

# Sentipensante Pedagogy: Educating for Wholeness, Social Justice and Liberation

Presentation at Core Commitments  
Symposium

Laura I. Rendón  
Professor & Chair  
Iowa State University  
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## Transforming Teaching & Learning

*If we can see it is our agreements which rule our life, and we don't like the dream of life, we need to change the agreements--Don Miguel Ruiz, The Four Agreements (1997)*

1. Say what you mean
2. Don't take anything personally
3. Don't make assumptions
4. Always do your best

## Transformation: Confronting and Challenging the Institutional Belief System

- ☞ Each institution has a shared belief system (overt and covert) that we agree to follow
- ☞ Rewards and punishments based on following these beliefs and values
- ☞ Many fear punishment for going against the belief system
- ☞ The dominant belief system is powerful, entrenched, validated and constantly rewarded
- ☞ It is the consciousness with which institutions operate

## Moving Forward in Fostering Students' Personal and Social Responsibility

- ☞ Interrogate prevailing belief system
- ☞ Beliefs (agreements) are part of the hegemonic structures\*/norms that perpetuate the status quo

\*Hegemony refers to the maintenance of domination not by the sheer exercise of force but primarily through consensual social practices, social forms, and social structures produced in specific sites such as the church, the state, the school, the mass media, the political system, and the family"--McLaren, 1989.

## The Belief System About Personal and Social Responsibility New Core Commitments

- ☞ Strive for excellence
- ☞ Cultivate personal and academic integrity
- ☞ Contribute to a larger community
- ☞ Take seriously the perspectives of others
- ☞ Develop competence in ethical and moral reasoning

## For Every Agreement (Belief) There is at Least One Competing Agreement

- ☞ Excellence/ Mediocrity
- ☞ Personal and Academic Integrity/ Dishonesty;  
Unprincipled Engagement
- ☞ Responsibility to Larger Community/ Focus on Self  
Interests
- ☞ Taking Seriously Perspectives of Others/ Focusing  
primarily on what we believe
- ☞ Moral and Ethical Reasoning/ Lack of Concern for  
Ethics and Morality

## Taking Seriously the Perspectives of Others

- ☞ If we are not doing this, we are holding on to a belief system that:
  - ☞ Does not make room for the views of others
  - ☞ Perceives that other belief systems are not as valid as ours
  - ☞ Operates with rigidity
  - ☞ Operates within the collective trance of "them and us"

## "Them" and "Us"

- ☞ The duality of "Them" and "Us" may be viewed both as a problem and as a gift
- ☞ The gift invites us to gain deeper awareness of the duality, and how and why it is held in mass consciousness
- ☞ The gift invites us to examine our own rigidity, inflexibility
- ☞ The gift invites us to be open to new possibilities and to the unknown
- ☞ The gift invites us to play a part in the resolution of dualities



Fostering Student  
Development Within the  
Classroom Environment



Shattering the Belief System  
About Teaching and  
Learning

## The Agreement of Monoculturalism

- ✎ Almost exclusive validation of Western structures of knowledge (i.e., individual achievement, rationality, and subjugation of knowledge created by women, indigenous people and people of color)
- ✎ Course offerings which preserve the superiority of Western civilization (i.e., belief that Western science contains the history of all science, adherence to conceptions of scientific rationality, objectivity and progress to distinguish the "civilized" from the "primitive")
- ✎ Dominance of faculty and administrators who subscribe to monocultural paradigms

Tuhiwai Smith (1999); Hills Collins (2000) Hurtado (1996); Arredondo, et al., 2003; Osei-Kofi, et al., (2004)

## Recasting the Agreement

- ✎ We need to change the agreement that Western ways of knowing are superior to all other forms of knowledge
- ✎ What agreement would speak to the notion of embracing traditional, mainstream perspectives as well as knowledge generated by diverse people?
- ✎ New Agreement: The agreement of multiculturalism and respect for diverse cultures

## The Agreement to Privilege Mental Knowing

- ☞ Privileges cerebral abilities such as verbal, scientific and mathematical ability
- ☞ Prizes and rewards outer knowing (intellectual reasoning, rationality, and objectivity) at the expense of inner knowing (deep wisdom, wonder, sense of the sacred, intuition and emotions)
- ☞ Yet, there are more than one or two intelligences

## Diverse Ways of Knowing

- ☞ Howard Gardner's (1993) theory of multiple intelligences is predicated on 7 diverse ways of knowing. The first two--linguistic and logical-mathematical--are usually employed to construct IQ.
- ☞ Gardner theorizes that linguistic and mathematical forms of intelligence may get a student into college, but that college achievement and success in life depend on all intelligences.
  - Linguistic
  - Logical-Mathematical
  - Spatial
  - Musical
  - Bodily-Kinesthetic
  - Interpersonal
  - Intrapersonal

## Diverse Ways of Knowing

- ☞ Daniel Goleman (1998) identified emotional intelligence (EQ) and its connection to neural systems in the brain.
- ☞ Goleman believes that EQ is more important than IQ for job performance and leadership.
- ☞ EQ has five elements:
  1. Self-Awareness
  2. Motivation
  3. Self-regulation
  4. Empathy
  5. Adeptness in Relationships

## Recasting the Agreement

- ☞ We need to reframe the agreement that educational achievement and success in life depend solely on linguistic and logical-mathematical abilities.
- ☞ What would be an example of a reframed agreement that is based not on a single approach to learning, but on multiple ways of knowing?
- ☞ New Agreement: The agreement to work with diverse ways of knowing in the classroom.

# My Learning Inquiry: Core Question

👉 **What is the experience of working with an integrative, consonant pedagogy in higher education?**

## METHOD/SAMPLE

•One-on-one, in depth, semistructured interviews (1-2 hours) with faculty.

Also interviewed 23 of their students using focus groups. Purposeful sampling employed.

•Sample, N=15

Name	Discipline	Institution	Gender/Race
Sam	Mathematics	2-year	M/W
Becky	Chemistry	2-year	F/W
Norma	English	4-year	F/L
Kristen	Communication	4-year	F/W
Mary	English	2-year	F/W
Bill	Physical Education	2-year	M/W
Alberto	Sociology	4-year	M/L
Herman	African American St	4-year	M/AA
Susan	Psychology	4-year	F/W
Xin	Education	4-year	F/Asian
Candance	Education	4-year	F/W
Barbara	English	2-year	F/W
Robert	Education	4-year	M/W
Sam	Education	4-year	M/W
Carlos	Art	4-year	M/L

•Audiotaped and videotaped/Heuristic and Transpersonal Research Methods

## Employing an Integrative, Consonant Pedagogy

- ☞ Connects inner learning (working with emotion, reflective processes, subjective views, etc.) and outer learning (working with intellectual activities such as reasoning, problem-solving, etc.)
- ☞ Diverse forms of contemplative practice used to engage the learner deeply in the material

## Contemplative Practice

- ☞ "Contemplative practices quiet the mind in order to cultivate a personal capacity for deep concentration and insight" Center for Contemplative Mind in Society
- ☞ "Contemplative education unlocks the power of deep inward observation, enabling the learner to tap into a wellspring of knowledge about the nature of the mind, self and other that has been largely overlooked by traditional, Western-oriented liberal education" Naropa University
- ☞ Examples: meditation, mindful walking, ritual, storytelling, poetry, music, communing with nature, free-writing, photographs, community work where social justice themes are highlighted, etc.

## Uses of Contemplative Practice

- 👉 Professor Norma Cantu, English, UTSA
  - 👉 ☐ Guided imagery
- 👉 Professor Alberto Pulido, Ethnic Studies, University of San Diego
  - 👉 Cajitas (sacred boxes) Project

## Exemplary Portrait: Professor J. Herman Blake Iowa State University African American Studies

- 👉 Carnegie Foundation Teacher of the Year
- 👉 Believes firmly that there are no known limits to learning

## Exemplary Portrait: Dr. J. Herman Blake

- ☞ Agreements he broke:
  - ☞ Professor is the only expert in class
  - ☞ Reflection is unnecessary
  - ☞ Learning ends once the class is over
  - ☞ We should not talk about disturbing issues related to race in the classroom
  - ☞ There are limits to learning, especially for students of color

## Exemplary Portrait: Dr. J. Herman Blake

### New Agreements Dr. Blake Created:

- ☞ Contemplative Practice is critical--allows for students to reflect and engage more deeply with the material
- ☞ Issues of race create tension, but we must work through them--disruption "wakes up" neutrality
- ☞ There are no limits to learning; levels of expectation should remain high, especially for students of color
- ☞ Liberating students from self-limiting views and fostering a passion to learn and to recognize and take action against societal inequities is the work of social justice in the classroom.

## Exemplary Portrait

- ☞ Dr. Carlos Silviera
- ☞ Professor of Art--CSU-Long Beach
- ☞ Teaching philosophy based on Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*
- ☞ Engages students in service learning
- ☞ Worked with poor children in the *favelas* of Brazil

## Exemplary Portrait: Carlos Silviera Professor of Art-CSULB

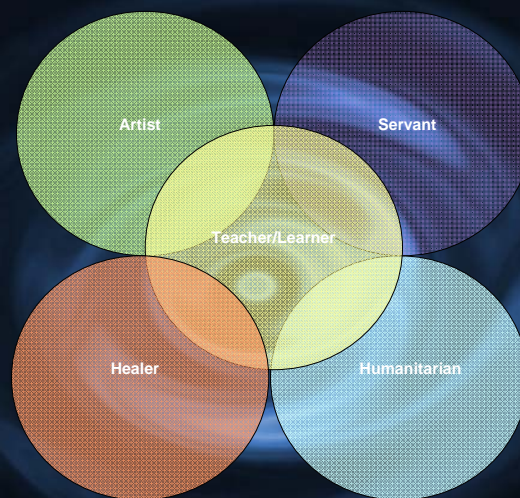
### Agreements He Broke:

- ☞ Art is a thing of beauty with little or no connection to sociopolitical, multicultural themes or to human healing
- ☞ The classroom is race/gender/sexuality-neutral
- ☞ Content can be learned only through academic forms—read a book, develop a theory
- ☞ Real learning occurs only inside the classroom
- ☞ Feelings/compassion are unimportant in pedagogical practice
- ☞ Poor students cannot learn
- ☞ Cognitive development is the only thing that matters

# Carlos Silveira's New Pedagogical Dream

## New Agreements:

- ✦ Art can transform; art has healing power. Art can be used to create socio-political awareness
- ✦ Real learning occurs not just in the classroom, but also in a field setting in a community. This is where theory meets humanitarianism, compassion and critical consciousness
- ✦ Professor can be a social activist—a change agent.
- ✦ Poor students can learn when allowed to express their voice, to work on projects that reflect what they know and what they represent
- ✦ Emotions can be a part of the curriculum



Faculty Positionality

## Overcoming the Entrenched View of Teaching & Learning

- ☞ We have not been socialized to embrace wholeness
- ☞ Faculty often work “under the radar screen”
- ☞ Faculty were passionate about their work, and did it regardless of what others might think about them

## What Do We Call a Pedagogy

- ☞ Honors our humanity--views individuals as whole human beings
- ☞ Decenters Western epistemology and ontology
- ☞ In all that we do, there is a greater purpose than what appears before us
- ☞ Is unitive--connects inner and outer learning; unites the student with the subject matter; employs contemplative practice to deeply engage the learner in the material
- ☞ Promotes the acquisition of both knowledge and wisdom
- ☞ Emphasizes activism, liberation, healing and social change
- ☞ Rooted in ancient wisdom--nonduality, wholeness, complementarity between two opposites

## Knowledge & Wisdom

### 👉 Knowledge

Goal is to acquire facts

Focus on outer experience

Begins from "objective" space

Based on rationality

Interpreted by detached observers

### 👉 Wisdom

Goal is self-awareness & purpose

Focus on inner experience

Begins from personal space

Allows for intuition

Borne of personal & communal experience

## Celebration of the Marriage of Heart and Mind

*Why does one write, if not to put one's pieces together?*

*From the moment we enter school or church, education chops us into pieces: it teaches us to divorce soul from body and mind from heart.*

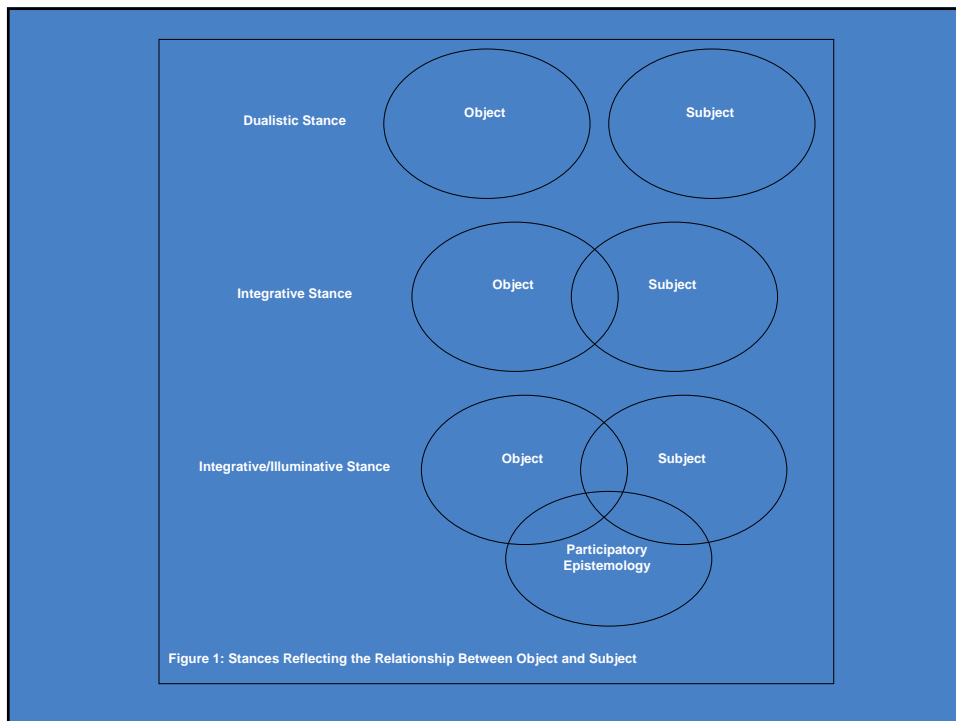
*The fishermen of the Columbian coast must be learned doctors of ethics and morality, for they invented the word, **sentipensante**, feeling-thinking, to define language that speaks the truth.*

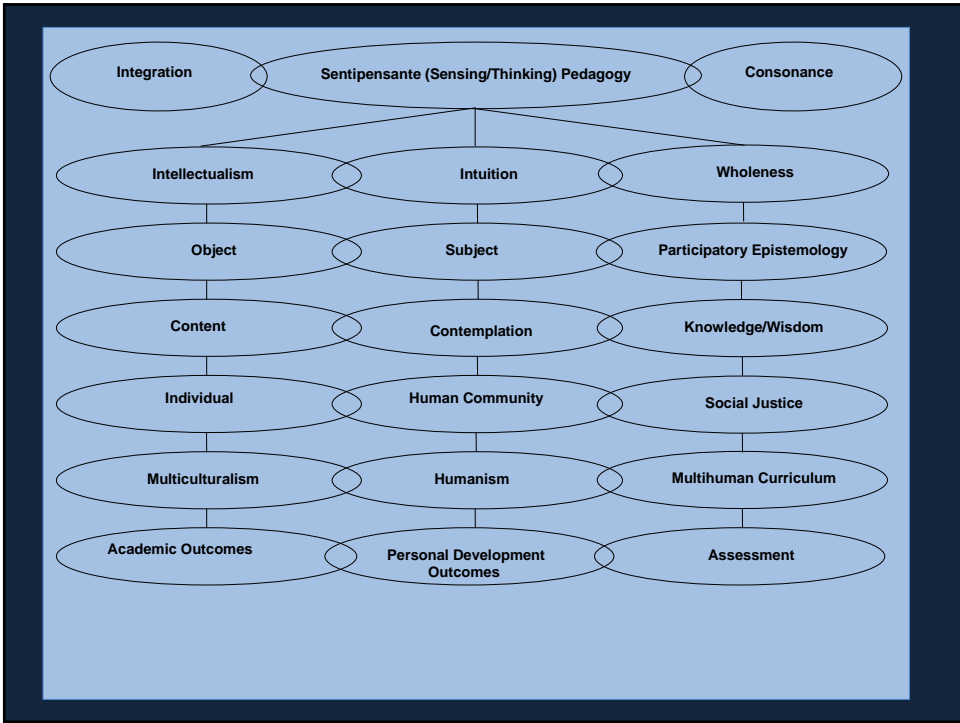
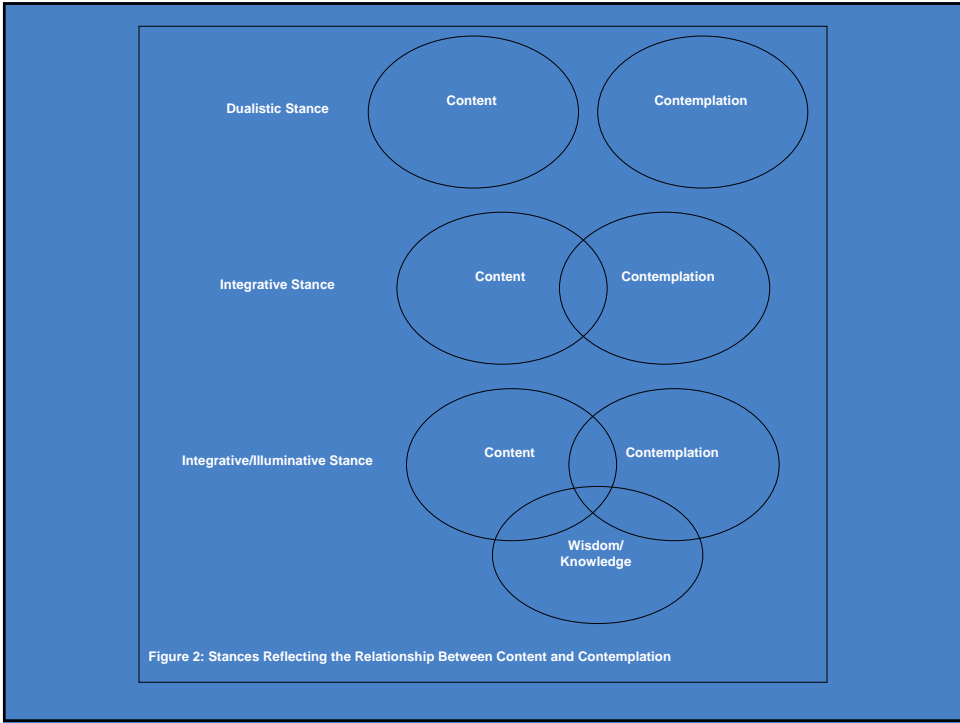
*--Eduardo Galeano, **The Book of Embraces (1989), p. 121***



# Difrasismo

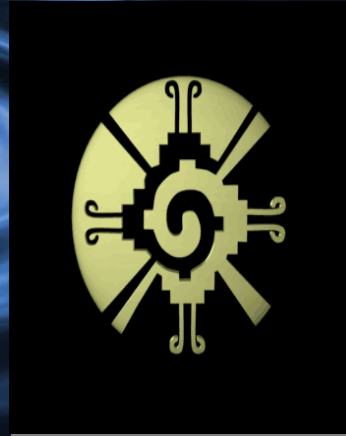
- ☞ Aztec literary device
- ☞ Dialectical space where two concepts, critically examined to reveal both how they differ and complement each other, illuminate a larger reality.
- ☞ Examples:
  - ☞ Sky.earth.world
  - ☞ You.me.belong
  - ☞ *in xochitl.in cuicatl.beauty*





## MultiHuman Curriculum

- ☞ Is multicultural and humanistic in nature
- ☞ Affirms dignity and worth of all people
- ☞ Respects diverse ways of accessing truth (i.e., scientific paradigm & full range of qualitative methods that honor the human experience)
- ☞ Engages diverse perspectives-- ancestral teachings, Western views of knowledge, Third-World & Indigenous Knowledge, etc



## The Liberating, Socially Just Classroom

- ☞ Emphasizes relationships and the betterment of the collective whole
- ☞ Promotes self-reflexivity and emergence of critically aware, socially responsible individual
- ☞ Curriculum is democratic, inclusive and reflective of student backgrounds and needs
- ☞ Students develop intellectual capacities and develop themselves as human beings-- identity, path in life, critical consciousness

## The Liberating, Socially Just Classroom

- ☞ Professor models social activism (service learning, working with poor students, etc.)
- ☞ Professor promotes an ethic of care, compassion and validation
- ☞ Fosters transformation. Students find self-worth, purpose, and voice
- ☞ Western paradigm which over-privileges mental knowing, monoculturalism, and separation is decentered. Emphasis is on wholeness

## The Task Before Us

- ☞ We are being asked to transform, to decenter the hegemonic belief system that works against wholeness, community, social justice and personal and social responsibility
- ☞ We are being asked to create a new reality based on newly constructed agreements
- ☞ We are being asked to turn inward, to become more self-reflective about our views and our willingness to entertain diverse perspectives
- ☞ We are being asked to have courage, to step out of our comfort zones and challenge the status quo