

# UNM MMUF FELLOWS RESEARCH PROJECTS



**TIMOTEO "TJ" L'ESPERANCE**  
Major: Political Science  
Mentor: Dr. Michael Rocca  
Poster Presentation: Healthcare Access for Latinx Immigrants and Their Families in the Albuquerque Area

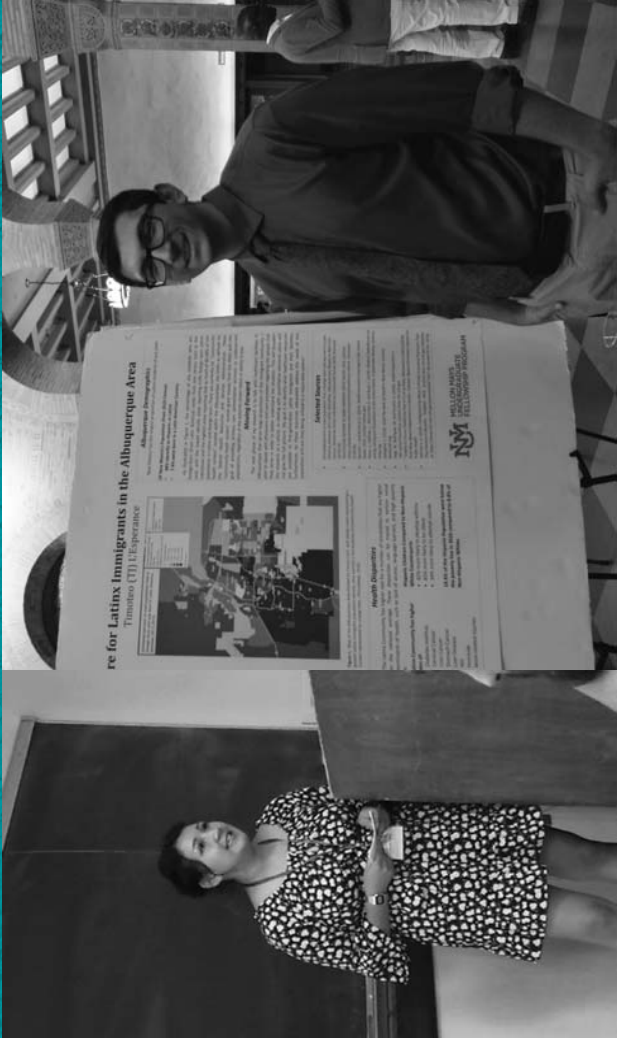
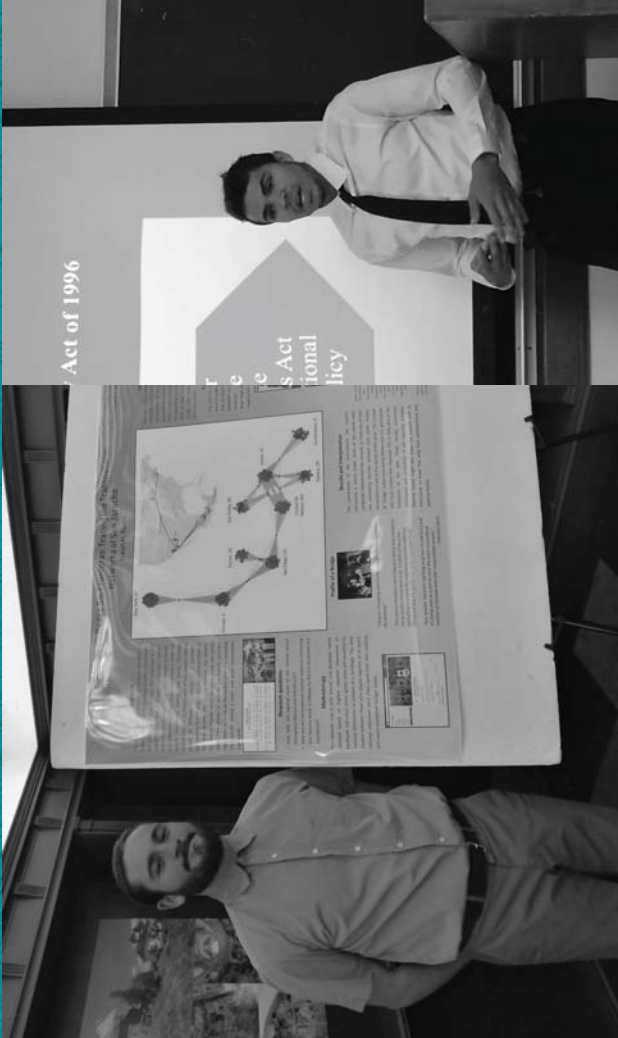
New Mexico has the largest percentage of Latinx individuals (48% in 2014) of any state in the US. According to the American Immigration Council, first-generation immigrants comprise 9.4% of the population of New Mexico, with 70% of them coming from Mexico alone. The current political climate in the US is hostile toward these first-generation Latinx immigrants. Both immigration and healthcare are extremely controversial issues that have each seen a significant number of policy changes in recent years. They interconnect in New Mexico often, because there is a conception people immigrate from Mexico and Latin America as a whole to the US seeking healthcare. The idea that immigrants create a burden on progressive healthcare policy, however these notions are unfounded and largely based in racism. Latinx individuals face a number of healthcare disparities compared to non-Hispanic whites; higher rates of asthma, tuberculosis, obesity, diabetes, infant mortality, and more plague in their communities. These healthcare disparities are often the result of social determinants like access issues and financial barriers. In this study, I aim to identify what healthcare resources are available to first-generation Latinx immigrants and their families; furthermore, whether these resources adequately address the needs of this population and are utilized to a reasonable extent.



**ISAIAH ROMO**  
Major: Latin American Studies  
Mentor: Dr. Irene Vasquez  
Oral Presentation: Redes Sin Fronteras: Tracing the Transnational Networks of Son Jarocho on the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands

My project seeks to understand the growing presence of Son Jarocho music in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands. Son Jarocho is a style of music that originated in the state of Veracruz, on the gulf coast of Mexico; it has its origins in African, Indigenous, and Spanish musical practices. I explore how the tradition of Son Jarocho has been shaped by the musical networks through which it flows, connecting an increasingly wider transnational community of musicians and music enthusiasts. Using a combination of network analysis, ethnography, oral history, and participant observation, I trace Son Jarocho's contemporary resurgence in cities such as Albuquerque, Tijuana, Tucson, San Felipe, El Paso, and San Diego through individual musicians and actors, social media/globalized technologies, and local community fandango celebrations. I analyze the structure and maintenance of the Son Jarocho network and how it connects to other factors such as migration and grassroots social justice movements. My study contributes to the knowledge of cultural production of Son Jarocho in the U.S. I draw on the theoretical influences and approaches of Mexican and Chicana-o ethnomusicologists and scholars, including Steve Loza, Alexandro Hernández, Randall Kohl, Antonio García de Leon, Rafael Figueroa, and Martha Gonzalez

# MMUF Conference Photos



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# 2018 MMUF WESTERN REGIONAL CONFERENCE

The Annual Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Western Regional Conference was held on November 2 & 3 at UCLA.

Our fellows attended the series of workshop on the first day at the conference. They learned how to prepare for the graduate application, what the student's experience is like in graduate programs, and the support programs for MMUF Fellows after graduating from UNM.

One hundred one fellows from eighteen different colleges presented at the annual MMUF Western Regional Conference including eight UNM fellows on the second day. The participating universities include California Institute of Technology, California State University (CSU) Dominguez Hills, CSU Fullerton, CSU Long Beach, CSU, Los Angeles), CSU San Bernardino, Claremont McKenna College, Heritage University, Pitzer College, Pomona College, Scripps College, Stanford, The University of New Mexico, UC Berkeley, UC Los Angeles, UC Riverside, University of Southern California, and Whittier College.



The UNM MMUF Fellows at UCLA  
From left: Samuel Smith, Isis Lopez, Lizbeth Miscles, Shelby Zubia, Damien Lopez, Tre Graves, Isaiiah Romo, and TJ L'Esperance

## MMUF Eligibility

- \* Have two more years remaining before graduation
- \* Be a full-time UNM student in one of MMUF eligible majors
- \* Have an overall GPA of 3.5 or above
- \* Be determined to pursue a Ph.D. and an academic career in professoriate
- \* Be a US citizen or permanent resident
- \* Be a member of an underrepresented group

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2018 MMUF WESTERN  
REGIONAL  
CONFERENCE RECAP

UNM MMUF FELLOWS  
RESEARCH PROJECTS

MMUF  
FALL 2018 NEWSLETTER



## UNM MMUF FELLOWS RESEARCH PROJECTS

All eight UNM MMUF fellows presented at the regional conference at UCLA on November 3.



LIZBETH MISCLES  
Major: Art History  
Mentors: Dr. Kency Cornejo

Talking Circle: Are all aesthetics violence? An analysis of Laura Aguilar and Nona Faustine’s use of their bodies and landscapes of erasure

Photographic history in US has a capitalistic, colonial, and racist past. In the 19th century most successful image-makers were funded by the government to create propaganda for its imperial projects. The photographers had the intention to further cement the delusion of Manifest Destiny and encouraged the extermination of indigenous humans. I use critical race, performance, and queer theory to analyze the photographs and performances of Laura Aguilar and Nona Faustine. Both artists are racialized and do not achieve euro-centric standards of beauty and femininity. For Aguilar, whose *Centers* (1996) performance in the New Mexico desert confronts the late 19th century photographic spectacles of landscape and exploration therein: vast, and with no depiction of the life that was exterminated in these spaces. In *White Shoes* (2015), set in Brooklyn, Faustine confronts the landscape built on slavery. About the works, she states “These are the meditative reflections of a history Americans have not come to terms with, challenging the duality of what is both visible and invisible.” Through the analysis of these images I question how the aesthetics of Aguilar and Faustine function to disrupt neo-liberal and colonial conventions of landscape and body; and whether the use of colonial aesthetics can ever disrupt colonial ideas and systems.



DAMIEN LOPEZ  
Major: Linguistics  
Mentors: Dr. Chris Koops

Talking Circle: Vowel Reduction in Kukama-Kukamiria

A vowel is a unique sound that is created by the constant flow of air through the vocal tract, the ‘quality’ of this sound is manipulated by the active articulators, including the tongue, the jaw, and the lips. The process of vowel reduction is motivated by both social and phonological factors such as the stress assignment of a word, vowel duration, speech tempo, or speech style. In this project, these motivating factors will be explored, and the physical process of vowel reduction will be illustrated as it takes place in the Kukama-Kukamiria language. KK is a highly endangered Amazonian Language that is spoken in Peru. Out of around 1,000 individuals who speak KK, most of them are older than 55 years and are also bilingual in Spanish. Consequently KK is ideal for challenging and strengthening cross-linguistic theories, including vowel reduction as a social and phonological process. Quantitative data will be gathered from interview recordings via Praat, an acoustic analysis software, and word final vowels with those in the post-tonic position so as to illustrate the phonological processes taking place. Qualitative analysis of the results may be conducted to determine what social factors are most relevant to motivating vowel reduction in the respective speech situations.

## UNM MMUF FELLOWS RESEARCH PROJECTS



ISIS LOPEZ  
Major: Political Science  
Mentor: Dr. Tim Krebs  
Talking Circle: A Philosophical Analysis of Latino Political Participation in the United States

Latino people will soon be the largest base of eligible voters in US. Despite this rapid demographic shift, Latino populations have comparatively low voting turnout. Substantial collected polling has been collected to explain the driving factors of Latino Voter turnout, including low socio-economic status, lack of access to resources, experiences of discrimination, and difficulties obtaining meaningful education. These components, while useful, cannot fully explain the voter turnout gap between Latinos and other populations. Nor can they fully elucidate a picture of the institutional allowed participation. Importantly, these components fail to explore the effects of historical events and generational trauma on the ways that Latino populations engage with government institutions apropos voting engagement. Although psychoanalysis is frequently omitted from the realm of political theory, I believe they are interconnected in meaningful and impactful ways. Many philosophers, including Jacques Lacan, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, and Herbert Marcuse provide compelling theories that apply to the Latino Voting population in various ways. Using these broader philosophical contributions in connection to analytical data presented surrounding Latino voting participation, a non-traditional query of participation can be done which I believe yield non-traditional and more accurate ways to discuss Latino populations in America’s democratic system.



SAMUEL SMITH  
Major: Philosophy  
Mentor: Dr. Ann Murphy  
Talking Circle: Epistemic Injustice and the Academic Institution: Languages

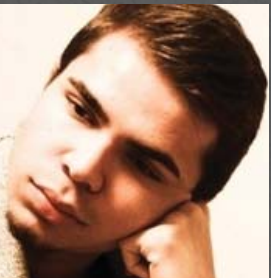
Epistemic oppression is the exclusion from communities that produce and justify knowledge that damages a group of people. Often this exclusion is deeply embedded in the practices and ways of justification that characterize a particular community of knowers. How might one engage with their own way of producing and justifying knowledge in order to better, ameliorate epistemic injustice? In US academic philosophy and theory, analogies to language or linguistic acts are often used to help conceptualize the mediation between more than one epistemology. While these conceptual schemes seem very useful or even natural, what kinds of knowledge might they also foreclose? This paper attempts to track some of the positions that theorize knowledge production and justification, and track how the concepts of linguistic exchange and translation figure in these theories. I suggest that an engagement with the way in which failures partially or do not show up must be engaged in order to produce a better theory of such failures at the institutional level.

## UNM MMUF FELLOWS RESEARCH PROJECTS



SHELBY ZUBIA  
Major: Linguistics  
Mentor: Dr. Dawn Nordquist  
Oral Presentation: “What If?”: How Counterfactual Thinking Can Be Used to Campaign for Language Revitalization

Approximately 34 languages become dormant each year. Just in New Mexico alone, there are 12 languages that are classified as endangered, and are at risk of becoming extinct, a state where there are no known speakers. While many studies have been conducted about how heavily these heritage language communities have been trying to increase their speakers, most of them conclude that it is a very difficult task. My study investigates how communities on the outside interpret this state of language endangerment that is happening not too far from where they live and how we get the outside community interested in this topic. I am relying on studies that use counterfactual thinking to persuade individuals to change their behavior or adopt a new perspective. I will specifically look into the effect of “counterfactual thinking” on encouraging neighboring community members’ participation in language revitalization efforts. By composing 2 campaign letters, one including counterfactual thinking and one without, I will investigate whether this psychological method can get individuals involved in an issue that does not have immediate implication for the self. This study is important for public policy makers and non-profits who are interested increasing support for their cause.



THOMAS “TRE” GRAVES  
Major: Political Science  
Mentor: Dr. Jami Nelson-Nunez  
Oral Presentation: Green Political Thought and its Implications for United States Border Policies

Since 1996, the United States government has passed policies that conjure up the need for a physical barrier along the United States-Mexico border. The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, the Real ID Act of 2005 and the Secure Fence Act of 2006 significantly expanded the presence of physical barriers along the border, and they allowed individuals within the government to ignore environmental legislation that would impede the construction of such barriers. These laws adversely impacted wildlife, and the ecosystems on which they depend. One study showed that after implementation of the Secure Fence Act, habitat range was decreased by as much 75% for certain species, and this decrease was associated with a higher risk of extinction. Primary text analysis of four nature writers; William Kittredge, John Clare, Thomas Merton, and David Abram enable critical evaluations on how such laws come to fruition by showing how laws are based on a collective mythology and self-interest that is ultimately harmful, even though it is rooted in the language of freedom. Their writings make it transparent that to form laws which are not destructive to the environment, society must reassess its collective mythologies while taking a perspective that incorporates alternative modes of intelligence.