligence. It is about the connection to your journey, the ancestors, teachings, and your responsibility to moving forward. And when I say journey, I am talking about your whole journey; from where you came from and this has been in the making for generations.

RM: So within Indigenous knowledge, how do you see it differ from Western ways of thought and ways of being?

Maestro: Sacred purpose is not individualistic, not materialistic…. It’s connected to everything around you, *In Tloque Nahuaque* (all is connected), all four directions, and to all relations. And these teachings have been passed on. The ancestors sent you with an intention. “Go do this.” And spirits and relatives make it possible and continue to make it possible for you to see your sacred purpose.

RM: How is each of our sacred purposes different?

Maestro Tello: Our sacredness is granted to us through *In Tloque Nahuaque*, our interconnected sacredness, that is an intricate web of life tying us all together. Sacredness is something that is, in our language, *In Tloque Nahuaque*, it means that all is connected to everything sacred. All of us are sacred, equally. So where sacred purpose may differ
is that all of us have different roles, gifts, …… We all come to this world at different times and with different energies and vibrations around us. These energies and vibrations allow for our differences. You see being born at various times, places, situations, causes the messages, teachings, and cargas (struggles) to be different for everyone. And many of our ways of being are connected to our purpose. The ancestors would say that we are connected to an animal or plant through our spirit. So maybe you are connected to a perro (dog), I don’t know. A dog’s spirit and someone else is a jack rabbit spirit, and someone else is a turtle spirit. So, but, if I expect you to be like me, and your purpose to be mine, it’s ridiculous. When the ancestors sent you here, they sent you here with an intention. Go do this. My belief in what I’ve learned, what I’ve felt, what I’ve dreamed, what I’ve been taught is that everyone that enters this universe comes with a gift, a teaching, a purpose, it’s sacred; it’s not bad. Even the traviesos (troublemakers), there is sacredness to them. Even the skunks. Skunks have a sacredness. We don’t like them because they smell and they smell shit up. Even the porcupines, even the cactus. But if you really check out the skunks they are beautiful. They are truth-sayers. Skunks are truth-sayers. So if it senses danger, everyone (woosh -sound effect) knows. We don’t like people who speak truth like that. Callense (Be quiet). Lots of times the traviesos (troublemakers) are the truth-sayers. So that’s sacred purpose from the skunk, coyote, to the rabbit, to the león (lion), to the eagle. You know is the eagle really more sacred than the crow or pigeon? Yeah we put a label that an eagle flies high, but is it really more sacred than a pigeon?

RM: So I guess this would be a good opportunity to go deeper into the “sacred” element of sacred purpose. Can you tell me more?
Maestro Tello: Sacred purpose is really connected to the teachings of *CARA Y CORAZON* (Face and Heart; *Ixtli and Yolotl* (Nahuatl translation)). These teachings, also known as instructions, have been collected from fourteen volumes of the Florentine Codex and they address the development of one’s character, identity, and roots. The ancestors understood that if the roots of the tree were not well grounded, then the tree would be weak and vulnerable. This identity root, based on the dual concepts of the *CARA Y CORAZON* (face and heart), is reflected in four main values: *dignidad* (dignity), *respeto* (respect), *confianza* (trust) and *cariño* (love). These dual elements of *CARA y CORAZON* reveal the critical formula in order for an individual to live out their sacred purpose.

*Dignidad* (dignity) is simple. You are a blessing. You are a blessing whether you are getting good grades or bad. You’re still a blessing and that is a constant; that doesn’t go away. You got to remember that. *Dignidad* is one of the most powerful teachings, and you see the way we lock that in is how we welcome the spirit when it comes. All ceremonies with a new child should be about welcoming them. You are here. We receive you just the way you are. JUST THE WAY YOUR ARE.

It is critical that a precursor to understanding and finding one’s purpose is the feeling, knowing, accepting, realizing, and actualizing of one’s sacredness. Once you know you are sacred, because below sacred purpose is sacred self, sacred connection. Once you’ve got that, then wherever you are sent, you can fulfill that. So honoring each individual’s sacredness is critical and we have always been doing this. In the Hawaiian culture, in their indigenous ways, one of the important things is when they see you, they greet you by saying, “I see you.” And what that means is that I see all of you - I see that
you represent a family, I see that you represent ancestors. “I see you. Welcome. And it’s not just you, welcome. But it’s ALL OF YOU, WELCOME. I welcome all of you because I see all of you. I see your beauty and I see your pain.” When we see kids in classrooms or in communities. Do we even see them? Or do we already want to take them some place, make them something else, change them? The theory of change, what is that? That becomes the basis for so many writings, movements, intellectual –you know –processes. We already want to change before we even understand what is here or what has come. Can we have a theory of acknowledgement of who we are right now? Can we see each other?

RM: So sacredness, that makes a lot of sense…

Maestro Tello: Our ancestors were so brilliant that they knew that. We have been doing these teachings since the beginning and they are simple. Like when you see a baby you touch them and interconnect with them because it’s the disconnection that brings pain, trauma. It’s when you don’t see the *En Lak’ech* (sacred reflection) in someone else. You are different from them. They’re “that” people. They are dysfunctional. They are less than, they’re deviant. When you judge, people disconnect, then you take away the sacredness. When you touch somebody, we are connected.

RM: OK, so you mention connection and disconnection and how these concepts are related to one’s sacredness. Can you go more into this notion as well?

Maestro Tello: What counters one’s feelings of sacredness is when they go into spaces where they do not feel welcomed. So I am working with a group of folks and the question comes up, “What about LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Queer) kids?” My response is… They are sacred just the way they are. “Can LGBTQ
men come to the circle?” They are sacred just the way they are. They are welcomed just like they are. “How about transgendered?” They are welcomed just the way they are. They are sacred. I mean we don’t need to go through that. That’s a fundamental teaching. One of the ancestors’ wishes was that children would arrive in places where they are welcomed. What produces pain is when they say you are not valued, you are not wanted, you don’t belong here, you are seen as negative. And it is within adolescence that youth innately ask these questions: Am I welcome? Am I supposed to be here? Do I have something to contribute positively to this world? Because the truth of this situation is that when we do not value someone’s existence and we do not see their sacredness then this causes pain. And pain, struggle, wounds are all blockages that give us susto (trauma). It freezes us and blocks our in-sight to our sacred purpose. So this teaching of CARA (FACE) and the element dignidad (dignity) is really about acknowledging that everyone is sacred. We are all blessings regardless if we are doing good or bad.

RM: You mentioned about locking in someone’s sacredness, can you elaborate more about what this looks like to welcome a spirit?

Maestro Tello: One of the ancestors wishes was that an individual’s spirit arrives in places where they are welcomed. All the ceremonies with a new child should be about welcoming them, connecting them. You are here. We receive you just they way you are. And when the child comes we need to say, “Okay, what is your sacred purpose here? Unfortunately many people don’t get this abrazo (welcoming). As a people we struggle because we are coming into our own house many times that we pay for and we are told by society that they own the land and the property, own this and you are not welcome and
you better follow the rules.” So it is like confusing as hell. … if not we will kick you out, lock you up, deport you.

RM: That makes a lot of sense. What about our own self-acceptance and self-love. Is this necessary as well within this conversation regarding dignidad?

Maestro Tello: Yes. You must see the sacredness in yourself. Self-acceptance is about embracing our spots like the story from the Jaguar and the Spots (referring to a story about a Jaguar who does not like its spots). The opposite of self-acceptance is self-hatred and it destroys you. It makes you focus on your deficiencies and leads to vergüenza (shame) and it can be debilitating taking over your energy and it will pull you away from others. Shame turns into a focus on “What is wrong with me?” and self-acceptance will allow you the movement you need for times when you are stuck. Self-acceptance is critical within sacred purpose because it is about respecting your life’s journey. And kids that come from violent families. They are thinking, “What’s wrong with me?” Shame takes over and it’ll take so much of your energy. You can’t learn. You can’t interact. You’ll pull away. You’ll hate on people. It’s tremendously debilitating. So in this case how do you get a person to heal? To love their wounds? How do you learn to love people who have hurt you? But once again these situations can become teachings. Life is a dusty journey. What are you going to dust off and leave behind? Take with you? And we recognize that as people we have night and day within us. And so when I ask my mom, “¿Cómo está mami? “Bien contenta (Very content).” So what bien contenta meant to my mom is that the blessings that I have, balance out the shit that I have going on in my life. That’s what it means. It doesn’t mean get rid of the problems or I’m not going to have problems. No. Siempre tener una lucha (One will always have
challenges/battles/struggle), *Siempre tener problemas* (One will always have problems). So the goal is not to get rid of the problems, because the problems as we call them are teachings. The struggle of life is beautiful and this is the teaching of the elders. Lessons are learned. Move beyond duality and dichotomies of good/bad; pass/fail; succeed/don’t succeed. Everything works together. Respect life’s journey. So our journey has some interesting, sometimes confusing, and very difficult lessons. But they are for a reason. So that sense of sacred purpose has to do with that. It’s not about power but about *poder* – internal strength in the struggle. And remember you have to go into the dark as well to get the teachings. We are supposed to go to sleep at night and be in the darkness. But then when Tata Sol (Grandfather Sun) comes, we are supposed to go into the light. There are only so many lessons that you learn in the dark, as there are many to also learn in the light. And what wounds do, is that they make you stay in the dark. And when someone is in darkness – In wounds, giving wounds, living wound, being in wounds, someone has to move you. Someone has to show you how to get out so you can get some light as well. Which moves into the next element of *CARA* (FACE), *respeto* (respect).

RM: Maestro, before you go into *respeto* I’d like to ask you, are there other energies that exist besides wounds that also pull individuals away from their sacredness?

Maestro Tello: Absolutely, our ancestors recognized that when people were hurting themselves or others it was because they were disconnected from their sacredness and the sacredness of others. In this sense we find individuals with a materialistic purpose and when you don’t live with certain values then you start oppressing people. Some people have purposes (false) rooted in control, power, and conquering. There is a whole reference to this in the Codices regarding the true and false *tlamatini* (teacher). It talks
about the smoking mirror and this is the false *tlamatini* because it puts this image in front of you and makes you believe, but it doesn’t let you see who that person is. It’s a smoking mirror. The true *tlamatini* is the mirror that lets you see on both sides – the outside and the inside. This is the true way to be- to allow others to see the inside of them and to use their journey (good or bad) as the true reflection of *el otro yo* (my other me).

RM: How do we help our youth to operationalize all of this? To help them love their wounds, learn to appreciate their journey, and to seek the true *tlamatini*?

Maestro Tello: There are different levels of solving problems within our society today, for example band-aiding, rescuing, transformational healing. Transformational healing is what I have been telling you about. It’s not about resiliency because what that teaches you is survive through it and stuff it, stuff, stuff it. Then one day you just explode. But the root of transformational healing is that before you move onto any other teaching it must be internalized that YOU ARE SACRED. YOU ARE A BLESSING. YOU ARE WANTED AND THIS IS THE WAY THAT YOU CONDUCT YOURSELF. IN ORDER TO RECOGNIZE THIS IN OTHER PEOPLE AND IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN WITHIN YOURSELF (emphasized with voice). But it’s also about helping others to recognize that all of us are sacred and have a sacred purpose. Which is the second component, like I was saying, of CARA – *respeto*. It is simply honoring and accepting ourselves and others with their gifts and baggage, our relationships with others. We all have a purpose but it is sacred when you realize that it is interconnected. Our sacred purpose cannot be about hurting oneself or others because it then contradicts sacred interconnection. There are mixed messages within our society that counter what I
am telling you and reinforce your wounded self (cargas). For example if you have ever been in a fight. Something comes up and BOOM, BOOM, BOOM you are fighting. And when you are fighting you may be just reacting to the situation but right after you might be thinking, “What went on here?” But when you were in it and people saw and they were like, “Dang, you’re a good fighter fool.” So the next time a situation comes up like that again they might say, “Hey come over here fool because you are a good fighter and you can throw down.” And now you are fighting, and fighting, and fighting, and you become a fighter…… That is not your sacred purpose. You are hurting other people, you are hurting yourself. That is not what you are here for. So the concept of respeto is first honoring and accepting someone’s total sacredness, which includes their gifts and baggage but then it’s about watering the gifts and healing the baggage. Relationships challenge us to grow. You see respeto is about what is going on right here. Even though we are talking about ancestors and sacred purpose, but that we are sitting here. You have blessed me by coming all this way. You think that you are coming here to interview me, but by sitting here you are calling me, you reinforce my journey, knowledge, teachings, you honor me, and it enhances my respect in myself. The more disconnected you are from relationships and yourself, then the more out of balance you become with your sacred purpose or in other words the disrespectful you treat yourself and others which pulls you away from your sacred purpose.

RM: That’s right, it’s about En Lak’ech. Tú eres mi otro yo.

Maestro Tello: Yes so this second teaching is that it’s not only about me, but it’s also about you. So, how do I flow with you? How do I not judge you or turn you away? How do I not wound you? And this is a balancing of movement. Because if I turn away
from others, then once again we disconnect which then in turn causes trauma, pain, etc. And we can’t just give, give, give either. You must recognize the duality. You have a left hand and it is supposed to receive and you have a right hand and it is supposed to give. We can’t be off balance and be, “A sus ordenes (I am here to help you), lo que tú quieras (whatever you need)” Unless you say it back to me. Like we are fighting to see who will give more. Based on a Chinese teaching, the greatest honor that you can see between two people is that they fight over giving. That is beautiful to show love like that. So, once again, we all have a purpose but it is sacred when you realize that it is interconnected and that is what respeto is all about. Respeto is about honoring each person’s sacred purpose and their sacred rhythm.

RM: That makes so much sense maestro. I am curious to find more out about the aspect of Yolotl (heart).

Maestro Tello: Yes, to be a possessor of heart means that you have confianza (trust) and cariño (love). So cariño is about living with value and doing things out of love. Even setting boundaries could be done with love. Even marching, you could do it with love. Con ganas (all your effort) you could do it. Do things that you love. Be passionate. You could protest, you can pass legislature, you can talk about your own people. You can talk about pride of your own people without putting other people down. So cariño is really important. Do things out of love, and that is why when you go to circulo (healing circles) you go this way (pointing to the left), you go this way; this way is your heart. Do things out of love. And once again our relationships with others should be out of love. This is why sacred purpose is not individualistic because we need people to massage our spirit when we are hurt, right? Sana Sana Colita de Rana (pain, pain go away). Right?
Because it is someone’s love that has to move you to remind you of your connection. Right? Let me connect you. Let me love you because you cannot love yourself. Let me make you feel smart because your self-talk doesn’t allow you to feel smart. And I have to say it over and over to you because your wounds tell you that you are stupid, that you are dumb. Your self-talk, if you are in the darkness, you are around people who are always putting yourselves down. So I got to give you some of that light medicine.

And the last element of Yolotl (heart) is confianza (trust) and it is really about creating a sacred, safe place internally and externally to learn, heal, and grow. So that is what prayer is and that is what ceremonia (ceremony) should be. Creating a sacred, safe place - to heal, learn, and grow. That is when we do Joven Noble (program for young men) groups, that is how it should be. That is when you go to sweat lodge, that is what is should be. When you go home with familia (family), that is what that should be. Your kids should feel safe at home. Your pareja (partner), I talk to men about this all the time, our role in the east direction is our strength. It is not a physical strength. It’s a strength to create security. When we walk in our homes, our kids should go, “aaaaah Sound effect of relief), I don’t have to worry.” Your pareja should be able to sleep through the night and know that if there are noises, you got it. Our role is really that sacred. Sacred space.

RM: As an educator and someone who works with youth daily, I am just thinking about how important these teachings are. Right?

Maestro Tello: It’s hard, because the ones that understand your math, you like them. And the ones that don’t??? ¿Sabes qué (You know what?)? But our job, as adults, is to help our children to find their sacred purpose and then water it. So in whatever we do-discipline, guidance, teachings- we can’t destroy that spirit. And that is the real task, how
do we raise children with their sacred purpose because if we only focus on it when they are older, then you have to bring them back from pain? And do we see them, and I mean really see them? Like from the story of The Jaguar and the Spots, do we blame them for their spots or do we ask them, “What happened to you to give you those spots?” Do we blame them like La Llorona (The Crying Women) or do we blame the oppressor? And adolescents question their sacredness more because of their pendejadas (poor thought out actions). Their emotions, as a natural state, are all intensified and this can throw them off balance. And this is why they need that confianza (trust)- A place to heal, develop, and grow. A steady drum beat person in their lives. Indigenous ceremony provides this. Support systems provide this. Right? Strong relationships, value, consistency, and a safe lugar (place).

RM: So sacred purpose is all about the Iztli and Yolotl, the face and heart, Cara y Corazaon. Dignidad, Respeto, Cariño, and Confianza.

Maestro Tello: Yes, and remember that our sacred purposes evolve. Do I really know the limits and full capacity of my sacred purpose? No, but if we pay attention then we can feel what is right, and we can find guides along the road that help us stay connected. There is a level of trust in the Creator and the ancestors. And our Indigenous teachings have taught us that none of this is about individualistic material gain. Following your sacred purpose is about giving you the ability to provide for others beyond money. It shifts the paradigm so that your destino (role) and sacred purpose is about recognizing that all of us have a teaching to give - a large teaching. But we also have many lessons to learn, and all of this is connected to each other and it is evolving – En Tloque Nahuaque.
Parting Ways: Jerry Tello

All three conversations with Maestro Jerry Tello that I had a chance to be part of were opportunities to learn, grow, heal, and feel acknowledged. At the culmination of each meeting we always shared a smile, a laugh, and a hug. Like the conversations that Maestro Tello shared regarding his abuelita (grandmother) and how she connected him to his sacredness, I felt the same way about him. I felt that through our conversations and through his authentic way of being, he connected me to my sacredness. From our first meeting to our last, Maestro Tello left me with a feeling of hope and inspiration to keep the research efforts alive.

Though it has been several months since I last physically met with Maestro Tello, I make it a point to reach out to him via email, phone, or Facebook in order to continue our relationship. Like he mentioned in our conversations about sacred purpose, it is our relationships that remind us of our sacredness, sacred purpose, and help us to move forward. I will always be grateful to him for the time, teachings, love, and spiritual energies that he provided our conversations.

-Tlazocamatli, Chiokoe Utessia (Thank You) Maestro Tello

Researcher Entry, Trust, and Preparations: Mama Cobb

While in the process of presenting a research study regarding pedagogy of the eagle and the condor along with the topics of sacred purpose, I was encouraged and highly recommended to seek out a relative named Angelbertha Cobb, also known as Mama Cobb. I was told that she was a highly respected indigenous elder who could inform my work.
Mama Cobb is widely recognized as an elder who possesses and shares the wisdom and teachings of many sacred traditions and ways. In hopes of sharing conversations with Mama Cobb regarding sacred purpose, and having the opportunity to meet her and learn from her, I had to be able to acquire entry and trust – a critical phase of the research. This entry and trust was not just a means to conduct research and simply interview her, but it was to be able to solidify an interconnected relationship with rich, honest, and loving dialogue/interaction.

Within indigenous protocols I have always been taught that elders are critical wisdom carriers within our communities and their lived experiences are sacred teachings and lessons for us all. Their understandings and sometimes even their age, align them strongly with the Creator and with the surrounding sacred elements. When you meet them you offer them love, a gift of tobacco/sage/copal, you make sure that they are comfortable, and you offer them your patience, ears, and humility.

With that being said, despite the fact that elders are very visible within a community, they are not necessarily easy to meet. Many times they have a protected layer of individuals around them who look out for their safety and security. This was the case with Mama Cobb; she was a very visible elder within her urban community where she resides, however since I was not from this community (over 500 miles away), she was not easy to contact.

Today many individuals use the Internet to meet, introduce, and make contact with someone. However, with elders this is not always possible, conducive, and it can even be found potentially disrespectful (depending on the elder). Therefore in order to gain entry and trust with Mama Cobb, I had to call upon the assistance of another
colleague who is good friends with her. This colleague contacted Mama Cobb and informed her about my work. Because Mama Cobb knew of my intentions and that I carried *palabra* (a respected level of commitment from the community), I was able to gain an initial level of entry and trust. Soon after I was given Mama Cobb’s telephone number. I contacted her, she agreed to participate in the study, and I was invited to travel up from San Diego to Sacramento to meet her.

In order to gain further entry and trust into this research with Mama Cobb, I had to show that my academic work regarding sacred purpose was respectful, from the heart, and done in a good way. One way I attempted to do this was I decided to take my two children (Elena Izcalli and Andres Cuahtli) along with me to meet Mama Cobb. My daughter was 9 at the time and my son was 7, and I felt that meeting Mama Cobb was a chance in a lifetime for them and that the teachings she would provide them were equally critical to the teachings that would inform my research. When telling Mama Cobb that they would be joining me as well on the trip, I remember her saying, “Well yes. I figured they were coming along.” This simple gesture, though in a sarcastic and somewhat scolding tone, reminded me that my work on sacred purpose was beyond a research agenda.

The road trip from San Diego to Sacramento offered an opportunity that was essential and reflective; it provided us with some time to slow down, be mindful, and it allowed me time to reflect on my role within the research, my intentions, and my hopes. In other words, the road trip allowed me, with my “city” mind and ways of being, to meet Mama Cobb in a good, respectful way. Western ways of research can be very fast paced, controlled, and with an intention of colonizing knowledge. However, the road trip
provided an opportunity for me to nurture the indigenous research design within my work and created a space for me to root my intentions so that the research could be done with openness, fluidity, and not constrained by Western research protocols. This opportunity for downtime on the road was good for my children as well. Lots of teachings, good dialogue, and reflections took place. All of these factors are strong indications of how indigenous research is truly relational and fluid.

While arriving in Sacramento there were some critical elements that needed to take place before heading over to Mama Cobb’s house. As we entered the neighborhood where she lived, we found a little park where we could stop to offer a prayer (aligned with Indigenous protocols it is respectful to honor the ancestors and caretakers of the land as well as ask for permission to enter a space). Our next stop was Mama Cobb’s house and once we pulled up, she was waiting there for us. We greeted and introduced ourselves, and my children offered Mama Cobb some sage. This is not only a gesture of thanks, but also offered when you are asking of something from someone (we were asking for knowledge/teachings/stories/principios de como vivir (principles for living). Also as a sign of respect, we brought food to share with Mama Cobb and her family. Lastly, we brought a piece of art created by my father – in – law, Armando Nunez, in order to present to Mama Cobb as a thank you gift. Once again all of these steps were done with the intention of doing this research in a good, respectful, and honorable way.

As Mama Cobb opened the door for our visit and welcomed us in, I had a sense, feeling, and understanding that I was in the right place, with the right person. As we entered her home she burned some copal to bless our presence and to rid us of negative energy that we may have been carrying. Our conversations began and continued for over
three hours. The following condensed story/conversation is the salient highlights of our time with Mama Cobb. The research story that follows emerged in response to my general questions about the elder’s background and the teachings, understandings, guiding principles, and stories of sacred purpose.

**Mama Cobb Conversations: Keepers of the Fire**

RM: I’d love to begin with some teachings about sacred purpose, how you’ve learned it, and how you perceive it.

Mama Cobb: It comes with me from the highest part of the Sierra Madres in a town called Xiloxixilmico. A place which is not on a map or even known about by the Mexican Consulate here in the United States. Xiloxixilmico is in the state of Puebla, but don’t call me *Poblana*, call me *Sierrana* (person from the mountains). Where I was born there was no electricity, no TV, no games that the kids with their little fingers could play (referring to video games), no McDonalds, no Coke. Everything was natural and I lived with my Tato, my great-grandfather. There, it was tropical and [on the land] we had coffee plantations, pineapples, watermelons, mangos, and we had *mamey*. You probably don’t even know of this fruit. The main source of living for my people was corn, squash, and for meat we had deer, wild pig, snakes, grasshoppers, and *gusano de maguey* (a type of worm). And perhaps you kill a deer, you are not going to eat it by yourself. It is for the entire community and we don’t waste anything of the deer. Because you know the hoof? We’ll make a rattle. And from the antlers, we made buttons or some instruments to play a song.

Let me show you this [picture]. This is me and that’s my Tato. It was the first picture that he took in his life. This is my Nano [great-grandmother]. You can see here
the difference in the social class. You see my Nano with the big thing [referring to a sort of hat]. So it’s the highest class. Not in money, but about learning. That’s how you made your status?

RM: Can you tell me more about this concept of status since you said it’s not about money, but about learning?

Mama Cobb: Concepts of sacred purpose are uncovered here. Since we were only one neighborhood, we had one calpolli (center area to gather, teach, and learn). And that’s how you start learning. School was taught by the elders of the community. There were not pencils, paper, books and the teachers taught in circles. They used a stick to draw in the earth, similar to how a teacher today writes on a whiteboard. A feather was used to tickle the back of student’s necks as a reminder of staying focused. The subject areas dealt with numbers, music, writing, but all in all it focused on what the students were interested in. Education was a privilege because you had the opportunity to study what you wanted. You were the one who got to choose what you wanted to do. If you wanted to be the best dancer, where do you think you’re going to be? In the place where you have to read and write everything? No. You are going to be where you get to learn folklorico (folkloric dance). So you learn dancing in school. But when you are studying it, you have to put all your attention and all your effort to be the best because it’s a privilege. And this is the way they have the kids interested. He likes to draw (pointing at my son). So if I am forcing him to learn some other subject that he is not interested in, then I am wasting his time and my time. And in those times when you see the interest of the children and what they want to do - remember, little children have the same mind, and same desires as a grown up person. So if he likes drawing and he grows up liking
drawing, then I am not going to put him in medical school, because if I do he is going to kill everybody and himself as well.

RM: I see. This is how the children learn more about their roles and interest in the community. Do you see the elders being important in this process?

Mama Cobb: Who do you think was teaching everybody there? Exactly, the elders. My Tato taught me a lot and passed on many teachings. He taught me to learn by observing. One time I had to watch ants. I figured out that ants that work in the day are not the same as the ones that work in the night. My Tato asked, “How do you know?” I told him that I had followed one of the ants. I put sap from a tree on one and a flower on another. I looked how many times it went back and forth and at night I was there looking at the ant with my little candle. So my Tato taught me to learn by observing. He died when he was 144 years old and my Nano when she was 124. I stayed with them until I was 6 years old. I left because they chose me to do something very important.

RM: Can you tell me more about this very important thing that you were chosen to do?

Mama Cobb: What you said about sacred purpose, it is the same reason why I was chosen. It was my responsibility because I am a Keeper of the Fire. I do what I have to do because I am a Fire keeper. You see, we are the keepers of the fire. So what does this mean? Which fire? How do you understand fire? Do you have fire in your body? Where is it located? You have heat, in your heart. Even If you take a shower you still have heat. Fire is life. So what does this mean? Keepers of fire? It means the continuation of life itself. If I say that I am the keeper of the fire, I am saying that I am keeping life alive – the history, traditions, the legends, the music, and the dances.
Ok, let me tell you more. When the Spaniards came, Moctezuma sent the people, elders, children, and women to the place where he was learning when he was a child. This place is where he learned the traditions when he was a child. He sent the people who were there to hide. This was the treasure. Ok, so what was the treasure? What were the Spaniards looking for? They were looking for the gold, riches… And these are not our treasures. Our treasures were the teachings, the customs, the values. And when he sent those people to hide, this was the secret of life. These people would be responsible for keeping the fire. Continuing life. Sharing the teachings, the customs, and the values. So when I see you, I say that you are not just anybody. You are part of the creation. You are also responsible for continuing life. When I sit here and watch tv, the news. I find out something is wrong [with our world]. What can I do [about it]? I can teach. My sacred purpose is being a keeper of the fire, a responsibility about learning and teaching the sacred teachings.

RM: Can you tell me more about being selected and maybe more about Keepers of the Fire?

Mama Cobb: When I was Elena’s age (referring to my daughter) I was already teaching. When I was six in 1938, five or six individuals arrived to my village and one of them was Florencio Yescas. He spoke in Nahuatl and he explained to my Tato that they were looking for someone to take to Mexico City because General Cardenas was expropriating petroleum from USA, Germany, and England. We said, “NO! That oil is from Mexico.” So someone had to teach the real customs of Mexico to General Cardenas. We were [my area] not from the other nations and they needed some representatives. Florencio Yescas said, “What do you people from here do besides arts and crafts?” My Tato said, “We
dance.” Ok, so he got the drum and he started calling (makes a drum sound). Have you ever heard someone say *india de sierra bajada tamborazo* (Indian of the mountains who calls others with a drum)? Some people say it to insult you. But anyway, the *principio* (principle) is that this is how communication was. How are you going to call us? There was no cellular, no telegram. How do you think they call us? With a drum… a big drum. *Se llama* (it’s called) *mitotl*. All of the words in Nahuatl have different ways of saying the last syllable. So with *mitotl* they drop the tl because it is hard to pronounce. So they changed it to *mitote*. So they call us with a *mitotl*.

Anyways, when my Tato said we dance, we danced. I always liked dancing. I danced because the sun was down, because the sun was up, learning…. Dancing, dancing, dancing. So they chose me to be the representative of my town to go teach the teachers to be able to present to General Cardenas to demonstrate that we were the true honors of the land and *subsuelo* (underground). So everything that is underground- water, minerals, they’re connected to us. And this is what happened and my Tato gave the permission for me to go with them. So they took me to the *academia de la danza* and I started teaching the teachers – dancing, singing, painting. I also had to tell about the background of the dance.

RM: So being a Keeper of the Fire, in the context of sacred purpose, is really about addressing the continuation of life through the act of teaching? Being able to teach others traditions so that they may also be able to be a keeper of the fire and to be able to give life?

Mama Cobb: Yes, because what are you doing when you dance and play a *teponaztli* (drum used in Aztec Dance) or a rattle? You are calling the elements. The South is the
children. East – fire, the warriors. West – water representing the women; North – the elders. What is the element [of the North]?

RM: hmmm. I was taught this before… (Time reflecting)

Mama Cobb: Wind, oxygen, right? And what does the wind do?

RM: Craziness, chaos??

Mama Cobb: No. Ok, so what is the symbol of life, in addition to the heart? The breath of life, right? In the Aztec Calendar, there is a face of the sun with the tongue out – *tecpatl*. They say what he is doing is giving life. Open your mouth and do the same, what do you feel? Fire, life, wisdom. *Tecpatl* is obsidian and what do you use it with? They cut you to give you life. Good life, bad life… it’s up to you. This is sacred purpose. But also, to be able to fulfill who you are is also about passing on traditions. We are not wetbacks…. We are not the greasers. I love when I get to start teaching. I put my name Angel Bertha Cobb. They expect white or black, but they do not expect a Mexican. Yes, I am Mexican, Indian. I have demonstrated to you and everyone else that we are the same. You know, I went to law school and I am a paralegal. I was ready to take the bar, but I said no. I changed my mind and continued to teach. When I teach, I have to be able to teach about the background of [each] dance. Now some *danzantes* (Aztec dancers) do not even know the background. Also, the backgrounds of the vestuario (dress). Lots of differences. You show me in any codex where the girls and the dancers have the dress all the way up here [pointing to thigh] or their *vestuario* is two pieces. Many [mestizo-historians] have changed it a lot. And they have changed the names as well. This is unacceptable!
For me, I really loved to dance because the dances told a story and had a teaching. When you learn the dance you learn about… Mira (look), tlaloc (rain)? Rain is water.

What is water? How many types of water do you know? How about spring water? Medicine water, do you ever hear in some places they have sulfur water? Rain water.

What is water in general? Do you have water in your body? Ok. It is one of the elements. Everything is together and we are going to make the dance. Tlaloc represents all the water and it is male and female. It is not only Tlaloc. Tlaloc is the male, the female from the water is? I’m giving you homework to find the name of her. El rio (the river), el laguna (the lake), el mar (the ocean), it has to be male and female. But now-a-days someone comes and changes the names and adds steps.

RM: Is an important element of being a keeper of the fire and sacred purpose connected to interconnectedness, relationships, hermandad (brotherhood)?

Mamma Cobb: I gave my danza (Aztec Dance) group over to an individual. I am very proud of him that he follows these ways because when he was a teenager, he struggled. I used to put on many plays for día de los muertos (Day of the Dead). One day after the play I found him crying and he hugged me and thanked me. He said, ‘You saved my life.’ And he said, ‘I am thankful to the creator that I have a mother who gave me birth and I have a spiritual mother, you Mamma Cobb. You changed my spirit.’ So to me it was a satisfaction that he learned the way. Now that he has the group, he has changed things a bit, but that is ok. If among all those people that I have been teaching, if they choose a better way of living than that is one of the most special things for me.

RM: Very true, y que otra cosa es el propuesto sagrado, how else do you perceive sacred purpose?
Mama Cobb: Everyone has their own world. Everyone is different and nobody takes that into consideration. You have to find out what is the interest of each one. Some people don’t come next to this dog (referring to her dog which is a *xoloitzcuintli*, a hairless dog). They say, “ewwww.” And some, they do because of curiosity…. When I was teaching there was a boy. He was 7 or 8. His name was Arturo and to me I always called him Arturito. And what I remember about Arturito is that he was always a boy very interested in the uniform. He was a Boy Scout, Cub Scout, he liked the army. Always he was in uniform. Well, time passed by and he left elementary and eventually high school. One time I was having my dance group across the street from my house in the garage. One of the neighbors was complaining of the noise and they called the police. Because I had 35 kids learning how to dance and you know that when you have *danza azteca* you have to have drums, rattles, and you have to make noise. Well the neighbor did not like the noise even though it was only five o’clock. Not in the morning but in the afternoon. He then tells me that the police are coming. So I was keeping an eye on the garage to see if the police were coming and I had the kids continue to dance. Well, I saw three police. Two tall guys and a chaparito (small guy) in the middle. I said welcome and I asked if there was too much noise. They said that they were not coming for that. The new chief of police wanted to know the neighborhood and what’s going on. I saw the *chaparito* and I said, “Arturito.” The little Arturito who loved having his uniforms, he was the new chief of police in Sacramento. *Mexicano.* And he looked at me and said, “Mama Cobb.” He grabbed me and hugged me in a *vuelta* (circle). He said, “Do you know who made me choose to be someone in a uniform? Mama Cobb. Because she was always telling me to follow your dreams and whatever you do or have, be proud of it. And I’m very
proud of this uniform and I am very proud of her teachings.” So the guy who called the police said, “Are you going to stop the noise and arrest that lady?” Arturito says, “That lady was my teacher through elementary and I wear this uniform because of her. And these thirty-five kids here making noise, they are not in the street breaking things. They are here learning important things. If you ask any one of those kids about their history in this country or in Mexico, I bet you they know it. I’m not afraid to ask them because I know how and what she teaches.”

RM: I really connect your understanding of sacred purpose to being a teacher.

Mama Cobb: Well, one of the reasons why I became passionate to teach was because of the thing that happened to me. When they put me in school for the first time, I was in school all day. For three months I was in school and it was all in Spanish, but I spoke Nahuatl. This was my first teacher. “Hey, manzana (apple)! Hey, hey manzana!! Manzan-a HEY! HEY MANZANA!” I said inichtli and they said manzana, all day long. I practiced all weekend. Monday I said Manzana. Then they said Manzana is roja (red). Then after that manzana roja en la escritorio (apple on the desk). After two months I learned everything about the manzana. One day I ate the manzana and the teacher grabbed my hand. I was six. She hit my hand with the rulers leaving my fingers without nails. That is why I have ridges. When I saw my own blood I punched the nun and I threw her on the ground. I was expelled and I promised that nobody was ever going to hurt me like that again. And I was going to eat any apple that I wanted to.

So, when I went to Sacramento state, I was working as a hostess, I had my own dance group, had my own kids, and I had a 3.4 average. Don’t ask me how I did it. So the apple was my one of my lessons to become a teacher to teach the teachers. It was with
that purpose, when I was six years old, that I realized that I needed to be here with that purpose. This is my number one purpose. To be the right kind of teacher. So for you, don’t stop! Continue your education. Because what you have is not enough. And I am not talking about a paper. When you teach an idea, it must come from your heart. *Yolotl a yolotl.* Heart to heart. Respect yourself and make the others respect you.

RM: *Tlazocamati* (Thank You) Mama Cobb, for your time, for your treasured teachings, for welcoming us into your home and community.

**Parting Ways: Mama Cobb**

Mama Cobb’s teachings began the minute I walked into her home. She shared tons of teachings regarding Nahuatl, about the geography of Mexico, Mexican history, Aztec dancing, jewelry, instruments, songs, and various stories. Though I had questions to facilitate the research conversation, Mama Cobb, for the most part, was the one guiding the conversation. She would listen to my questions, answer them how she deemed fit, and she would ask me many questions in return. Much of her discussion around sacred purpose consisted of the responsibility to teach others and it was obvious that she modeled this process of teaching throughout our conversation.

In looking back at my time with Mama Cobb I am so grateful for the opportunity and teachings that she put forward for this research. On the second day of our visit, I turned off the audio recorder and simply made it a point to be present with Mama Cobb and her stories. We shared a meal, she shared more stories about life, she continued to teach us about music, art, dance, and Nahuatl. And then we parted ways. A few months later, during the recent holiday season, my children made artwork and a necklace special for Mamma Cobb. Though not as often as we like, we reach out to Mamma Cobb to
check in with her to make sure that she is ok and well. The time we spent with Mama Cobb, as a result of the research, will always be memorable for us.

**Research Preparations with Roberto Cintli Rodriguez**

Twenty years ago I was introduced to the writings of Dr. Roberto Cintli Rodriguez while in my undergraduate years of study. His teachings at that time were found to be engaging and held implications for my development as a human, an intellect, and as an individual seeking clarity regarding my Chicano identity and the formation of my indigenous epistemology and ontology.

Fast forward to a couple of summers ago, as I had been in the process of developing the frameworks of pedagogy of the eagle and the condor. I had the opportunity to cross paths with Maestro Cintli at a conference held in Tucson regarding the Mexican American Studies Program (MAS). I was very eager to access and learn about his efforts in Tucson, alongside many others, as they created, developed, and implemented the now banned Mexican American Studies (MAS) Program. His work with MAS, his multiple pieces of literature around *maíz* (corn) teachings, and his indigenous research analyzing spiritual running drew my attention as all of it presented powerful curricular and pedagogical implications for my students, my research agenda, and my life as a whole.

At a later time, during the summer of 2013, I contacted Dr. Roberto Cintli Rodriguez in regards to his participation in this study. Once again, his work with youth, his writings about *maíz* teachings, his indigenous research, and the recognition he has been given as an elder, and carrier of indigenous knowledge and wisdom made him a strong match for this research.
Maestro Cintli agreed to participate in the study and my trust and entry was probably a result of various factors. I use the word “probably” because this statement is an assumption and the only way for me to know the direct result of my entry and trust would come from an explicit conversation outlining these concepts. I have never felt it appropriate to have this conversation regarding why my entry and trust into this research was granted, therefore, my assumption is that I was able to gain entry and trust for these reasons: my palabra (a level of respect from the community, which is based on my commitment to youth and comunidad (community)), my involvement and commitment to sacred ceremonies and families (Redstone Sun Dance, Izcali Escuela de La Raza, Peace and Dignity Journeys), my relationships with others who are good friends with Maestro Cintli, my past interaction with him in the forms of brief emails, face book posts, and public presentations, and my personal research agenda which utilizes much of the teachings of Maestro Cintli’s work.

Though residing in Tucson, Arizona, Maestro Cintli happened to be visiting Los Angeles, which made my research conversation with him more convenient. I made plans to meet him at a café where we would be able to have a conversation regarding his understandings, perceptions, and teachings of sacred purpose. Aligned with indigenous protocols, I made sure to offer Maestro Cintli tobacco as the norm when asking an elder for something. We also shared a meal (breakfast), which in our case, it created an authentic, open setting for good conversation.

What follows is a condensed conversation of my time with Maestro Roberto Cintli Rodriguez in regards to his teachings, stories, understandings, and guiding principles of sacred purpose. There were close to 30 pages of transcription, however the
transcripts that follow provide Maestro Cintli’s teachings of Life as a Ceremony, Creation/Resistance, and Yolqui. All of these teachings, according to Maestro Cintli, addressed sacred purpose on various levels.

Conversations with Roberto Cintli Rodriguez: Life is a Ceremony, Creation & Resistance, and Yolqui

RM: What is your understanding of sacred purpose Maestro? How do you see it within your lived experiences in all that you do?

Maestro Cintli: The way I understand this notion of sacred purpose is through two concepts that parallel. You know, live your life as a ceremony because our lives are ceremony. The other one has to do with a concept called creation resistance. So the idea of sacred purpose to me, when I hear that, I translate it to these two concepts that I just passed on. And you know it’s a small world, because the idea of sacred purpose that you bring up, matches the concept of yolqui, which is something that I have been writing about as of lately.

RM: These three concepts all have teachings rooted in your understanding of sacred purpose. I’d love to move forward with yolqui first. I heard you speak about this concept recently in a presentation. It may allow us to go more into depth about your personal story and how yolqui emerges and how it connects to your perceptions of sacred purpose.

Maestro Cintli: I took this concept [yolqui] that I heard about and I applied it to myself. That is, yolqui are the warriors that live in the spirit world but they are brought back to this world to battle. So I think I told you about that dream, I saw myself dead.

RM: Can you tell me more about this dream?
Maestro Cintli: I was in a village called Huitzililac in Morelos. Might have been 10 years ago. They took us to the corn fields. It had all of this maguey evenly spaced out, and they told us it was to soak up the water because it rains a lot there. And then they cut open the maguey and gave us the *aguamiel* (sweet water from maguey plant). We drank it, and after drinking it, that night I had a dream. Prior to that dream I hadn’t had a dream that I could remember for 20 years. All it was, was that I saw myself dead. I was above my own body. Sprawled out on the ground, I saw myself dead and it scared me. The point of it all was, that night this is what I dreamt. Later I remember talking to my friend and he said, “Don’t worry, all warriors have to die. If you die that is a good thing.” And I said, “Why is that a good thing (a little laugh)?” He says, “When we die, we become reborn so we can fight.” And so it sort of helped. But at the time it threw me off… the idea that wow, “had I died?”

I really didn’t give it much thought until I was finishing my book on *maiz*. I am reading a book on *maiz* and there is a codex that records a yolqui warrior. So I read it and I guess I read the footnotes or something and that is when I found out that it refers to a warrior summoned from the spirit world. It was amazing because it said it wasn’t strictly an ancient concept. It said that during the civil war in Guatemala that is what the Maya also did. They summoned two million warriors or something to that effect. Yeah they summoned all of these warriors to battle. So it wasn’t like I connected with that idea specifically, but with the idea of summoning someone’s spirit. The point about yolqui is, I saw this in my dream and that is what I wanted to write about because it related to me, and to me, it’s connected to sacred purpose. The way I saw it was if I had died (referring to a prior situation with the Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department (LASD) where Maestro
Cintli was a victim of police brutality), like I saw in my dream, I figured it out that it was
myself, that I had summoned myself; I wasn’t ready to go. When this whole situation
occurred (Cintli, 1997), I wasn’t even sure that I had lost consciousness. And when I
pieced my recollections back together, I realized that I must have lost consciousness
because I don’t remember what happened after getting hit. And the next thing I remember
I was on the ground, arms like this (on top of arms), and face down. I don’t remember
that too much. What I do remember is that they were screaming at me and as they were
screaming at me I didn’t hear them, but I could hear them very faint screams. So
apparently I lost my hearing. And then I remember hearing I think they wanted one of my
arms. I was thinking, “They want one of my arms to handcuff me and arrest me,” but my
mind wasn’t thinking straight. I couldn’t move, so I started to rock and after I rocked I
was able to free my arms and do that. I remember talking to doctors. I was in really
good shape at the time. I’d workout everyday. Played handball or racquetball. I
remember a doctor saying if you hadn’t been in great shape you probably would have
died. Because they left me bleeding for like an hour, on the street, in the car, and the
slow ride to the hospital. At the hospital they couldn’t treat me so they took me to
another hospital. The first hospital they did stop the bleeding. When they started to
operate on me the bleeding started again. The guy was having trouble closing it up so it
kept on bleeding and bleeding. So with this dream it made me think that maybe I did die.
I died for a reason – to come back to fight… torture, political violence, anything that
speaks to dehumanization, so that is very personal you know.

So maybe in a sense the Yolqui transformation was my path because I could have
kept going for my safety (see story - Cintli, 1997). Yeah anyways, I don’t know if there
is a name for that, that decision I made. But the main thing with yolqui and the understanding that I died and came back…. that is very recent. Just a few months ago..
RM: Were you the same person before your situation with the LASD as far as your activism and level of consciousness.
Maestro Cintli: I was always politically conscious since I was 14 years old. That was the walkouts in Los Angeles. There was a lot of activism in LA. I might not have gone to all the rallies or each rally, but I was conscious of what was going on. So I considered myself politically active from about that age, in 1968. But 1970 that was the big year when they killed Salazar (referring to Ruben Salazar). But if I believed (yolqui) my friend that I had died and came back - that I summoned my self back, like the concept of yolqui, then you could say that I have dedicated my life since then, like I said probably before, but more specifically to anything that dehumanizes, and more generally the betterment of humanity.
RM: I am really interested as well in creation resistance. Can you share how this concept is within your understanding of sacred purpose?
Maestro Cintli: Creation resistance, for me, comes from Tucson. That comes from battling in Arizona; like non -stop battle. I don’t know about everybody, but for me at a certain point I just got tired of having to protest. Because that is all we do over there. Like that is what is going on right now and around the country. But the idea of… You see a protest is resistance and it is a good thing. However, what I noticed at a certain point that everything was a protest. That is, we were always doing resistance, meaning somebody did something and we responded. Somebody did something again and we
responded. And I just thought that our lives seemed to revolve around somebody else’s actions.

That is when the idea of creation came in. And they can’t be opposites, but rather they have to be complimentary. Because the idea of creation is why don’t we create? And what do we create? Are we ourselves creative? Or again do we react to everything? And for me, I concluded that absolutely we create and that’s partly the curriculum, its partly who we are, when we run. All the things that is not dictated by [other peoples’] actions. At the same time, what happens if our lives revolve only around creation? The opposite of only resistance? Only creation would mean that simply we don’t really live in this world. Well, in Arizona we have Joe Arpaio, we have Jan Brewer, we have Tom Horne, and so to create as if they weren’t there or we weren’t there, would be again to live some other kind of existence; like a hippy existence or something.

And so the idea was and is that we can’t do one or the other. It has to be both - creation and resistance. Now me I would always tilt towards the creation, but it’s not a one or the other. You see the whole “purpose” is creation resistance; about creating a balanced human being. And I think because I live in Arizona it’s easy for me to see that. I don’t know if people can see that elsewhere because over there we are in constant battle.

RM: Sacred purpose defined by our struggles and fought through creating and resisting. Sounds simple and complex at the same time?

Maestro Cintli: Mira, this battle in Arizona has increased my amount of speaking because what has been going on. And everywhere I go I ask, “Would you like to know about the resistance (the battles) in Arizona or do you want to know about the creation (teachings that have been banned)?” Imagine that? I mean the battles are awesome, they are
historic, but they want the teachings. So the question to myself is why do they want the Mexican American Studies teachings (the creation) as opposed to that romantic story of the struggle? I mean the resistance is awesome. Non – stop resistance, protesting, getting arrested, but they want to know the teachings. And the answer is obvious. You can resist anywhere. You can have protest anywhere. But being anchored in the fundamental knowledge of the curriculum? Why would they make that illegal, the knowledge?

RM: This is very connected to the purpose of my work. How do we uncover sacred teachings that anchor us? This is fundamental knowledge.

Maestro Cintli: I agree that we have to be anchored in those teachings, but the key is also how can we contribute to it. Once again this is the creation element and how it is connected to sacred purpose. In my opinion, the most important part, always tell people we are not dead. I have contributed to stories such as “La Llorona (The Crying Women)” and “Quetzalcoatl and “Why the Ants Said No,” because I am alive and I am part of this culture and I think that is key. That is, we cannot just see ourselves as from the past and there must break from there. There are two different ideas that I am putting out here. If we see ourselves in the past then we are in a museum and we battle about “how things used to be.” And also I think the idea is to see ourselves as a continuity. Our knowledge comes from the past, but we are also alive and, so if we are alive, we create and respond to our reality. With that even our knowledge from the past. I don’t even want to say from the past because it is a living knowledge. That is the term that I would use, that it is living knowledge that is thousands of years and people are very attracted to it. Look if the Navajo, if the Hopi, if the Lakota, if all these cultures had teachings, I think with what
you see with Chicanos and Chicanas, they don’t feel like they do not have a handle on their own teachings. So there is like a desperate search for it. And I think that for me this is the process that we are engaged in right now. Because many of us or most of us are de-indigenized and its not by choice. It’s just the way it is. And so the question is it is not just about learning about the past but how can we integrate it with the teachings of today. In other words it can’t just be everybody else has a culture or everybody else has a culture to contribute to and we ourselves have to be able to contribute to that culture so we are part of that living culture and living knowledge of it as well. So that is the key, not simply repeating the past because I think I see some of that. People running around saying this is what it used to be like. And it is like that is great for them, but how do we apply that now. And I know that the people at that time were contributing to the knowledge then. And we are alive, so we have to be a part of that creation. We have to become.. I think that is the number one alienation of humanity - That we were separated from the creation process. So the objective can’t be to just find what it used to be, but to integrate into that creation process. You know otherwise we are living like 500 years ago, or 5,000 years ago. In other words, if the Europeans never showed up, that culture would have flourished and we would still be alive today. And it is alive today. So in that matter that is how we need to see ourselves as part of the present with all those knowledges. That continuous knowledge. Its like an elder once said we never lost the culture, we got disconnected from it.

RM: This topic of creation resistance really sticks out to me, and how it is really key to finding out who we are. Navigating. Identity like you had mentioned. As you are saying, these elements are rooted in our sacred purposes?
Maestro Cintli: You know a lot of people use the concept of “becoming” as opposed to “Who we are.” So it’s not “Who am I,” but it’s “Who am I becoming?” And this is part of the creation process that I am speaking of.

RM: Identity, you have written a lot about that.

Maestro Cintli: You know for the last ten years a lot of my writing of identity has been about maiz. What I have seen is that people are always battling what to call themselves, how to identify themselves, so what I was saying is that your spirit is your identity. And so this is how I use the teachings of maiz in a central way. What I liked about maiz and I got this knowledge primarily form the elders that I interviewed, is that maiz has nothing to do with the border or a nation, so there is no line to fight for in a border sense. Therefore these teachings are not nationalistic. So it’s the idea that somos gente de maiz (we are people of the corn) or soy hombre de maiz (I am a man of corn), what’s wrong with that? And this identity is tied to the earth, actually connected to the earth, protecting the earth, protecting the seeds. It’s like I am not going to fight for a border or a nation, but I am going to fight for the betterment of humanity. To me that is the concept of maiz. And what I have seen is that many people in our communities end up in competitions about which is the best identity or the better or the more correct identity. And in the end, if for not arrogance what does it matter? So for me I think the end [objective] is to recoup the humanity. For me, once you recoup the humanity, the identity takes care of itself.

RM: I understand what you are saying. Maiz teachings are a living knowledge that are ancient, but these concepts are then integrated today with the intentions of creating and
battering humanity? The generality of the term maiz is more inclusive so our focus is about the values?

Maestro Cintli: Yeah, the reason that I feel very tied to maiz concepts is because it doesn’t lead you to claim. But think about this, “Is sacred purpose about ending up with a Mexica consciousness?” If so, it’s not bad because some people end up this way. This is part of our community; some people want a Mexica movement. I personally don’t identify with that - with the objective of everybody becoming Mexica. What is today Mexico, there were hundreds of peoples. So to me the idea of everyone becoming Mexica [is not correct]. I have another friend and his work has been the opposite. He said, a lot of people from the Southwest are from the north. Not the south. In other words, not Mexica-Aztec -- Navajo mixed with Apache and other Indigenous peoples from the Southwest…We neglect all that because again that romanticism of the Mexica and the Aztec. Especially Chicanos, who have been around hundreds of years mixed with all of the pueblos, all the people. So that is part of the reason for my de-emphasis on the word Mexica. We never know… and to me that is not the most important thing in the world, but the values are. The values are and it’s not about knowing them but living them. Which leads into the last concept related to sacred purpose, which is living life as a ceremony.

For me it’s related to spiritual running, for me that’s at least where I got the idea from. That is we can have ideologies, we can have ethos, we can have a worldview. We can have a cosmo vision. But if you say it, but do not live it, it’s worthless. When we run we always talk about the footprints you leave behind. I use that analogy to this idea of life as a ceremony. And literally in my opinion a lot of people live ritual, not
ceremony. To me ceremony is life; it’s what you discuss – sacred purpose. And people do lots of rituals, and what people call ceremonies, to me, they are really rituals. So it’s almost like an obsession, of always doing rituals of all kinds. And to me your life is the ceremony. Therefore how you live your life is the ceremony. It’s kind of like ethos. You learn ethos and then you live by them. That is you are taught an ethos. So live it because I think Tucson for me has been the exception. The calpolli (Mexica learning center/non – traditional school) is an integral part of the battle. We are battling all the time there and they are at the heart and center. My exposure to other calpolli or tradicion (traditional ways) is the public context is one where, the general public treats them as entertainment, and they too treat themselves as almost apart from that central struggle. “We’ve got the traditions and we don’t need to be a part of the political struggle.” And sometimes that is good for reasons but there is a disconnect. So I see being apart of the creation resistance process as connected to living your life as a ceremony versus various rituals. If you a person, metaphorically, just does rituals, then it doesn’t tell me who that whole person is. In Tucson, our calpolli is integral and that is the whole point is that you are your life. Because once again, once you understand that ethos than live it and the footprints and the life you leave, people can see. So people can judge me on my footprints, not what I say. To me that is what I mean about life as a ceremony. This is how I relate it to sacred purpose. So once you gather the teachings, once you have ethos, the idea is to live. You are not simply going to ceremony on Friday night, but you are living what you have learned everyday. And this is your sacred purpose. I have explained my ceremony and it is connected to the betterment of humanity. That is we have been dehumanized and I think society as a whole has been
dehumanized. So the idea is to be a humanized society. Well, how do you do that? Life is your ceremony.

And if you think about it - creation resistance, life is a ceremony, and *maiz* teachings are all really about sacred purpose, and about creating a balanced human being.

**RM:** And Yolqui connects because it is about spirits being brought back in order to remind society of this, like you said to fight violence, torture, dehumanization.

**Maestro Cintli:** It all connects to my story of *La Llorona*. We are the children of *La Llorona* and it’s the idea that the children never drowned. They were just swept upstream. They all ended in the U.S. They ended up here to battle, create, and survive.

**RM:** I understand, so we can add on to the teachings and this is part of our creation and our resistance. It’s part of our ceremony, part of creating a balanced human being or a humanized society. And it’s all connected to sacred purpose. Gracias Maestro for all of these teachings.

**Parting Ways: Roberto Cintli Rodriguez**

Our conversation lasted over two hours as Maestro Cintli provided a very unique exploration and explanation of sacred purpose. Before our meeting, I had some reservations about conducting this research in a café. Sometimes environments as such do not allow for an authentic relational dialogue to flow due to noise, distractions, and various elements and energies that emerge in these public settings. However, despite the occurrence of all of the above factors (noise, distractions, energies), our conversation engaged a strong heart to heart dialogue, which were my hopes for the research. A heart to heart dialogue, is rooted in trust “*confianza*” and in simple terms, it is like sharing a conversation with someone you have known for many years and one who you respect,
care for, and consider family. I was very honored to have had a conversation as such with Maestro Cintli.

Since our meeting I have had a chance to touch base with Maestro Cintli on occasion. We both agreed to remain in contact with each other regarding this research, research concerning *maiz* based teachings, and future research projects. Currently, he continues to resist in Arizona and at the same time create art, run with the people, and live life as a ceremony – for a better humanity.

**Research Preparations with Grace Sesma**

I was able to connect with Maestra Grace Sesma by chance or as we like to say that all the energies lined up. Within various domains, I had been sharing a lot of my research and I was putting it with my networks that I was looking for key elders to inform this work on sacred purpose. Grace Sesma’s name emerged from various individuals, and it was due to a conversation with a good friend, Alicia Chavez, where I realized that Maestra Grace was an elder that could uniquely inform this research on sacred purpose. Maestra Grace is a traditional *curandera* with a practice rooted in Mayan Mexica Zapotec traditions, and she is a carrier of ancestral teachings that offer healing and balance.

Excited and determined to bring Maestra Grace into this research, I asked Alicia Chavez to send an email message to her introducing my work, my intentions, and my hopes. Shortly after, Maestra Grace confirmed that she was interested in participating in this research study. It helped that she happened to be in San Diego at the time visiting from Colorado where she resides. We communicated through email a few times as I was able to elaborate more about myself and this research study. We established a plan to meet so that we could discuss sacred purpose as she perceived it.
In this case I was able to access entry and trust, a critical phase of this research, because of a good friend Alicia. Relationships help move us when we are stuck, and in this case, my friendship with Alicia, helped move me forward in gaining entry and trust with Maestra Grace. It is important to emphasize the significance of relationships and respect within our community while doing indigenous research. Elders sometimes carry a high level of skepticism and distrust of academia (research, institutions, and intentions) and they perceive their participation in the research study (indigenous framework or not) as risky, time consuming, and lacking reciprocation. These elder perceptions of academia are long rooted in colonialism and the effects of social, political, economic, and spiritual exploitation that Western academia has perpetuated. Therefore, in my situation, the entry and trust with Maestra Grace may have been virtually impossible if it wasn’t for the assistance of my friend Alicia. Also, Alicia is respected and recognized as an individual who has established strong relationships with the community as a result of her community-based work. She knows that I carry *palabra* and that the intentions of my research are honest, from the heart, and done in a good way. Therefore, she put in a very good word for me with Maestra Grace. Once again, it was evident that elders are many times protected by layers of people and energies, and even though they are visible within the community, accessing them for work within academic institutions is not always possible and easy to attain.

Once again, within indigenous protocols, when I had a chance to meet Maestra Grace in person, I offered her a bundle of sage formally asking her for her teachings of sacred purpose. I also gifted her with some artwork from my father – in – law as a gesture of gratitude.
What follows is a condensed conversation of my time with Maestra Grace Sesma in regards to her teachings, stories, understandings, and guiding principles of sacred purpose. There were close to 30 pages of transcription, and the condensed conversation that follows documents Maestra Grace’s teachings of A Calling from the Grandmas. All of these teachings, according to Maestra Grace, addressed sacred purpose on various levels.

Conversations with Grace Sesma: A Calling from the Grandmas

RM: Maestra, what is your understanding of sacred purpose? Your thoughts? Your definitions or the different words you may use for it?

Maestra Grace: To me, I've always referred to it as a calling because that literally is what got me on this path as a young child. It was the Spirit calling me. It wasn't somebody else. It wasn't even myself acknowledging. It was the Spirits coming to me in dreams and calling me back to what could be termed as of my sacred purpose, which is what I'm doing now. It took me many years to get to this point because when I was very young my father died, when I was fifteen. I got pregnant, I got married at sixteen, got divorced at nineteen from an abusive relationship. Then, I dropped out of high school, so I had to work. There's a lot of things, and in between this call kept pulling at me. To me it is a call because you feel like a pull. A pull from the Spirits, from the Creator to live your life differently because there is something greater than yourself that's waiting for you to apply yourself to. When I finally entered the call in a very serious way, it wasn’t until I was in my early thirties. It took me awhile because I had two young girls too, as a single mom, and I raised my daughters by myself. I was very fortunate, but I did have two jobs and eventually I was able to get a GED. Eventually, I got a fellowship through the National
Hispanic Leadership Institute. That really was, for me, a real turning point. To see how Chicanas were out in the world living what they were seeing as their calling, their sacred purpose. Some of them, politics calls to them. To be agents of change; in our political circles and human rights and natural rights work. It was a real eye-opener for me, but even that still. I was still looking at my calling as trying to fit it into the western model. So, I was the administrator of a psychiatric pressure hospitalization program by this time, and I applied for this scholarship. I had no degrees at this time, nothing. Just my GED. So getting this scholarship meant a big deal for me to be able to continue to do this work. I remember writing that I wanted to study and get a degree in ethno-psychology, ethnobotany. I was thinking these things. I never thought traditional medicine. I never thought curanderismo (traditional healing). I was thinking, still at some point, going to school, but the Spirits when they called, they weren’t calling me to go to the western, but they were calling me to learn about my own culture that had been, in many ways, denied from me.

RM: Tell me more about this pull from the ancestors and the spirits.

Maestra Grace: Yeah. I call it the calling of the Grandmothers. They appeared to me as a large group of elderly women of different nations because they all had different regalia on. I knew they weren’t just Yoeme (Yaqui) and they very different. Some had buck skin. We don’t wear buck skin in Mexico, so it was women from different nations. It's like a council of elders.

RM: When do you remember this calling first being introduced?

Maestra Grace: my earliest calling that I remember. We had just moved from Mexicali to Calexico. That's my marker. I think I was between six and maybe eight years old. Éramos
muy pobrecitos (We were very poor). Mexicali, my mom and my dad, hicieron su casita de adobe (they made their house of adobe). Vivíamos por la colonia Colgar. Un barranco in the back of our house. Éramos bastante pobrecitos (We lived in the area of Colgar. A ravine in the back of our house. We were fairly poor.) We came to Calexico. Teníamos una casita (We had a little house) and my sister and I, we had a little rollaway bed that we put in the closet every night. Then we'd move the dining room table, roll it out at night, y allí dormíamos (there we slept). One night, allí estaba (I was there) in my little cot, and this beautiful lady entered the room. I could still see her beautiful gown entering the room. She reaches down, "Mijita, ven conmigo (My little one, come with me)." There was no thought in my mind to say no. To me, at that point, I look back now as an adult. I recognize that even then as a child, as a very small child, I was already listening to my spirit because I knew that I had to go. I think even as young children, when we are listening and we're in that space, we know whether it's right or wrong. I went with her. We walked out the house and I got into a carriage with her. Seemed almost like a, what do you call those cabrioles? Like a horse-on carriage. It had that feeling, but I don't remember seeing it. I just, I could feel it. She was sitting on my left. I remember looking at her. She was talking to me. She was asking me, "Would you do this because you need to do this." I was just mesmerized by her reboso (shawl) because her reboso had pinpoints of light and they would move like stars, little stars. It wasn't until I got older that I realized it was Our Lady of Guadalupe wearing her reboso de estrellas (shawl with stars), citlalli (stars). She's our traditional mother con las estrellas (the stars). She was telling me a lot of things. I remember going like, "Okay, yes, all right." Later years she came to me in different aspects.
One time she came to me as Tara. Are you familiar with Buddhist icona? She looks a lot like our Lady of Guadalupe, a lot. She has the stars also. She wears a veil with stars in it también (also). In different forms to acknowledge, at least from my understanding, that she is not constraint to any one people. She belongs to everyone. It's the divine feminine to each of us, men or woman, according to our needs at that moment. To me, that was the beginning. When she came and me agarró de la mano y dijo, "Mijita, ven conmigo (she grabbed my hand and said, mi little on, come with me)," and I went with her.

Even in 1998 to 1999, she kept coming again to me in my dreams and saying, "I need for you to sit on Tuesday evenings at 7:00 PM every Tuesday for the four Tuesdays, and I'm going to have messages for a small group of you." In my dream I was like, "Okay," and I always say okay. Maybe if it was in my everyday mind I would say, "Let me think about this," but in the dream state, I answered the path. To me it's almost as if I don't have a choice. Although, I do know that I have a choice. We all do. We're all chosen in different ways to do different things. To me, that is the answer in the call, but the soul is also guiding us to answer the call. Does that make sense?

RM: Answering the call, that's an interesting concept. So if we aren't answering the call, as you say, are we disconnected from our sacred purpose? And it's a choice we make right?

Maestra Grace: Even when you say you're disconnected, that's an illusion because we're really, truly never disconnected. It's just that we don't see the connection. We fail to see it sometimes because we don't want to. We blind ourselves to it literally because we're lazy, we don't want to make changes, and I've been there. I didn't want to become a curandera
because I had seen my tia (aunt), I had seen other people. *Todo el tiempo viven de lo peor, no tienen dinero, están enfermos* (They live in the worst conditions all of the time, they have no money, the people were sick). I saw my aunt, con *diferentes cosas* (with different things) where she would battle other bad practitioners or evil practitioners if you want to call it that way. I didn't want to answer the call. By this time, I had managed to get a good job. My daughters were finding I was being able to buy them clothes without having to worry where the next meal was going to come from. I was able to buy a house. I didn't want to leave all of that. I didn't want to leave my town. I didn't want people to ridicule me. I had an established position in my community as a leader, as an activist, as a woman who guided other woman. All of a sudden what? I'm going to guess, what, I'm a *curandera*. It's scary to do that. To make that kind of change because you know that as much as people respect the real *curanderas*, to a certain degree, at the same time they have a tendency to not want to be seen with them. In most communities that's the way it is because we've been conditioned to say that *curanderas* are evil because most of our Catholic rules. I was afraid of all of those things. The wounding, what happened to me made me do it. It was the catalyst for me and the Spirits warned me. They said, "Do it. This is the time. Circumstances are going to come about that you're going to lose everything." *Dicho y hecho* (They said it and it happened). Within 6 months, the company I was working for closed - the psychiatric hospital. I lost my job. I couldn't get another job there. In Imperial Valley there's very few work, that professional work there. Lost my house, lost my car. By the time I got another job I had lost everything. I had been warned. It was a really hard time for me. I nearly died from the grief, the loss, the shame. The Spirits kept coming. Finally, I said, "Fine. I surrender, but I still have to have
a job." It's how we use that. It's how we use that beginning to be a catalyst and springboard for us to really begin the process of real self-reflection of a really deep, profound, spiritual practice. Or we can use it to drown ourselves in addictions, drugs, alcohol, lo que sea (whatever), to go to a totally different road.

And even then, you still have the opportunity. If there's someone who is able to get through to you, to hand you a lifeline if you want it, you can still reconnect; it's still there. It's still there. It's just that we're putting it on the side. It's just that we're putting it on the side. When people say, "They're disconnected," yes, it's true. On one level I understand the meaning of it, but on a deeper level, no one is ever disconnected truly. And we need these constant reminders that we are ALL sacred.

RM: You mentioned “if there is someone there to throw you a lifeline, to be able to get through to you.” Others have perceived that sacred purpose is interconnected and strengthened with relationships, do you see it that way as well?

Maestra Grace: I think when we say, "We're all connected," unless you have had a direct experience of seeing that connection and are able to express it, people can hear the ring of truth when you say, "We're all connected," because you know it, because you read a book that somebody said that we are versus I've seen those connections. I've seen how all these luminous fibers when they come to me. Into every single beam of stone and tree and cosmos and the stars. I've seen that. Could be very big. Could be very small. We're all part of it. When we talk about that, I could feel your emotions, from a distance or I could hear your thoughts or I could feel it, it's not a magical thing. It's because those luminous fibers that connect us are carriers of that information. If I do something to harm me or you, that's why it goes down through all of those luminous fibers and affects everybody
else. What they call the butterfly effect, that's what it is. To me is, how do I give that experience? How can I cultivate myself, my spirit, my soul as a spiritual being, but also as a spiritual guide to someone, how can I help them have that direct experience? How can I bring them into that experience? How can I share that with their kids?

Although most young people will actually believe that we are all connected. Most people will believe it, so that is also part of that sacredness because all of that you see that and you feel it. You're up high and you look down and you see that there's spots of light on the earth. Some are bigger and some are smaller. Those also tell you what each person is what, so your light is bigger. Will shine bigger than maybe that person because what they're doing is still not fully walking their path. They're baby steps. Where you’re fully embracing your purpose, your sacredness, therefore your luminous light is bigger. Someone in sight would see it bigger.

It reminds us of our humanity. When my husband and I went to Yucatan I said, “Wait until you get into Mexico.” I said, “Because even here really se te está olvidando (you are forgetting) how to be human in a Mexican way.” You used to walk down the street, you always said hello to everybody. Buenas tardes, buenas tardes (Good afternoon, good afternoon). You didn't know anybody, but buenas tardes, buenas noches (good evening). ¿Cómo estás? (How are you?)? Muy bien (Very well).” You'd walk into the doctor's it's, "¿Cómo estás? Buenas tardes (How are you? Good afternoon)."

Everybody goes, "Buenas tardes." Looking at each other in the eye and saying, "Buenas tardes,"

He was just ecstatic. He said, "Oh, my God." He said, "Everywhere we go, people look me in the eye and they say, "Buenos días (Good morning)." I said, "Exactly, but as
we get close to United States, you start becoming assimilated and you start getting into the fastness of the lifestyle and the overlooking people. You're too busy to be courteous, to acknowledge a fellow human being.” I really hope that we don't lose that because of all the problems that Mexico is having. That we don't lose the innate human stability, courteousness, politeness, but a real heart acknowledgement of another person even if you never see them again.

And we all have our own lugar (place, role). None is better than the other.

Tenemos nuestro lugar. Todos tenemos lugar (We have our place/role. All of us, we have a place/role), and together we can behave as a cohesive unit to address all of this because that's the only way, I think, it's really going to work. We're so big now. Even before our neighborhood, our barrios, we all took care of each other. It was like a little rez (reservation). Barrios were like a little rez. You had your curandera, you had your curandero, you had your elders.

If something happened, you would usually ... I went to Mexicali with my dad. I still remember. I was quite young. A young girl had got molested by a man in the neighborhood. Los señores se pintaron (They went out looking for him), they knocked on the door, lo sacaron (they got him out), le metieron su friega (They were very physical with him), they said, “You don't do this anymore. You don't beat the women, you don't abuse your child. You do that, the next time we're going to kill you.” It stopped. It's like the warrior society in a way. Now, we're more disconnected, so we don’t have that. We also no longer give our friends those permissions. Where in the old days, people trusted each other enough that we were a community that said, "Sí, sabes que (Yes, you know?)," it was unwritten. It was unofficial.
Sabíamos aquellos hombres, son buenos hombres. Son los guerreros (We knew that those men were good men. They were the warriors). If there's a problem, the men they handle it. Las mujeres (the women), they handle it in a different way, but I remember seeing that. If somebody needed help, they'd go to my tía's (aunt’s) house. No matter what time of the day or night. They'd go to my tía's house para que les diera su limpia or sus hierbitas (so that she would give them a cleansing or their herbs). We all had our place. It doesn't seem like we have that anymore. We just don't have our places of respect for each other like we used to.

RM: So this idea is then also very related to the concept of belonging. “Belonging” to a community, belonging within the community, acknowledgement from members of the community?

Maestra Grace: That's right because I think it's hard to embrace a sacred purpose when you don't think you're good enough. That's what I see a lot in my practice from all ages. That most of us, somehow we came to this place where we’re not good enough. It doesn't matter what we're doing. Somehow we think we're a sham, and we have people buffaloed. How can you get to the next step?

When you talk about not belonging. I hate that expression. Recently, we were teaching. I think it might have been in Tampa, and somebody said ... we're talking about immigration and immigration reform or immigration issues. This woman was not native or not Mexican, "You know Grace. You're an immigrant. I forgot how exactly she said. “You know how it is because it's not really your country." I said, "Well, you know, actually, you're wrong." I said, "Technically I may be an immigrant, but I'm not. This has been my country for generations."
I said, "For my father's side we're Yaqui. It was before there was borders, but even more so," I said, "My Kumeyaay ancestors have been in San Diego, in Imperial Valley, Baja California area for six hundred generations, six hundred generations." I said, "So no, I'm not an immigrant." I was like, to be able to say that was very empowering to me. *Vieja, casi sesenta años que estoy* (Lady, I’ve been here almost sixty years), but to be able to say that finally and to say it with dignity and to say it owning it versus that sort of like, “*Yeah, sí es cierto*” ("Yes, it’s true"). *Antes, nos robaron* (Before, they robbed us) of that kind of history. It was very different, so that sense of belonging was very important to us.

Additionally, I had a very human experience and I'm very grateful to a Kumeyaay elder from San Diego County because in traditional circles when healers go to other areas, we typically will look for an elder, a local elder, and we introduce ourselves and we say, “Here we are. This is our medicine. In a good way. We ask for your blessing to be able to enter into your community and share our medicine, exchange cultural ways.”

My husband and I were talking to this elder on the phone. I had emailed him and introduced myself and my background. “My mother's from Kumeyaay from La Vuelta, Ensenada area. My father is Yoeme (Yaqui) from Miguel, San Miguel en Casitos en Sonora, so we're Yaqui.” I said. “We'd like to invite you to dinner and introduce ourselves.” “All right, well, call me,” he said. So I called him. We had a very nice conversation, and my husband gets on the phone and he says, "Well, how come you guys are reaching out to me?" My husband says, "We really just always follow the tradition protocols" He says, "Well, I think that's really great, but you know, Grace is Kumeyaay She doesn't need my permission or anybody else to bring her medicine. This is her land.”
I thought, it brought tears to my eyes because no one had ever told me that. I knew it. The Spirits tell me, but for a tough elder to say, "She's Kumeyaay. There's no need for her to ask me permission. This is her land." It's like, yeah. That's right. I mean, all of a sudden something shifted in me internally. As you can tell, it's still, it's really ... and growing up, my father would say, "Mija, somos Mexicanos. Trapeale que somos Indios. Eso no sé nos quita. Somos Yaqui. No se te olvidé. ("My daughter, we are Mexican. Go a little deeper, we are Indian. That can’t take that away from us. We are Yaquis. Don’t forget it.") It's very different when someone who is a traditional elder because we're raised in Mexico. Mestizos are not Indio. That’s changing little by little, but that was very freeing to me.

RM: At what level do you see responsibility connected to sacred purpose? Like within sacred purpose lies responsibility? Your responsibility to manifest and fulfill this calling of the grandmas?

Maestra Grace: One of the things that the grandmothers and spirits told me when I was quite young, one of the reasons why I was supposed to learn the medicine, learn the culture more was because the time of the women power to return was going to be coming, so I had to be ready. Not only for myself, but then other women would be waking up and I had to be a part of that because I had to be ready for it. This has actually been happening. It's been amazing to me.

I think for me and anyone who has an ioda of common sense, we shy away from embarking on the path that I did because of the huge responsibility that we have to Mother Earth, to the world. Not just to our immediate family, our immediate friends, or
even our immediate community, but the bigger community, as well. It is a multi-
dimensional responsibility. At least, that's the way I see it.

It's not just that I have responsibility in a physical way for the people who come
to me for help, but I also have a responsibility and answer to the Spirits with the work
that I do, with the people who come to me for help on Spiritual levels. There are dream
time level or the daily levels that we don't always see during the day. There's the other
dangers, spiritual dangers because sometimes there are people who are so lost in
materialism and lost in greed they're sick. The way they pursue that is through coercive
practices. The brujos (witches). What they deem brujos.

There's that element of danger, but there's the responsibility that I have, that I've
been given to help and protect people. There's that responsibility, and there's the
responsibility that I also feel that I have to learn. It's an ongoing process for me. It's
interesting that the last few years, in particular, I keep getting asked to speak out on this
as a wisdom person, which to me is my Elder who’s one hundred years old. I still feel a
little funny about that, but it keeps coming up.

The responsibility is also keeping this cultural practice going, and applying it and
decolonizing the medicine. We talk about decolonizing our minds and decolonizing our
lifestyle. What I also am doing, now that I have more time to, do some research, and that
I'm understanding because I’m not a scholar. Everything that I've learned has always
been OJT (On the job training), everything. I learn it, the Spirits tell me what to do, or an
elderly tells me what to do, but, generally, everything I've learned I haven’t learned it
from books.
It's a new thing for me too, actually, be doing some research and doing that aspect of it. I'm trying to decolonize the medicine in the sense that, this is *curanderismo*, but what does that mean? Where does this come from? Seeing other practitioners that are bringing in laughter therapy, other models that are not traditional. Then the question rises, what is traditional? How do we continue to practice *curanderismo* and bring in other elements and so that it still remains *curanderismo*? At what point does it stop being *curanderismo* because you're bringing all these elements, and you're teaching it in such a way that you don't clarify to your students that this is not a traditional model.

To me, some of these people are inadvertently colonizing the medicine even more so than it has been already. When I do the egg *limpias* (cleansings). I've always done the egg *limpias*. I've always seen them done in a certain pattern. For me, the Spirits always told me, "No, you start here." Then I get my elder and he says, "No. You start at the *ombligo* (belly button) and you go down. Or the *ombligo* and you go up." I'm like, "Why?" "Well, it’s because así son. Porque te tienes que arraizar y luego lo demás entra al cielo para que se vaya al cielo." (that is the way it is. Because you have to get to the roots and the rest comes from the elements so that it can return to the elements”). In reading some of the scholarly works, I've discovered that the reason for that is because our body is the mirror of our cosmology. Of our Meso-American cosmology. This is our *ombligo*. The *ombligo* of the earth. This is all the levels of the subconscious that goes on to mirror as long as [inaudible.]

That's what I mean by decolonizing our medicine, decolonizing my own terminology, my own terms, so that when I'm teaching someone, I'm not saying, "*Mira, aquí está el blanquillo. Aquí está el tuyo. Vamos hacer así porque todo ahorita es Él*
Padre, El Santo, El hijo y..." (Look, here is the egg. Here is yours. We are going to do it this way because everything now is the Father, the son, and the holy one) No. That's not why we're doing it. We're doing it because this is your tonal (aura). This is your dolor, El Espíritu. Es esto. Es la cosmología. Es la ama de tierra. Es la conciencia. Estamos entonces poniendo más luz, es esa conciencia cuando estamos haciendo esto (This is your pain, The Spirit. This is it. It is the cosmology. It is the love of the land. It is the consciousness. We are then putting more light, it is that consciousness when we are doing this.)

There's things so that you see that the template is not a Western European template. Like some people say that it was brought over by the Spaniards. It's not. That's what I'm talking. To me, that's my responsibility also. There's another aspect of the responsibility besides the responsibility of teaching it ethically, compassionately, lovingly, but also holding people accountable for how they learn it and how they apply it. There's many levels and many nuance as to the word responsibility in terms of how I see my role as a mujer (woman) trying to walk the path as best as she can.

That's also the role of us woman, nowadays, is to wake you guys up. Men and women will say, "Donde están mis hijos. Mis hijos están aquí." (“Where are my children. My children are here.”) Just like our ancestors said, "One day our teachings will come back to light. Will come back into the sun. We'll be starting to wake up."

That's another aspect of the sacred purpose. I was talking about decolonizing curanderismo practices. Or at least so then you're able to identify what comes from where. To say, "No, I'm sorry. You're wrong. This did come from the Moors. This comes from ours." The Chinos (The Chinese), the acupunctures, when does the Chinese people
look and try to say, "We taught it to the Mexicans, the acupunctures." Like, "No. No, you didn't. No, you did not."

_Yo, sí les digo. Yo les digo,_" (Yes, I tell them. I tell them). No, you didn't." To me, all of that is part of the sacred purpose. It's the reminder and to hold the medicine men accountable. I see a lot of that. They talk, but they turn around and they mistreat their wives or their elders. Excuse me. How can you be there and present yourself as a spiritual person and say we need have balance and the next breath, you're teaching the men here how to mistreat the woman.

RM: I have the very unique opportunity to see your perspective, a healer's understanding of sacred purpose. So through your lens, how does the concept of “healing” connect to sacred purpose?

Maestra Grace: Yeah, it's about learning how to balance practical with spiritual. It's about balancing your relationship with your spouse, with your own personal needs. It's about balancing the needs of your children with your own personal needs. It's about balancing your work demands with your personal needs and the needs of your family and so on. Balance in that way.

It’s balance about nutrition. It's a balance about the female and the masculine within us so that our emotions are more consistently balanced. We're human beings, so at every moment there is something that is going to trigger us and can challenge us. It's an ongoing process learning how to balance our needs with the needs of the external world around us.
RM: So how much of the healing work, with individuals, relates to our use of words. The reason why I ask is that I work with youth and I see how key simple “words” and messages can be, their effects, and the potential implications of them on sacred purpose.

Maestra Grace: It depends on the tonality and the intention and the authenticity with which you say the words. Definitely it's the vibration because the authenticity and the truthfulness and the intent, that creates a special vibration. When you say a word in a certain way, it creates the resonance in the other person. Just as when we're speaking in a conversation. If someone changes their tone of voice and begin saying, like an intonation of a prayer - like calling in the directions in a certain way, the whole energy shifts, right? That's what happens within a person's body when the words are spoken in a certain manner, but to me the real healing happens energetically because the words have to reach into that energetic space in between the cells, in those spaces, and it has to help the person shift their belief system. How they believe of themselves. What they believe themselves to be now as a consequence of what happened to them in what they can see is their past. I try to explain to them how healing works. Healing for me is, we're in a circle and it looks like a flat circle, but it actually isn't. Really, it's a never ending sphere, if you will. We're doing that medicine where people don't even look at past and future and present, right? Like a linear, but for us it's not linear. It isn't. It's all happening simultaneously. If I can help you change the way you're looking at what you're perceive is the past, it changes the past. It shifts your cellular response to it. That, to me, that's when you start making in those along with the words. The words, the vibration of the word, just like when you're singing. The drum makes a resonance. The rattle makes a resonance. It stirs some things up. That’s what, to me, happens.
Sometimes people need to have an explanation so that they understand how it's working because they're caught up in their head. If you can get that into them, then it opens the door for them to accept healing. It's hard because I would say 60% of people who have come to see me are victims of sexual abuse. Some are strangers. Most of them are family members, multiple, so it's pretty traumatic.

RM: What is your thoughts on the “sacred” element of sacred purpose?

Maestra Grace: a long time ago, I was trying to be a coyote with the spirits. Trying like "Okay, you want me to be a healer? I'm going to do a Reiki and I'm going to go to the church of religious science and I'm going to do this positive thinking, and all these things." Then, I don't know what I was doing. This woman comes up to me. She asked me, she says, “Grace, you're such a holy woman. You're a sacred woman. I can see it.” I panicked. I said, "No, I'm not." Because to me it felt blasphemous. She looked at me and she says, "No, no." She says, "You're sacred. Look at what you're doing. Your hands." I said, "No, I'm not. I'm a disco queen and I like to drink."

Not understanding that being a sacred being doesn't mean that you're in a monastery. That was my vision - A saint with blood coming out of your hands. I've learned and I'm grateful to my clients because they're actually the ones who trained me to think of myself as being a sacred being. I still have trouble with “holy” because it has so many other kind of Catholic, Christian connotations for me. Where Sacred has more indigenous connotation. I understand that my clients, they are people, and so to me I'm very grateful to them because I was forced to acknowledge that I am a sacred being because of all of the experiences I've had bad and good.
It's not just because you've always been good that makes you feel good. Not only
good experiences. The good and the bad make you who you are. That’s what I try to
convey to the young women. Anybody, if they've had risky behaviors, and the men
themselves because I also remind them that they themselves would have to help their
young men or their moms or grandparents like myself. We have to remind the men in our
lives that they themselves are sacred as well.

RM: I agree so much with everything you have said. Thank you so much for your
participation and contributions to this research about sacred purpose.

Parting Ways: Grace Sesma

I was so honored to be able to spend time with Maestra Grace Sesma. She offered
a unique perspective of sacred purpose and the dynamics of our conversation unfolded as
if we had known each other for years. As a result of the methodology, conversation helps
to deepen relationships with research participants. In this case it evoked the spiritual,
mental, physical, and emotional, which created a strengthened relationship as a result of
sharing story and active listening. I like to consider that it is very rare for people to have
the full attention of another human being, therefore conversations often create a powerful
intimacy as the case with my conversation with Maestra Grace.

Throughout this conversation I showed a relational accountability, a respect for
protocol, and I acknowledged the insight offered by Maestra Grace. As a result, higher
levels of trust emerged which ultimately created deeper levels of conversation. At the
conversation, we agreed to stay in communication with each other regarding the various
political, social, and ceremonial efforts that we are involved in. To this day I am grateful
for the powerful teachings that Maestra Grace shared and for the trust and friendship that emerged.

**Presentation of Findings (Thematic Grouping & Codices): Teachings from the Elders**

This research has been a process of triangulation, offering a shared perspective of how sacred purpose is perceived by four very different indigenous elders. Throughout this journey I have been guided by the question, “What are the principles derived from indigenous elders that can guide the development of a curriculum that promotes sacred purpose?” However, I have found the specific sub-questions even more critical, consisting of: What is sacred purpose and its guiding principles? What stories/teachings/themes of sacred purpose that can be identified by indigenous elders and how do they see it actualized? How does sacred purpose, according to indigenous elders, contribute to adolescent development?

In this chapter I share the findings overall, thematically, from all of the elders and their conversations regarding sacred purpose. One of the most overarching findings presented throughout all of the conversations is that sacred purpose is simple, but yet very complex. It is much different than Western definitions and perceptions of purpose in life, whereas sacred purpose is found to be multi-dimensional engaging the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual states of each individual as pointed out repeatedly by Maestro Jerry Tello. It calls upon the past, present, and future. The past is inclusive because it acknowledges the ancestors and the ancestors’ sacrifices, wishes, and intentions that are embedded in each individual’s sacred purpose; and which have been in the making for generations. As an example, Grace Sesma’s reference to sacred purpose
as a “Calling of the Grandmas,” and this implies the implicit and spiritual ancestral work within sacred purpose. The future is a critical element as well because it is embedded with the concept of responsibility; a responsibility that each individual carries within their sacred purpose for the future generations to come. Mamma Cobb refers to this responsibility as “Keepers of the Fire.” Equally important is the acknowledgment of the present providing each individual with the opportunity to be sacred purpose driven and “Live Life as a Ceremony,” as articulated by Maestro Cintli. In utilizing all of the teachings from the conversations, sacred purpose is also found to be relational, endless, holistic, and about the internal and external.

The elders also spelled out the denotations, connotations, and perceived meanings of sacred purpose by breaking up the words and discussing them as fragmented concepts. For example, what I learned is that when the term “purpose” is by itself, according to the elders, it takes on a meaning that relates to gifts, roles, interests, passions, sparks, or long-term intentions. Similar to the western research regarding purpose all of the elders agreed that it looks differently based on the individual and it can manifest in various ways and in multiple domains. However purpose takes on a whole different meaning once it is recognized as “sacred purpose.” The “sacred” element of sacred purpose uncovers a whole new paradigm. Not attached to a religion nor is it a synonym for holy, sacredness is the true acknowledgement that each and every element of creation is of utmost importance. Grace Sesma presented her understanding of the concept sacred by expressing its relationship to people, “You are a child of Mother Earth and Father Sky... the beloved grandchild of Star Ancestors. Creator's love and power is in you and around you. You are a miracle of love and light." Sacred, according to the elders, could also
refer to sacred relationships, sacred spaces, sacred responsibilities, sacred teachings, and/or sacred self-acceptance. Therefore, the “sacred” element within sacred purpose carries a new depth especially when putting both words together.

There are a variety of other multi-faceted teachings from the elders that serve as key guiding principles of sacred purpose. In moving forward I feel that it is most respectful to share these critical teachings in a way that honors each elder’s unique perception of sacred purpose as opposed to clumping everything together. Additionally, in an attempt to document my understandings of their teachings within this section, I created a codex/codices (approved by each elder) that allows me to offer significant points and also allow for a form of summarization. Codices are visuals with conceptual and theoretical content which in the case of this research are the “footprints that lead from the past and into the future” (Rodriguez, 1998, p.24). These conceptuals, when juxtaposed, show the commonalities of the elder perceptions, and they also exhibit the differences in the ways the elders use language and story to convey their teachings, understanding, perceptions, definitions, and derivations of sacred purpose. Following each maestra/o codex, I also included a brief narrative explaining the flow and content of the construct documenting how I understood the concept when it was presented in the conversations.

**In Ixtli In Yolotl: The Teachings of Jerry Tello regarding Sacred Purpose**

Figure 3 was created to articulate the teachings of Ixtli and Yolotl (Face and Heart/ Cara y Corazon) as expressed during conversations with Maestro Jerry Tello. Here the overarching teaching is *In Tloque Nahuaque* (EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED). According to Tello, “We are a huge part of this interconnected web of
In Ixtli In Yolotl

Watering Sacred Purpose

Figure 3. In Ixtli In Yolotl (Face and Heart) codex.

Life, as we all have a big teaching to give, and more importantly we have many lessons in life to learn.” This construct of Ixtli and Yolotl provides key concepts that serve to actualize and “water” the sacred purpose within yourself and those around you by engaging the elements of Ixtli and Yolotl (Face and Heart); teachings which have been collected from fourteen volumes of the Florentine Codex. The dual concepts of Ixtli and Yolotl reflect four values: dignidad (dignity), respeto (respect), confianza (trust), and cariño (love). Ixtli, addresses the concept of “sacred” and refers to the importance of our sacredness and our sacred interconnectedness. Yolotl is about finding ways to navigate one’s purpose in life. Overall this codex serves to show the guiding principles of sacred purpose, and how to operationalize the teachings of sacred purpose.

The first element, Ixtli, encompasses two main elements: dignity and respect. Dignity, according to Maestro Jerry Tello, is the most basic teaching that can be found in all cultures of the world. Dignity is simple - You are a blessing, you are a blessing if you are doing good or bad, you are a blessing just the way you are, you are a blessing if
you are LGTBQ, you are a blessing regardless of your race-sex-class-religion-looks-physical conditions, and you are a blessing regardless of which animal spirit you are connected to (ie. coyote, jack rabbit, eagle, turtle). Dignity is about acknowledging that everyone is sacred, a blessing, but additionally you must see the sacredness in yourself as well. You must embrace yourself and accept yourself because when you do not see your own sacredness, when you have self-hatred, it destroys you. Tello argued:

It makes you focus on your deficiencies and leads to verguenza (shame) and it can be debilitating taking over your energy and it will pull you away from others. Shame turns into a focus on ‘What is wrong with me?’ Shame takes over your energy so that you can’t learn, can’t interact, you’ll pull away from others, and hate on others.

So overall, dignity within this codex signifies that within each individual lies sacredness, and this understanding is the most critical element of sacred purpose -You are sacred. You are a blessing. You are wanted and this is the way that you conduct yourself. Recognize this in other people and maintain it within yourself.

The next element of Ixtli is respect and it’s also about “helping” others to recognize that all of us are sacred and have a sacred purpose. It is about our sacred interconnection and simply about nurturing the relationships around us. It is the reminder that, “Someone has to show you how to get out, so that you can get some light as well.” Someone has to massage your spirit when you are wounded – Sana, Sana, Colita de Rana. We need others to remind us of our responsibility to walk with our sacred purposes especially since these sacred purposes have been in the making for generations and especially since they are intended to impact the future generations to come. So respect, is about honoring someone’s sacredness and this is done through enhancing the relationships around you. Relationships, like Maestro Jerry Tello shared, challenge us to
grow, allow us to heal, provide us teachings. He stated, “We all have a purpose but it is sacred when you realize that it is interconnected. And the teaching is, that it is not only about me, but it’s also about you. So, how do I flow with you to respect your sacred purpose as well and your sacred rhythm?”

_Yolotl_, the other dual concept within the teaching of sacred purpose, means to be a possessor of the heart. In a way it is sequential to the concept of _Ixtli_ and can only be effective once an individual honors and lives the elements of dignity and respect found in _Ixtli_. _Yolotl_ consist of two values, trust and love, and both refer to the positive steps that one must take in order to navigate their sacred purpose. _Cariño_ (love) is about living with value and doing things out of love. Everything in life that we do such as parenting, teaching, protesting, politicizing should be done out of love. Maestro Jerry Tello shares, “you can even talk about the pride of your own people with love by not putting other people down.” So, _cariño_ is finding ways to live with value and love because when you don’t live with certain values, then you start to oppress people. Tello articulated:

Some people’s purposes are rooted in control, power, and conquering. This contradicts sacred purpose. There is a whole reference to this in the codices regarding the true and false _tlamatini_. It talks about the smoking mirror and this is the false _tlamatini_ because it puts this image in front of you and makes you believe, but it doesn’t let you see who that person is. It’s a smoking mirror. The true _tlamatini_ is the mirror that lets you see on both sides – the outside and the inside. This is the true way to be – to allow others to see the inside of them [living with love and value].

Through the teaching of _cariño_ (love) we see that our sacred purposes cannot be about hurting others because it then contradicts our sacred interconnection. Therefore our purposes must be about love.

The last element of _Yolotl_ is _confianza_ (trust) and it is about creating a sacred, safe place (internally and externally) to be able to learn, heal, and grow our sacred purpose. Having spaces provides a physical security, but it also provides a consistent
lugar (place). People need domains that are rooted in respect, love, balance, consistency, positive energy, etc. in order to develop, enhance, and fulfill their sacred purposes. For some, confianza occurs at home or could even happen at school. Within indigenous ceremonies, confianza is a focal point. For example, sweatlodges and gatherings provide individuals with a place to learn, heal, grow, and feel acknowledged, feel important, and feel a sense of belonging. Sometimes confianza could even be a person that serves as a consistent drum beat for the people. They are deemed as honest, wise, respectful individuals who provide others with a sense of safety and nurturance. Overall, confianza is critical in nurturing one’s sacred purpose.

Through the teachings of Ixtli and Yolotl, Maestro Jerry Tello reminds us that we can go anywhere and apply our gifts, talents, interests, and purposes. However, if we do not see the sacredness in ourselves or in others, then we cannot truly walk with our purpose and we cannot refer to it as sacred purpose. Sacred purpose is all about In Tloque Nahuaque, the intricate web of life tying us all together. When we see the sacredness in ourselves then we will also see it in others. When we are disconnected from this teaching, then we will find ourselves more out of balance with our sacred purpose. In Ixtli In Yolotl is a means to help individuals connect to their sacred purpose and help them “water” and nurture dignity, respect, trust, and love wherever one may go.

Calling of the Grandmas

Figure 4 is a conceptual model of the guiding principles of sacred purpose as perceived by Maestra Grace Sesma, which were extracted from the research conversation. It follows up on critical elements that serve almost as a gateway to sacred purpose. These critical elements could impede one’s “calling from the grandmas”
(sacred purpose) or they could spark, develop, or enhance it. These factors once again are about responsibility, interconnectedness, balance, and sacredness. In order for an individual to enhance, develop, find, or fulfill their sacred purpose, these initial elements are critical. Maestra Grace teaches, “Whatever your life’s purpose may be, when it is about a responsibility (to help and protect, to teach, to learn, to pass on, to decolonize, to hold others accountable, to love and be compassionate, to impact future generations); or when it is about interconnectedness; or when acknowledges all that is sacred; and when it is lived with balance, sacred purpose emerges.”

Figure 4. Guiding principles of sacred purpose codex: Calling of the grandmas.
Keepers of the Fire

Figure 5, Keeper’s of the Fire, is based on the teachings of Mamma Cobb. She perceived sacred purpose as inclusive of multiple guiding principles that she presented through stories. There are five integral elements within sacred purpose (development, enhancement, and fulfillment of sacred purpose) consisting of sacredness, nurturance, learning, teaching, and responsibility. The main teaching of this codex lies at the center and comes from the Aztec Calendar that asks how is one going to give life (lead life)? In a good way or a bad way? To live life in a good way is one’s opportunity/choice to develop, enhance, or fulfill their sacred purpose.

Figure 5. Keepers of the Fire codex.
The elements of the teaching tablet are continuous and not linear. They occur throughout a lifetime, and over and over again as one’s sacred purpose is developed, enhanced, and eventually fulfilled. Maestra Mama Cobb explains the five elements in her teaching: Sacredness element: You are sacred, others are sacred as well. A part of our sacredness are the sacred teachings that have been passed on. Part of our sacredness are also our gifts, talents, interest, roles, long term intentions that are part of our being; Nurturing element: All people, domains, and systems around us are responsible for nurturing each other’s sacredness, and our sacred gifts, talents, interest, roles, long term intentions. Learning element: We must learn from our environments, our indigenous epistemology, our multiple lived experiences – good or bad, and our sacred teachings which have been in existence for generations; and they help us learn more about our talents, passions, and interests. Teaching element: We must teach with love and compassion, teach our lived experiences, teach about each other’s sacredness, teach about the sacred teachings, teach the teachers as well, and hold the teachers that we teach accountable. Responsibility element: We have a responsibility to be a keeper of the Fire and continue life itself. Life continues when we utilize the five elements and we teach it to others. This responsibility allows our true treasures to flourish- traditions, customs, music, art, and dance.

**Life as a Ceremony**

Figure 6, Life as a Ceremony, articulated by Maestro Roberto Cintli Rodriguez signifies the full time commitment and daily reminder, struggle, and acknowledgment of one’s sacred purpose. This element is the main factor that highlights the critical difference between sacred purpose and simply purpose. According to this indigenous
Figure 6. Life as a Ceremony codex.

elder, life as a ceremony means that one cannot compartmentalize a huge aspect of their life, but must be intentional about it in every moment. Be intentional about the footsteps that you leave behind and do not ritualize your purpose. Ritualizing your purpose means honoring and acknowledging it once in a while, which is something common in our Western society. Looking more into this concept of living life as a ceremony, Maestro Cintli also asserts that it is not just about living your ceremony daily, but also attempting to enhance the quality of one’s ceremony. The elements that can determine the quality of one’s ceremony consist of one’s values, lived experiences, and the sacred teachings (maiz teachings) they live by. Therefore, if one has value, strong lived experiences and understands, acknowledges, and lives by maiz teachings (En Lak’Ech, Panche Be, Hunab
Maestro Cintli also refers to Yolqui, which are the warrior spirits that exist in our physical world sent here with the intention of battling. This factor can also impact one’s life ceremony.

As Maestro Cintli explained that, a strong life ceremony must be manifested through creation resistance. This concept means that one’s life ceremony must be about resistance against all injustice and inhumanity. This resistance takes the form of protesting, marching, speaking out about issues, politicizing, etc. Resistance is very similar to using your mind and the intellectual dimension to battle and resist. The other element creation is about creating and utilizing your heart and spirit within your ceremony. According to Maestro Cintli, this takes on the form of art, dance, spiritual runs, curriculum development, music, writing, etc. Both of these elements, creation-heart and resistance- mind, and allow one’s life ceremony to be balanced. The equation that this codex produces is that when individuals connect all creation-resistance layers of their sacred purposes, and their sacred purposes are about living ceremonies that are lived daily and are consistent, rooted in a quality indigenous epistemology, and balanced with actions of the heart and mind, the ultimate outcome is the betterment of humanity.

**Bringing All Four Codices Together**

Despite the codices, which specifically bring out the principles that each elder has presented, in putting all of them together it is quite clear that there are commonalities. Their teachings indicate that sacred purpose is: multidimensional, fluid, complex, relational, about one’s responsibility to learn and teach, it is about passing on cultural treasures (music, art, dance, teachings, customs, song), it is about balance, it is about
healing; it is about lived experiences; it is about personal gifts/talents/passions; it is about listening to the guidance of the ancestors; and it is about living all of the above factors each day.

Figure 7 is a synthesis of these teachings about sacred purpose. In this flow chart it presents the inherent choice and process that individuals have regarding sacred purpose. The elders share that through life individuals are provided with numerous signs, messages, and teachings regarding their sacred purpose that start can appearing when they are little children. These signs, messages, and teachings (sometimes positive experiences, sometimes negative experiences) are pullings that manifest in a variety of ways. Answering the call refers to the choice aspect that each of us have within our sacred purpose. It is the individual’s consistent response to the signs, messages, and teachings. In other words, does the individual use the signs/messages/teachings as a catalyst or springboard in order to find, develop, or enhance their sacred purpose? Or does the individual fail to “answer the call?” Both responses have outcomes and implications as indicated within this synthesis. The teaching also highlights that there are various critical factors that impact one’s mental/emotional/physical/spiritual ability to answer the call including one’s understanding of responsibility to future generations, one’s perspective of interconnectedness, one’s understanding of their own sacredness, and one’s sense of balance.
**Sacred Purpose Driven**

Sacred Purpose is:
Multidimensional, fluid, complex, relational, about one’s responsibility to learn and teach, it is about passing on cultural treasures (music, art, dance, teachings, customs, song), it is about balance, it is about healing; it is about lived experiences; it is about personal gifts/talents/passions; it is about listening to the guidance of the ancestors; and it is about living all of the above factors each day

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*Figure 7.* Answering the call theoretical conceptual model.
CHAPTER 5

Discussion, Implications, Limitations, & Future Research

A main focus of this research was to give voice to Indigenous elders, but it also sought to answer the question, “What are the guiding principles of sacred purpose that could be used in the development of a curriculum for educational domains and the pedagogy of eagle and the condor?” The findings of this research indicated that sacred purpose is multidimensional, fluid, complex, relational, about one’s responsibility to learn and teach, it is about passing on cultural treasures (music, art, dance, teachings, customs, song); it is about balance, it is about healing; it is about lived experiences; it is about personal gifts/talents/passions; it is about listening to the guidance of the ancestors; and it is about living all of the above factors each day (life as a ceremony). Data collected offered insight and understanding regarding sacred purpose as an integral and critical element of Indigenous wisdom that has utility for individuals and communities as they develop, heal, transform, and simply navigate through life.

Findings of the study served multiple purposes. It informed the Indigenous frameworks of the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor. It also informed the development of a fluid curriculum into the context of today’s educational system utilizing the teachings of sacred purpose as perceived by Indigenous elders. And indirectly it contributed to the body of research uncovering the teachings of sacred purpose, which have been absent in Western academia and slowly disappearing in Indigenous communities.

This research followed an Indigenous research design and a variety of criteria were addressed in order for this work to be considered as such. First and foremost, this
research was rooted in respect, reciprocity, relationships and responsibility in every aspect of the research design. Next, its findings made visible what is special and needed, and what is meaningful and logical in respect to Indigenous peoples’ own understanding of themselves and the world (Smith, 1999). It contributed to Indigenous communities, which made the work purposeful. Through the use of the conversational method, this study deepened our understanding of sacred purpose by privileging the voices of the elders. This study and its design were also unique as it informed the past, present, and future. Through this process it contributed to the current and past review of literature, and it challenges today’s research to engage in an Indigenous methods design in order to address the absence of Indigenous knowledge and to serve to improve the quality of lives of Indigenous people and the communities they belong to.

Because reporting back is a critical imperative of Indigenous research (Porsanger, 2004), this study and its findings about sacred purpose were significant because the findings will be shared with a variety of individuals who represent culturally/linguistically diverse communities, thus allowing this knowledge to be utilized within Indigenous spaces and Western academia. As such, the findings of this dissertation have been organized in a unique format (condensed story, thematic grouping - codices) in order to utilize the oral teachings for all to learn, benefit, and share.

Though not the primary intent of this dissertation, the uncovering of sacred purpose through the voice of the elders has offered a body of literature that allows for the further comparison of sacred purpose and the Western construct of purpose in life. The findings of this research show that the operational definition of purpose in life is quite similar to sacred purpose. Purpose in life can be defined as an individual’s intention to
accomplish something positive, that is both important to the self and directed at making a
difference in the world beyond the self (Damon et al., 2003). In this case, sacred purpose
can also be perceived as an intention that one views as positive and one in which benefits
the individual and the world. However, it is important to note that even though sacred
purpose encompasses these elements of purpose in life, sacred purpose is much more; it
is more relational as opposed to individualistic, and sacred purpose is much more
complex and multi-dimensional.

Along the same lines the literature review of this research, provided strong
evidence supporting the development, enhancement, and facilitation of purpose in life
within an individual’s life especially during adolescence and within educational domains.
Taking this into account and the fact that purpose in life is much more simpler of a
construct compared to sacred purpose, I think it is fair to suggest that the numerous
positive impacts and effects linked to purpose in life are also likely occur as a result of
sacred purpose found within individuals. In fact, sacred purpose allows for much more
benefits according to the teachings found within the condensed stories and thematic
grouping of this research. These benefits include transformational healing, balance, the
learning of cultural treasures, acknowledgement, passed on responsibilities, strong
authentic relationships, lived experiences, communication with the ancestors, and the
opportunities to live out one’s talents/passions/skills/gifts.

Moving beyond the comparisons of sacred purpose and purpose in life, one of the
focal points of this research was to further explore sacred purpose uncovering its
teachings, stories, definitions, and perspectives so that I could better understand its
conceptual and methodological practicality within the pedagogy of the eagle and the
condor (see Figure 1). The pedagogy of the eagle and the condor articulates the reunion of the heart and intuition (condor) with that of the mind that seeks the use of science (eagle). This pedagogy operates through the lens of an Indigenous paradigm and incorporates a mixing of pedagogical practices consisting of strong teacher/student/community relationships (pedagogy of hope - Andrade-Duncan, 2011), critical dialogue, consciousness, and praxis (critical pedagogy -Freire, 1993), critical compassionate intellectualism third dimension (Romero, Arce, & Cammarota, 2009), and holistic education (Miller, 2005; see Figure 1).

My interest in sacred purpose, as an integrated element within the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor, occurred while I was piloting the pedagogy with an ethnically diverse group of middle school students (Medina, 2012). The findings of the study suggested that Indigenous principles such as En Lak’ech can yield student-teacher relationships, critical consciousness, critical praxis, organic intellectualism, enhancements in empathy, compassion, cultural identity, and some elements of youth purpose. Being interested in the construct of purpose in life, I implemented another pilot study comparing these same middle school students to another group of students not exposed to the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor, analyzing levels of purpose (Westernized construct). I found that students who had been exposed to the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor showed a stronger sense of purpose (Medina, 2012). These studies were instrumental as they probed a deeper interest in looking more into purpose, youth purpose, and a comparative analysis of Western forms of purpose and Indigenous constructions of purpose. It is here where my commitment to researching sacred purpose emerged and a new quest unfolded which consisted of how to operationalize, define, and
uncover the teachings of sacred purpose in order to deeply understand its capacity, vitality, and potential within pedagogy of the eagle and the condor.

**Implications of Sacred Purpose on the Pedagogy of the Eagle and the Condor**

The pedagogy of the eagle and the condor was developed as a way to actualize the current Indigenous prophecies that speak of the reunification of energies (ie, Western/non-Western; heart/mind; male/female; science/spiritual). This pedagogy was never intended be a linear road map, where an individual or a group of individuals could follow certain steps in order to get to a set finish line or an established outcome. On the other hand, the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor was introduced to be a fluid framework engaging its participants in a balanced pedagogy highlighting numerous constructs such as critical consciousness, relationships, Indigenous wisdom, organic intellectualism, compassionate and community-based praxis, holistic approaches, etc. In such, the overall findings of this research about sacred purpose have lots to offer the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor.

Prior to the dissertation, I was briefly introduced to the construct of sacred purpose as it was described to me as the most significant element of keeping an individual balanced and well-rooted (Tello, 2008). Although this teaching, at the time, held a unique promise for individuals and for the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor, I was, in all honesty, unclear about how to properly define, operationalize, and actualize sacred purpose. And because this concept of sacred purpose was considered to be a critical element of Indigenous wisdom, which is an intentional focal point of the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor, I wanted to be able to understand it more including its place, role, and utility within the frameworks.
The findings of this research about sacred purpose have multi-layered implications for the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor. First, the elder stories and teachings regarding sacred purpose were highly insightful in providing me with the language and understanding that I needed to better understand sacred purpose and its teachings, derivations, definitions, stories, and guiding principles. The elders offered perspectives explaining why sacred purpose is the most significant element of keeping an individual balanced and well-rooted, including reasons such as: it is relational; it provides us with a responsibility to learn and teach; it requires one to strive and maintain balance; it provides a discourse for healing wounds; it honors lived experiences; it requires one to find and use their personal gifts/talents/passions; it requires one to honor their entire journey – past, present, and future – acknowledging and listening to the ancestors, and living a life so that it impacts future generations; it requires individuals to be complete human beings and it consists to live life as a ceremony. These findings about sacred purpose offer the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor a language that is rooted in Indigenous wisdom, and as a result a discourse that counters social amnesia, hegemony, and a colonial epistemology.

Next, after analyzing the condensed stories and the thematic groupings, that were constructed based on the conversations with the elders, I felt that it was necessary to revisit the original theoretical framework of the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor (see Figure 1). Taking into account all of the teachings provided from the four Indigenous elders, we all agreed that sacred purpose offered a very critical component within the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor; it is precursor to all other elements and it needed to be placed at the heart of the pedagogy. As a result, this finding strongly
suggested the redevelopment and restructuring of the frameworks (see Figure 8). Figure 8 articulates the changes made and provides a new dialogue regarding the centrality of sacred purpose within the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor.

*Figure 8.* Pedagogy of the eagle and the condor reconstructed framework.
Also seen in Figure 8 is a new dimension added to the theoretical framework which highlights levels of engagement (participant, student, teacher, teacher of teachers). This addition to the framework was a result of the condensed stories and thematic grouping which consistently embraced the notion of responsibility. After conversations with the elders I began to call into question the explicit responsibility attached to sacred purpose that educators, curricula, and pedagogies have in engaging individuals. What is our responsibility in engaging individuals to learn, critique, challenge, analyze, teach, disseminate, facilitate, and teach the teachers the components of the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor? The overall teaching here, which was offered by our four Indigenous elders, suggested that pedagogy of the eagle and the condor is not for individuals to simply reproduce. This pedagogy holds accountability and expects individuals to develop higher levels of engagement because this progression also fosters the maintenance of one’s sacred purpose. The levels of engagement within the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor unfold as such: At the participant level one learns about and soaks in the teachings, elements, and guiding principles of the pedagogy and one’s sacred purpose. At the student level one begins to ask questions, create dialogue, initiate praxis and self reflect about the pedagogy as well as with their own sacred purpose; at the teacher level one begins to teach the contents of the pedagogy to others and teach as it relates to their sacred purpose; and the teacher of teachers level holds an accountability for teachers to work with other teachers so that all can grow, learn, and heal together as it relates to the pedagogy. Teachers of teachers is really about finding ways to use one’s sacred purpose to inspire others; inspire means to be “in spirit” with someone else, which shows the powerful implications of sacred purpose within the pedagogy of the eagle and
the condor. This pedagogy is a reminder that all individuals in communities are participants, students, teachers, and potential teacher of teachers. Our role with the pedagogy and within our sacred purpose is to take each individual around this cycle from a participant to a teacher of teachers.

**Implications for Adolescence**

Since I have focused a lot of my energy working with adolescents (twelve – fifteen year olds) and researching adolescent development, I understand that within me lies bias and hopes for the potential implications that sacred purpose has for adolescence and adolescent research. I would like to be able to share that the findings of this research present significant implications for adolescents, however the conversations with the elders do not directly suggest this. The Indigenous elders perceived that the teachings and understandings of sacred purpose are highly relevant and applicable for any stage of life and not necessarily specific to adolescence. Maestro Jerry Tello argued, “sacred purpose is critical at all ages of life. The real task is, how do we raise children with their sacred purpose because if we focus on it only when they are older then you have to bring them back from pain.” However, despite this overall finding about sacred purpose and adolescence, there are many connections from the conversations that I was able to gather which serve to inform adolescent development and the need for sacred purpose during this time period. Following are some reflections that are intended to initiate a dialogue regarding the findings of sacred purpose and its relationship, relevance, and significance during adolescence.

Adolescence is a time period where individuals experience many changes. The social and emotional changes, though different for every youth, can be transformative,
but also intensely complex. During this stage individuals are highly emotive; they have strong feelings, they are more sensitive, and they are more self-conscious. Like Maestro Jerry Tello shared, “One second they love you and the next they hate you.” This is where the concept of sacredness emerges. Since adolescents are innately flooded with a mix of emotions, they tend to question their sacredness more compared to other stages of development. Adolescents ask with a sense of fervor: Am I good enough?; Am I bad?; Do I feel acknowledged?; Am I important? Am I loved?; Am I able to contribute to the world? Sacred purpose has relevance and is significant in order to address this intensely emotive state. Therefore the teachings of sacredness, self-love, self-acceptance, and self-acknowledgement within this research have implications for the stage of adolescence.

Along the same lines, adolescents are also within a time period where they long, crave, and yearn for more independence. As a result, they position themselves less around the supervision and guidance of adults. Of course this can be a positive outcome - adolescent independence- however within the process, adolescents are known to make some very poor decisions which can even be out-of-character. These actions and behaviors have the potential to deviate from the norm, and therefore adolescents doubt, question, and misinterpret their sacred purpose. Adolescents could benefit from the teachings of sacredness that the elders spoke of – YOU ARE SACRED IF YOU ARE GOOD, YOU ARE SACRED IF YOUR ARE BAD. Therefore, consistent reminders about sacredness and teachings regarding sacred purpose have implications for adolescence.

Another facet that occurs within adolescence is identity formation (Erickson, 1968). Young people, at this stage, are busy working out where they fit in this world.
Influences from media, peer groups, and cultural teachings all contribute to one’s identity search. The findings about responsibility within this research are key to identity formation. The elements of responsibility that the elders spoke of have the capacity to enhance one’s understanding of their cultural backgrounds, their ancestry, their sacred teachings and Indigenous epistemology, and the commitment and responsibility that they carry in order to learn and pass on critical teachings. Future research will continue to advance this understanding of how responsibility and identity formation correlate.

Another factor that is highly triggered within the stage of adolescence is an individual’s focus on socialization within their peer group (Erickson, 1968). Adolescents are highly influenced by their friends. Much of this intense focus on the social is because of the simultaneous development of the adolescent’s sexual identity. Adolescents during this time period yearn for relationships and intimate relationships. Once again, the findings of sacred purpose within this study have much relevance. Relationships are discussed by all of the elders as an integral component of sacred purpose. They are key in the enhancement, development, facilitation, and fulfillment of sacred purpose. Therefore, how can relationships be integrated effectively with adolescent sacred purpose in accordance to the findings of this research?

All of these points were intended to initiate a conversation regarding the implications that this dissertation’s findings have on sacred purpose with adolescence. I am hopeful that an intentional dialogue takes place outlining the many more implications that this work has on adolescents and the effective praxis that can emerge from the findings of this work.
Implications for a Fluid Curriculum

One central focus of this research was to operationalize and actualize a curriculum for educational domains that specifically develops, facilitates, nurtures, and enhances sacred purpose based on the teachings and understandings of the four Indigenous elders. Curriculum, as perceived within this research, utilizes the Latin root currere and is defined in its verb form as running the race course or the running (or lived experiences) of the course (Henderson, J. & Gornik, R., 2006). Additionally, the definition of curriculum that dissertation utilizes contrasts the mainstream understandings of the word, which consistently defines curriculum in its noun form as “the track” (Kinloechoe, 1998, p. 129). My understanding and reference to curriculum is based on the works of Pinar (1994) and Slattery (1995) who argued that curriculum is an “active process, not simply the lesson plan, the standardized tests, the textbook, or the district guidebook… Curriculum is a holistic life experience honoring the path and journey; it is never a finished product that can be mastered and passed along seamlessly to awaiting a generation” (Kinloechoe, 1998, p. 130).

In utilizing the above understanding with this research, the stories, teachings, and culminating codices of the elders held implications for the development and creation of a fluid curriculum. Ironically sacred purpose, specifically within educational domains was never explicitly articulated by the elders, but it is my understanding that much of their conversations intentionally left out sacred purpose in educational settings. Their perceptions were that sacred purpose belongs everywhere in the community, with all individuals, not just in education. This implicit teaching provided by the elders suggests that sacred purpose should not be compartmentalized, colonized, or fragmented; sacred
purpose should be addressed collectively and in all areas of our lives. And this notion of compartmentalizing education seems to be more extreme within today’s paradigm of education (something that the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor attempts to balance).

I agree completely with the elders in that the teachings and implementation of sacred purpose have relevance and importance in multiple settings, not only in education. However, even within education I have concerns about its implementation and integration into curriculum due to our current (2012-2014) model and purpose of education in the U.S (See Appendix D). Our current schooling paradigm is rooted in “moving up,” and the inherent problem with this paradigm is what Cornell West often refers to as “cheap schooling.” The curricula and pedagogy is dictated by what is profitable by the marketplace, not one that is humanizing, community-based, and with an epistemology of community as praxis. It is quite obvious that the teachings of sacred purpose minimally align with this educational paradigm. Therefore, the emergence of a curriculum, as a result of the findings of this research, challenges today’s schooling paradigm and encourages new models of schooling and education to unfold.

There are currently a handful of spaces within education that are pushing back on the “moving up” schooling paradigm or alluding to Maestro Cintli’s concept of sacred purpose, creation-resistance. These places are ideal as starting points for the implementation of the curriculum which has emerged from this research. Many of these spaces are schools, specifically charter schools, who champion innovation. They may be schools composed of dedicated community members, educators, and administrators who are attempting to try something as such because they have seen that previous reforms, interventions, and strategies have been ineffective, subtractive, and overall lacking. They
may be schools who are explicitly seeking curricula and pedagogy that is culturally relevant, rooted in social justice, and containing Indigenous knowledge. Therefore, it is within these spaces that I would recommend an implementation of the sacred purpose curriculum that has emerged as a result of this research and the findings.

As an educator for almost twenty years I understand the complexity of curriculum development and integration. Because curriculum within this research is considered as the journey and not the final destination, I see the process of developing, designing, integrating, and implementing curriculum as a collective approach utilizing collective viewpoints, reflections, and lived experiences. However, I also want to be able to offer some ideas regarding the mapping of sacred purpose in the form of a curriculum for educational domains in order to initiate the process of design and implementation. The development of this curriculum is in the form of curriculum “maps” that (see Appendices E - H) uncover the teachings of sacred purpose all based on the elders’ conversations. These curriculum maps utilize the elements of the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor and the maps can be utilized within various educational settings and age levels. My hopes for these curriculum maps were to offer approaches, processes, critical reflections, fluidity, and ideas for how to integrate and implement the elders’ teachings in domains from kindergarten through higher education. Since this is a fluid curriculum it serves as an introduction so that individuals, classrooms, grade levels, and schools have the opportunity to adapt, modify, and/or personalize it to meet the specific needs of their students. These curriculum maps serve more as a dialogue between me (the researcher and teacher of teachers) and the individual who has interest in utilizing the findings of this research.
The curriculum maps (see Appendices E - H) presented here focus on specific themes, concepts, and ideas of sacred purpose that were extracted from the four Indigenous elders’ conversations, condensed stories, and codices. There are three curriculum examples provided: Teaching Curriculum Map 1: Themes on Sacred Purpose - Sacredness & Interconnectedness (Appendix E), Teaching Curriculum Map 2: Themes on Sacred Purpose - Responsibility and Cultural Teachings (Appendix F), and Teaching Curriculum Map 3: Themes on Sacred Purpose - Nurturing sacred purpose through balance, consistency, and creation-resistance (Appendix G). Each curriculum model has four main stages, which guide the flow of the curriculum. Individuals (K - 12) begin with “Self-Reflection,” and at this level critical questions are introduced, brainstormed, and reflected. Next is the development of “Precious Knowledge,” and it is here that individuals are engaged in the process of learning and analyzing key information that gives one more depth and understanding about a topic. The stage, “The Will to Act” requires individuals to take actions, steps, and praxis utilizing their acquired knowledge and personal gifts/talents/passions in order to make positive change around them. Lastly, the “Transformation” stage engages individuals in a discussion, reflection, and presentation of what they have gained from the stages and what they have left behind; in other words “Transformation” stage is really about articulating personal growth and outcomes. These four stages are aligned to Indigenous teachings, specifically maiz-based teachings, and found within the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor; they are known as the four tezkatlipokas (see Table 1).

These curriculum maps also show the multiple ways that sacred purpose can be embraced within the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor such as: pedagogy of hope.
which focuses on the development and maintenance of relationships; holistic pedagogy which is a focus on an educational process intended to develop both of the heart and mind of the student; critical pedagogy which utilizes the Freire’s problematization approach in order to develop critical consciousness and praxis; and barrio pedagogy which is a focus on examining and reconstructing epistemologies. The other components of the curriculum map consist of the common core state standard expectations of English Language Arts, ways to integrate the findings into the subject area of Humanities, and lastly this curriculum brainstorm addresses is the student levels of engagement which hold individuals accountable to their learning and teaching.

Appendix E provides numerous ideas, strategies, and general reflections regarding how to integrate sacredness, honoring the sacredness of others, living with value and love, and developing places to heal, grow, and develop. Appendix F provides a fluid map documenting how to integrate the inherent responsibilities found within sacred purpose which require individuals to teach and learn the critical cultural teachings as well as using one’s passions, gifts, and talents. Lastly, Appendix G includes various ideas and reflections regarding ways to integrate balance, creation resistance, and life as a ceremony into classrooms. All of these curriculum maps, once again, were intended to be sparks that have the potential to create dialogue and collective praxis; all were developments based on the findings of the research, and were modified, adapted, and integrated in a way that works best for each student, classroom, school, program, district, etc.

There are also implications of this research designed for non-formal, Indigenous based domains and naturally these spaces allow for a more authentic introduction,
development, and enhancement of sacred purpose. Appendix H addresses alternative ways this research could be utilized in settings as such. According to Brant-Castellano (2000) Indigenous knowledge is gathered through three methods: Indigenous empirical knowledge, traditional teachings, and revelation. Empirical knowledge is a representation of “converging perspectives from different vantage points over time” in real-life situations and settings (p.24). So, this includes knowledge that is gained through lived experiences and observations. Secondly, traditional teachings encompass knowledge that has been passed down through generations. And lastly, revelation is known as spiritual knowledge and it is acquired through dreams, visions, intuition, ceremonies; knowledge understood to be coming from the spirit world and ancestors. Taking these teachings into consideration, Appendix H utilizes the three methods of indigenous knowledge in order to develop, facilitate, and enhance sacred purpose in indigenous educational domains.

Overall, when we adapt, implement, and design our educational domains by utilizing the teachings offered within this research, the potential for transformations within ourselves, our families, our communities, and our society as a whole emerges. Figure 9 outlines the potential outcomes that are inherent in all the curriculum maps. It is the hopes for this research about sacred purpose and the work within the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor that calls for creation of a new paradigm for education (see Figure 9); a paradigm that embraces the teachings of the heart and mind, a paradigm that is about sacred purpose, balance, healing, relationships, lived experiences, cultural relevancy, critical consciousness and praxis, intellectualism, holistic approaches, and
Figure 9. Complete provider framework.
Indigenous wisdom. Let us create the dialogue, by utilizing the findings of this research in order to create this new paradigm for living, our communities, and society.

Limitations of the Study

As the study examined the teachings of sacred purpose in order to yield to a curriculum that combines the development of socio–psychological perspectives of knowing (condor) with scientific perspectives of knowing (eagle) there were various limitations to this study. The findings from the study were limited to the study sample from which data was gathered. Data was drawn from four Indigenous elders. Additionally, the results from this study were limited to geography and this made it difficult to ascertain transferability to the larger indigenous population or to all constructions of sacred purpose (Creswell, 2003).

The research process and design used for the study was qualitative in order to provide a framework for understanding, exploring, and operationalizing sacred purpose in other geographical settings. The study used data that was reflective of the essence and depth of sacred purpose within Indigenous wisdom.

In addition to the limited scope of data, data collection and analysis occurred during a specified timeframe. Limitations related to time indicates that data collected during this study provided a snapshot of how sacred purpose was examined, understood, and collectively molded through four selected Indigenous elders.

Also, despite the use of an Indigenous process of collecting data known as conversational method, the personal views/perceptions of the participants could have been impacted as a result of a distrust of Western academia. This distrust was not
observed, however it is possible that it could have affected the participant’s candidness and authenticity at times.

Lastly, researcher bias may have served as a limitation to the study. As an Indigenous scholar, I have been influenced by the values, practices, and attitudes of Indigenous knowledge, protocols, ceremonies, and overall ways of living. In utilizing an Indigenous methodology and as an Indigenous researcher, my epistemology was rooted in the belief that all relations are connected. This belief articulates “a reciprocal relationship between the researcher and the researched who must become ‘a family’: be interconnected in a reciprocal way in the frames of the particular research project with which they are involved” (Porsanger, 2004, pg. 111). Therefore I, as the researcher, had to monitor my personal bias and feelings towards the participants in this study.

**Future Research**

As a result of the findings of this study about sacred purpose, future research could take a variety of directions. I am hopeful that I am able to continue this research regarding sacred purpose with Indigenous elders. More stories, teachings, and understandings of sacred purpose and the future developments of pedagogy of the eagle and the condor are awaiting with open arms. The findings and the culminating frameworks of this research could also serve as powerful tools for discussion, and future research could elaborate on how other Indigenous elders perceive the construct and how they understand the findings and culminating codices.

In addition, this study has implications for future research within Indigenous communities. Future research has the opportunity to document the various outcomes and effects as a result of the implementation of sacred purpose and the pedagogy of the eagle
and the condor within Indigenous communities. Implementing this work within community centers, rehabilitation programs, and within the daily discourse of families, Indigenous communities have the opportunity to fully engage with this construct and future research could document this journey.

I am also hopeful that this research informs micro-level educational domains with the steps and processes in how to transform paradigms, curricula, and pedagogy by utilizing the findings of this work. Future research documenting these micro-level experiences could be powerful in order to inform this ongoing praxis. For example, a few years back I had the opportunity to introduce some of the basic teachings of the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor into a graduate level course. The outcomes were powerful and future research could provide more discussion regarding the implications of these findings, specifically findings related to the integration of sacred purpose. Future research could focus on sacred purpose and the impact it has on one’s pursuit of educational goals. Or research focusing on sacred purpose and its role in facilitating and enhancing one’s research agenda in order to personalize the process, strengthen it, and align it to individual and collective responsibilities. There are hopes for future research to correlate one’s completion of educational goals/degrees as a result of the implementation and integration of one’s sacred purpose into academic settings. All in all, if within sacred purpose we find interconnectedness, balance, responsibility, sacredness, consistency, etc., what are the implications of this construct on larger level factors within education?
Lastly, there is a need for future research that utilizes Indigenous research agendas are critical especially as it relates to solving the challenges and problems of Indigenous communities.

Closing

In acknowledgement of all the directions (East, West, North, South, the sky, the earth, and in the center) I am honored to pass on this research. Our means of solving today’s problems can no longer be rooted in the status quo, band-aiding, and rescuing as mentioned in the introduction of this research. Solutions within ourselves and within our communities must embrace “transformational healing.” Sacred purpose and the pedagogy of the eagle and the condor serve as transformational healing. Let these teachings, as humble and simple as they may be, engage our communities in transformation, in healing, in sacred interconnectedness, in a responsibility for seven generations, in balance, in daily steps that are intentional for the betterment of humanity, in accountability, in uncovering our sacred teachings, in teaching, in learning, in answering the call, in listening to our elders, in honoring our ancestors, in creation resistance, in the continuation of life itself, in ixtli in yolotl, and in all that I have forgotten. This work is for the people and from the people. From my heart, from my mind, from my sacred purpose – Aho Mitakuye Oyasin, Ometeotl…
References


APPENDIX A

Participant Consent

San Diego State University and Claremont Graduate University

Participant Consent Form for Interview on Sacred Purpose

You are being asked to participate in a research study by Ricardo Medina. Before you give your consent to volunteer, it is important that you read the following information and ask many questions as necessary to be sure you understand what is being expected of you.

Investigator

My name is Ricardo Medina and I will be conducting this research study along with the supervision of Dr. Karen Cadiero-Kaplan (Professor at SDSU) and Dr. Carl Cohen (Professor at CGU).

Purpose of the Study

I am conducting this study to learn about the stories, teachings, definitions, and perspectives of sacred purpose perceived by indigenous elders with the hopes of helping indigenous youth and the educational system.
**Description of the Study**

If you agree to participate in this study, you will participate in 2 semi-structured interviews/conversations. These conversations will take place at a date and time that works best for you. The conversations will involve questions about your understanding of sacred purpose. More specifically, what teachings, stories, and perspectives do you carry about sacred purpose, how does sacred purpose contribute to adolescent development, and how can sacred purpose fit in today’s schools. If you are chosen to participate in the study, you can choose whether or not to participate.

**Risks or Discomforts**

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. You do not have to answer any question you do not want to. You may discontinue participation at any time by simply not answering questions or leaving the room.

**Benefits of the Study**

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include contributing toward necessary conversations among indigenous elders of what sacred purpose looks like, how it can help youth, and how it can be included in to schools. Through your stories you pass on the traditions of the ancestors and share knowledge and wisdom that remind Indigenous people of who we are. It is hoped that this information will help schools to design programs and interventions that increase sacred purpose ultimately helping youth to pursue personal and academic transformations. You may find it rewarding to have a chance to reflect on your lived experiences and passed on teachings, and then be able to share it so that it carries on to future generations. I cannot guarantee, however, that you will receive any benefits from participation in this study.
**Confidentiality**

You have the choice to have your name associated with the research. Should you request that your name not be associated with this research or if you wish to use a pseudonym, your anonymity will be protected by ensuring that all identifying information will be removed from the data. You will have an opportunity to review the transcripts and findings from our conversation/interview to ensure that you are comfortable with the presentation of the material and that all identifying information is removed from the data. All of the transcripts and findings will be kept in a locked file cabinet and/or passworded computer. As the sole research for this project, only I will have access to the interviews captured on audio and transcription form. When the research is over, all paper and electronic data files will be maintained for three years then destroyed.

**Incentives to Participate/Costs**

Participants will not be paid to participate in this study and there are no costs with this research.

**Voluntary Participation**

Taking part in this study is up to you. Your participation is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you can always change your mind and stop at anytime you want. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your relationship with me, SDSU, or CGU.

**Questions About the Study**

You can ask me any question about the study and I will do my best to answer them for you. If you have any questions about the study at a later time, you can contact me at ricardo.medina@cvesd.org.
An institutional review board (IRB) is a committee that has been formally designated to monitor, and review research involving humans, with the aim to protect the rights and welfare of the research subjects. If you have questions regarding your rights as a human subject and participant, you may contact an Institutional Review Board (IRB) representative in the Division of Research Affairs at SDSU (phone: 619-594-6622; email: irb@mail.sdsu.edu) or an IRB representative at CGU (phone: 909-607-9406; email: irb@cgu.edu). These review boards are responsible for ensuring the protection of research participants.

You signature below indicates that you have read the information in this document and you have had a chance to ask questions about the study. It also indicates that you agree to be in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw consent at any time. You have been given a copy of this consent form. You have been told that by signing the consent form you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

Please check each one of the boxes to tell us what you want to do:

☐ No, I do not want to be in the research study.
☐ Yes, I want to be in this research study.

Please check box to indicate your consent for the following:

☐ I give permission to be audio recorded in the interview.

Please check box to indicate your consent for the following:

☐ I give permission to use my actual name attached to the data.
☐ I give permission to use only a pseudonym (fake name) attached to all data.

__________________________________________
Write your name here (please print)

__________________________________________  ______
Your signature  Date

__________________________________________  ______
Signature of Investigator  Date
February 2013

Introduction letter for Indigenous Research Project

Project Title: SACRED PURPOSE: A Qualitative Indigenous Research Study
Indigenous Teachings Informing Pedagogy of the Eagle and the Condor

Participant name:

This is a brief introductory letter to give you some more background on the project. A bit about myself – I am a Chicano Yaqui currently living in San Diego, California. For the past 18 years I have been striving to learn more about my indigenous ancestry and as a result I have experienced a beautiful journey. Despite meeting many people and learning various teachings, I have had the opportunity to Sun Dance. This commitment as a Sun Dancer carries a responsibility that follows me wherever I journey. At present, I am enrolled in a PhD program in Education and am currently embarking on the research phase. I also work as a teacher at a middle school located in Chula Vista, California. While I have several areas of interest within the area of education, my current curiosity focuses on Indigenous teachings and stories surrounding sacred purpose (also known as purpose in life). My doctoral research centers on an inquiry into how indigenous elders perceive sacred purpose and how these teachings can be implemented into schools. I am writing to request your participation in this research study. I am asking for your involvement in this research because of your lived experiences and your commitment to
sharing indigenous teachings. I am interested in your story and the insights you would like to pass on to future generations regarding sacred purpose. This *Introduction letter* is a brief background of my proposed research project including an outline of the guiding questions that I wish to ask of prospective participants.

**Background**

The motive behind my wish to inquire into the teachings of sacred purpose arose from my own experiences as an educator working with adolescents. I started to look into adolescent purpose in life, which is an element mainly found in Western research. Western research shares tons of information about purpose in life and how it helps in one’s development, survival, and overall well being. I stumbled upon a book by Don Coyhis titled, “Understanding the Purpose of Life: 12 Teachings for Native Youth,” and Jerry Tello’s work, “Recovering Your Sacred Purpose” and I found these pieces of indigenous wisdom to be highly beneficial to my personal growth and to have implications for my classroom. As I researched more into this topic I found a need for it to be more visibly documented and I wanted to embark on this journey. As a critical researcher, I was propelled forward by the belief that the more we, the indigenous community, speak, write, and share indigenous research the more space we create for healing, balance, and transformation. In searching for increased understanding on the topic of sacred purpose and the teachings of sacred purpose that the elders hold, I arrived at my research questions:

What are the principles derived from indigenous elders that can guide the development of a curriculum that promotes sacred purpose.

Sub – Questions to examine main research question:
1. What is sacred purpose and its guiding principles?

2. What stories/teachings/themes of Sacred Purpose that can be identified by indigenous elders and how do they see it actualized?

3. How does Sacred Purpose, according to indigenous elders, contribute to adolescent development?

4. How can the teachings/elements of Sacred Purpose, based on the conversations with elders, be actualized in education?

I am proposing to study 4 indigenous elders and because I am interested in gaining balanced and strong perspectives, I will be approaching 2 male elders and 2 female elders from different geographical locations in California and Arizona. The participants of the project will be selected as well based on community identification as an elder and knowledge carrier.

The goal of this research is to carry out 4 in-depth interviews/conversations regarding the teachings of sacred purpose. To assist the interview process I offer the general questions below to guide the discussion – but they are just guide questions, which I may or may not ask:

What is your understanding of sacred purpose?

How do you define it?

Any other words in your native language that refer to sacred purpose?

Are there stories that bring out the teachings of sacred purpose that you could share?

Where did you learn these and why were they told to you?
Are these teachings of sacred purpose important? For what reason?

What do these stories and teachings mean to you?

How has sacred purpose existed in your personal life?

How has sacred purpose existed in the lives of the people around you?

Are there still people around you that refer to sacred purpose?

Does sacred purpose have more relevance during the stage of adolescence?

What are these teachings directed at the youth?

What do you think would occur if more youth carried on these teachings of sacred purpose and implemented them into their lives?

What do you think occurs when youth do not carry on and implement these teachings?

What could help in the development of purpose? Such as some people speak to the fact that a pivotal moment and/or service to others really helped individuals to define their purpose. How do you see this?

Can the teachings of sacred purpose be implemented into today’s schools?

What should teachers know? How should schools approach this?

Is there anything else that you’d like to add or share?

Everyone who participates will have an opportunity to review his or her data prior to it being incorporated into my dissertation. While there is a component of this research that will contribute toward the creation of knowledge for its own sake, I hope that this study will have practical application in the educational system. If it can assist in helping youth
to heal and transform, it will be a great success. By sharing your insight and experience, I believe this work contributes to creating new tomorrows.

I thank you for agreeing to participate in this study and I am really looking forward to hearing your thoughts. My email address is Ricardo.medina@cvesd.org and my cell phone is 619-392-4064. I will contact you to arrange a time and a place for the interview at your convenience. As per university ethical demands, it would be great if you could review the attached consent form prior to our interview. Again thank your for your involvement and I look forward to meeting you, listening to your words, and sharing powerful conversations regarding sacred purpose.

Respectfully,

Ricardo (Ricky) Medina
APPENDIX C
Conversational Method Protocol
Participant Questions

Semi-Structured Conversation/Interview Questions

Before conducting conversations/interviews, the primary investigator/researcher will confirm that participants selected for the conversations have completed and turned in assent forms. The primary investigator will also review the assent form with the participants at the beginning of the conversation/interview to ensure that elders fully understand what it means for them to assent to participating in the study. The researcher will also cover confidentiality and time frame related to the study.

What is your understanding of sacred purpose?

How do you define it?

Any other words in your native language that refer to sacred purpose?

Are there stories that bring out the teachings of sacred purpose that you could share?

Where did you learn these and why were they told to you?

Are these teachings of sacred purpose important? For what reason?

What do these stories and teachings mean to you?

How has sacred purpose existed in your personal life?

How has sacred purpose existed in the lives of the people around you?

Are there still people around you that refer to sacred purpose?
Does sacred purpose have more relevance during the stage of adolescence?

What are these teachings directed at the youth?

What do you think would occur if more youth carried on these teachings of sacred purpose and implemented them into their lives?

What do you think occurs when youth do not carry on and implement these teachings?

What could help in the development of purpose? Such as some people speak to the fact that a pivotal moment and/or service to others really helped individuals to define their purpose. How do you see this?

Can the teachings of sacred purpose be implemented into today’s schools?

What should teachers know? How should schools approach this?

Is there anything else that you’d like to add or share?

If you have some ideas that you were not able to express or share during our conversation, please feel free to write it down and send it to me, email me, etc. Thank you for your time.
APPENDIX D

Moving Up - Today's Schooling Paradigm

What is the purpose of education?
To learn and memorize facts and constructs

What do facts and constructs do?
They help you get a degree

What does a degree do?
Gives you a job

What does a job do?
Provides you with money

What does money do?
It allows you to participate in the system of materialism
### APPENDIX E

#### Teaching Curriculum Map: Themes on Sacred Purpose - Sacredness & Interconnectedness

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<td><strong>You are sacred.</strong></td>
<td>Student: What is your relationship with yourself? Other students? Teachers? Teacher: What is your relationship with yourself? Students?</td>
<td>Teaching of Smoking Mirror: Inner/Outer Sacredness: Who am I on the inside/Outside?</td>
<td>Are some individuals treated as less sacred in our society? What are the ways to transform this situation?</td>
<td>Where did you acquire the ways you think about sacredness? Who does this benefit? How can you reconstruct this belief?</td>
<td>Dialogic Inquiry, Journaling, Blogging, Socratic Seminars, sharing circles, reflexive activities</td>
<td>K - 5 Ask and answer questions, retell, recount, identify, name, to Participant</td>
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<td><strong>Honor the sacredness of others</strong></td>
<td>Precious Knowledge: Accessing diverse stories, articles, teachings</td>
<td>Learning to acknowledge your spots; Reading collectively; literature circles; blogging; promotion of student voice; Dialogic inquiry</td>
<td>Communicate what you are learning through visual and performing arts</td>
<td>Name reasons why individuals are unwelcomed in our community. Why does this occur? How can this situation be changed?</td>
<td>Interviews; How do community/family members perceive sacredness</td>
<td>Reading and Writing – Fiction/Non- ie – Monster by W. D. Myers, Theme: Do All Youth Matter? Writing: Argument, Research, Informative</td>
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<td><strong>Live with value and love.</strong></td>
<td>The Will to Act: Enact what you have learned</td>
<td>Student works out in the community and develops relationships utilizing gifts, passions,</td>
<td>Develop and present projects that explore inner/outer work Focusing on Praxis – Taking steps to enact precious knowledge Example: gathering community</td>
<td>Presenting community stories; discuss findings; Discuss Implications;</td>
<td>Pick out themes from literature (ie. poverty, youth violence) and engage in field</td>
<td>6 – 12 Cite; determine; Analyze; Evaluate to Teacher</td>
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<td><strong>Develop a place (inner / outer) to learn, develop, and heal</strong></td>
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**Note:** The table outlines the guiding principles and stages for teaching curriculum, focusing on themes of sacredness and interconnectedness. Each stage is detailed with specific activities and questions for students and teachers to engage with, fostering a deeper understanding of sacredness in both inner and outer spaces.
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<td>Holistic Pedagogy</td>
<td>talents</td>
<td>multiple learning strategies and utilizing gifts, passions, talents</td>
<td>members to take action on one of the emergent themes.</td>
<td>reconstruct Epistemologies: present the process</td>
<td>work / action research</td>
<td>Literacy – Being able to read the word and the world</td>
<td>Compliance at local, state, and federal levels</td>
<td>A Role in the community; “un lugar” Complete Provider Framework</td>
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<td>Critical Pedagogy</td>
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<td>Barrio Pedagogy</td>
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<td>Humanities Integration</td>
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<td>Common Core</td>
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<td>Student Outcome:</td>
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<td>Level Of Engagement</td>
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# APPENDIX F

## Teaching Curriculum Map: Themes on Sacred Purpose - Responsibility & Cultural Teachings

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learn critical cultural teachings</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-Reflection: What can I learn? What can I teach? What are my gifts? How can I use my gifts to help others?</td>
<td>Student: What is my responsibility to myself? Other students? Teachers? Teacher: What is my responsibility to myself? Other Students?</td>
<td>How can I learn, teach, and use my gifts in a way that allows me to utilize my mind and my heart?</td>
<td>How does oppression affect the way you perceive yourself and your responsibility to future generations?</td>
<td>Where did you acquire the ways you think about your responsibility? Who does this benefit? How can you reconstruct this belief?</td>
<td>Dialogic Inquiry, Journaling, Blogging, Socratic Seminars, sharing circles, reflexive activities</td>
<td>K - 5 Ask and answer questions, retell, recount, identify, name,</td>
<td>Participant</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Teach critical cultural teachings</strong></td>
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<td>Precious Knowledge: - Accessing Diverse cultural Stories, Articles, Teachings connected to responsibility</td>
<td>Responsibility to help others and yourself: Reading collectively; literature circles; blogging; celebration of student voice; Dialogic inquiry; cooperative learning activities</td>
<td>Communicate critical cultural teachings through visual and performing arts: What does my heart say about my culture? How can I show it?</td>
<td>Name ways society today subtracts or devalues critical cultural teachings. How can this be transformed? Who is responsible for engaging this transformation</td>
<td>Interviews: How do community/ family members perceive responsibility, the teaching critical cultural stories, the learning of critical cultural stories</td>
<td>Reading and Writing – Fiction / Non ie – <em>Breaking Through</em> by F. Jimenez, Theme: How do youth responsibility, cultural teachings. Writing: Argument, Research, Informative</td>
<td>Student</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Will to Act:</td>
<td>Students work out in the</td>
<td>Develop and present</td>
<td>Praxis – Taking steps to uncover critical cultural</td>
<td>After reading various text, 6 – 12</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
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<th>Participant</th>
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<td>Student</td>
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<td>Teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use your gifts, talents, passions</td>
<td>Enact what you have learned</td>
<td>community and develop relationships using gifts, talents, passions</td>
<td>projects that explore inner/outer work Focusing on multiple learning strategies - using your gifts, talents, passions</td>
<td>share critical cultural teachings and or embrace your responsibility to sharing these teachings -using your gifts, talents, passions</td>
<td>teachings as perceived by the community; discuss findings; Discuss Implications; reconstruct Epistemologies; present the process</td>
<td>Implement a plan to help your peers uncover critical cultural teachings that exist in your community. *Action Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome: Sacred Purpose development</td>
<td>Support, acknowledgment from others; positive self-outlook</td>
<td>Wholeness Development of mind and heart</td>
<td>Critical Consciousness-Being able to improve the quality of your life, family, community, world</td>
<td>Intellectualism, Academic Identity, positive self-outlook, deconstruction of stereotypes</td>
<td>Literacy – Being able to read the word and the world</td>
<td>Compliance at local, state, and federal levels</td>
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## APPENDIX G

Teaching Curriculum Map: Themes on Sacred Purpose - Nurturing Sacred Purpose Through Balance, Consistency, and Creation-Resistance

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Balance:</strong> Inner / Outer; relationships; nutrition; practical / spiritual</td>
<td>Self-Reflection: Can pursuing your passions and talents be harmful? Do I show my inner feelings to others?</td>
<td>Student: Do I have a positive relationship with: myself? others? Teachers? Teacher: Do I have a positive relationship with: myself? others? Students?</td>
<td>How can I show my passions? How do I balance my inner/outer self? What does my body tell me when I feel out of balance.</td>
<td>How does oppression affect one’s sense of balance, determination, positive outlook on life? What can be done to help individuals to heal wounds?</td>
<td>Where did you acquire the ways you think about balance and consistency? Who does this benefit? How can you reconstruct this belief?</td>
<td>Dialogic Inquiry, Journaling, Blogging, Socratic Seminars, sharing circles, reflexive activities</td>
<td>K - 5 Ask and answer questions, retell, recount, identify, name, to Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Creation - Resistance</strong></td>
<td>Precious Knowledge: Accessing teachings that provide critical info. about balance, creation /resistance, and Life as a Ceremony (Books, articles, interviews, videos)</td>
<td>Responsibility to help others and yourself: Reading collectively; literature circles; blogging; celebration of student voice; Dialogic inquiry; cooperative learning</td>
<td>How have specific leaders, role models balanced their lives, created and resisted, and lived life through daily “actions”? Bring these examples to the class: ie. Teatro Campesino;</td>
<td>What have been the affects of colonialism on people’s sense of balance, their ability to create? Resist? Live consistently? What are examples of praxis that has countered this process?</td>
<td>Interviews: How do community/ family members perceive balance, creation resistance, living life as a ceremony</td>
<td>Reading and Writing – Fiction / Non ie – <em>Maus by Spiegelman</em>, Theme: Life’s situations their implications Writing: Argument, Research, Informative Ie. Research - How do people push through?</td>
<td>Student to Student</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student     to    Teacher</th>
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<td>Participant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Life as a Ceremony</td>
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<td>The Will to Act:</td>
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<td>The Will to Act:</td>
<td>Share your forms of balance, creation resistance with others in order to be a mentor or support system.</td>
<td>Using your gifts, talents, passions – communicate your sense of balance. Enact a creation / resistance project. Document your life’s ceremony</td>
<td>Praxis – Identify areas of need in order enact resistance. Integrate creation into your resistance. Be mindful of balance, and how to implement the process into your daily life.</td>
<td>Uncover specific teachings about balance, creation resistance, living life as a ceremony; Discuss; Reconstruct Epistemologies; Present the process</td>
<td>After reading various text, Implement a plan to help to understand these guiding principles of Sacred Purpose. *Action Research, Xinachtli – Mentor others</td>
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<td>Chicano Park Murals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outcome: Sacred Purpose development</td>
<td>Support, acknowledgment from others; positive self-outlook</td>
<td>Wholeness Development of mind and heart</td>
<td>Critical Consciousness- Being able to improve the quality of your life, family, community, world</td>
<td>Intellectualism, Academic Identity, positive self – outlook, de-construction of stereotypes</td>
<td>Literacy – Being able to read the word and the world</td>
<td>Compliance at local, state, and federal levels</td>
<td>A Role in the community; “un lugar” Complete Provider Framework</td>
</tr>
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# APPENDIX H

## Teaching Curriculum Map: Themes on Sacred Purpose – Indigenous / Non-Traditional Educational Domain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guiding Principles of Sacred Purpose</th>
<th>Self Reflection</th>
<th>Empirical Observation (Precious Knowledge)</th>
<th>Passed On Teachings (Precious Knowledge)</th>
<th>Revelation (Precious Knowledge)</th>
<th>The Will to Act</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I am sacred</strong></td>
<td>Why am I here? What can I experience and observe to learn about my sacredness? Am I still sacred if I am doing bad? How do my wounds affect my sacredness?</td>
<td>Find key community identified leaders, elders, medicine people and observe them uncovering, “how do they live life as a ceremony?”</td>
<td>Collecting stories from the elders. Learning of songs, dances, and ceremonies which carry these teachings. (implicit / explicit) Analyze the various indigenous languages looking for this concept.</td>
<td>Pay attention to teachings that come through ceremony, dreams, intuition, that carry the message of sacredness Teachings that come to you through creation resistance.</td>
<td>Enact – Live Life as a Ceremony. Xinachtli – share teachings with others utilizing your gifts, passions, talents. Acts of compassion -helping -teaching -mentoring -feeding -respecting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Others are sacred and we are interconnected - In Tloque Nahuaque</strong></td>
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<td>Observe protocols of ceremony, celebration, and gatherings looking for teachings that show our interconnected relationships. ie. elder, female, children treatment</td>
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<td><strong>Responsibility: Multidimensional, Past, Present, Future To Learn To Teach To Continue Life</strong></td>
<td>What critical teachings do I have a responsibility to learn and teach? Am I living my life as a ceremony? How are my wounds getting in the way of my responsibility. Are there messages being sent to me about my responsibility.</td>
<td>Observe protocols of ceremony, celebration, and gatherings looking for teachings that show the responsibility that we carry for elders, female, children. Paying attention to the elements such as animals, plants, earth, sun, and mood for teachings.</td>
<td>Collecting stories from the elders. Learning of songs, dances, and ceremonies which carry these teachings. (implicit / explicit) How have responsibilities in the past been articulated</td>
<td>Pay attention to teachings that come through ceremony, dreams, medicine, intuition, feelings, that carry the message of sacredness. ie. Vision Quest serves this specific purpose.</td>
<td>Enact – Live Life as a Ceremony. -Embrace -Accept -Acknowledge Xinachtli – share teachings with others utilizing your gifts, passions, talents. Decolonize Name Western paradigm to penetrate it and change it.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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