



# Mestizo Center



**“To be racially mixed is to represent unity, to synthesize, and to integrate.”**



## The Journal of Mestizo and Indigenous Voices

The *Journal of Mestizo and Indigenous Voices* serves as the on-line publication outlet of the Center for Mestizo and Indigenous Research and Engagement, which focuses on the generation, transmission, and application of knowledge to serve the needs of Latino/Mestizo and Native/Indigenous communities in the Pacific Northwest.

Our work has implications for communities both nationally and globally. Consistent with WSU's land-grant mission, the objective of the center is to generate a strong program of research and service/outreach to illuminate the social, economic, educational, and political conditions of Latino/Mestizo and Native/Indigenous communities.

### *Call for papers!*

Anyone may submit an original article to be considered for publication in the *Journal of Mestizo and Indigenous Voices* provided he or she owns the copyright to the work being submitted or is authorized by the copyright owner or owners to submit the article.

[education.wsu.edu/mestizo\\_indigenous/journal.html](http://education.wsu.edu/mestizo_indigenous/journal.html)

## The Mestizo Perspective

By *Brian W. McNeill and Laurie “Lali” McCubbin*

As Stavans (2013) puts forth, a Mestizo is a person or culture born from different races, but it is something far bigger yet tangible: a state of mind. Among Latinas/os, ancestral histories are embedded in the Mestiza/o experience, the forging of several different racial and ethnic backgrounds, including Caucasian, African, and Indigenous bloodlines that have contributed to their unique identity and worldview. The Mestiza/o experience and the Indigenous backdrop are interrelated, and consequently form an essential basis toward a critical identity for many Latino groups. Ramirez (1998, 2004) refers to the Mestizo perspective as a dynamic, synergistic process developed from the amalgamation of peoples, philosophies, and cultures bridging the European continent and the Americas; the intermingling of physical, psychological, cultural, and spiritual ties between the Caucasian and the Indian.

For centuries racial crossbreeding was rejected in our society, and seen as a refutation of purity, as purity was synonymous with wholesomeness. As we reconsider this view, to be racially mixed is to represent unity, to synthesize, and to integrate (Stavans, 2013). Ramirez (1998, 2004) traces this perspective to the Mesoamerican peoples who came to represent a mix of European and Native Cultures and ideologies. These peoples often spoke two languages and served as cultural ambassadors or brokers. In this process of cultural and genetic “Mestizoization” the individual was viewed as an open system i.e., openness to diversity and experience made indigenous peoples receptive to other ways of life and philosophies. In their search for self-knowledge, every culture, person, worldview was believed to reflect the knowledge necessary to understand the mysteries of life and self. Consequently, diversity was accepted and



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incorporated into the self through both genetic and cultural amalgamation. Ramirez (1998) further illustrates this perspective in delineating the major differences between European and Mestizo Approaches to the social sciences and helping professions. The Mestizo approach includes a focus on the interdisciplinary, with frameworks that are devoid of notions of cultural, genetic, gender, or sexual orientation superiority. Communication and cooperation are valued with primary responsibility to the groups and communities one is working with, along with a deep personal commitment to solving social problems. What Burke (2002) describes as the attributes of a Mestizo Democracy include: The permeability of borders in contrast to the inelasticity of frontiers, a relational as opposed to a possessive rendering of morality and community, the transformation of relations of domination into relations of empowerment, and the engendering of hope in the struggle for justice for all peoples.

The psychology of the indigenous peoples of North America over centuries has also viewed the person as an open system as what is learned in interactions with others, the environment, and the universe helps a person achieve harmony with surroundings and to understand the meaning of life. The notion of interpenetration is also an integral part of the view of the person as information and knowledge from others is modified and incorporated, and influences the psychodynamics of the person. Additionally, the spiritual world holds the key to destiny, personal identity, and life mission, and is a source of power and knowledge. Finally, community identity and responsibility to the group are of central importance (Ramirez, 1998).

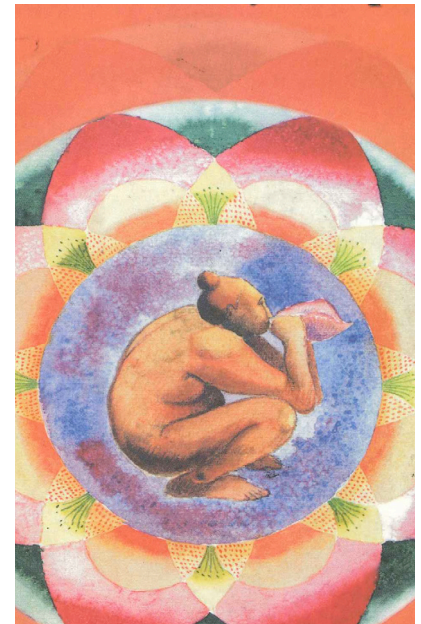
Similar concepts are demonstrated in the indigenous psychology of the multiethnic and multiracial Native Hawaiians, which emphasizes the examination of psychological phenomena



Indigenous is a reference to those populations, who, by historical origin, were the original inhabitants of a designated land or nation who include Native American/American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian populations. Being indigenous incorporates the embodiment of an earth-based spirituality—namely, the recognition that all life is interconnected, and that this awareness influences and guides responsible action toward appropriate moral and ethical behavior, and a commitment to the being of others (Cervantes, 2008; McNeill & Cervantes, 2008).

in ecological, historical, and cultural contexts, involving multiple perspectives and methods to create a comprehensive and integrated picture of the people. These concepts are grounded in the emphasis upon social relationships, and tied to the view that the individual, society, and nature are inseparable and key to psychological health. Unity or accord is paramount as mental health is viewed holistically encompassing body, mind, and spirit.

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Ties to earth and nature are more than simple place or geography, but embody multiple dimensions including the physical, psychological, and spiritual.

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Ties to earth and nature are more than simple place or geography, but embody multiple dimensions including the physical, psychological, and spiritual. What is referred to as Mana is the spiritual energy of life found in all things, as well as divine or spiritual power, and connects person, family, land, and the spirit world (McCubbin & Marsella, 2009).

populations (e.g., Duran & Duran, 1995), as well as the holistic framework for psychological health delineated by McCubbin and Marsalla (2010) for Native Hawaiians.

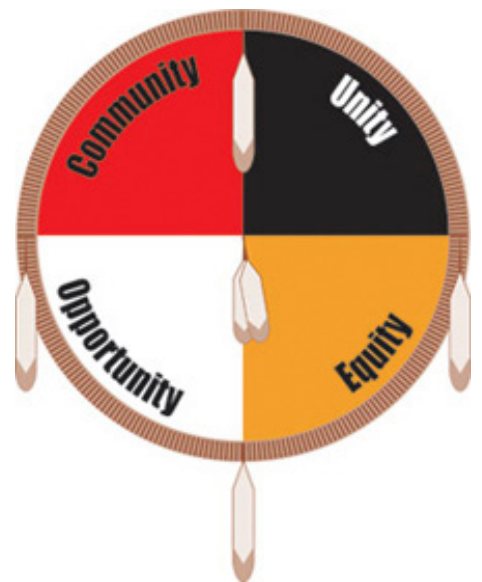
Perhaps it is the increasingly changing demographics in our culture or simply the reality of our multicultural and increasingly multiracial society that is influencing these movements. The *Curanderos*

## Ties to earth and nature are more than simple place or geography...

The influences and effects of these Mestizo perspectives have only started to be articulated, integrated, and understood by mainstream organized psychology (McNeill & Cervantes, 2008; Gallardo & McNeill, 2009, Comas-Díaz, 2006). Cervantes (2004, 2010), for example, describes the Mestizo perspective within the context of indigenous Latina/o spiritual principles with guidelines for therapeutic relationships, procedures, and goals including the integration of indigenous healing ceremonies. Emphasis is placed on the central role of spirituality, cultural or ethnic identity, and the power of ritual and ceremony in the counseling process. Similar work has been articulated for Native American

or Traditional Mexican Healers say that we are now coming full circle in recapturing traditional cultural practices post colonization that reflect the worldviews of our peoples. After all, our ancestors provided us with 2000 years of Evidence-Based Psychology Practice (EBPP), while we as contemporary practitioners have only 200! Nonetheless, it is somewhat reaffirming that the American Psychological Association (APA) now recognizes the crucial role of culture and common factors across all healing procedures in defining EBPP (APA, 2006). For many of us, these developments represent the reality and influence of our increasingly *Mestizo* nation.

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This article, along with all reference citations, can be found on the Center for Mestizo and Indigenous Research and Engagement website:

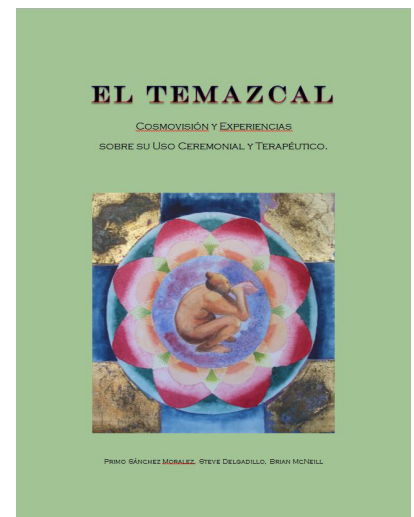
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## Books



# Recent and Ongoing Projects

## Funding Activities

We were recently awarded two faculty research awards in the following areas:

- Indigenous and Mestizo Leaders' Perspectives on Culture, Education and Health in Local Communities – \$9,000
- Examination of Resilience, Well-Being and Adaptation among Midlife Adults Transitioning to Aging – \$4,860

**El Temazcal: Cosmovision and Experiences about Its Ceremonial and Therapeutic Use**  
By P. S. Morales, S. Delgadillo, and B. McNeill (editors)

**Mexican Psychology: Indigenous, Colonial and Post Modern Contributions**  
By F. Ortiz, B. McNeill and L. Arrellano (editors)

*The NWATE Conference was a good opportunity to engage in research, scholarship, workshops, dialogue, and enrichment, while spotlighting the Clearinghouse on Native Teaching and Learning*



## 2013 NWATE Conference

We partnered with Francene Watson in coordinating the conference for the Northwest Association for Teacher Educators which took place at Washington State University May 30-31, 2013. The theme of the conference was Curriculum in Community: Language, Culture, and Partnership in Our Schools and included the following activities:

- Scholarship and research presentations across disciplines and from multiple perspectives related to schooling and education, especially connected to language, culture, and partnership.
- Keynote address by Dr. Anton Treuer, expert on Ojibwe history and language and author of [Everything You Wanted to Know about Indians But were Afraid to Ask](#).
- Workshop and dialogue circles exploring conference's central question, how do we build curriculum in community? Invited presenters were teachers and students from our Native community and highlighted foundational perspectives in and for teacher education.

- Enrichment and educative conference sessions featuring film Teachings of the Tree People: The Work of Bruce Miller with post-viewing discussion, and the option to tour a special exhibit featuring historic Nez Perce photos, shown through Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC).
- Opportunities throughout the conference to spotlight the Clearinghouse on Native Teaching and Learning so as to more powerfully identify educational resources for our local and regional community.