Reclaiming Our Identity:
Second-Generation Mazalteca/os across Mexico and the U.S.
Tá Rtilatnaá Tu Acabetná Dicá Natnaá:
Tiupa Scuá Generación té Mexico né Estados Unidos

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By

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to the Mazalteca/o community who has been a constant source of knowledge and inspiration.

Me gustaría dedicar esta tesis a la comunidad Mazalteca/o que ha sido una constante fuente de conocimiento e inspiración.

Na lasna gaapaná cá mietitna ne te chínthná tú vanescán yal penzartna né part alcabenná dica nattlan.
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Abstract

Tá Rtilatnaá Tu Acabetná Dicá Natnaá/ Reclaiming Our Identity:
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This research focuses on the ethnic identity development of second-generation Mazalteca/o young adults in Mexico City and Los Angeles, California. It examines the historical context of colonization as well as Mexico’s *Indigenismo* movement and *mestizaje* to better understand the factors that influence Zapotec identity. The work includes a discussion of the methods best suited for gathering data and working with indigenous communities. Moreover, it utilizes indigenous research methods including individual and focus group interviews to ensure that the voices of the participants are reflected in this research. This study is part of a growing body of research on the Zapotec indigenous diaspora in the United States. The findings show that despite growing up in urban cities, the second-generation continues to affirm an Oaxaqueño identity. The epistemology imparted by their parents, elders and their desire to contribute to their larger community, strongly influences Zapotec worldviews and are primary reasons for their indigeneity in the 21st century.
Chapter 1: Introduction

Very few studies on the indigenous identity of Zapotecs in Mexico and the United States have analyzed ethnic identity formation amongst second-generation Zapotecs from the regional town of Santo Tomás Mazaltepec. Data compiled by the Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI) 2010, demonstrates that Zapotecs constitute one of the largest indigenous groups in Oaxaca, with approximately 371,740 inhabitants. According to Mixtec scholar Gaspar Rivera-Salgado (2004), who has done extensive work on the Oaxacan community in California, Zapotecs from the Central Valleys and northern Sierra have been migrating to Los Angeles since the early 1970s. Zapotec migration to the U.S. dates from the Bracero Program (1942-1964).¹ The 2010 U.S. census data also reflects that the county with the most Latinos of indigenous origin is Los Angeles, with approximately 53,946 people identifying as indigenous Latinos.² Although the U.S. census estimates that the total number of indigenous Latinos in Los Angeles is roughly 53,946, Jonathan Fox and Gaspar Rivera-Salgado’s (2004) study purports that the Zapotec population alone makes up 50,000-60,000 people. The growing number of indigenous Zapotecos in the United States calls for the need to produce scholarship on this community.

My thesis project seeks to examine the experiences and social processes that shape the ethnic identities of second-generation Mazalteca/os through a multi-sited lens. In particular, this study is concerned with Mazalteca/os across Mexico and the U.S. This comparative lens is important because it allows us to explore the similarities and differences in the process of

¹ For more information on Oaxacan migration through the Bracero Program, refer to Indigenous Mexican Migrants in the United States by Jonathan Fox and Gaspar Rivera- Salgado eds. and Transborder Lives: Indigenous Oaxacans in Mexico, California, and Oregon by Lynn Stephen.

identity development across borders. Likewise, it enables for the acknowledgement of multiple perspectives to be made. For the purpose of this study, the second-generation is defined as the children of Mazaltepec, Oaxacan born parents who were born outside of their parent’s respective hometowns. Three terms are used throughout this thesis: Zapoteco, Mazaltepec, and Mazalteca/o. Zapoteco refers to the umbrella term used to define the ethnic identity of Zapotecs from Oaxaca, Mazaltepec is used to define the town that is studied in this particular research, and Mazalteca/o is attributed to the people from the town of Mazaltepec, specifically, the second-generation Mazalteca/o. This study examines the effects of colonialism and past Mexican ideological movements, specifically, the indigenismo movement and mestizaje aimed at trying to define who is “indigenous” and its influence on contemporary Mazalteca/o identity and worldviews. This research attempts to elaborate on Adriana Cruz-Manjarrez’s (2013) and Michael Kearney’s (2000) analyses of second-generation Zapotecs’ multilayered identity and their constant negotiation across different boundaries by demonstrating that second-generation Mazalteca/o young adults have established a Oaxaqueño, hybrid identity to express their indigeneity. It incorporates the voices of second-generation Mazalteca/os to depict how they self-identify and discusses the factors that contribute to encouraging or preventing them from reaffirming their Mazalteca/o identity. The thesis will address two central questions:

• How do racial, ethnic, and linguistic conceptions of indigenous identity as defined by the state of Mexico and the U.S. influence Mazalteca/o indigeneity?

• What similarities and differences exist in how second-generation Mazalteca/os in the 21st century from Oaxaca, Mexico and Los Angeles, California describe their indigenous identity?

These questions arise from the necessity to give voice to a community that has been historically
excluded, erased, and misrepresented in the bordering states of Mexico and the U.S. Moreover, the thesis is in many ways a result of my personal experience of growing up as a second-generation Zapotec woman, born and raised in Los Angeles. I became aware of my difference from other Latina/o youth at the age of six. My “indigenous phenotype” always made me a target of discrimination, mostly by other second-generation Mexican children. I was seen as “Pocahontas” and teased by my first grade Spanish-speaking classmates, who would refer to Oaxaca as “gua caca.” I always knew that I was different from others because of my broken Spanish as well as my clothing, with my mother dressing me in traditional Oaxacan skirts. The cultural practices that my family participated in were also Oaxacan. Even though I did not have a clear understanding of the Zapotec people in Oaxaca, I knew that my family’s history did not correlate with what it means to be “American” or “Latina/o.” It was difficult for me to completely embrace my indigenous identity because I did not have a clear historical awareness of it. I internalized a negative perspective of my identity and felt isolated and alone. My personal experiences of struggling with my identity led me to write this thesis, but most importantly, the need to produce indigenous scholarship written by indigenous peoples and for second-generation indigenous youth.

Likewise, the need to include more indigenous scholarship within the field of Chicana/o Studies is another prominent reason behind this work. Although Chicana/o Studies has helped me gain a critical consciousness and grow as a person, there is still a major issue with the scholarship that is presented to us. It is exclusive of other indigenous communities that are not Aztec. I was rarely assigned texts that touched on other indigenous communities throughout my undergraduate and graduate Chicana/o Studies education at University of California, Los

3 Enaguas, Oaxacan skirts
Angeles and California State University, Northridge. Bringing indigenous perspectives into the field of Chicana/o Studies is critical to the discipline because it promotes awareness of the diverging ethnic groups that makes up the Latina/o population and documents the experiences of second-generation indigenous youth in the United States.

**Methods and Methodology**

In order to compile my research, I used qualitative methods. Strauss and Corbin (1990) defined qualitative research as, “any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification” (p. 11). It is a nonmathematical process of interpretation through which a theory can emerge. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) added to this definition by stating, “qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry” (p. 13). Qualitative research methods offer space for ways of researching indigenous peoples, because it is interpretive; the stories of both the researcher and the participants are reflected in the making of meanings. Additionally, indigenous methodologies can also be situated within a qualitative landscape because they encompass characteristics congruent with other relational qualitative approaches. Such methodologies share two interrelated characteristics with other qualitative approaches: both approaches are relational and must show evidence of process and content (Kovach, 2009, p. 32). According to Porsanger (2004), indigenous methodology is “a body of indigenous and theoretical approaches and methods, rules and postulates employed by indigenous research in the study of indigenous peoples” (p. 107). The main goal of utilizing indigenous methodologies is to ensure that research on indigenous issues is carried out in a more respectful, ethical, correct, sympathetic, useful and beneficial fashion, seen from the point of view of indigenous peoples (Porsanger, 2004, p. 107-
This research specifically employed a conversational method as a means of gathering knowledge within indigenous cultures. In *Conversational Method in Indigenous Research*, Kovach (2010) stated, “conversational method aligns with an indigenous worldview that honors orality as means of transmitting knowledge and upholds the relational which is necessary to maintain a collective tradition” (p. 42). This thesis employed a conversational method as a means of incorporating indigenous knowledge as well as guiding the research. This enabled for the juxtaposition of self and subject matter to be made. Three interviews with second-generation Mazalteca/os were conducted in Santo Tomás Mazaltepec, Oaxaca, Mexico and three in Los Angeles, California, United States in order to investigate the variety and different meanings of ethnic identity that young Mazalteca/os develop in Mexico and in the U.S., conceivably influenced by differences in class, age and gender. This provided a more nuanced understanding of transnational perceptions of identity. I chose to conduct my research specifically in the town of Santo Tomás Mazaltepec because of the personal connection that I have with Mazaltecos. My family from both my mother and father’s sides originated from Santo Tomás Mazaltepec. Our connection to this particular town traces back six generations. Although I was allowed into the community because of my personal ties, my positionality as a researcher presented many advantages and responsibilities. Chavez (2008), author of *From the Inside: Advantages, Complications, and Demands on Insider Positionality*, described the advantages of an insider: being considered a member of the indigenous group makes approaching almost any community member about the study more feasible and requires little or no rapport building. Similarly, it is not as difficult for me to understand the literal meaning behind the responses that participants give. I am better able to pick up on emotions and facial expressions compared to someone who is
not familiar with the members of the Mazaltepec community. However, there are also limitations that come with being an insider, such as the tension of stepping into sacred spaces, because even though we are scholars and researchers, we still owe the members of the community the same respect that we would give them on every other occasion.

Utilizing an indigenous research methodology and a conversational method allowed me to build relationships with the participants. Furthermore, I constructed open-ended, semi-structured interview questions to promote conversations where both the participants and researcher co-created knowledge. Some of the central questions that were addressed in the interviews are: How do you choose to identify yourself ethnically and why? How do you define your indigeneity? Have you ever confronted a difficult situation in your life that you think was influenced by your ethnicity as a Mazalteca/o? Do you think that there is still discrimination towards indigenous peoples today? Could you please talk about any experiences that you have confronted which you feel have shaped you into the person you are today? What is your worldview and are there factors that you think have influenced your worldview? These particular interview questions were selected because they enabled the participants to choose how they want to identify without the researcher imposing an identity on them. It allowed the participants to describe their experiences in their own ways and through their own terms. Interviews were chosen as the primary method for this research because “it gives the opportunity to step into the mind of another person, to see and experience the world as they do themselves” (McCracken, 1988, p. 9). The interview allows us to get a better understanding of the different experiences each individual has encountered and how their trajectories have shaped their worldviews.

**Zapotecos in Previous Academic Research**

A majority of previous research conducted on Zapotecos focuses on the perspective of
first-generation Zapotecs, such as Hirabayashi (1993), Kearney (2000), Fox and Rivera-Salgado (2004), and Stephen (2007). The experience of second-generation Mazalteca/os is thus critical to examine because of the growing number of children of Zapotec parents being raised in states outside of the parents’ respective hometowns. In *Children of Oaxacan Parents*, Cruz-Manjarrez (2013) wrote, “the identity formation process among Zapotecs born in the United States, henceforth the second-generation Zapotecs, is new, different, and complex” (p. 53). Youth confront social oppression and racism that affect their lives and their indigenous identity formation. Unlike their first-generation Mazalteco parents, second-generation Mazalteca/os are constantly faced with stressors from peers, community members, parents, and relatives. Trying to find a place where they fit in impacts their decision either to embrace an indigenous identity or to reject it.

The children of Mazalteco immigrants undergo added challenges from other second-generation Latina/os. Discrimination based on culture, language, and physical appearance continues to be prevalent. According to Cruz-Manjarrez (2013), being defined by others as an indigenous immigrant can bring double discrimination: non-indigenous Latina/os see indigenous peoples as lower ranking, while Anglo-Americans see them as part of the undocumented Latina/o masses. Social pressures to assimilate into the American and Mexican mainstream are also a constant battle for the second-generation. Many instances of racism and discrimination are experienced at the hands of other Latina/os, Chicana/os, or Mexicans. An example of this is the 2012 “no me llames Oaxaquita campaign” that was launched by Oaxacan indigenous youth and community members in Oxnard, California as a response to the bullying that indigenous students were experiencing at school from their mestizo peers (Esquivel, 2012). The term “Oaxaquita,” little Oaxacan, is a derogatory term that is used to demean indigenous peoples from Oaxaca.
Elvia Pacheco’s U.S. born son threatened to kill himself if his mother made him go to school due to the bullying he experienced from classmates and his teacher alike. The campaign resulted in the school district passing a resolution that prohibited the use of the terms “Oaxaquita” and “indito” from being used on school grounds and encouraged lessons about indigenous Mexican culture and history. The racism and discrimination that indigenous peoples confront in Mexico is reproduced in the United States, and is still a pressing issue for second-generation Oaxacans.

Although second-generation Mazalteca/os are constantly renegotiating their indigenous identity because identity is neither static nor fixed, the Chicana/o ideology that is used to describe the social process of second-generation Latina/os does not adequately address the experiences of second-generation Mazalteca/os in the U.S. In his book From Indians to Chicanos, Vigil (1998) argued that Chicanos are, in an evolutionary sense, tied to the Indians of Mexico and the Southwest. However, he continuously pointed out that the ethnic label Chicana/o is also a derivative of the Aztec tribal name Mexica. Therefore, the term Chicana/o imposes a hegemonic identity as descendants of Aztecs. Likewise, in Borderlands/La Frontera, Anzaldúa (2012) explained, “The Aztecas del norte…compose the largest single tribe or nation of Anishinabeg (Indians) found in the United States today… Some call themselves Chicanos and see themselves as people whose true homeland is Aztlán” (p. 23). The term Chicana/o and the discourse of Aztlán have diminished differences in history, migratory experiences, linguistic preferences, social class, race, and ignores the experiences and identifications of other indigenous peoples (Fregosa, Chabram, & Grossberg, 1990). Early Chicana/o discourse makes it difficult for second-generation Mazalteca/os to adopt a Chicana/o identity because their voices and communities are not represented; therefore, several challenge it. It is crucial to understand that race and ethnicity play a prominent role in shaping identity. Mazalteca/os have experienced
a multiple form of marginality, having been rejected from their Mexican and American counterparts because of their “Indian” appearance, their diverse language, and differing cultural practices.

Second-generation Mazalteca/os find themselves situated between two worlds, languages, and multiple cultures. In Mexico, it is the Mexican and the Oaxacan, and in the U.S., it is the American and the Oaxacan. The children of Mazalteco parents are appropriating an indigenous hybrid identity to express their constant negotiation across different boundaries. Bhabha (1994) argued that people in multicultural societies create, live, and operate in the “third space,” an in-between hybridized space where identities, diversity, difference and boundaries of intersecting race, class, gender, and nation are negotiated and redefined in everyday life. Similarly, in The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History, Pérez (1999) described “third space” as a location where oppositional, subaltern histories can be found. In this “third space” that Pérez (1999) and Bhabha (1994) reiterated through their works, the “other” is decolonized, understood, and contextualized within frameworks that are non-Euro-centric. This space can best be explained through the term coined by Kearney (2000) as Oaxacalifornia, a third sociocultural and political space created amongst Oaxacan immigrants but now being adopted by second-generation Mazalteca/os to appropriate their hybrid identity as belonging to both places. It is in this space where second-generation young adults are able to freely express their own ethnic consciousness.

This thesis aims to go against a process that silences and marginalizes indigenous people. By writing through the perspectives of Mazalteca/os, this research challenges the notion of Eurocentrism and resists an imperialist way of documenting research. Although an examination of identity formation is carried out, it is critical to understand that I do not attempt to define what
being indigenous is, nor what constitutes indigenous identity, which would only replicate the stereotypical notion of indigenous identity as constructed by the state. Rather, by documenting the lived experiences of the research participants, I chose to let them define themselves through their own voices and ideologies. This work, in essence, is both a written account of Mazalteca/o experiences through their worldviews and a site where a “third space” is created.

The structure of this thesis is as follows: Chapter 2, *Zapotecs: Colonization and Indigenous Identity*, historically examines the realities of Zapotecs by demonstrating the way in which a distorted notion of the “Indian” has been perpetuated throughout Mexico and the U.S., starting from the root of colonialism leading up to the 21st century. Chapter 3, *Indigenous Methodologies: Talking About our lived Experiences and Worldviews*, examines closely the methodology and framework used in order to create a transformative space that enables the participant to reflect on their lives and identities. Chapter 4, *The Identity Development of Second-generation Mazaltecas/os Across Mexico and the U.S.*, draws on interviews with second-generation Mazalteca/os in Mexico and the U.S. in order to discuss the ways in which this second-generation establishes their identity, as well as the factors that lead to claiming their indigeneity. Finally, Chapter 5, *Conclusion: Why Indigenous Studies Matters?* provides a general summary of the thesis and recommendations for further research.
Chapter 2: Colonization and Indigenous Identity

Indigenous people want to tell our own stories, write our own versions, in our own ways, for our own purposes. It is not simply about giving an oral account of a genealogical naming of the land and the events which raged over it, but a very powerful need to give testimony to and restore a spirit, to bring back into existence a world fragmented and dying.

---Linda Tuhiwai Smith, 1999

The history of colonization in Mexico has often been written to exclude and negate indigenous voices and epistemology. In *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People*, Smith (1999) wrote, “History is about power. It is the story of the powerful and how they became powerful, and then how they use this power to keep them in positions in which they can continue to dominate others. It is because of this relationship with power that we have been excluded, marginalized, and ‘othered’” (p. 34). History has been used by Mexico as a tool to attempt to colonize indigenous minds and justify colonization. Understanding the past from an indigenous perspective is a necessary step in moving towards the critical pedagogy of decolonization. Smith (1999) further elaborated that in order to transform our colonized views we need to revisit history and tell our stories of the past, reclaim it, and give testimony to the injustices that it has caused. Writing from an indigenous perspective challenges the deficit discourses that deny indigenous epistemology. In order to understand the factors that have influenced Mazalteca/os identity, we must acknowledge the impact that historical events have had on the Zapotecs of Oaxaca. Both colonization as well as the role of the Mexican government’s *Indigenismo* movement of the 1900s are critical when examining why some Mazalteca/os still experience racism and discrimination and internalize these racist ideas.

The historical events that are described in this chapter are not simply a retelling of history; they are included in order to provide an analysis of the ways in which history has influenced Mazalteca/os ethnic consciousness and their identity formation. A strong
understanding of history is important because it allows individuals to reflect on who they are and where they come from. Marginalized communities, such as the Zapotecs, are often written into history through the perspective of the colonizer or those in power, using Eurocentric frameworks. Indigenous peoples are depicted as inferior and uncivilized which results in distorted notions of their ethnic identity. They are labeled “Indios” regardless of what ethnic group they belong to, how they identity, or what languages they speak (Cruz-Manjarrez, 2013, p. 112). This is deeply problematic because the use of this term groups indigenous people homogenously and degrades an indigenous identity. Diversity exists amongst different indigenous communities, for example, in the context of Oaxaca, Zapotec social identity is based on one’s home community: each possessing their own local variant of Zapoteco as well as distinctive cultural traditions expressed in music, dance, clothing, and cuisine (Kearney, 2000). Academics have produced works on Zapotecs that follow a western paradigm of documenting research that deny and negate their voices. In his work, Zapotec Deviance: The Convergence of Folk and Modern Sociology, Selby (1974) wrote about Mazalteca/o deviance, specifically, witchcraft. His work negatively shapes attitudes towards Mazalteca/os from Oaxaca. Not only did he fail to cite the works of major Mexican indigenous scholars, but he also only relied on the works of Western anthropologists and sociologists as points of reference. Utilizing these frameworks to represent indigenous identity disregards epistemology altogether and therefore continues to oppress communities through theories created by non-indigenous scholars, the complete opposite of decolonization. Moreover, he compared Western and Mazalteca/o thoughts and explained the ways in which Mazalteca/o thought processes are similar to Western thought processes, using the interactionist model to further validate his claims. Likewise, he elucidated that he chose to study this particular community in Oaxaca because they were “a traditional
community, economically unchanged since the Spanish conquest when domestic animals, as well as wheat and steel tipped plows, were added to the local inventory” (Selby, 1974, p. 4). Selby (1974) failed to utilize an indigenous methodological approach when examining this community, which is why he quickly concluded that this community was “unchangeable.” Therefore, he continued to project the stereotypical notion that indigenous people are unable to progress and modernize, failing to step away from a colonial perspective. Furthermore, he portrayed Mazalteco males to be violent alcoholics and neglectful, irresponsible parents, a stereotype that is held against indigenous peoples, particularly men, and that further taints maternal and paternal views of Mazalteca/os. Finally, he failed to include the community that he researched in the production of knowledge and depicted them as intellectually incapable of understanding the realm of psychology, further dehumanizing them by using notions to depict savagery and primitivism. Smith (1999) argued that researching through a Western paradigm negatively reflects the way in which indigenous peoples are documented and represented in academia.

Pérez (1999) noted that some Chicana/o writers fail to step away from the very colonial imaginary against which they rebel. Literary scholar Contreras (2008) described in her work, Blood Lines: Myth, Indigenism, and Chicana/o Literature, that Chicana/o literary indigenism creates cultural narratives of Indian-ness that rely most prominently on mythic accounts. She further suggested that in relying on mythological narratives, Chicana/o scholars fail to recognize the contemporary realities of Native people in the United States, as well as in Mexico...to reconsider the historical and social erasure of the Indian in the mestizo and yet recognize the ways, rhetorical and material, in which mestizos obliged that erasure. (p. 40)
For many Chicana/o scholars, the term *mestizo* is used to demonstrate the combined European and Amerindian descent. Chicana/o nationalist discourse contends that Mexican-ness is defined through the *mestizo*, with lineage stemming from the ancestral homeland of the Aztecs known as *Aztlán*. As a result of the assimilationist efforts brought forth by the Mexican state, *mestizos* are assimilated to Western aspects of their identity. Contereras (2008) strongly affirmed that many Chicana/o scholars fail to adequately critique *indigenista* discourse and romanticized ideas of indigenous peoples continue to be perpetuated. Second-generation Mexican youth tend to be labeled as Chicana/o even though they do not adopt this identity; this is because the term resulted from the participation of young adults during the 1960’s Chicana/o movement (Jacobs, 2006).

Merging indigenous peoples into the Chicana/o Aztec paradigm is deeply problematic because not all Chicana/os have Aztec indigenous roots (Contreras, 2008). The history, identity, and worldviews of second-generation Mazalteca/os within Mexico and the U.S. cannot be overlooked and intertwined into the identity development of Chicana/os, this further taints and marginalizes indigenous peoples. Therefore, an examination of the cultural capital of Zapotecs is prominent in understanding the worldviews of Mazalteca/os. Similarly, an examination of colonization and its impact on Zapotec ideologies and the role of the Mexican state in defining indigenous identity are necessary in order to comprehend second-generation Mazalteca/o identity development.

The Zapotec’s Pre-Colonial Empire

Providing a review of historical, geographical, and regional aspects of Zapotec culture is critical in this research because it examines the cultural capital of the Zapotecs and the role that they played in shaping Mexico’s history. Before the arrival of the Aztecs, the Zapotecs already had a long history of settlements. Although the Aztecs are glorified and seen as the main group
that define indigenous history for Mexico and the Chicana/o community, many indigenous groups such as the Olmecs, Mixtecs, Toltecs, and Mayas had already established empires prior to the Aztecs. Batalla (1996) stated that Zapotecs of Oaxaca were amongst the first indigenous people in Mexico. The Zapotec civilization began in the late 6th Century B.C.; Zapotec culture was influenced by the “mother culture,” the Olmecs (Batalla, 1996). According to Schmal (2006), the term Zapoteco comes from the náhuatl Tzapotécatl meaning “settlement of sapote,” and the name was given to them by the Aztecs due to the abundance of sapote--soft edible fruit--in the territories of the Ben’Zaa or “people of the clouds.” However, the Zapotecs do not constitute a culturally homogenous group. Ethnographers group them into four distinct branches: Central Valley (including Isthmus Zapotecs), Northern, Western, and Southern (Serrano et al., 2002). Within the interior of each group exist different cultures, histories, and languages (Serrano et al., 2002).

During the pre-colonial era, Zapotecs lived alongside Aztecs, but they were their own distinct group of people. In fact, they contributed to Aztecs through their pottery, writing and calendric system. According to Navarro (2005), Zapotecs were astronomical observers and had their own calendar system. Caso (1965), a Mexican archeologist that specialized in the study of Monte Alban and Oaxaca’s culture, argued that ancient Oaxacans invented the 260-day ritual calendar and devised its intermeshing with the 365-day solar one (p. 932). It is possible that what Teotihuacán sought at Monte Alban was intellectual rather than commercial. Monte Alban may have taught Teotihuacán how to measure the sun easily and accurately. The earliest documented appearances of calendric dates are carved upon the stone monuments of Monte Alban centuries before those of Teotihuacán.
Prior to the arrival of the Aztecs, Zapotecs had established their empire in the Valley of Oaxaca. According to Gay (1881), Oaxacan historiographer who published *Historia de Oaxaca*, “los zapotecas tuvieron su asiento principal en el valle de Oaxaca, desde donde se extendieron por el Norte y Nordeste hasta encontrar a los mixtecas y chimaltecas, y por el sur hasta las costas del Pacífico” (p. 29). Gay (1881) continued, “por el oeste tuvieron poco ensanche, pues hallaron un obstáculo primero en las montañas que limitan el valle mismo, pobladas de mixtecas, y más adelante en las otras montañas pobladas de chatinos” (p. 29). Fray Francisco Burgoa (1997) wrote that Zapotecs established at first in the valley of Teotitlán where they had their own chiefs and priests up until the conquest. Likewise, Burgoa (1997) affirmed that a lake surrounded the valley, where the waters of rivers Atoyac, Jalatlaco, Huayapan, Tlacolula, Mixtepec, and others, which had no outlet to the south, were stopped in their courses. Archeologists maintain that the valley’s largest settlement during the Preclassic period (CA 1500-500 BCE) was at San José Mogote (Al-Shimas, 1922). This historical site is situated in the valley of Etla, Oaxaca, the municipality of the northeastern towns in the valley of Oaxaca; Santo Tomás Mazaltepec belongs to this municipality. The first known forms of pottery, adobe, and Zapotec hieroglyphic writing have been excavated from there. Etla is considered to be the oldest permanent agricultural village in the Oaxacan valley.

Burgoa (1997) wrote that at the end of the Rosario phase (700-500 BC), Zapotecs at San José Mogote had abandoned the site and moved to Monte Alban. This became the Zapotecs

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4 My translation of the quote is as follows: “the Zapotecs had their principal base in the valley of Oaxaca, from where they spread to the North and Northeast to find the Mixtecs and Chimaltecs, and south to the shores of the Pacific” (Gay, 1881, p. 29).

5 My translation of the quote is as follows: “The west had little widening because they found an obstacle--first the mountains bordering the valley itself, populated by Mixtecs, and later in other populated mountains, Chatinos” (Gay, 1881, p. 29).
socio-political and economic center (Burgoa, 1997). In fact, Zapotecs were one of the first indigenous groups to develop a powerful state system (Batalla, 1996). Much like Tenochtitlán for Aztecs, Monte Alban became the capital city of the Zapotecs. According to Ortiz (2006), one of the oldest examples of writing in Mesoamerica can be seen through the danzantes, or dancers, hieroglyphics at Monte Alban. It flourished for 13 centuries, from 500 B.C. to 850 A.D. (Ortiz, 2006). At one point, there was an estimated population of 40,000 inhabitants (Ortiz, 2006).

Moreover, it was planned from the start as a ceremonial center. In fact, the Zapotec name for Monte Alban was Dani Biaa, meaning “sacred mountain” (Ortiz, 2006). They established a growing city-state with a parochial political culture and a theocratic superstructure, where priests were the most powerful nobility (Navarro, 2005). Chavalas (2004) stated, “A market flourished in Monte Alban, where imported goods such as obsidian, pottery, salt, lime, and other items were bartered” (p. 422). Zapotecs profited greatly from trade relations developed with the Olmec civilization during the formative period, and with Teotihuacán between 500 and 100 B.C.E. (Navarro, 2005, p. 36). They had an extensive relationship with the people of Teotihuacán (Caso, 1965). However, by 900 C.E., Monte Alban fell to Mixtecs from the north. When the Aztec-Zapotec war broke out in Oaxaca, Monte Alban was no longer the central political sphere. At that point, Zaachila-Yoo (1400-1521 A.D) predominated. Al-Shimas (1922) wrote, “Zaachila Yoo, called by Aztecs Teotzapotlan, was the national capital. It was founded about the year 1390 A.D. by the able ruler Zaachila I” (p. 197). Aztecs arrived to Oaxaca with the intention of taking Zaachila Yoo under their control. In 1486, during Zaachila III’s kingship, Aztecs were defeated by the Zapotec-Mixtec alliance at Zapotec fortress of Guiengola, and this is marked as the first major Aztec defeat (Al-Shimas, 1992). However, Ahuitzotl, Aztec ruler, invaded and gained his revenge on Zapotecs in 1494 A.D., when Aztecs destroyed both Mitla and Zaachila Yoo. Aztecs
attacked the Zapotecs and slayed several of their warriors. In order to ensure that Mixtecs didn’t come to aide their allies, Aztecs destroyed Mitla, Mixtec’s empire. Al-Shimas (1922) described this event:

Ahuitzotl directed his forces against Mitla and not encountering a vigorous resistance set fire to the city, leveled its houses with the ground, and put a great part of the inhabitants to death… the sanctity of her temples was desecrated by the slaughter of her priests and the demolition of her gods. (p. 200-201)

In the course of trying to colonize Oaxacan territory, Aztecs also attempted the destruction of a Zapotec worldview by massacring thousands of people and destroying their religious artifacts. They attempted to destroy Zapotec society altogether hoping to infiltrate their land for the purpose of being seen as the central figures of power that defined Mexico.

Conflict amongst the two groups continued. Once again, Mixtecs and Zapotecs joined forces to expel Aztec armies from the region of Tehuantepec, Oaxaca. Together, Zapotecs and Mixtecs took control over the region of the isthmus. Al-Shimas (1922) wrote:

Ahuitzotl, seeing that he could not take Guiengola, that his army was rapidly melting away, as well from the ravages of war as because of the diseases which decimated its ranks, and that force accomplished nothing, instructed Moctezuma, commander-in-chief of his armies, to open negotiations, proposing piece to Cosijoeza upon advantageous terms… Ahuitzotl offers you as a pledge of his enduring friendship the hand of his fairest daughter, Aztec Princess Coyolicatzin. (p. 207-208)

The alliance was sealed with the marriage between Cocijoeza and Coyolicatzin, which resulted in Zapotecs, Mixtecs, and Aztecs signing a peace treaty. They gave birth to Cocijopii, who was named the king of the Zapotec region of Tehuantepec. Shortly after, Zapotecs and Mixtecs ended
their peace treaty and war broke out, but the war was interrupted by news of the entrance of the Spanish conquistadors under Hernán Cortés into the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán. A more powerful attempt of colonization against Zapotecs occurred, and this time it had devastating effects on their society.

**The Scars of Colonialism**

In his book *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, postcolonial theorist Young (2001), defined colonization as the subjugation of one group by another. Colonization was a brutal process through which two thirds of the world experienced invasion and loss of territory, accompanied by the destruction of political, social, and economic systems which led to external political control and economic dependence on the West. Colonizers were able to gain economic and military dominance over indigenous peoples through colonialism.

Around 1524, when Spanish conquerors arrived at Oaxaca, they found the Valley and the Sierra regions at war. In the Valley, Mixtecs were engaged in hostilities with Zapotecs (Chance, 1978). According to Taylor (1972), Spanish settled in Oaxaca in search for gold. Hernán Cortés sought the title of the Marquis of the Valley of Oaxaca from the Spanish crown (Taylor, 1972). In 1525, when they entered the Sierra, Dominican priests arrived with them. While the Spaniards sought to take control of Zapotec, Mixtec and Chinantec villages and gain political and economic power in the Sierra region, Dominican priests began the process of proselytization. Under the rule of the Spanish Crown, they traveled around the Sierra to organize the founding of the first congregations. Moreover, they built the first churches in the region, initiated classes of catechism, and administered the sacraments (Cruz-Manjarrez, 2013, p. 46). Thus, the process of colonization began with the introduction of Catholicism. The church played a prominent role in shaping Zapotec ideologies.
However, a common misconception of the Spanish conquest is that they entered indigenous territory, forced indigenous peoples to adopt their ways of life and the presumed colonized conformed. According to Yannakakis (2007), a historian on the social and cultural history of colonial Latin America, Zapotecs fiercely resisted Spanish impositions. In fact, the Spanish would not have been as successful as they were without the help of indigenous conquistadors who aided them in their conquest of Mexico (Matthew, 2007). For Oaxaca in particular, the Tlaxcaltecas played a major role in the “civilizing” and evangelizing projects of the Spanish colonizers (Yannakakis, 2007). Tlaxcalteca families were used to model Christian communities and were used as examples of “civilized” peoples (Yannakakis, 2007). However, due to the Zapotecs’ rebelliousness against the conquest and colonial rule, the Spaniards believed that these unruly locals had never wholly resigned themselves to Spanish domination (Yannakakis, 2007). Indigenous peoples did not play the role of victims; instead, they actively struggled to shape the new order, conditioning the Spaniards’ colonial projects (Lamana, 2008). Zapotecs did not end their “idolatrous” ways either; they continued to practice their rites and rebelled when the Spanish tried to stop them. From an indigenous perspective, there was little contradiction in the simultaneity of native and Christian practice. Vigil (1998) purported that the Spanish made every effort to get rid of “Indian” religion by destroying temples, idols, or anything related to indigenous religious practices. Moreover, clerics burned over four hundred thousand manuscripts; “they reasoned that burning the books would somehow rub out the spiritual ideology in ‘Indian’ minds and hearts” (Vigil, 1998, p. 58). Yannakakis (2007) wrote that in San Francisco Cojones, Zapotecs demanded that the priest return the artifacts that had been taken from them. As a warning sign, they took two hostages and signaled that intervention in the community’s affairs would not be tolerated. As a result, the Spanish garrotes fifteen men
from Villa Alta, their corpses were drawn and quartered, and their remains were displayed around the town as a warning to would-be idolaters and rebels (Yannakakis, 2007, p. 242).

Battles went back and forth; however, with the assistance of the Tlaxcaltecas, who provided an enormous boost in manpower and weaponry, the Spanish were able to gain control. The war between Zapotecs and their neighbors and rivals, Mixtecs, also contributed to the eventual military success of Spaniards and their indigenous allies.

Although the alliance with the Spanish enabled Tlaxaltecas to gain a temporary privileged position through constant legal and rhetorical work, they always had to justify that they were different from the regions indigenous population in order to be respected (Yannakakis, 2007). In return for their military and colonizing services, they were promised land rights. Tlaxaltec captain Juan de Tascala, who aided Aztecs in the conquest of Latin America, “received half of the town of Citala, or Zinquinala, in encomienda, or entruts, from Pedro de Alvarado” (Matthew, 2007, p. 112). However, just as quickly as privileges were granted, they were taken away. Matthew (2007) explained, “very early the indigenous conquistadors’ precarious position in the colony was apparent. They were forced to work alongside local natives panning gold and performing manual labor, work that was never expected of Spaniards” (p. 113). Once the Spanish stole the decrees that secured the rights and privileges of indigenous conquerors, racial hierarchy was used to override their relationship. Tlaxaltecas as well as all other indigenous allies during the conquest were seen as nothing more than local “Indians.”

Indigenous peoples were identified through language, someone who spoke Nahuatl, or another language besides Spanish was an “Indio” (Matthew, 2007). Spaniards viewed “Indians” as idolatrous, barbaric and uncivilized, but they were also the only exploitable resource in the region through cheap labor. It was during this time period that the term “Indian” was first created
and defined. It was used as a derogatory term that implied a negative connotation. Those who were called “Indios” were dehumanized and positioned to a low social status. The racism and discrimination that indigenous peoples endured continues to be reproduced in modern day Mexico and the United States.

As a result of colonialism, hegemony over indigenous people’s identity was practiced, and race became a marker of inclusiveness or exclusiveness. Colonization had a profound influence on the identity of indigenous Oaxacans and on Mexico’s stratification structure. A caste system was developed that placed indigenous at the bottom of the social and racial ladder. Indigenous identity was socially constructed by the Spanish and deemed socially stigmatizing. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon (1963) wrote that the colonist fabricated and continues to shape the colonized subject. Spaniards used race as a symbol of difference and inequality, thus making indigenous people challenge their own perceptions of themselves and established definitions of their collective community. Batalla (1996) further explained that, “before the European invasion, each of the peoples who occupied the territory that today is Mexico had a particular, clearly identified social and ethnic identity…the Indian is the product of the establishment of the colonial regime” (p. 76). The term “Indio” is not used in indigenous communities, where people associate with their respective regions; for example, people from Santo Tomás Mazaltepec call themselves Mazalteca/o or they choose to identify with the ethnic identities of Zapoteco, Oaxaqueño, but never as “Indios.” The caste system played a prevalent role in the formation of social classes defined primarily by race. Therefore, one drop of Spanish blood conferred entitlement as privileged elites.
Nineteenth Century Mexico: Reaffirming Spanish Lineage

Years after the Spanish invasion, Mexico attempted to re-envision the racialization efforts that the Spanish introduced. Indigenous peoples were seen as an impediment to the state’s nation-building project. They were not viewed as an ideal image of Mexico’s present nor future. Therefore, an assimilation effort was the means through which Mexico attempted to solve their “Indian problem” (Batalla, 1996). The conquest was a violent invasion that had been a permanent marker of relations with indigenous peoples (Batalla, 1996). Furthermore, Batalla (1996) stated that, although Mexico denies racism, segregation and discrimination against indigenous peoples still persists. The caste system is deeply embedded in Mexican society and has inflicted many social, economic, and political effects, such as economic globalization, agrarian commercialization, and issues pertaining to land rights. Despite achieving independence from Spain, the internal colonial structure continued in Mexico. In addition, the colonizing project of the West was never abandoned, thus, the vision of the state’s future even after the Spanish left has been contextualized within a Western framework.

One of the major events that played a critical role in the ethnic identity construction of Zapotecs was the Indigenismo movement, a political movement that gained prominence in the early twentieth century in Latin America. Its goals were to modernize Mexico and vindicate the area’s indigenous peoples after centuries of abuse and marginalization (Coronado, 2009). According to Beals (1967), Mexico’s Indigenismo movement had at least three lines of development: the romanticist, based on the view that Indian culture could be restored to its pristine state; the rehabilitationist, which focused on the economic and political realms; and finally, the assimilationist, which sought to incorporate Mexico’s indigenous peoples into the national mainstream through direct educational and other interventionist work. Terms such as
mestizaje, or mixed race, resulted from the Indigenismo movement. Mestizaje, called for the indigenist project to ‘educate’ and ‘redeem’ the “Indian” (García, 1973). However, this movement was used to form a stereotypical image of indigenous identity. Furthermore, León-Portilla asserted, “the official praise of the Indian heritage did not translate itself into forms of action which would really make possible the development of the indigenous communities” (as cited in Poddar, Patke, Jensen, & Beverley, 2008, p. 549). José Vasconcelos and Manuel Gamio, proponents of modernization and mestizaje, affirmed that the greatest threat to Mexican post-revolutionary nation building was the ostensible lack of racial and linguistic unity. In the Survey Graphic published in May 1924, Gamio wrote that he was organizing “systematic efforts towards racial understanding, towards a fusion of the different cultures, towards linguistic unification and economic equilibrium… we are convinced that it is only in this way that we may hope to achieve a coherent national consciousness, a true patria” (Poddar et al., 2008, p. 558).

Therefore, assimilation efforts resulted in encouraging indigenous communities to speak Spanish in order for indigenous peoples to have a common language with the rest of the population. However, this has only served to mark indigenous languages as invaluable and unimportant. It has not served to increase cultural understanding amongst diverse communities within Mexico (Kovach, 2009).

The Indigenismo movement devalued indigenous people’s culture and language. In order to be deemed a “modern” society, Mexico did away with anything that constituted “backwardness” this resulted in the exclusion and silencing of indigenous communities in state affairs. Batalla (1996) argued that indigenismo and mestizaje are nothing but an upper class letrado, or written discourse, whose purpose was to justify the continued dominance of the mestizos. Historian Knight (2004) echoed this same perspective when he stated, “indigenismo
thus represents yet another non-Indian formulation of the ‘Indian problem’; it is another white/mestizo construct… a part of a long tradition stretching back to the conquest” (p. 77). The ideological exaltation and image of the “Indio” was made visible under state control, wherein the state did not allow indigenous communities to freely practice their culture and language. This can be seen through the way in which elite tourist promoters packaged, marketed, and sold an image of the Mexican nation, presenting indigenous people as objects (the objects of study, the objects of education), but never as subjects, a role that only corresponded to the mestizo (Gnecco & Ayala, 2011, p. 19). In fact, when the excavation of the Templo Mayor in the Zócalo of Mexico City was carried out, Enrique Florescano (as cited in Contreras, 2008) pointed out that the functionaries in charge of the excavation and presentation of the artifacts to the public tried to transform “a living part of the beliefs and religious practices of the indigenous population into an archeological document, ignoring the cultural practices and community beliefs of living indigenous subjects” (p. 86). Again, indigenous peoples were always devalued. Furthermore, indigenism took form as an artistic trend during the post-Revolutionary period. Diego Rivera’s murals offer the most prominent example of a Mexican indigenous susceptibility in Mexico. The artist’s murals can be seen on the halls of the National Palace and the Secretary of Public Education Building. They offered to the public “astounding depictions of the agricultural, social, and technological sophistication of a once-dominant civilization” (Contreras, 2008, p. 25). The Mexican state commissioned to have the murals painted in an effort to demonstrate past greatness and incorporate indigenous subjects into the modern mainstream so that they could move beyond their “backward” existence. Although artistic projects that were led by Rivera and other muralists did mark an everlasting image of desirable characteristics of indigenous cultures,
they were sought out by the Mexican state to show that “the only good Indian is the mythic Indian” (Contreras, 2008, p. 25).

Similarly, archeological zones and commercialization of indigenous handicrafts have been designed to stimulate growth and tourism. The “Indian” has always been depicted as exotic, used merely as external consumption. Mexico uses indigenous culture as a commodity, advertising their ruins and pyramids as popular sites for attraction. This leads to sacred sites and objects not being respected when they are seen as merely goods to trade (“Negative Socio-Cultural Impacts,” n.d.). Likewise, the need to adapt to tourist demands can cause artists to change traditional designs in order to satisfy customers’ taste, causing loss of the items spiritual value and quality (“Negative Socio-Cultural Impacts, n.d.). Indigenous communities in Mexico have remained principal victims of an official rhetoric, often excluded and disenfranchised. Both colonialism and the Indigenismo movement of Mexico have played a critical role in attempting to shape indigenous identity. The ideologies that resulted from these practices continue to be used to discriminate against indigenous peoples including Mazalteca/os and relegate them to a low social status. Mazalteca/os are indeed Mexican citizens but are not fully treated as such in Mexico because the concept of citizenship and identity in Mexico has been ideologically fused with the notion of the mestizo national community and identity (Batalla, 1996, p. 15). Although second-generation Mazalteca/os did not live through these movements or times in history directly, it still plays a prevalent role in their willingness to deny or reaffirm their indigeneity. As a diaspora, they often encounter new and old forms of exclusion.

**Being Indigenous in the 21st Century**

Racism and discrimination of Indigenous peoples is not an issue of the past, in fact, the aftermath of Mexico’s assimilationist project continues to affect indigenous communities of the
21st century. Likewise, as more indigenous peoples from the state of Oaxaca find their way north, particularly to California, they are confronted with other obstacles that they did not face back home (Fox and Rivera-Salgado, 2004). Indigenous Mexican migrants are incorporated into the labor market at the lowest level (urban service for the Zapotecs). Compared to the mestizo population, indigenous migrants arrive in the United States with greater disadvantages. For example, some are monolingual in their indigenous language or speak Spanish poorly, often their economic conditions are more difficult and they are subject to racism by both Mexicans and Americans (Zabin et al., 1993). Although in new terrain, indigenous communities continue to be marginalized.

Indigenous migrants are culturally and socially different from the mestizo migrants that make up the majority of the population in the enclaves in which they settle (Rivera-Salgado & Rabadán, 2004, p. 153). According to Cruz-Manjarrez (2013), indigenous Mexican migrants experience discrimination at the hands of non-Indigenous Mexicans. This is an influential factor in the identity formation of Mazalteca/os. Therefore, theorists agree that identity exists, not solely within an individual or category of individuals, but through difference in relationship with others (Rivera-Santiago, 1996). Mazalteca/os have been marginalized not only in Mexico but also by their own paisanos in the U.S. Rivera-Salgado and Rabadán (2004) described the difficult experiences of Zapotecs in the U.S. when they stated, “indigenous people find themselves excluded-economically, socially, and politically-both as migrants and as indigenous peoples. Economically they work in ethnically segmented labor markets that relegate them to the bottom rungs” (p. 4). In Los Angeles, feelings of exclusion, racism, family disintegration, and pressures to assimilate are so strong amongst second-generation Mazalteca/os that some have experienced what Vigil (1998) described as ”multiple marginality.” Derogatory terms such as
“oaxaquitos” (little Oaxacans) and “indios sucios” (dirty Indians) are often associated with being indigenous. Furthermore, indigenous migrants who do not speak English well and often also do not speak Spanish, experience intense language discrimination on a daily basis at the workplace and also in their interactions with legal, educational, and health institutions (Fox and Rivera-Salgado, 2004).

As mentioned previously, language becomes a marker of “indigenous identity” and leads to inequality, discrimination, and exploitation. Speaking an indigenous language, categorizes individuals as indigenous or non-indigenous. Language as a legal marker of indigenous identity was first introduced through the Mexican census, better known as Instituto Nacional Estadística, Geografía e Informática in the 1920s (Diaz-Polanco, 1991). Race and the ability to speak a native tongue classified individuals as “Indian.” According to Diaz-Polanco (1991), race was abolished in the census by the 1930s, but language was not. This created the stereotypical notion that indigenous peoples are only those who speak an indigenous language. Numerous indigenous peoples have lost the ability to speak their native tongue due to the discrimination they face from their mestizo counterparts within Mexico and the U.S. Many can associate with the Zapotec poet, Natalia Toledo’s experience of leaving their hometowns in Oaxaca and experiencing discrimination and feelings of exclusion:

Nunca sentí esa diferencia: mi vida antes transcurrió en mi lengua, con la gente que me rodeaba de afecto, sin nada extraño…Ya cuando me traslado a la ciudad de México empecé a tener más problemas porque hablaba un español muy precario, impreciso, tenía que pensar bien antes de hablar porque su sintaxis es muy distinta de la del zapoteco.

Entonces me refugié un tiempo en el silencio, me dije: mientras no sepa bien no me voy a exponer. Porque era niña, y los niños son a veces muy crueles, y se podían burlar de mí,
This experience that Toledo described in an interview with Deny Extremera San Martín from *La Ventana* (2006) is much too common for Zapotecos. This bias affects their longing to continue to practice their language. Furthermore, the use of the term “dialect” to describe indigenous languages marks it as inferior. According to Mexico’s 2010 census data, the overall percentage of indigenous speakers in 2010 was reported at 34.2% (450,419), a drop from 35.3% (452,887) in the 2005 census count (INEGI, 2010). The drop may not adequately reflect the reality of the language loss in the country since the 2010 census was changed to accommodate people who spoke an indigenous language three years of age and older compared to the five years of age and older data from 2005.

In Natalia Toledo’s poem “To T.S. Elliot” (2005), the speaker notes:

¿Guná nga ni bisanané binniguenda laanu? ¿xí yuxi guie bisaananéceba laanu?
Ca xiiñe’ zutiipica’ diidxa’ guní’ jñiaaca’ne zazarendaca’
sica ti maní’ ripapa ndaani’ gui’xhi,’ ne guiruti zanna tu laaca’.

Guirá beeu nuá’ neza guete’ (p.1)

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6 My translation of the quote is as follows: “I never felt this difference: my life before went by my tongue, with the people who surrounded me with affection, without anything strange... Since I moved to Mexico City I began to have more problems because I spoke very poor, inaccurate Spanish. I had to think carefully before speaking because its syntax is very different from Zapotec. I took refuge in silence for a while, I said, until I know, well, I’m not going to expose myself. I was a child, and children are sometimes very cruel, and could make fun of me, of my accent, my way of constructing sentences. I lived that consciously, at the age of eight” (Toledo, 2006, p. 1).

7 Translation of the poem is as follows:

“¿Cuáles son las raíces que prenden, qué ramas brotan de estos cascajos?/ What are the roots that turn, which branches sprout from these gravel?/ tal vez soy la última rama que hablará zapoteco/ maybe I’m the last branch that will speak Zapotec/ mis hijos tendrán que silbar su idioma/ my children will have to whistle their language/ y serán aves sin casa en la jungla del olvido./ and be
While asserting her identity through Zapoteco, the speaker is well aware that not many indigenous people are still able to speak their native languages, and for second-generation Mazalteca/os, identifying as indigenous does not necessarily include the ability to speak the mother tongue. This is best exemplified through the data collected in the 2010 INEGI, or Mexican census. According to INEGI 2010, 15.7 million people of three years or older self-identified as indigenous, which equals to 14.9% of the total population measured in 2010. Of those who identified, 6.6 million stated that they spoke an indigenous language, while a majority 9.1 million did not (INEGI, 2010, p. 67). Through this we can infer that those who choose to identify as indigenous do so because they have an ethnic consciousness of themselves as indigenous peoples and manifest their identities in multiple ways. Since the U.S. census is tailored to categorize people through race, it is difficult to demonstrate statistical data reflecting indigenous diasporic identity. In his analysis of the 2010 census data, Kissam (2012) stated that Mexican or Guatemalan indigenous immigrants can self-identify on the U.S. census by stating their ‘race’ as American Indian. They are then instructed to write in the name of their ‘enrolled or principal tribe,’ but they do not have tribal designations, so instead they are supposed to know to ignore this and put in their ethnic/language group, such as Zapoteco. This lack of explanation causes many individuals to select ‘some other race,’ thus resulting in a tremendous undercount of indigenous peoples in the U.S. Kissam (2012) estimated that there are about 1.8 million indigenous Latina/os who are first and second-generation immigrants from Latin America.

For second-generation Mazalteca/os, the issue of defining their identity is complex. Cruz-Manjarez (2013) described that the children of Zapotecs do not develop nor experience a homogenous identity; they are engaged with and responding to different social, political, and homeless birds in the jungle of oblivion.” (Toledo, 2005, p.1).
cultural concerns that shape their sense of identity in new and different ways. Moreover, second-generation youth grow up in a multicultural society that allows them to affiliate with more than one ethnicity and recognize the hybrid nature of their identity. Therefore, their identity could best be explained through “third space” theory. Bhabha (1994) described this space as a mode of articulation, a new way of describing a productive, and not merely as a reflective space that engenders new possibility. Furthermore, he stated that the hybrid “third space” is an ambivalent site where cultural meaning and representation have no ‘primordial unity or fixity’ (Bhabha, 1994). In Hybrid Identities: Theoretical and Empirical Examinations, Smith and Leavy (2008) explained that hybrid identities are not assimilated or altered independently, but instead, elements of cultures are incorporated to create a new hybrid culture. Furthermore, as cited in Smith and Leavy (2008), the creation of a hybrid identity is a “twofold process involving the interpenetration of the universalization of particularism and the particularization of universalism” (Robertson, 1992, p. 100). The local and the global interact to create a new identity that is distinct in each context.

Second-generation Zapotecs have developed a “third space” where their identity is constantly shifting. Cultural identity is not static; rather, it progresses through developmental stages during which an individual has a changing sense of who he or she is, perhaps leading to a rediscovered sense of themselves. Kaufman (1985) asserted, “identity is the essential core of who we are as individuals, the conscious experience of the self-inside” (p. 3). Unlike the second-generation, first-generation Mazalteca/o immigrants in the United States have a much more grounded understanding of their identity. First-generation Mazalteca/os are more likely to identify directly with their hometowns or with the ethnic category Zapoteca/o. This is because they can more closely identify with their homeland as their place of birth. However, youth who
were not born in their parents’ indigenous communities have experienced a lifestyle that enables them to identify with more than one ethnicity. Second-generation Mazalteca/o experiences are critical to document because they bring voice to a fast emerging group within the United States. As such, it is important to understand the history and listen to the experiences of this community. Second-generation Mazalteca/os who were interviewed for the purpose of this research are constantly renegotiating their identity; however, through their participation in this process they have recreated what it means to be indigenous and have adopted an identity that challenges the hegemonic definition of what constitutes indigenous identity. Moreover, they have redefined it to reflect their changing cultural landscape.

This chapter aimed at providing a review of the way in which indigenous identity was socially constructed by the Mexican state in order to understand the factors that have played out in the indigeneity of second-generation Mazalteca/os. The study is set to examine the way in which this community has responded, challenged, accommodated, or manipulated the stereotypical notion of indigenous identity. The following chapter discusses the process that was taken to conduct interviews with second generation Mazalteca/os across the Mexico-U.S. border.
Chapter 3: Indigenous Methodology: Discussing our Experiences and Worldviews

Indigenous peoples are often researched, but much of the research that is compiled and presented to academia is written through the voice of the colonizers and through a Western paradigm of research. In the *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*, Denzin, Lincoln, and Smith (2008) described how Westerners, because they are in a position of power, have shaped what is deemed as “true” and legitimate knowledge. Likewise, Battiste and Henderson (2000) stated that worldviews that differ from Eurocentric thought are relegated to the periphery, if they are acknowledged at all. Indigenous communities have been represented to the world through the perspective of the colonizer. Smith (1999) described this further:

“[Imperialism, history, writing, and theory] are words of emotion that draw attention to the thousands of ways in which indigenous languages, knowledges, and culture have been silenced or misrepresented, ridiculed or condemned in academic and popular discourses” (p. 20). It is important to acknowledge the voices of indigenous peoples and to make the larger community aware of indigenous epistemology. Meyer (2008) wrote that every individual speaks through their own epistemology and their own understanding of the world. As an indigenous researcher, I incorporated research methods that allowed the participants to be actively engaged in the research process. My goal was to create a transformative research environment that would provide the participants with a safe space to reflect on their experiences and empower them to bring their voices to the forefront. Therefore, methodological triangulation was implemented as part of the data collection process. According to Denzin (1978), the logic of triangulation is based on the premise that “no single method ever adequately solves the problem of rival causal factors. Because each method reveals different aspects of empirical reality, multiple methods of observations must be employed” (p. 28). Thus, I conducted one-on-one interviews as well as a
focus group session that gave the participants the opportunity to consider their responses individually and as a collective.

Another principal goal of this research was to provide a space where second-generation Mazalteca/os could talk about their identity through their own terms. Moreover, it sought to examine the factors and challenges that youth face in retaining their culture and identity. The research sample should not be considered representative of all second-generation Mazalteca/os in Los Angeles or Mexico, because it is a small sample. However, it does reaffirm that there is a growing need to examine this community.

Sample

The study population for this project consisted of six young male and female adults between the ages of 18 and 25. Through snowball sampling, six second-generation Mazalteca/os were asked to participate in this study, with three residing in Los Angeles, California and three in Mexico. The research participants were recruited through referrals from family members. All interviews were conducted in the preferred language of the participant, Zapoteco, Spanish or English, and were audio and video recorded; however, to protect the rights of the participants consent forms were issued and human subject protocols were followed. Everyone had a connection with the town of Santo Tomás Mazaltepec because at least one of their parents had been born and raised there. Members were asked to attend a group meeting that served as an informational session, two one-on-one interviews, and a focus-group session that was scheduled after everyone had completed the individual sit-downs. Furthermore, I continued to follow-up with them after the interviews for additional information as needed. Pseudonyms are used throughout this thesis to protect the privacy of the participants. Although the participants were from similar age groups and had familial connections to Santo Tomás Mazaltepec, they had very
little else in common. Nestor is a 20-year-old college student, born and raised in Mexico City. Although at a distance from their hometown, his family is actively engaged in the *pueblo*. They frequently travel to their hometown to visit relatives and attend cultural events and festivities. They have always maintained a close relationship with the community of Mazaltepec. The second interviewee, Pablo, is a 25 year old who was born and raised in Sinaloa, Mexico. He currently lives in Mexico City with his cousin and owns a small business. His father is from Santo Tomás Mazaltepec, Oaxaca and his mother from Sinaloa, Mexico. Finally, Alicia is 22 years old and was born in Mexico City; she grew up in the city but currently lives in Santo Tomás Mazaltepec with her husband and two sons. Her father is from Santo Tomás Mazaltepec, and her mother is from Sierra de Juarez, a Mixtec town in the valley of Oaxaca. Unlike Nestor and Pablo, Alicia is the only participant from Mexico who returned to live in her parent’s hometown after having grown up in Mexico City. All of the interviewees stated that their families migrated to Mexico City in the mid 1970’s in search for jobs and economic growth. The participants from Los Angeles included: Marcela who is 21 years old, born and raised in East Los Angeles. She is currently working at an elementary school and attending the local community college. Araceli is 19 years old and was born and raised in Boyle Heights, Los Angeles, California. She is a full-time student attending a California university. Angel was born in Oaxaca City, but was raised in Los Angeles. He came to Los Angeles as the age of five and is currently a 24-year-old truck driver. While some of them have maintained ties to their parents’ hometown communities, others have not. Despite this, they expressed different ways in which they continue to embrace an indigenous identity even though they do not have a direct connection to their ancestral homeland.
Methodology and Methods

My research adopted an indigenous methodological approach in collecting data. Indigenous methodologies are those that permit and enable researchers to be who they are while they are actively engaged as participants in the research process (Weber-Pillwax, 2001). Furthermore, this research rejected the prevailing orthodoxy that scholarship could or should be “neutral” and “objective.” Data for this research comes from formal and informal interviews with the participants. Long interviews were used during a one-on-one setting. McCracken (1988) argued that the long interview is one of the most powerful methods in the qualitative armory due to its ability to take us into the life world of an individual (p. 9). Therefore, it becomes a tool through which the research participants can give testimony to their lived experiences. I wanted the research participants to be able to consider for themselves who they are in terms of their Mazalteca/o identity and to give their own definitions of their identities. As the researcher, I guided the interview process by posing specific questions for them to elaborate on. I then followed up with the contributors and asked them to participate in multiple interviews. Such follow-up was critical in order for them to have an ongoing process of reflection. Likewise, after all members completed the one-on-one session, a group interview was conducted. Focus groups were also used and designed to give individuals the opportunity to gather, reflect, and elaborate on topics posed by the researcher in a group setting. According to Morgan (1988), focus groups “provide direct evidence about similarities and differences in the participants’ opinions and experiences” (p. 3). It provided the interviewees an opportunity to have a free-flowing discussion and to share their stories and experiences with each other. What allowed me to be able to incorporate a focus group as part of this research was the fact that I was familiar with all the participants. During the time that I was in Mexico conducting research, all of the participants
were in Santo Tomás Mazaltepec with their family members for the Christmas holiday, which presented the opportunity to arrange for a group session. A conversational method was incorporated as part of the focus group process. Kovach (2010) best described it as a dialogic approach to gathering knowledge that is built upon an indigenous relational tradition. In doing this, I sought to create the research as a space that could be transformative for all parties involved. During the group session, I shared my personal experience of growing up as a second-generation Mazalteca in Los Angeles. At times, the conversation steered away from the prompt questions, but participants had the opportunity to approve transcripts and remove or revise any information they did not feel comfortable sharing in the transcript. Knowledge was thus co-created by the researcher and the participants, which helped to strengthen the overall research project and provide a space where counter-narratives could be created.

The insider/outsider positionality plays a prevalent role in my research. Merton (1972), who is amongst the earliest scholars to have examined the role of the insider/outsider, characterized an insider as a scholar who is equal to the participants they are studying. In other words, “an insider is someone who has been socialized in the community, and endorses the values, perspectives…and knowledge of his or her community and culture and is perceived by people within the community as a legitimate community member” (Chavez, 2008, p. 475). Someone who is an insider studying members from their own community is more likely to have background knowledge that gives them insight into matters that may seem obscure to others (Merton, 1972). Similarly, Denzin, Lincoln and Smith (2008) stated, “there exist other intangible/nuances that are best transmitted and understood when shared experiences, epistemologies, and the relationship to both are evident between the observer and the observed” (p. 90). In contrast, an outsider has a “structurally imposed incapacity to comprehend alien
groups, statuses, cultures, and societies” (Merton, 1972, p.15). In order to ensure that relational accountability and respect for protocol were implemented, I communicated back to everyone regarding the research and the interviews that would be used as part of the analysis. I allowed them to provide feedback on the written work I produced. Furthermore, I plan to share the final draft of the research project with all contributors. This is especially important because indigenous voices in research are often written and interpreted by scholars incorrectly, which leads indigenous peoples down the same path of internalized oppression.

The knowledge gathered in the project was thematically grouped. Findings were presented as condensed stories, which provided context and voice of the participants. Counter-storytelling was a crucial framework in this project because it concurs with the belief that the use of narratives and storytelling posit the voices and worldviews of disenfranchised people. Furthermore, it argues that “race (hate), de facto segregation and terrorism continue to have a profound impact on one’s way of knowing (epistemology) and one’s relationship to what there is to know (ontology)” (Woodson, 1990, p.86). An individual’s epistemology is, therefore, shaped by historical, social, political, and economic experiences. Yosso (2006) argued that there is knowledge in lived experiences, and counter-narratives allow this to be presented. Second-generation Mazalteca/os present valuable forms of knowledge in regards to their indigenous identity. They are a generation that continues to acknowledge and embrace their roots and worldviews. Through the personal testimonies documented in this research, the participants are giving their own critical understanding of their identity, and by doing so, they are challenging the majoritarian narratives that omit and distort the histories and realities of oppressed communities (Yosso, 2006, p. 10). One misconception presented regarding second-generation indigenous peoples in the United States is that those who are born in the United States become assimilated
into the “American” mainstream and an “American” way of life. These beliefs suggest that by being raised in the U.S., second-generation Mazalteca/os lose their cultural, social, and political relationships to their homelands. In actuality, however, for many youth, their way of seeing and perceiving the world is tied to their indigenous ancestry. The range of contemporary critical theories argue, “it is from those who have suffered the sentence of history-subjugation, domination, diaspora, displacement that we learn our most enduring lessons for living and thinking” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 172). In order to provide a meaningful process for the participants, I chose methods that they would benefit from and which would provide a space for reflection, counter-storytelling, and healing. In sum, I hoped to bring light to Mazalteca/o indigenous epistemology and utilize their voices and testimonies as a form of resistance and empowerment to the Zapotec diaspora.
Chapter 4: The Identity Development of Second-Generation Mazaltecas/os Across Mexico and the U.S.

Examining the way in which the state has defined who is “indigenous” is critical in understanding why second-generation Mazalteca/os embrace or struggle with their indigeneity in Mexico and the United States. In order to get a better sense of the way in which second-generation Mazalteca/os interpret and define their identity a multi-sited study was conducted to explore the differences and similarities in the process of identity construction that emerge in the urban cities of Los Angeles and Mexico. Other scholars that have also focused on Zapotec indigeneity include Stephen (2007), Manjarrez (2013) and Fox and Rivera-Salgado (2004). However, my work specifically examines the community members from the town of Santo Tomás Mazaltepec. I traveled to Mexico to conduct interviews with second-generation Mazalteca/os whose parents had left their rural pueblos and moved to Mexico City; likewise I interviewed second-generation Mazalteca/os in Los Angeles, to understand how their Zapotec worldviews remain relevant in a new space and time; in the urban city and in the 21st century.

My hope in this chapter was to allow participants to tell their own stories and to give them voice as much as possible to avoid misrepresentation. In terms of their indigeneity, the participants had various interpretations of their Zapotec identity. For example, one of the participants associated strongly as Zapoteca, while another participant stated that he identifies primarily as Mexican. The remaining four participants identified as Oaxacan.

The six interviewees included: 1) Twenty-two year old Alicia, born and raised in Mexico City but currently residing as a housewife in Santo Tomás Mazaltepec, 2) Nestor, a twenty-one year old college student living in Mexico City, 3) twenty-five year old Pablo, a small business owner from Mexico City, 4) Marcela, a twenty-one year old college student from East Los Angeles 5) nineteen-year old, college student, Araceli from Boyle Heights, Los Angeles and 6)
twenty-four year old, truck driver, Angel born in Oaxaca City but raised in Los Angeles since the age of five. Of the six people that I interviewed, the only one that spoke Zapoteco was Alicia. Nestor and Pablo spoke Spanish while the three participants in Los Angeles: Marcela, Araceli and Angel spoke English and Spanish, but felt most comfortable expressing themselves in English. Despite not being able to speak the Zapotec language the young adults from Los Angeles still affirmed an indigenous identity. To distinguish the similarities and differences in the way that the children of Mazaltecos from Mexico and Los Angeles define their identity the analysis is broken up into three sections The first section, *The Children of Mazalteca/os in Mexico and Los Angeles* explores the ways in which male and female Mazalteca/o young adults, from the ages of 18-25, define their identity. The second section, *Zapotec Epistemology* seeks to demonstrate how the transference of knowledge passes on common values within Mazalteco families. In particular, it shows how knowledge as taught through parents and elders, plays a paramount role in the identity development of second-generation youth. In a Zapotec community, elders are recognized as male and females who have earned the respect of their community through wisdom and harmony, moreover, those who continue to practice the culture, language and traditions of the pueblo. Finally, *Transnational Ties* examines the way in which community building through the sharing of resources, remittances, and connections with their community back home; a system that was organized through the first-generation, impacts the second-generation’s understanding of their role within the diaspora.

**The Children of Mazalteca/os in Mexico and Los Angeles**

In *Indigenous and Authentic: Hawaiian Epistemology and the Triangulation of Meaning* Meyer (2008) stated that indigenous peoples are all about place, “you came from a place, you grew up in a place, and you had a relationship with that place” (p. 219). The circumstances that
indigenous peoples face outside of their respective hometowns strongly impact their identity development. First-generation Mazalteca/os who were born and raised in the town of Santo Tomás Mazaltepec are more likely to identify as Mazalteca/os because of the personal connection they have with their hometown, one of the few remaining towns in the Etla district to continue to practice their language, cultures, and traditions. Moreover, second-generation Mazalteca/os who were born and raised in the urban cities of Mexico and Los Angeles are expected to adhere to a new culture and a new environment, they are encouraged to assimilate into the mainstream culture and adapt a new language and lifestyle. Indigenous youth in particular find themselves the victims of social inequalities that are reproduced by racist structures along the Mexico/U.S. border. Similarly, they are forced to constantly negotiate and renegotiate their identities to accommodate living in a new space. This strongly influences whether they choose to identify as indigenous or not. However, being born and raised in the city, outside of one’s respective pueblos (towns), does not necessarily mean a lost connection to our ancestral homeland.

For example, in my interview with Alicia, a twenty-two year old housewife, born in Mexico City but currently residing in Santo Tomás Mazaltepec for the past nine months with her husband and two sons, stated in Tizá, a variant form of Zapoteco used in Mazaltepec,

*Narrí naná bín Zapoteca, naarí nanàbiín lushitna né te ka mietitna, matnà ne patná vanescán cá valortnaá. Loò naná bímaà loy patnà ne matná mnakán tee ca biín niácua lanrún niopná kadicá bdulò shisítna.*

I am Zapoteca because everything that I am and everything that I know originated from my parents, who are Zapotecos. My parents taught me what they were taught by their parents; as a kid I would hear the same cuentos, or stories that their parents told them.
For Alicia, her identity is directly linked to her worldview; she does not see one being without the other. Furthermore, her desire to answer this question in Zapoteco shows that her identity is also reflected through her language, being able to speak Zapoteco is prevalent to her indigeneity. By stating her response in Zapoteco, Alicia not only challenges the way in which knowledge is transmitted, but also relays the importance of maintaining Zapoteco in the diaspora. At the same time she shapes the form and language in which her story is told. Moreover, her use and repetition of the pronoun I, asserts agency over the construction of her identity and her life.

Similarly, when I asked twenty-four year old truck driver, Angel, from Los Angeles, who was born in Oaxaca City but brought by his parents to Los Angeles at the age of five and has continuously resided there, he stated in English, “When people ask me where I am from I always say that I am from Mexico, when they ask which part, I say Oaxaca because my parents are from there.” Although Alicia and Angel were not born or raised in Mazaltepec, they both referenced an Oaxacan identity. For many youth, there is an ongoing willingness to remain connected to their parents’ communities and to transplant those communities into new spaces. As elaborated by Meyer (2008) “land is more than a physical place. It is an idea that engages knowledge and contextualizes knowing” (p. 219). In essence, even though they did not necessarily grow up in their parents’ ancestral homeland the worldviews of second-generation Mazalteca/os continue to encapsulate a connection to this space. Meyer (2008) continued, “knowing with land should help you find out more about your own self…it’s all about recognizing and finding how space influenced your thinking” (p. 219). Therefore, second-generation Mazalteca/os continue to be shaped by their parents’ native homeland.

However, this cannot be said for other Mazalteca/os who no longer see themselves as Zapoteca/os. When I spoke to Pablo, a twenty-five year old, small business owner in Mexico
City and asked him if he identifies as indigenous he responded in Spanish,

\[Yo no me veo como indígena, sé que mi papa es de Oaxaca, y que es orgulloso de ser Oaxaqueño, pero yo no me identifico como indígena, no hablo Zapoteco ni lo entiendo.\]

\[Yo me identifico como mexicano porque nací en México. He vivido en México toda mi vida, comencé mi negocio aquí y espero quedarme aquí mientras el negocio siga bien.\]

I don’t see myself as indigenous, I know that my dad is from Oaxaca, and he is proud of his Oaxaqueño culture, but I don’t feel like I am indigenous, I don’t speak Zapoteco or understand it. I identify as Mexican because I was born in Mexico. I have lived in Mexico all my life, I started my business here and I plan to stay here as long as the business keeps doing well.

Unlike Alicia and Nestor, Pablo affirmed a Mexican identity because Mexico is the place in which he was born, he also did not see himself as indigenous because he does not speak an indigenous language. There is also an issue of class that is necessary to mention because it plays a prevalent role in his identity. As stated by Rivera-Santiago (1996) issues related to social class status and employment opportunities are significant in the identity development process. The fact that Pablo is a business owner encourages him to assert a “Mexican” ethnic identity.

When asked why she believes that second-generation Mazalteca/os struggle to identify as Zapoteca/os Alicia stated,

\[Yo creo que tiene que ver con el racismo que se encuentra fuera de Oaxaca. En el D.F. uno se encuentra con gente que discrimina; la gente me llamaba ‘India.’ Crecer en ese ambiente fue difícil, porque los niños se reían de nosotros, tenía compañeras bien crueles, me miraban mal porque hablaba Zapoteco, usaba mi rebozo, y me peinaba de trenzas cuando iba a la escuela. Yo creo que es por eso que la gente deja de decir que \]
son de Oaxaca o de origen Zapoteco, nos tratan mal y automáticamente piensan que somos ‘Indios.’

I think it is due to the racism that we experience outside of Oaxaca. While in Mexico City I encountered so much discrimination; people would call me ‘Indita’ [a derogatory term used against indigenous women]. Growing up in D.F. was difficult because we would be made fun of by the other kids at school, I had very cruel classmates that would look at me weird because I spoke Zapoteco, wore my rebozo, shawl and trencitas, braids to school. I think that’s why people stop saying that they are from Oaxaca or of Zapotec origin because people treat us badly and automatically assume we are ‘Indian.’

Alicia’s response demonstrates that racism and discrimination are still common in Mexico and are often times experienced at the hands of Mexican mestizos, and non-indigenous Mexicans. Additionally, her experience shows that a stereotypical image of indigenous women continues to be perpetuated; women are degraded through the use of racially constructed, derogatory remarks such as “India.” Rohrer (2009) best described this in her work, Stereotyping in the Films of La India Maria where she argued that the filmic depiction of La India Maria “is a simplified, stable, clearly structured representation of a certain ethnic group, an image of the other” (p. 56). According to Rohrer (2009) the indigenous woman is viewed as someone who wears the conventional dress: a long skirt over an underskirt with lace borders a thick knitted belt, a satin blouse of bright colors and her hair is usually neatly braided with bright color ribbons (Rohrer, 2009, p. 56). This creates a negative perception of indigenous women’s identity and robs them of their agency. The depiction of La India Maria, serves as yet another example of the way in which indigenous women are viewed as a burden to Mexico’s society, stereotyping them as dumb, naïve, uneducated, and only good maids. Thus, Zapotecas constantly find themselves
negotiating between spaces that dismiss their identity. In Alicia’s case, it was at school where she felt like she could not be herself. Mazaltea/os attempt to survive and cope within a territory that marginalizes them and denies their existence. This is no different for the children of Mazalteca/os living in Los Angeles who have also dealt with similar experiences of exclusion, nineteen year old college student, Araceli, from Boyle Heights stated in English,

When you are in school you want to fit in, you do not want to be an outcast, so you do whatever it takes to fit in, for me this meant lying about my identity. When my Mexican friends at school would ask me where my parents were from I would tell them that they were from D.F. [Mexico City]. That’s what all of the other kids would say, so I never felt comfortable saying that my family was from Oaxaca. I denied it for a long time. I felt ashamed about lying, it scarred me a lot, and I felt like I was betraying my family. I feel really embarrassed about the person that I was before.

Araceli’s response was very honest. This is important because it is not always easy to talk about or admit experiences of shame. For many of us including myself, it takes having to go through a phase of denial to come to terms with our identity. Kaufman (1974) best explained this process in his work The Meaning of Shame: Towards a Self-Affirming Identity when he argued, “shame becomes inevitably bound up with the process of identity formation which underlies man’s striving for self, for valuing, and for meaning” (568). Moreover, Pahl and Way (2006) noted that peer interactions are influential in the identity development process because, feeling social support from peers give rise to high levels of security and, as a result, high levels of affirmation. Through Araceli we are able to see that her shame resulted from the awareness that she was

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8 During the Indigenismo Movement, the educational system was used as the principal place to transmit Mexico’s assimilationist efforts. Even after the movement ended, the hegemonic project continued.
different from other second-generation Latina/os, and the translation of that difference by her peers as “bad.” This led to negative feelings of her self-worth and a lack of acceptance of her identity; identifying as Zapoteca or Oaxaqueña would mark her as an outsider by her peers. In order to prevent this alienation she chose to identify with the more commonly used ethnic identity by second-generation Latina/os, “Mexican.” As Araceli and I discussed this topic I expressed that coming to know who we are and reaffirming our identity often involves a healing process, and being able to speak about this experience is part of that process.

Nevertheless, Araceli was able to approach her shame and eventually reached an achieved ethnic identity that was translated into a hybrid identity. When I asked her to elaborate on her identity development process she stated,

It was not until I reached junior year of high school that I started to reexamine my identity. One of my teachers gave us an assignment where he asked us to write about our identity, who we are and where our families were from. I was eager to learn about my history and roots, however, although I am proud to say that I am Zapoteca, I also embrace my Mexican and American identity. When I travel to Oaxaca, I’m reminded that I’m from el norte, when I’m in the U.S. I’m reminded that I’m Mexican, when I’m at home I’m reminded that I’m Zapoteca.

Araceli’s experience correlates with Phinney’s (1993) model of ethnic identity development, where she argued that individuals progress through three stages: unexamined ethnic identity, ethnic identity search (exploration) and achieved ethnic identity. As a child, Araceli found herself in the first stage of development where she did not have a clear understanding of her identity because of negative encounters that she experienced, however, during her high school years she began to explore her identity, she learned about her history and her roots, which
eventually led her to achieve an understanding of her ethnic identity. This translated into the use of all three ethnic labels and referents to define the boundaries of her identity. The longing to connect to more than one ethnic identity is common amongst second-generation youth in Los Angeles. For example, twenty-one year old, college student, Marcela from East Los Angeles said in English,

I see myself being Mexican, Oaxaqueña, because my parents are from Oaxaca, Mexico and also American because whether we like it or not we do hold aspects of the American culture. It is hard to just choose one; I think maybe I’m all three.

Cruz-Manjarrez (2013) elaborated on this notion by stating that the children of first-generation Zapotecs are more prone to identify with multiple ethnic identities because it derives from their recognition that they are positioned to more than one ethnic group and that they are culturally and socially competent in Zapotec, Mexican, and American cultures. However, as mentioned by Araceli, the use of these ethnicities is highly dependent on place and context. Moreover, the opinions voiced by community members, parents, peers, and other members of society influence when and where they identify with each particular ethnicity. For example, while in Oaxaca, Araceli is reminded that she is not fully Zapoteca, as such; she is influenced to choose an identity label as “American.” In contrast, in the U.S. she is more likely to adhere to the dominant ethnic identity of “Mexican” but in her home her family encourages a Zapotec identity. This demonstrates that second-generation Mazalteca/os are forced to constantly renegotiate their identities to accommodate the experiences of living in the United States.

**Zapotec Epistemology**

As I asked the participants questions pertaining to their identity I was able to see that those who choose to identify as indigenous do so because their understanding of their indigeneity
is very much grounded on a Zapotec worldview, seeing and understanding the world through an indigenous consciousness. The concept of worldviews has been described as mental lenses that are entrenched ways of perceiving the world (Olsen, Lodwich, & Dunlap, 1992). They are more than culture, even though the distinction between the two can be subtle; it extends to perceptions of space and time. I became interested in understanding who influenced the participants’ worldviews and how it has been taught to them. In order to consider this, we must first understand how Zapotec knowledge, or epistemology is transmitted within Mazalteca/o families.

Epistemology refers to the knowledge that Zapotec communities consider valuable and how community members communicate those values to generations that follow. Meyer (2008) best described this when she said, “epistemology is the philosophy of knowledge. It asks questions which we have long taken for granted: ‘What is knowledge? What is intelligence? What is the difference between information, knowledge, and understanding?’” (p. 230). In analyzing the data that I gathered from interviews, one of the commonalities that I found amongst second-generation Mazalteca/os in Mexico and the U.S. was that their identity formation is strongly linked to their epistemology and the values that are taught to them through female elders in their family, specifically their mothers or grandmothers. These women, helped foster an indigenous worldview amongst second-generation youth that encouraged them to reaffirm and reclaim their indigeneity. Some of the aspects of this worldview that were reflected in the interviews are a connection to Zapotec history through storytelling, transmitting values of humility and respect, and the use of language and textiles, or clothing.

Knowledge Through Storytelling

According to Smith (1999) storytelling is crucial to the cultural and political resurgence of indigenous nations, it serves as both a narrative of history and an attitude about history. Silko
(1981) further highlighted the importance of oral storytelling in Native American communities by stating, “storytelling among the family and clan members served as a group rehearsal of survival strategies that had worked for the Pueblo people for thousands of years” (xviii). Although it is important to acknowledge that storytelling allows for the transference of knowledge to be made from older to younger generations, it is also critical to discuss who is ensuring that this exchange is taking place. Through my interviews with Marcela and Alicia I was able to see how knowledge through the use of storytelling is transferred primarily from female elders in the family. As mentioned previously, the stereotypes held of indigenous women are that they are naïve, dumb and uneducated, but women play an integral role in identity development of youth through the education and wisdom they share. They serve to connect youth to meaningful events that took place decades ago, attesting to their abilities as indigenous women. By connecting youth to their ancestors they also partake in an act of resistance. For example, in my interview with Marcela from East Los Angeles she stated,

My grandmother loved to tell stories about growing up in the pueblo, she especially loved to tell the founding story of the pueblo and how our people were led to the hill that then became known as Mazaltepec because they were hunting deer. This is where the pueblo got its name “Mazaltepec” Mazal meaning cerro and tepec meaning venado, or ‘hill of deer.’

By remembering, telling, and sharing historical narratives Marcela’s grandmother is teaching her ancestral oral textual practices. Similarly, by telling the stories in Zapoteco and translating them into Spanish so that Marcela understands them, she demonstrates that changing the language in which the story is told does not make it less meaningful, instilling in her the role of storyteller and the importance of continuing with the tradition. Her grandmother served as an active agent in
influencing the direction that their stories would take. Hence, she voices the need to assert agency over their own stories and histories to ensure that they are not misrepresented. Thus, the use of storytelling and oral narratives functions as an essential mode of survival in the diaspora. This is significant because it enables youth to connect to their past and ancestry. Storytelling as a way of passing down knowledge was also reflected through Nestor, a twenty-year-old college student from Mexico City, he said,

_A pesar de que no crecí en el pueblo, mi mama siempre platicaba de él y nos contaba cuentos e historias cuando éramos niños. Ella siempre hablaba del pueblo con mucho orgullo, y esperaba que algún día yo pudiera ir a visitar el pueblo cuando estuviera más grande y tuviera suficiente dinero para pagar el camión._

Even though I didn’t grow up in the _pueblo_, my mom always talked about it and told us _cuentos_, stories about it when we were kids. She would always speak of the _pueblo_ with so much pride, and hoped that one day I would be able to visit the _pueblo_ when I got older and had enough money to pay for the bus.

Not only are the women educating youth about their culture and heritage through the use of storytelling, but they are also communicating the message that the children are part of these communities. His mom’s desire for him to visit the _pueblo_ demonstrates that she is an active participant in the identity development process. Furthermore, Nestor stated that he embraces an indigenous identity because he was taught about his history and culture from his mother.

While listening to Nestor’s response I couldn’t help but reflect and share with Nestor that my mother played an integral role in my own identity development. My mother was the storyteller in the family; she shared a lot about her life and growing up in the _pueblo_ more than my father, even though he also grew up in Oaxaca. She always hoped that one day I would visit
her hometown and walk the same streets she walked on as a child. I always felt a sense of responsibility to visit the pueblo and learn from the land and people of my roots. I traveled to Mazaltepec for the first time in 2014, when I first started collecting data for this thesis project. One of the main reasons that it took 26 years for me to finally visit the pueblo was due to poverty. My family of six could not afford to travel, however, I also feared that I would not fit in or meet the expectations held of me, but the more time I spent talking to community members, I realized that we shared similar values and beliefs. Being able to learn and engage with the Mazaltepec community empowered me to further embrace and affirm my indigenous identity.

**The Value of Humility**

Another form in which Zapotec epistemology is passed down from elders to the younger generation is through values. Alicia stated:

"lo más valioso que aprendí de mis padres y abuelos es ser una persona humilde y respetosa. Trato de inculcarle estos valores a mis hijos."

The most valuable lesson that I learned from my parents and grandparents is to be a humble and respectful person. I try to teach these values to my children.

**Interviewer:** ¿*Qué significa ser humilde?* What does being humble mean?

**Alicia:** *Ser humilde es reconocer que todos tenemos defectos, no porque uno este económicamente bien significa que es mejor que otra persona; es más que nada apreciar lo que tenemos y conformarnos con lo que tenemos. También se trata de respetar y tratar a todos por igual, porque todos somos iguales ante los ojos de Dios.*

Being humble is recognizing that we all have flaws and that doing well economically doesn’t make you better than someone else; it is appreciating what we have and
conforming to it. It’s also about respecting and treating everyone the same because we are all the same in the eyes of God.

Through Alicia’s response we can see that being humble must be extended outside of the family and should be a part of everyday interactions with people. Although this moral value can be associated with Christian ideas, it represents an ideology that is taught in Zapotec communities. The individual or the analysis of the individual doesn’t exist amongst indigenous peoples, since they are always tied to the community. Being humble helps foster community amongst indigenous peoples, it teaches the importance of community building and goes against Western notions of individualism. Moreover, in my interview with Angel, a twenty-four year old truck driver in Los Angeles he also expressed that his values reflect what he was taught as a kid through his parents. He stated,

My parents are very humble people, and they would always tell us that we need to be humble and respectful too, they would always say ‘nunca comas delante de la gente’ never eat in front of anyone. If you have a plate of food you need to share because you don’t know if the person sitting in front of you has eaten or if they may be hungry, you don’t ask if they want some food, you take your plate, split it in two and give them half.

Teaching humility transmits a message to the younger generation about a way of thinking and living in the world. In Zapotec communities youth are taught that the people around them should be treated as extended family, with respect and care, you learn that you are part of a larger collective. This sense of humility and respect as taught through elders in the family bears meaning to the younger generation because they choose to continue to hold on to those morals and to practice them in their everyday lives and encounters with people.
Language

As I continued to ask the participants questions related to their expressions of Zapotec identity many affirmed that another form of Zapotec epistemology is expressed through language and traditional clothing. Similar to the way in which Spanish is racialized in the United States, and viewed as an additional marker which signals a subordinate racial status on the racial hierarchy, within Mexico the ability to speak an indigenous language connotes an “indigenous” identity and positions an individual to the bottom rungs, marking them as “inferior.” Like Davis and Moore (2014) who argued that the Spanish language becomes intricately connected to Latino-ness, I argue that this is mirrored in Mexico as well. However, it is critical to note that second-generation Mazalteca/os have developed cultural expressions of themselves as indigenous peoples that are distinct from the standard definitions and expressions of “indigenous” identity in Mexico. These new identities thus challenge the political forms and identities that are part and parcel of the hegemonic definitions that have been constructed by the modern Mexican state since its emergence in 1917 (Kearney, 2000). Although a majority of the participants did not speak Zapoteco they still acknowledged that it is important in their lives and those of their family members because it was passed on from their ancestors. In ‘Being’ Hopi By ‘Living’ Hopi Redefining and Reasserting Cultural and Linguistic Identity: Emergent Hopi Youth Ideologies Nicholas (2003) noted, that even though second-generation youth do not speak Hopi they are redefining and reasserting their personal and social identities as culturally competent members of their community. This is best exemplified through Nestor’s response when he stated,

Creo que nuestra lengua es importante; creo que debe ser preservado y transmitido a las generaciones más jóvenes. Como deseo que mis padres me hayan enseñado su lengua, lo
quiero aprender, por eso cada vez que visito el pueblo lo práctico, he aprendido muchas palabras y frases cortas, tengo la esperanza de que un día voy a ser capaz de hablar con fluidez.

I think that our language [Zapoteco] is important; I think that it should be preserved and passed down to younger generations. I wish my parents would have taught me their language. I want to learn it, so every time I visit the pueblo I practice it, I have learned a lot of words and short phrases, I’m hopeful that one day I’ll be able to speak it fluently.

By acknowledging the importance of preserving Zapoteco Nestor illustrates that language continues to be an important aspect of identity. Likewise, his desire to learn the language demonstrates an effort to maintain the language within the diaspora. Similarly, Angel stated, “It’s really cool to know that our ancestors had their own language, sometimes when my parents get together with my tías, aunts and tíos, uncles they’ll start talking in Zapoteco, I don’t know a lot of people who can say they are trilingual, and my parents and my tíos are.” This sense of pride that Angel demonstrated in his parent’s and family members’ ability to be able to speak Zapoteco shows that language is still very much a part of his identity and worldview. This longing to be able to learn our mother tongue was something that bonded all of the participants who chose to affirm an indigenous identity. When the participants and I met for our focus group meeting in Mexico, we discussed creating a chat group over the internet where we could all exchange in this practice. Alicia offered to be our instructor since she was the only one in the group who could speak Zapoteco, and I agreed to teach them English. I extended the invitation to the participants in the U.S. and they were all eager to join us. This exchange represents a desire amongst us as second-generation youth to maintain our ancestral language, but at the same time to be able to transverse across linguistic borders. Through this, we were all able to participate in
the exchange of knowledge. This process allowed us to build a space where we could come together as a community.

**Zapotec Textiles**

A Zapotec identity and worldview is not only expressed through words, but also through textiles. In Mexico and the U.S. alike, second-generation Mazalteca/o men and women demonstrate their identity through the use of traditional Oaxacan clothing, made from *tela de manta*, white rough cotton fabric with colorful embroidery, but they also incorporate new aspects of their multiple identity by dressing it up with other “nontraditional” wear. Alicia from Mexico stated,

*A pesar de que vivimos en el D.F. muchas de las mujeres mayores en nuestra comunidad todavía se visten muy tradicional, con sus huipiles de manta, faldas largas, y rebozos.*

Despite us living in D.F. [Mexico City] many of the older women in our community still continue to dress very traditionally, with their *manta huipiles*, cotton, embroidered blouses *faldas largas*, long skirts, and *rebozos*, shawls.

Maya scholar, Otzoy (1996) stated that the use of the *traje* by women is a political action; by continuing to wear their traditional attires they are reminding the elite of the failure of their efforts to make them disappear. Otzoy (1996) wrote that the clothing was a form of “historical struggle, cultural, creativity, and political resistance” (p. 141). By wearing their traditional clothes women play a central role in maintaining Zapotec identity and worldview.

However, as noted by Alicia,

*La generación más joven, como yo, hemos modernizado la moda; las mujeres mayores no les preocupa, lo que quieren es que nos vistamos ‘decente.’*
The younger generation such as myself have modernized this fashion; the older women don’t mind, they just want us to dress ‘decently.’

Change is inevitable, and the older women in the city accept that the younger generation chooses to clothe themselves differently. However, by adding their own take on the traditional attire, the younger generation is also reaffirming their own sense of identity, taking an “old” form of fashion and making it “new” to fit their changing cultural landscape. This practice of incorporating new perspectives of wearing traditional clothing demonstrates that this is also a space where second-generation youth negotiate their identity. Araceli from Los Angeles stated, “When I was a kid my mom used to dress me in the huipil with a long skirt, but now that I am older and can dress myself, I like wearing the huipil with jeans I think it contrast very nicely.”

Modernity and globalization coupled with fashion have changed the way in which young women dress. Similarly Marcela from Mexico City stated, “I love buying rebozos, I have a ton, all different shapes and sizes, I like to use them as a scarf. Because they are extra-long I am able to tie them in different ways, and the vibrant colors really make my outfit standout.” In choosing to embrace Zapotec textiles in their own ways the women are allowing clothing to serve as a dynamic expression of their experience, both the changes and continuities result from acts of self-determination (Otzoy, 1996, p. 144).

In addition, men also express themselves through clothing through the use of guayaberas shirts made from manta, with less embroidery, huaraches, sandals and a morral, a heavy knitted bag. In my interview with twenty-five year old Pablo, from Mexico City he said,

_Cuando mis padres se van a Oaxaca por lo general regresan con regalos. Pero yo le pido a mi mamá que me traiga de vuelta unos huipiles y huaraches. Me gustan los huipiles de manta de allí porque son hechos a mano y de mejor calidad que los que se_
pueden comprar aquí en el D. F. Además, se pueden conseguir por un precio más barato, porque los que venden aquí en D. F. son traídos de Oaxaca.

When my parents go to Oaxaca they usually come back with gifts. I usually ask my mom to bring me back some huipiles and huaraches. I especially like the manta huipiles from there because they are handmade and better quality than the ones that you can buy here in D.F. Plus you can get them for a cheaper price, because the ones that they sell here in D.F. are brought from Oaxaca.

Although Pablo is the only participant of the six that I interviewed who did not identify as indigenous and instead chose a Mexican identity, he still participates in the culture through the use of the clothing. Furthermore, his understanding of the work that the weavers put into making the clothing makes him opt for clothes purchased directly from the fabricator. In my interview with Angel from Los Angeles he said, “I’m fascinated by the art and skill that goes into the morrales, and guayaberas de manta, I really like wearing the clothing, plus you need some good huaraches to complete the outfit, it’s nice to be able to show off our peoples skills and represent.” For Angel the clothing is an expression of himself as a Zapoteco and also an expression of the respect that he has for the artistic creativity of Zapotec weavers. Having this understanding of the artistic richness that comes with weaving enabled Angel to affirm his identity through the use of Zapotec textiles. Dress in this context serves a powerful, political, and cultural statement.

**Transnational Ties**

Another prominent example of the way in which second-generation Mazalteca/os reassert their identity is through the observance of transnationalism by their first-generation parents. Kearney (2000) described transnationalism as the processes by which immigrants forge and
sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement (p. 174). Although the second-generation Mazalteca/os are not directly involved in the giving and exchanging, seeing that their parents were active participants by: participating in remittances, forming ethnic enclaves across borders, and occupying transnational spaces strongly impacted their indigeneity.

In my interview with Nestor, from Mexico, he stated that due to growing up in a neighborhood in Mexico where six other Mazalteca/o families lived, the town’s culture was a big part of his life. He described this by saying,

_Aunque vivimos en la Ciudad de México, tenemos relaciones muy cercanas con el pueblo, mis padres y yo ayudamos a organizar las fiestas patronales mediante el envío de dinero, alimentos, y la preparación de la artesanía._

Even though we live in Mexico City, we have close ties to the _pueblo_, my parents and I help organize the town’s patron saint festival by sending money, food, and preparing crafts.

Support through remittances is an example of the way in which members of the community are able to continue to assist each other across borders. Angel provided another prominent example when he stated,

My parents would always send money to my grandparents, while they were alive, and also assisted the community with projects, I remember this one time that my parents participated in the renovation of the town’s church and sent money so that they could repair it.

Angel’s response enables us to see that remittance serve not only as a form of assisting direct family members with personal expenses, but also to improve their hometowns. This practice of
collective work is based on the principle of *comunalidad*, a term that comes from Oaxaca’s indigenous context and is best explained by Jaime Luna, an Oaxacan anthropologist. He stated, *Comunalidad* is a way of understanding life as being permeated with spirituality, symbolism, and a greater integration with nature. It is a way of understanding that Man is not the center, but simply a part of this great natural world. It is here that we can distinguish the enormous difference between Western and indigenous thought. Who is at the center- only one or all? The individual, or everyone? (Meyer & Alvarado, 2010, p. 24).

This exchange that their parents participate in is important for the younger generations’ ethnic identity development and shaping of their worldviews. It relays an ideology that goes against a Western mode of thinking, they are taught that growth and development comes from within the community through *ayuda mutua*, mutual help. Alicia added to this by stating,

*Recuerdo cuando mi abuela falleció, todas las personas que viven aquí que eran del pueblo nos ayudaron con los gastos del funeral, todo el mundo se fue al velorio, y todas las mujeres nos ayudaron a preparar alimentos y bebidas para darles algo de comer a las personas que vinieron a despedir a mi abuela, esto realmente significaba mucho para mi familia y para mí, esto me hizo comprender que la familia se extiende más allá de la casa.*

I remember when my grandmother passed away, all of the people living here [Mexico City] that were from the *pueblo* helped us with the cost of the funeral, everyone went to the *velorio*, vigil and all of the women helped us prepare food and drinks to feed the people who came to pay homage to my grandmother, this really meant a lot to my family and to me, this made me realize that family extends outside of one’s immediate home.
The support that the community members offered to Alicia’s family had a meaningful impact on the way she perceived her “self through others.” She realized that she was part of a larger collective, which motivated her to identify as Zapoteca. Moreover, the continued practice of *gzwon*, or Guelaguetza, meaning mutual exchange of services, is a form of collective work that continues to be prevalent in the diaspora. Everyone is expected to work for the community and help each other. Further, the connection that Alicia felt to her hometown through these experiences encouraged her to move back to Mazaltepec, where she built a home and currently lives with her husband and two sons.

Another example of building community is through the forming of ethnic enclaves across borders. Angel, from Los Angeles commented on this practice when he stated,

Last year, my cousin and I drove to New Jersey where I was able to experience the “fiesta del pueblo.” It was really cool! They had it in a town hall and the place was packed. In the morning everyone attended church and we had a mass to honor the patron saint. It was a smaller version of the actual town’s fiesta but it was really nice.

Through this we are able to see that the cultural and political work of Mazalteca/os is transnational in context. According to Kearney (2000) “they construct novel forms of political organization and elaborate cultural expressions of themselves as indigenous peoples” (p. 174). Contrary to the belief that assimilation results from the displacement of indigenous peoples, Mazalteca/os have built a space and a sense of peoplehood in which youth are able to participate. Although my thesis does not examine the Mazaltepec community of New Jersey, I believe that it is important to mention that a majority of the first-generation Mazalteca/o migrants who had originally settled in Los Angeles have moved to New Jersey where they have formed a much more solid grassroots organization, some of my own family members currently live there too.
Angel told me that roughly 300 Mazalteca/os from various generations have made New Jersey their permanent home. I was able to see through the participants’ responses that by being immersed in the ethnic enclaves their parents built these second-generation Mazalteca/os developed Zapotec worldviews. The second-generation Mazalteca/os interviewed understand themselves in relation to their collective experiences; forming their sense of identity from these foundational spaces.

The six interviews that were examined in this chapter allow us to see the different ways in which Zapotec youth express their indigeneity in the context of Mexico and Los Angeles. Although it is assumed that by living in urban cities the second-generation will become assimilated and acculturated they continue to hold on to their cultural roots. Whereas their identity as Zapotecos might be questioned due to their inability to speak the indigenous language their desire to learn the language, wear Zapotec textiles as a form of empowerment and resistance, and participate in communal practices demonstrate ways in which youth affirm their identity and expand the meaning of Zapotecness. Equally important, the identity development of second-generation Mazalteca/os and the decision to embrace a Zapotec, Oaxacan, Mazalteca/o identity is very much linked to Zapotec epistemology and worldviews that are transferred through the elders, mothers, grandmothers, and community members. By reflecting on their lived experiences and voicing their own narratives the youth simultaneously express an effort to reconstruct what it means to be indigenous in an urban context and across borders.
Chapter 5: Conclusion: Why Does Indigenous Studies Matters?

Those covered faces descending from the mountain,/ as cactus of straight spine/ with fresh air on their backs/ those faces of black yarn,/ Anemic eyes,/ clots in time/ What is to be indigenous?/ Here is my list:/ To have a language for the birds,/ for the whistling air,/ a language to speak with the earth,/ To discuss life,/ To charm in the village festivals,/ A language to laugh at the awkward stranger,/ Silent shadows,/ Ivy on cowardice neck/

What is to be indigenous?/ Being indigenous,/ Is having a universe,/ and not giving it up.

---Natalia Toledo, 2002

As depicted in Natalia Toledo’s poem, an indigenous identity results from living, practicing, and embodying aspects of indigenous ethnic culture. Through qualitative methods, this thesis sought to examine the ways in which racial, ethnic, and linguistic conceptions impact indigenous identity and to determine if any similarities or differences exist in the way that second-generation youth define their indigeneity across borders. My initial hypothesis claimed that second-generation Mazalteca/os are adopting a hybrid identity to express their indigeneity, and most youth choose to identify as Oaxaqueño. This research found that the hypothesis was correct because five out of the six participants that I interviewed chose to identify with the ethnic term, Oaxaqueño. Due to the discrimination that remains present for Mazalteca/os and other Oaxacans a pan-indigenous and statewide identity as Oaxaqueño has emerged. However, it is important to mention that interviewees in Los Angeles were more prone to identify with more than one ethnicity. They saw themselves belonging to multiple ethnic categories and reaffirmed that they were not only Oaxaqueño but also Mexican and American. Once again, shedding light to their ability to be competent in all three spaces.
The existing literature on indigenous identity development concludes that second-generation youth are constantly renegotiating and questioning their identity, a process that is highly complex and contradictory. In *Children of Oaxacan Zapotec Immigrants in the United States*, Cruz-Manjarrez (2013) examined the ideas, experiences, and social processes that shape the construction of ethnic and racial identities of the second-generation Zapotecs, specifically from the Yalalag community. I believe that *Reclaiming Our Identity: Second-Generation Mazalteca/os across Mexico and the U.S. / Tá Rtilatnaá Tu Acabetná Dicá Natnaá: Tiupa Scuá Generación té Mexico né Estados Unidos* adds to Cruz-Manjarrez’s work because it not only examines the experiences of second-generation Zapotecs in the contexts of the U.S. but also provides a multi-sited analysis by examining the identity development of Zapotecs in Mexico City. An analysis that is necessary in order to understand how identity is shaped through context.

Similar to Cruz-Manjarrez, a qualitative research approach was critical in this study. Indigenous methodologies were implemented with the goal of centering the voices of the participants. For many of the participants, including myself, this space became a place where we were able to reflect on our identity and roots, and connect with other Mazalteca/os who have also dealt with similar experiences as our own. It translated into a space where we were able to create a community. Research can also be a space for healing and transformation. The focus group session that I had with the participants was critical for this process to take place. It was a space where we were able to bond and talk freely about our experiences as second-generation Mazalteca/os. We were able to reflect, share our struggles, our dreams, and voice our concerns. The need for future research on the identity development of Zapotecs is critical. Indigenous communities often get weaved into the popular label as Latina/os. Consequently, indigenous peoples become trapped into the categories of Hispanic and Chicana/o, terms that rob indigenous
youth of their agency. It is necessary to create awareness of the diversity that exists within the Mexicana/Chicana/Latina/o masses. Scholarship on this population is necessary in academia because of the growing number of Mazalteca/os in these spaces. Although I provide a critique of Chicana/o Studies within this thesis, I would like to mention that it is in this interdisciplinary department that I am able to produce this work and discuss a topic that is not only relevant to me but that speaks about the lived experiences of indigenous youth. My hope is that as Chicana/o Studies continues to grow and expand more courses are designed to address indigenous issues and communities from Mexico, Central America, and South America. Moreover, I believe that indigenous scholarship is also prevalent to the field of education, especially teacher preparation programs; educators should be informed about best practices for working with these youth.

Limitations of this work include the small data sample, only six participants were asked to participate in the study. Therefore, their experiences are not meant to be generalized or representative of all indigenous youth. Furthermore, the study focused only on second-generation Zapotecs from the regional town of Santo Tomás Mazaltepec, but there are many other indigenous groups within Oaxaca. Hence, the findings might not be reflective of other Zapotec indigenous experiences. Recommendations for further research include a gender and class analysis and the role that they play in the identity development process. Also, an examination of the third-generation and factors leading to their identity development is also necessary. As the gap between second and third generation Zapotecs widens, there is a need to examine how the experiences of the new generation compare and contrast with those of the older generations. Furthermore, we must examine the ways in which the third-generation define their identity and if they choose to identify as indigenous peoples what influences them to do so, can commonalities be drawn between the second and third generation experience? It is also important to continue to
investigate other forms in which second-generation Mazalteca/os remain connected to their hometowns in Oaxaca. Likewise, it is necessary to explore different contexts in which Mazalteca/os have developed transnational communities like New Jersey, where currently no research has been conducted. Finally, I hope that scholars and researchers continue to find ways to ensure that the communities they choose to study are not simply seen as research objects but as subjects that are viewed as equally important in the research process.
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Appendix A

1st Individual Interview

Could you please share your name, age, and how long you have resided in Los Angeles or Mexico City?
How would you describe your lifestyle in Los Angeles or Mexico City?
What is your job title, what is your income?
Where were you born, where were your parents born?
Do you have any children, if so, how many, how old are they?
When did your family emigrate to Mexico City or the United States, what year, why did they choose to leave their hometowns?
Do you like living in Los Angeles or Mexico City?
Have you noticed any changes in the city’s geography or population in the years that you have lived here? When did you start noticing these changes, in what specific years? What has changed and how?
Have you ever been to Santo Tomás Mazaltepec?
Would you like to go back to visit the town, would you consider living there?
How would you describe the culture and people of Santo Tomás Mazaltepec?
What are some things that are unique about the town of Santo Tomás Mazaltepec?
Are you involved in the town through community service, politics (town government) or other community events/commitments? If so, how?

2nd Individual Interview

How do you choose to identify ethnically, why?
When people ask “where are you from,” what do you say?
Do you identify as Zapoteca/o? Why or why not?
Do you think you are different from Oaxacan born Zapoteca/os? Why?
Do you think being born or raised in an urban city affects whether or not you identify as Zapoteca/o? Why or why not?
What do you think prevents or encourages people from identifying as Zapoteca/o?
Has your perception of your identity or ethnicity changed at all in the past?
How did you identify as a kid, how do you identify now, what do you think influenced these changes?
Do you practice the culture, traditions, and values of your ancestors? How?
How do you connect to your Zapoteca/o identity (clothing, spirituality, values/beliefs)?
Do you speak Zapoteco? If not, would you like to learn it?
Have you ever confronted a difficult situation in your life that you think was influenced by your ethnicity as a Zapoteca/o?
Do you think that there is still discrimination towards indigenous peoples today?
Do you think that racism exist in Mexico and the United States?
What is your worldview, are there factors that you think have influenced your worldview?
Have you been taught about Zapotec history and culture? Who has taught you?
Could you please talk about experiences that you have confronted that you feel have shaped you into the person you are today?
Focus Group Interview

What does the term ‘community’ mean to you? Do you see yourself as a member of a community?
Do you believe that living in an urban context has affected you as a person, why or why not?
Who has influenced your identity development (grandmother/grandfather, mother/father, sister/brother)? How have they influenced you?
Do your parents or elders ever talk to you about Santo Tomás Mazaltepec, what do they say about it? Could you share an anecdote?
Do your friends, peers, or classmates chose to identify the same way you do? Do you believe that those around you influence you to adopt a certain identity or ethnicity?
Do you feel that other Latina/os, Chicana/os and non-indigenous Mexicans understand what it means to be Zapoteca/o?
Do you feel like you have support from others when it comes to your identity?