

The Potential Role of In Lak'ech and the Nahui Ollin in Nurturing Social Emotional Learning

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Abstract

This paper explores how In Lak'ech and the Nahui Ollin can serve as potential frameworks in fostering Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) for Mexican American students in U.S schools. By comparing the five competencies of SEL (CASEL, 2015) with In Lak'ech and the four movements of the Nahui Ollin, I discussed how In Lak'ech and the Nahui Ollin cannot only be applied to reach the goals associated with SEL, they can also expand the field of SEL by providing a culturally relevant and decolonized way of approaching emotional learning. I focus on one student *testimonio* to highlight the connection between In Lak'ech, the Nahui Ollin, and SEL.

Key words: Social and Emotional Learning, In Lak'Ech, Nahui Ollin, *Testimonio*

There has been a push by educational reformers for a more holistic education approach that includes emotions as part of students' learning and well-being in schools. These efforts have primarily taken place under the banner of Social Emotional Learning (henceforth, SEL) which first emerged as a thematic and programmatic focus in schools during the 1990s (CASEL, 2015; Elias et al., 1997; Hoffman, 2009; Jones et al., 2017). The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), the United States' leading organization in advancing the practice of SEL into P-12 schools, has largely defined five intended skills when developing students' SEL. CASEL (2015) defines SEL as students demonstrating: (a) self-awareness (being able to recognize and label one's own emotions); (b) self-management (having the capacity to express and manage emotions appropriately); (c) social awareness (the ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others); (d) relationship skills (establishing and maintaining positive social relationships); and (e) responsible decision-making (the ability to make constructive and respectful choices). Many schools recognize the promise of SEL and have begun incorporating SEL into their curriculum.

Proponents of SEL have mainly turned to results showing that developing students' SEL skills can lead to "improvements in social and emotional competence, reductions in problem behavior, and improved academic performance" (CASEL, 2015, p. 31). Educators have used these reasons to not only justify the need for SEL in schools but have also highlighted how at-risk groups can stand to benefit most from SEL (Elias, 2009). Students of Color (SOC) are considered an "at-risk" group who often experience challenging social environments at school (Polleck, 2010; Reyes & Elias, 2011;

Reyes et al., 2013) and have greater risks of not graduating from high school (León et al., 2011). SEL has thus been proposed as an essential “missing piece” to providing SOC with an effective education (Elias, 2009). As such, recent efforts within education research have aimed to make SEL more accessible to SOC.

Educators have proposed drawing on culturally relevant practices and resources in the classroom, such as books focusing on the experiences of People of Color (POC) and translating SEL curriculum into a student's first language (León et al., 2011; Polleck, 2010; Reyes & Elias, 2011), to promote SEL for SOC. While outcomes have been inspiring, researchers have also noted significant critiques regarding SEL's underlying assumptions and outcomes among SOC. SEL curriculums have been critiqued for: (a) teaching students to control rather than understand their emotions; (b) prioritizing individual skill development; and (c) defining emotions from a white middle-class perspective (Hoffman, 2009; Humphrey, 2013). Expanding on these main critiques, Kaler-Jones (2020) identified how schools' adoption of SEL curriculums has influenced a growth in anti-Black sentiments, shedding light on how SEL fails to acknowledge cultural variation in how emotions are discussed and expressed amongst POC. In addition, Camangian and Cariaga (2021) highlight the hegemonic, colonial, and dehumanizing nature of SEL, arguing that SEL as currently present in schools continues with the miseducation of SOC. SEL as a vessel of coloniality (Maldonado-Torres, 2007) contributes to the historical Americanization of SOC where they are forced to abandon their cultural ways of being and adopt a white standard of how to exist within society. Given the growing popularity of SEL, proponents need to address these critiques if a true culturally relevant SEL model is to emerge.

While adjustments can be made to existing SEL curriculum to reflect aspects of a student's identity, as is the case when translating SEL curriculum from English to Spanish (León et al., 2011; Polleck, 2010; Reyes & Elias, 2011), the colonial goals inherent in SEL will continue to exist if nothing is done to drastically change how SEL is framed and approached within schools. In this paper, I first discuss how SEL fits the goals of coloniality by examining the three main critiques of SEL and referencing how each describes aspects of the colonial project. I then propose In Lak'ech and the Nahuí Ollin, two indigenous philosophies commonly used in Mexican American Studies, as a framework that can foster and even decolonize SEL. I end by drawing on a student's *testimonio*, presented at the end of a summer enrichment program, to reflect the emotional learning a program incorporating In Lak'ech and the Nahuí Ollin in its curriculum can foster for students.

Literature Review

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) describes the process of helping one develop the knowledge and skills necessary to attain social-emotional competence (Weissberg et al., 2015). Social-emotional competence speaks of the ability to understand, manage, and express social and emotional aspects of one's life “in ways that enable the successful management of life tasks such as learning, forming relationships, solving everyday problems, and adapting to the complex demands of growth and development” (Elias et al., 1997, p. 2). Questions surrounding SEL's original promise of promoting equity and helping students understand their emotions has generated its fair share of critiques. These critiques can be synthesized into three broad categories: (a) SEL as a means of controlling students' emotions and behaviors; (b) the prioritization of individual skill development; and (c) the assumption of a ‘universal’ student who is not influenced by culture

(Hecht & Shin, 2015; Hoffman, 2009; Humphrey, 2013; Vadeboncoeur & Collie, 2013). I discuss how SEL's three main critiques promote central tenets of coloniality below.

Controlling Students' Emotions

SEL as a form of controlling students' emotions abides by the assumption that there is a correct way to behave and exist within schools. SEL programs have emphasized teaching students how to control their emotions rather than providing them with the tools needed to explore and understand their emotions. For example, Greenburg and Kusché (2006) highlighted an elementary school SEL program known as PATHS and discussed the SEL skills PATHS focused on developing. In PATHS, desirable emotional outcomes were described as improved self-control, including recognizing emotions, having the ability to tolerate frustration, and moments of decreased aggression in the classroom (Greenberg & Kusché, 2006). The outcomes PATHS emphasized reflects the goals many SEL programs focus on when attending to students' SEL development in schools (Hoffman, 2009).

SEL, enacted as a form of controlling students' emotions, aligns with notions of schooling as a process of acculturation. With Mexican American students, defining appropriate student behavior in schools stems from the deficiency argument (Valenzuela, 1999) which presents the notion that Mexican and Mexican American peoples lack the attributes necessary to be successful in American society. The deficiency argument can be traced back to the colonial project and a concept Aldama (2001) labels as *the construction of the savage*. Labeling people as a savage establishes a distinction between who is and who is not civilized within society. Under a Eurocentric lens, being "European" took on the definition of what it meant to be civilized, hence pushing the argument that white people were not savage. The establishment of the European as "superior" predicated the subjugation of Black and Brown bodies (Lowe, 2015).

Schooling involves the belief that there is a "correct" way to express one's emotions in school which according to Humphrey (2013), Vadeboncoeur and Collie (2013), and Hoffman (2009), is grounded in white, middle-class norms. Since current SEL programs rarely consider cultural variation when approaching students' emotions, ways SOC express their emotions run the risk of being deemed as inappropriate given schools' standards and historical goals of teaching students how to properly exist within American society. A student who deviates from what is perceived to be the "correct" way to express oneself in school can result in remedial attempts to re-teach students the "correct" way to express their emotions which can lead to punitive punishments, such as time-outs or the removal of students from the classroom (Hoffman, 2009). In grander cases, Kaler-Jones (2020) highlights how SOC often face far more severe consequences such as suspensions or expulsions from schools, even having encounters with law enforcement.

Although there are healthy ways to manage emotions, one must shift from a single, universal perspective of managing and expressing emotions to a pluralistic, culturally mediated understanding of managing and expressing emotions. In addition, a greater focus on teaching students to understand, rather than control their emotions, is needed.

Individual Skill Development

Strong support for incorporating SEL into school curriculum has come from the positive impact it can have on a students' academic achievement (Elias et al., 1997). This focus on the individual

student coincides with the historical and current educational climate surrounding accountability, standardization, and measurement (McGuinn, 2006), which came to represent a very influential argument for incorporating SEL in schools (Humphrey, 2013). With research validating the link between increased social and emotional skills and academic achievement, SEL has its needed justification to remain in schools.

The emphasis on improving students' academic achievement has, however, raised questions as to whether schools are focusing more on academic results as opposed to students' actual social and emotional well-being (Elias, 2009). Hoffman (2009) discusses how the focus on skills, measurement, and academic results may neglect "the less quantifiable and perhaps more genuine aspects of emotionality in schooling that inhere in human relationships" (p. 540). Schools tend to prioritize the development of self-awareness and self-management when teaching SEL because they correspond to behavior that supports individual success when it comes to test taking. Focusing heavily on testing emphasizes schools' purpose of promoting ideals of capitalism where students adopt the cognitive skills needed to abide by adult work rules which will greatly position students to be active contributors of the U.S. economy (Bowles & Gintis, 2002).

Focusing on the benefits SEL can have on individual skills speaks to current day narratives around prosperity and success which often glorify the individual and pays little regard to the safety and well-being of others. As seen throughout the development of Western capitalism, Black and Brown bodies have suffered most in the labor force (Lowe, 2015). In addition, the elevation of self-determination in Western capitalist societies foregrounds the needs, desires, and motivations of the individual as opposed to (and as separate from) the community. In effect, this reinforces a vision for success that eschews collaboration in favor of individualism.

A "Universal" Student

Current implementations of SEL programs presume a universal, acultural learner absent of race, religion, and class (Hecht & Shin, 2015; Hoffman, 2009; Humphrey, 2013; Vadeboncoeur & Collie, 2013). This assumption, however, negates the racial and ethnic diversity present in U.S. schools and society. It also fails to acknowledge the role schools have served in the Americanization process of students through policies that push for a monolingual and monocultural student (Gonzalez, 2009; Valenzuela, 1999). This universal perspective on SEL positions Western (specifically white, middle-class) views of emotion as the norm. Thus, SEL can be seen as aiming to establish a narrow view of emotions that ignores the cultural variations that exist when it comes to emotional development, experience, and expression (Humphrey, 2013). For example, Hoffman (2009) states that "not all cultures interpret emotional experience in the same way, nor do they assign the same kinds of regulatory or expressive responses (such as talk) commonly shared by the white, American middle class" (p. 540). By neglecting the role of culture variation in emotionality, SEL programs are promoting a one-size-fits-all approach, creating tension between school and home cultures.

Humanizing Pedagogy through Ethnic Studies

Given SEL's close ties to coloniality, the question now arises, can SEL be decolonialized or do approaches outside of SEL need to be considered when attending to the emotional wellbeing of SOC? Camangian and Cariaga (2021) argue that "social and emotional learning initiatives and other

character education framings are essentially hegemonic policies offering more benign forms of miseducation” (p. 4). Given SEL’s ahistorical schooling, approaches outside of SEL need to be considered to address the colonial factors that negatively impact the wellbeing of SOC.

Researchers have proposed humanizing pedagogy as an alternative to SEL. Humanizing pedagogy not only describes a way for students to reclaim their own humanity, it also motivates students to realize their own agency, all while strengthening their notion of care for oneself and the collective (Camangian & Cariaga, 2021). Care as a critical framework has been effectively introduced by educators within Latina/o/x communities to provide students with a way to navigate hostile White school spaces. Sosa-Provencio et al. (2021), for example, drew on critical notions of care to emphasize how marginalized students can come to a place where their embodied, spiritual, and emotional wholeness is honored. Educators can guide youth of color through issues of power, oppression, and ongoing trauma to a point where they can “transform racialized oppression, (re)build community, and ultimately radiate with joy” (Sosa-Provencio et al., 2021, p. 12). Humanizing pedagogy’s focus on the mind, body, and spirit in the social and emotional learning process transcends the colonial ties that traditional SEL programs promote within schools.

Mexican American Studies (MAS), a culturally responsive curriculum grounded in notions of care, has the potential to not only “resist centuries of colonial power but to heal the intergenerational traumas it has caused” (Villanueva, 2013, p. 26). MAS, as a pedagogical approach, cannot only accomplish what SEL sets out to do, but it can address the shortcomings around SEL and its inability to critique social oppression and promote social justice (Camangian & Cariaga, 2021).

Perspectives

Mexican American Studies (MAS) first emerged in the 1960s to counter the assimilationist practices that Mexican American students encountered in U.S. schools. MAS gained national attention in 2010 when the Tucson Unified School District targeted MAS arguing that it fostered “anti-American” sentiments among the mostly Latina/o/x student population who took MAS classes. MAS was officially banned in Arizona Public Schools despite research showing the positive influence taking MAS had in improving grades and test scores for Mexican American students (Acosta & Mir, 2012; Sleeter, 2011). MAS was seen as a threat that needed to be addressed to maintain the goals of coloniality, as present in the traditional U.S. curriculum, despite MAS unintentionally contributing to the notion that a culturally relevant curriculum can motivate SOC to not only navigate hostile school spaces, but also to do well in their studies.

MAS abides by one guiding principle, *In Lak’Ech*, in order to reflect the “beautiful struggle that is learning and teaching” (Acosta & Mir, 2012, p. 17). *In Lak’ech* is part of a larger poem, “Pensamiento Serpentino,” which was written by Luis Valdez. The meaning of *In Lak’ech* comes from the Mayan definition of what it means to be a human being (Valdez & Martinez Paredes, 2012). It is in *In Lak’ech*’s message where a framework for attending to Latina/o/x students’ emotions can possibly exist.

IN LAK’ECH
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 mi mismo.
I do harm to myself.
Si te amo y respeto,
If I love and respect you,
Me amo y respeto yo.
I love and respect myself.

The promotion of empathy and integrity is central throughout this short poem and is captured in the eloquent flow of words, shifting between “tu” (you) and “yo” (I), where a connection between oneself and others is identified. Not only does In Lak’ech identify the interconnection present in humanity (Villanueva, 2013; Sosa-Provencio et al., 2021), but most powerfully, the back-and-forth relationship between “you” and “I” positions the other in relation to the self by first emphasizing the other (tu) and then proceeding to include the self (yo). The goal and meaning of In Lak’ech coincides with both the goals of humanizing pedagogy and with SEL. Humanizing pedagogy promotes care for others as well as for oneself. In SEL, self-awareness & self-management are skills that specifically focus on the self while social awareness & relationship skills focus on connecting with others. Responsible decision-making is a competency that can be reflected within the other four competencies as it encourages students to make decisions that have a positive influence on oneself and others.

In introducing a decolonial way of approaching SEL, and potentially identifying how In Lak’ech can positively influence Latina/o/x students’ emotions, CASEL’s competencies should not exist in specific categories. As is promoted in In Lak’ech, the self and the other exist in unison. Recognizing the relationships between the self and others is where SEL skills can be reflected. However, SEL’s skills must exist in a way that reinforces the decolonial message that In Lak’ech conveys.

Another principle that guides MAS is the Nahui Ollin. Acosta (2014) describes the Nahui Ollin as pre-Columbian indigenous knowledge from Mexico which works to reaffirm students’ humanity through the teaching of four concepts. Four concepts define the goals of the Nahui Ollin: *Quetzalcoatl* represents the precious and beautiful knowledge we all have; *Xipe-Totec* represents self-transformation; *Tezcatlipoca* inspires critical self-reflection; & *Huitzilopochtli* promotes the will to act and make a positive individual or social change. There exists some overlap between the goals of the Nahui Ollin and those that CASEL has for SEL.

Table 1 SEL Skills & the Nahui Ollin Comparison

SEL Skill	Nahui Ollin
Self-Awareness	Quetzalcoatl (precious and beautiful knowledge) & Tezcatlipoca (self-reflection)
Self-Management	Xipe-Totec (transformation) & Tezcatlipoca (self-reflection)
Social Awareness	Tezcatlipoca (self-reflection)
Relationship Skills	Tezcatlipoca (self-reflection)
Responsible	Huitzilopochtli (will to act)
Decision-Making	

Proceeding with In Lak'ech and the Nahui Ollin as a framework for approaching students' social and emotional well-being in schools can represent an opportunity of applying curriculum already found in U.S. schools, such as MAS, to reach the goals of SEL. However, it is also important to recognize how In Lak'ech and the Nahui Ollin can stand alone as their own framework for attending to students' social and emotional well-being. Thus, recognizing the impactful work MAS and other programs that employ In Lak'ech and the Nahui Ollin in their curriculum have already been doing for years, way before SEL was institutionalized within U.S. schools.

Methods

To highlight the social and emotional impact In Lak'ech and the Nahui Ollin can have on Latina/o/x students, I draw on data collected during a week-long, summer enrichment program that takes place at the University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) known as the *Aquetza* Academic Summer Program. Aquetza provides high school students with strong ties to the Latina/o/x community with an interactive experience focused on examining the history, literature, health science, and relevant social and political issues surrounding their cultural communities from a MAS perspective. Like a traditional MAS program, Aquetza incorporated both principles of In Lak'ech and the Nahui Ollin throughout their daily practices. For example, Aquetza participants would meet at the start of the day and recite In Lak'ech as a group before proceeding to the class portion of the program. Likewise, Aquetza facilitators would highlight one of the four Nahui Ollin concepts, each day, encouraging students to embody the meaning of Quetzalcoatl, Xipe-Totec, Tezcatlipoca, & Huitzilopochtli throughout their daily interactions.

As part of Aquetza's schedule, students were expected to work on and present a final project which they would present to Aquetza teachers, students, and family members in a culminating event known as a Final Encuentro (Spanish word for meeting or encounter). Several students presented testimonios during the Final Encuentro.

Testimonios have historically served as a way for members of the Latina/o/x community to critique systems of power, while reflecting on and healing from injustices that were once experienced (Brabeck, 2003; Huber & Cueva, 2012; Pérez Huber, 2012). A testimonio's defining feature not only lies in their intent to spread awareness of oppressive conditions, but also in their intent to seek justice from those oppressive conditions (Collins, 1991; Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Elenes, 2000). A testimonio thus serves as a form of empowerment in its ability to affirm a person's experiences, especially when their narrative goes unrecognized by systems of oppression.

I focus on one testimonio presented by Olivia at the end of Aquetza to capture the emotional impact In Lak'ech and the Nahui Ollin can have on Latina/o/x students. I choose to focus on Olivia because she presented a testimonio where: (a) she identified and reflected on her own or a family member's lived experiences; (b) positive and/or negative emotions emerged from reflecting on lived experiences; and (c) provided hope for a better future. Focusing on one person is a common approach when analyzing testimonios since it allows researchers to center individual experiences and present an in-depth description of what those experiences could possibly mean for the individual (Beverley et al., 2000; Creswell, 2008). In addition, focusing on one person's testimonio also provides the researcher with the opportunity to explore ways in which a person recounts an experience, how they position themselves when recounting an experience, and what overall

message the presenter aims to share in their recounting of events (Baumeister & Newman, 1994; Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Riessman, 1993). Analyzing Olivia's testimonio also offers the opportunity to assess as to whether In Lak'Ech and the Nahui Ollin were referenced after Olivia spent an entire week hearing of and learning about both principles.

Findings

During the Final Encuentro, Aquetza students each presented, one at a time, while standing at the front of a large lecture hall where Aquetza teachers, students, family members, and members of the surrounding CU Boulder community sat in the audience, respectfully listening to students' presentations. Olivia stood up from her seat when it was her turn to present and proceeded to the front of the lecture hall. Before beginning, Olivia explained to the crowd that she would be presenting a letter she wrote to her parents. Like all students, Olivia paused before beginning, took a deep breath, and presented her letter oftentimes shifting between English and Spanish.

*Queridos Mama y Papa,
Ustedes me trajeron a este mundo. A un mundo plagado con enfermedad, pobreza, sexismo, racismo, y todos los males representados por la cosa anaranjada que ocupa la oficina de la presidencia. Pero ustedes, ustedes representan la luz entre la oscuridad. La cura para la enfermedad, la riqueza entre la pobreza, el feminismo contra el sexismo, y la compassion entre el racismo. Dos historias de resistencia y fortaleza que me han dado todo. Gracias.* ("Olivia Letter to Parents," 2017)

Translation:

Dear Mom and Dad,

You two brought me into this world. Into a world plagued with sickness, poverty, sexism, racism, and all the evils represented by the orange thing occupying the office of President of the United States. But you two, you two represent the light in between the darkness. The cure for the sickness, the wealth in between the poverty, the feminism against the sexism, and the compassion in between the racism. Two histories of resistance and fortitude which have given me everything. Thank you.

From the beginning, Oliva reflects the message of In Lak'Ech as she recognizes the important role her parents have had in her life. Gratitude is reflected in the way Olivia not only credits her parents for giving her the inspiration needed to confront the injustices that plague society, but also in how Olivia sees her parents as a symbol of good in the world. In Lak'Ech is a reminder for how one should embrace the world around them (Acosta & Mir, 2012). Olivia chooses to embrace the world not by succumbing to all the injustices present in the world, but in contemplating on the positive role she can have in society, she thus realizes her own agency to be an agent for positive change (Freire, 2017). Olivia's understanding of systems of oppression not only includes a historical acknowledgement of ideologies that have caused inequality in society such as poverty, sexism, and racism, but it also incorporates contemporary figures like Donald Trump who come to represent a symbol of oppression for many people.

Olivia continues her letter by dedicating a short paragraph to each of her two parents. Olivia embodies Quetzalcoatl & Tezcatlipoca in the critical awareness and knowledge she shows

throughout her letter. As stated in her letter, Olivia recognizes how the systems of oppression she learned about in Aquetza impact the people she cares about the most.

Dad, I know now it's impossible for me to understand what you've been through. Like you always say, you've lived five lives and each one is more complex than the last. However, now, now I am aware of the complication and injustice within the institutional systems of our society. A concept you've always known and experienced, but one I've been too ignorant to recognize. ("Olivia Letter to Parents," 2017)

Olivia recognizes that her father's lived experiences are beyond her understanding. Olivia's emerging self-reflection has helped her come closer to understanding how a loved one can be impacted by systems of oppression. As can be interpreted in her description, Olivia recognizes that at one point, she did not know the extent to which her father has suffered in U.S. society. However, Olivia's understanding of the larger social and political factors in society has helped Olivia in being able to empathize with her father. Olivia's letter also reflects Xipe-Totec in the way she is verbalizing her transformation in front of her parents who are sitting in the audience watching her present.

Critical self-reflection not only contributed to Olivia being able to shift any preconceived judgements of her father, but it also contributed to her adopting an appreciation (and love) of her own self (Camangian & Cariaga, 2021). "I learned to appreciate my indigenous roots and the wonderful language I'm mentioning [Spanish]" ("Olivia Letter to Parents," 2017). Olivia hints at knowing the school policies that have targeted Latina/o/x students throughout history to limit the use of Spanish in classrooms (Valencia, 2011). Olivia further references her transformation by embracing her racial and linguistic identity and relinquishing any resentment she may have had towards her indigenous roots and Spanish-speaking skills.

"The orange thing occupying the office of President of the United States" is a direct reference to Donald Trump who served as president of the U.S. from 2016-2020. Trump's dehumanizing and violent rhetoric against the Latina/o/x community resulted in a rise of anti-immigrant and anti-Latina/o/x sentiments in schools throughout the country. Latina/o/x students not only fear for their own safety in schools but also worry over the safety and well-being of their parents (Costello, 2016). This social and political context is referenced by Olivia who writes about the struggles her mother faces being an immigrant in the United States:

Ser un inmigrante en tiempos modernos es algo muy duro. Gente de piel mas baja criminaliza a nuestra raza. Nos llaman traficantes, violadores, y asesinos. Mentiras que salen como balas a nuestro corazón. Veo el dolor en tu cara, llena de miedo, similar a las caras de millones alrededor del país. ("Olivia Letter to Parents," 2017)

Translation:

Being an immigrant in modern times is something really hard. People with lighter skin criminalize our race. They call us traffickers, rapists, and murderers. Lies that come out like bullets to our hearts. I see the pain in your face, full of fear, similar to the faces of millions around the nation.

Olivia is aware of her mother's fear in a time when anti-immigrant sentiments plague the nation. Echoes of Trump's words spoken when he declared his candidacy for President of the United States

in 2016 are present in Olivia's letter. To frame an entire race of people as traffickers, rapists, and murderers downplays the sacrifices many immigrants make when leaving their homeland in pursuit of better opportunities. Olivia is aware of the sacrifices her parents have made and is once again able to show empathy and solidarity (Camangian & Cariaga, 2021). Olivia is able to view her mother's experience and migration status as a source of inspiration as opposed to reacting and succumbing to anger in response to the negativity and hate facing the Latina/o/x community. Olivia finishes her letter by highlighting the goals her parents have inspired her to pursue:

Ustedes empujan la educación porque saben que es la única manera por cual puedo seguir adelante. Y por eso les agradezco. Quieren oportunidades para mi que ustedes nunca tuvieron en un sistema roto que los fallo [. . .] Estos ojos te ven a ti mama. Una mujer humilde que emigró por mi. Con todo que me han dado, seguire adelante. Because now these eyes. They see success because of your sacrifice. They visualize; un futuro mejor que emergera de nuestro pasado injusto. ("Olivia Letter to Parents," 2017)

Translation:

You push education because you know it is the only way I can continue ahead. And for that, I thank you. You want opportunities for me that you never had in a broken system that failed you [. . .] these eyes see you mom. A humble woman who immigrated for me. With everything you have given, I will continue ahead. Because now these eyes. They see success because of your sacrifice. They visualize; a better future that emerges from our unjust past.

Schooling to get ahead in today's current system is a goal Olivia's parents want her to achieve. Knowledge of obstacles present within U.S. society contributed to Olivia's self-empowerment as she sets out to prove those who have a deficit view of Latinas/os wrong. Thus, Olivia reflects In Lak'Ech by referencing the beautiful struggle that is learning.

Discussion

Interestingly, CASEL's (2015) five SEL competencies can be observed throughout Olivia's testimonio presentation. Olivia reflects: self-awareness in how she describes the pain that comes from being criminalized in U.S. society for being Latina/o/x; self-management in how Olivia expresses her anger and frustration in the form of a written letter but does not let that anger shape her emotional state or decision-making process; social awareness in how Olivia is able to empathize with her parents' experiences; relationships skills in how Olivia has grown close to her parents after reflecting on their struggles; and responsible decision-making in how Olivia aims to pursue her studies to not only improve her life but to change the narrative surrounding Latinas/os and education. While In Lak'Ech and the Nahui Ollin are not frameworks that exist under the umbrella of the traditional SEL model, it does speak to the impact humanizing curricula can have in incidentally reaching the goals of SEL, like students showing an increase in test scores and grades after taking MAS despite still encountering all the challenges that Latina/o/x students face in schools. It is important to note how In Lak'Ech and the Nahui Ollin, as a decolonial model for SEL, cannot only do traditional SEL but go beyond the goals of SEL.

Four tenets emerged in Olivia's testimonio presentation that push the boundaries of what is possible in SEL. These four tenets embody Olivia's mind, spirit, and soul in the way she: *reflected*

on identities; recognized community assets; reflected on struggles; and aspired for positive change. I define the four tenets that emerged below:

Table 2. Decolonial SEL Tenets

Tenet	Description
Reflecting on Identities	Exploring how one's racial identity, ethnicity, cultural upbringing, gender, and migration status influence one's experience in the U.S. For example, Olivia reflected on how her own Latina identity will influence the way she is seen and treated within U.S. society.
Recognizing Community Assets	Recognizing community resources as a form of strength and motivation. For example, Olivia credited her parents' bravery as a reason for wanting to make a positive change within society.
Reflecting on Struggles	Identifying and reflecting on a personal trauma or social issues affecting an individual or group of people. For example, reflecting on the emotional impact immigration policies have had on the Latina/o/x community in the U.S.
Aspiring for Positive Change	Identifying and discussing personal and/or collective goals, hopes, and dreams for a better tomorrow. For example, Olivia wanting to finish her studies to counteract the stereotype surrounding Latinas/os and them not succeeding in the education system.

The tenets that emerged in Olivia's testimonio presentation when centering In Lak'Ech and the Nahui Ollin as a framework for decolonizing SEL address the critiques around needing a form of emotional learning that: (a) centers the self in relation to others; (b) explores the role social and political structures have in shaping lived experiences and emotions; (c) does not center whiteness when discussing emotions; (d) critiques social oppression; and (e) is motivated by social justice.

With the ongoing political backlash against Ethnic Studies programs in the U.S., now more than ever do we need to center the emotional work Ethnic Studies has been doing, in the midst of a growing push for SEL in U.S. schools. In Lak'Ech and the Nahui Ollin can offer a decolonial approach to fostering SEL among Latina/o/x students. In the process, not only does the centering of two indigenous philosophies reemphasize the power of humanizing pedagogy in relation to emotions, but it also promotes a much-needed collective effort in attending to the well-being of SOC.

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