

M. Paola Leon Arizmendi

School of Social Work, Grand Valley State University
College of Education and Community Innovation
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Education

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign – Ph.D. in Social Work, May 2016

- Dissertation Advisor: Steven G. Anderson
- Dissertation Title: Weaving in public spaces: A multi-case study of Peruvian Indigenous Women
- Adjacent area of study: Latin American Studies

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign – Master of Social Work, May 2001

- Specialization: Community Mental Health
- Minor: Gender Relations in International Development

University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras – Bachelor of Social Work, December 1999

- Magna Cum Laude

Professional Academic Positions

Grand Valley State University, Grand Rapids, MI

- Director, School of Social Work, July 2023-present
- Graduate Program Director, School of Social Work, July 2020 – June 2023
- Associate Professor, School of Social Work, August 2018-present
- Assistant Professor, School of Social Work, August 2012 – July 2018

Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI

- Outreach Specialist, Institute of International Agriculture, 2009-2010
 - Administered U.S. government requirements in the completion of a \$30 million food industry development project, which operated in Ghana, South Africa, Kenya, and India over a 10-year period.

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Urbana, IL

- Program Coordinator, Nuevos Horizontes Radio, 2007-2008
 - Led the development and implementation of weekly educational programming in Spanish catering to Spanish-speaking communities and Spanish language learners.

- Crafted specialized educational packages for diverse audiences, including AP high school Spanish classes, public libraries, and prison libraries.
- Tailored these educational packages meticulously to address the unique needs and challenges inherent to each of these distinct learning environments.

Higher Education Teaching Experience (Undergraduate and Graduate levels)

Grand Valley State University, Grand Rapids, MI, 2012-present

- Social Work and Difference, Diversity and Privilege (SW300)
- Generalist Practice I (SW317)
- Human Behavior and the Social Environment II (SW341/ SW620)
- Special Topic: Gender violence and immigrant women (SW380 / SW680)
- Social Work Research (SW430)
- Human Rights and Social Work (SW613)
- Social Policy and Mental Health (SW614)
- Advanced Generalist Practice Seminar (SW640)
- Social Work Practice: Individuals (SW670)
- Community and Social Planning (SW676)
- Special Topic: Antiracist Social Work Practice: Consciousness raising through visual media (SW680)

Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, Lima, Peru, March-July 2019

Visiting Professor and Fulbright Scholar

- Qualitative Research Methods for Social Work (undergraduate level)
- Thesis Seminar (undergraduate level)

Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, 2010-2012

- Community Engagement in the Andes: Social capital, history, culture, social structures, and development challenges (ISS 330C)

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Urbana, IL, 2006-2007

- Introduction to Social Work (SW150)

Parkland Community College, Champaign, IL, 2004-2006

- Latin American Cultures and Civilizations (HUM106)

Program Development and Facilitation

Study Abroad

- Program Developer and Co-Director, Global Service Learning (SW630) – Peru Study Abroad, Grand Valley State University, expected to take place in Spring of 2024
- Program Co-Director, Global Service Learning (SW630) – El Salvador & Guatemala, Grand Valley State University, 2017-2023
- Program Co-Leader, Community Engagement, and Interdisciplinary Studies of Global Issues in the Peruvian Andes, Michigan State University, 2010-2012

Faculty Development

- Co-facilitator and content development, Inclusive Excellence Teaching Institute (IETI), Faculty Teaching and Learning Center (FTLC), Grand Valley State University, Spring 2022, and Spring 2023
- Facilitator and content development, Ethical considerations in qualitative research. Faculty Development Series, School of Social Work, Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, Lima, Peru. March-June 2019

Community Engagement

- Founder and facilitator, Social Justice Begins with ME! Reading program for children ages 4-11 developed in collaboration with the Grand Rapids Public Library. 2018-present.
- Organizer, 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. A global campaign to raise awareness about gender-based violence. Community-based organizations and the GVSU School of Social Work developed programming for the 16 days of the campaign. 2022-present.
- Founding member and Editor, El Informador Newspaper. A Spanish-language newspaper serving the Latina/Latino community in the towns of Champaign, Urbana, and Rantoul, IL. 2001-2008

Continuing Education

- Human Trafficking Training Module – designed and created a comprehensive online asynchronous training tailored to meet the licensing requirements for social workers. Office of Continuing Education, Grand Valley State University, 2020.

Student Mentoring

Grand Valley State University, Grand Rapids, MI

- Master's Thesis. Title: Talking about Death: Exploration of the Impact of Death Communication Norms on end-of-life Caregivers. Maureen McKenzie. (served as Committee Chair)

- Master's Thesis. Title: Burned out and underappreciated: Exploring Emotional Support for certified nursing assistants in Skilled Nursing Facilities. Andrea Miller. (served as Committee Chair)
- McNair Scholar Project. Title: Reimagining Social Justice Begins with ME! In Service of the Latinx Community. Rosie Barrera. (served as research advisor)
- Senior Project, Honors College. Title: LGBTQ+ Inclusivity: Toolkit for parents of children who identify as non-binary. Shelby Schefke. (served as research advisor)
- Senior Project, Honors College. Title: Water: human right or commodity? A case example from El Salvador. Halie Learmont. (served as research advisor)
- Senior Project, Honors College. Title: Civil society's response to human trafficking in El Salvador: Lessons Learned. Kayla Dora. (served as research advisor)
- Independent Study. Title: African American women's experiences with microaggressions in the workplace. Monique Gay. (served as research advisor)

Social Work Professional Experience

Mental Health Consultant, Hoopeston Migrant Head Start, Hoopeston, IL 2003-2004

- Developed educational resources for migrant families and organized bilingual workshops.
- Facilitated group and one-on-one counseling sessions.
- Founded a bilingual (English-Spanish) library, securing a \$ 2,500 grant from the local Rotary Club to support this valuable community resource.

Outreach Counselor, Rape Crisis Services - A Woman's Fund, Urbana, IL 2001-2003

- Established linguistically and culturally appropriate counseling services for Spanish-speaking survivors of sexual assault.
- Developed informational materials and provided educational workshops to various community and professional groups.
- Organized the first annual Latina Women Health Fair
- Secured funding and developed a position for a full-time children's counselor.
- Received the Outstanding Service Provider Award and the New Leader in the Effort to End Violence Against Women Award from the National Organization of Women (NOW).

Scholarly and Creative Activity

- Perez Alva, E. D., **Leon, P.** & Guillen, E. (2021). *Rethinking concepts, practices, and understandings of alternative economic strategies from the perspectives of women's everyday life in the central jungle of Peru*. Visual Arts: Documentary. Seminario de Economia Solidarias, UNMSM, Lima, Peru.
- Pelon, S. B., Youker, B. W. & **Leon, P.** (2019). Chapter 14: Hospice and End of Life Care. In Lihua Huang, Sally Pelon, Scott Berlin (Ed.), *Anti-Ageism in Social Work*. (pp.1-28). Scholar Works.

- **Leon, P.** & Smith, S. (2018). *Water: A Human Right or a Commodity? A comparative case example of El Salvador and Flint, MI*. Visual Arts: Picture Exhibit. Grand Valley State University Gallery. Accepted in 2018. Exhibit dates: January – July 2019.
- **Leon, P.** (2015). *Paya Lliklla – Las tejedoras de Chari, Peru: Reweaving tradition in the 21st century*. Visual Arts: Picture Exhibit. Grand Valley State University Gallery. Accepted in 2015. Exhibit dates: May – August 2016.
- **Leon, P.**, Summerfield, G. & Arends-Kuenning, M. (2013). Exploring Latina/o Migrant's Adaption to the Economic Crisis in the U.S. Heartland: A Capability Approach. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities: A Multi-disciplinary Journal of People-Centered Development*, 14(2), 195-213.
- Arends-Kuenning, M., Summerfield, G. & **Leon, P.** (2008). Financial Practices of Latino Immigrants in a Midwest City: Lessons for Consumer Educators. *The Journal of Community Education*, 25, 32-45.

Conference Presentations

- Perez Alva, E.D. & **Leon, P.** (May 2023). *Tensiones entre cuidados y practicas económico sociales de mujeres cooperativistas de la selva central del Perú*. Presented at the Latin American Studies Association Congress. Virtual.
- Perez Alva, E.D. & **Leon, P.** (May 2022). *Autonomía económico social de mujeres cooperativistas cafetaleras de la provincial de La Convención (Región Cusco, Perú)*. Presented at the Latin American Studies Association Congress. Virtual.
- **Leon, P.** (November 2021). *Economía alternativa desde el cotidiano de las mujeres de la selva del Perú*. Presented at the Council on Social Work Education 67th Annual Program Meeting. Orlando, Florida.
- **Leon, P.** (2021). *Access to clean water: Human right or commodity? Workshop presentation. Teaching Water and Environmental Justice: From the Great Lakes to Latin America*. Presented at the Teacher Training Conference. University of Michigan, Latin American & Caribbean Studies. Virtual.
- **Leon, P.** & Langlois, J. (November 2020) *Social Justice Begins with ME! Literatura infantil, concientización y trabajo social*. Featured oral presentation at the Council on Social Work Education 66th Annual Program Meeting. Virtual.
- Green, K., Cadreau, J., Bates, A. & **Leon, P.** (November 2020) *Action, advocacy, and allyship in Allendale*. Presented at Grand Valley State University Teach-IN at Grand Valley State University, Grand Rapids, MI. Virtual.
- Perez Alva, E.D. & **Leon, P.** (May 2020) *Sumak Kawsay: estrategias económico alternativas desde el cotidiano de las mujeres en la selva central del Perú*. Presented at the Latin American Studies Association Congress. May 13, 2020. Virtual.
- **Leon, P.** & Trainor, T. (November 2019) *Too poor to get out of jail: Understanding the impact of pre-trial detention and cash bonds*. Presented at Grand Valley State University Teach-IN at Grand Valley State University, Grand Rapids, MI.
- **Leon, P.**, Ronk, D. & Scheuerle, K. (June 2019) *Estructura de programa de practicas pre-profesionales de trabajo social en Grand Valley State University*. Presented at Coloquio Internacional sobre practicas pre-profesionales. Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos. Lima, Perú.

- **Leon, P.** & Wittebols, R. (June 2018) *Social Justice Begins with ME: Cultural competency, critical literacy, and children's literature*. Poster presentation. NASW National Conference. Washington, D.C.
- **Leon, P.**, Ortiz, H. & Felix, L. (April 2018) *Herramientas para el empoderamiento económico*. Presented at Día de la Mujer Conference at Michigan State University. East Lansing, MI.
- **Leon, P.** (February 2018) *Participatory qualitative research methods in cross-cultural research*. Invited presentation. Doctoral Research Seminar. Graduate School of Social Work, Beatriz Lassalle. San Juan, Puerto Rico.
- Dora, K. & **Leon, P.** (2016) *Civil society's response to violence against women in El Salvador*. Presented at the Conference of the Americas at Grand Valley State University, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Learmont, H. & **Leon, P.** (2016) *Water: A human right. Lessons learned from El Salvador*. Presented at the Conference of the Americas at Grand Valley State University, Grand Rapids, MI.
- **Leon, P.** (2015) Keynote Address at *Social Work in the 21st Century: Does race matter?* School of Social Work Teach-IN at Grand Valley State University, Grand Rapids, MI.
- **Leon, P.**, Youker, B. & Ford, K. (2015) *Experiencing otherness*. Workshop. Social Work in the 21st Century: Does race matter? School of Social Work Teach-IN at Grand Valley State University, Grand Rapids, MI.
- **Leon, P.** (2015) *Social work practice with immigrant communities*. Presented at the Global Social Work Coloquio at Universidad Garcilaso de La Vega. Lima, Perú. (invited)
- **Leon, P.** (May 2013) *Exiting a research site: a dialogue of the emotional and intellectual challenges of 'letting go'*. Presented at the Ninth International Congress on Qualitative Inquiry. Urbana, IL.
- **Leon, P.** (April 2013) *Latina women and mental health: Barriers to seeking services*. Workshop. Día de La Mujer Conference at Michigan State University. East Lansing, MI.
- **Leon, P.** (May 2012) *Achachaw Mamay! You've captured my voice in your little box! The use of technology to gather data in an indigenous community in Perú*. Presented at the Eighth International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry. Urbana, IL.
- **Leon, P.**, Summerfield, G. & Arends-Kuenning, M. (2012) *Exploring Latina/o migrant's adaptation to the economic crisis in the U.S. heartland: A capability approach*. Presented at the Responding to Immigrants National Conference: Bridging research and practice to meet the needs of immigrants in new growth communities. Urbana, IL.
- **Leon, P.**, Summerfield, G. & Arends-Kuenning, M. (2012) *A capability approach to Latina/o migrant's adaptation to the economic crisis*. Presented at Forum: Surviving the economic crisis: Latina/o Migrants in the U.S. Heartland. Urbana, IL.
- **Leon, P.** (November 2011) *Agency, empowerment, and indigenous women: Exploring the (un)intended consequences of social entrepreneurship projects*. Presented at the Council on Social Work Education 56th Annual Program Meeting. Atlanta, GA.
- **Leon, P.** (May 2011) *Weaving in public spaces: Peruvian indigenous women in social entrepreneurship ventures*. Presented at the Seventh International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry. Urbana, IL.

- **Leon, P.** (October 2010) *Narratives of encounters: The makings of cultural competence*. Presented at the Council on Social Work Education 55th Annual Program Meeting. Portland, OR.
- Arends-Kuenning, M., Summerfiled, G. & **Leon, P.** (2010) *Migration, crisis, and remittances in the Midwest*. Presented at the International Association for Feminist Economics Conference. Buenos Aires, Argentina.
- **Leon, P.** (May 2009) *Cultural gender expectations: Negotiating identities in the field*. Presented at the Fifth International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry. Urbana, IL.
- **Leon, P.** (October 2007) *Think globally, act locally: Challenges to social work education in a globalized world*. Presented at the Council on Social Work Education 52nd Annual Program Meeting. San Francisco, CA.
- **Leon, P.** (2006) *Domestic violence in an indigenous community in the Peruvian highlands: Beliefs, attitudes, and responses*. Presented at the Tinker Foundation Conference, Urbana, IL.
- **Leon, P.** (2005) *Latino immigrants and human security in Champaign County*. Presented at Gender and Human Security: Latina/o Immigrants in the Midwest Symposium. Urbana, IL.

Awards

- Grand Valley State University Internationalization Award (2023)
- GVSU Faculty Teaching and Learning Center Burch, Jacobs & Moore Diversity Teaching Excellence Award Nomination (2021)
- GVSU College of Community and Public Service Internationalization Award (2020)
- Verdant Systems Outstanding Service Provider Award (2002)
- National Organization for Women (NOW) New Leader in the Effort to End Violence Against Women (2002)

Service

Grand Valley State University

- Member, Accreditation Committee (2023-present)
- Member, Search Committee, Social Work affiliate faculty (2021)
- Member, College of Education and Community Innovation Anti-racism and Social Justice Committee (2021-present)
- Member, GVSU Restructuring Task Force – CCPS & COE merger (2020-2021)
- Co-Chair, Antiracist Social Work Committee (2020-present)
- Advisor, Master of Social Work Student Organization (2020-2023)
- Member, Field Education Committee (2019-present)
- Faculty Mentor, School of Social Work (2019-2023)
- Member, School Social Work Personnel Committee (2019-2023)
- Member, GVSU Grievance Committee (2016-2018)
- Member, Latin American Studies Executive Committee (2015-2016)
- Member, Hybrid and Online Teaching Committee (2014-2023)

- Student Mentoring, NIARA Program (2014-2020)
- Member, Latin American Studies Advisory Committee (2013-present)
- Member, Graduate Assistant Committee (2013-present; Chair 2016-2020)
- Member, Student Awards Committee (2013-present; Chair 2016-2023)
- Member, GVSU General Education Committee (2013-2016)

Profession

- Reviewer, U.S. Fulbright Scholar Applications (2020 and 2022)

Community

- Board Member, Puertas Abiertas, Grand Rapids, MI (2021-present, secretary 2023-present)
- Board Member, YWCA West Central Michigan, Grand Rapids, MI (2021-present)
- Board Member, Lansing Latino Health Alliance, Lansing, MI (2011-2018, Secretary 2013-2015; Chair 2015-2018)

Grants

- Social Justice Begins with ME! Spanish Edition, Special Projects Graduate Student, GVSU Graduate School, 2023-2024 funding for a half-time Graduate Assistant.
- Study Abroad Program Development, GVSU Padnos International Center, \$6000 (2023)
- Travel Grant, GVSU Faculty Teaching and Learning Center, \$700 (2018, 2021, 2023)
- Dissemination Grant, GVSU Center for Scholarly and Creative Excellence, \$900 (2021)
- U.S. Fulbright Scholar, 4-month grant for teaching and research in Lima, Peru (2018)
- Sponsored Programs Grant, GVSU Faculty Teaching and Learning Center, \$3500 to attend the Faculty Success Program at the National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity (2016)
- Research Grant-in-Aid and Early Career, GVSU Center for Scholarly and Creative Excellence, \$6000 (2014)

Languages

- Spanish – Native Language.
- English – Speak fluently and read and write with high proficiency.
- Quechua – Speak, read, and write with basic competence.

Memberships in Associations and Institutional Affiliations

- National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
- Association of Latina/Latino Social Work Educators (ALLSWE)
- Council of Social Work Education (CSWE)
- Affiliation: Seminario de Economías Solidarias, Escuela de Trabajo Social, Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, Lima, Peru.