Research Paper

Borderlands in North Carolina Community Colleges: Cultural Capital, Community Cultural Wealth, and Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera*

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Abstract

The nonprofit myFutureNC established the lofty goal of 2,000,000 earned postsecondary credentials in the state by 2030. Considering this challenge with the increased number of Latinx students attending or wanting to attend NC community colleges underscores the need for a change in our approach to pedagogy. In this paper, I examine the tensions of structure and agency using the theories of Pierre Bourdieu and Tara J. Yosso. I identify Yosso's theories of community cultural wealth as being particularly useful to NC community colleges for its shift from a deficit oriented to an asset based approach to supporting Latinx students. Using this framework as a springboard, the paper offers Gloria Anzaldúa's borderlands theory as a unique touchstone for developing pedagogies that facilitate community cultural wealth in the classroom. Three areas for pedagogical development are offered based on borderlands theory: deconstructing Whiteness, linguistic affirmation, and inclusion of males from underrepresented groups. Specific practices aligning with each of these areas are offered.

Keywords: structure, agency, cultural capital, community cultural wealth, borderlands theory

Borderlands **in North Carolina: Cultural Capital, Community Cultural Wealth, and Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera***

In one of the untitled vignettes in Tomás Rivera's *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him* (1971/1995), a book about Mexican workers in the United States, two unnamed children discuss going to school. "Why do y'all go to school so much?" inquires one child. The other explains, "My Dad says it's to prepare us. He says that if someday there's an opportunity, maybe they'll give it to us." The inquirer then explains:

> Sure! If I were you I wouldn't worry about that. The poor can't get poorer. We can't get worst off than we already are. That's why I don't worry. The ones that have to be on their toes are the ones who are higher up. They've got something to lose. They can end up where we're at. But for us, what does it matter? (Rivera & Vigil-Piñón, 1995, p. 97)

The vignette reveals two different perspectives on schooling, but one overall impression of power and agency. One child sees school as only for those seeking to retain their hierarchical position ("the ones that are higher up") while the other goes to school in the hopes of opportunity ("if someday there's an opportunity, maybe they'll give it to us") (Rivera & Vigil-Piñón, 1995, p. 97). These children know their minoritized status; moreover, they have come to know their position from the viewpoint of lack. One sees school as maintenance of the status quo, thereby acquiescing to social and economic inequalities; the other views school as a way to climb the social and economic ladder if only someone, somewhere, would give him the "opportunity" to do so. Both view school as a reflection of a society in which they do not inherently belong, where they either have to wait to be given an opportunity to prove their worth or where they can just sit back and fulfill a destiny of poverty and oppression.

Rivera was an author and educator—a teacher, professor, and the chancellor of University of California Riverside from 1979 until his untimely

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death in 1984. Although *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him* (1971/1995) was written from the perspective of a child, there is still insight to be gained regarding the broader educational experience of students from underrepresented groups. The vignette and the decades of conversations and social movements over race, class, and ethnicity—the Chicano movement being one—begets some questions about what is at stake between structure and agency in education. How does one go about examining the power structure, while also leaving room for agency to question and challenge the status quo? This paper attempts to describe the context of these questions, the conditions under which they arose, and how they can be applied to pedagogy in the community college setting.

I build my conceptual framework around Pierre Bourdieu's (1977/2000) theory of cultural capital and Tara J. Yosso's (2005) theory of community cultural wealth. The former describes social inequality foreordained by structure, and the latter emphasizes the cultural wealth of underrepresented groups. Taking the lead from Yosso, who also draws from Gloria Anzaldúa (1987/2012), I propose Anzaldúa's borderlands theory as a useful framework for developing pedagogical practices that elevate the cultural wealth of students from underrepresented groups. The deconstruction of Whiteness, linguistic affirmation, and inclusion of males from underrepresented groups are discussed as practices that, when paired with Anzaldúa's theories, offer rich pedagogical possibilities for those involved in education. I argue that these practices should be at the forefront of our pedagogical practices in North Carolina community colleges.

Borderlands in North Carolina

Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* was first published in 1987 and has since become a staple in Chicana studies, American literature, LGBTQ studies, and many other disciplines. Drawing from the fields of history, anthropology, philosophy, linguistics, and literature, and written in Spanish, English, and Nahuatl, Anzaldúa discusses life on a physical and mental borderland. This discussion of the borderlands offers a way to think about the experiences of Latinx students served in NC community college classrooms. Anzaldúa (2012) explains, "Being tricultural, monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual, speaking a patois, and in a state of perpetual transition, the mestiza faces the dilemma of the mixed breed: which collectivity does the daughter of a darkskinned mother listen to?" (p. 100). Moreover, the physical and mental borderlands of the mestiza attain a larger, psychic significance for all cultures, as "the struggle is inner: Chicano, indio, American Indian, mojado, mexicano, immigrant Latino, Anglo in power, working class Anglo, Black, Asian—our psyches resemble the bordertowns and are populated by the same people" (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 109). I argue throughout the paper that our classrooms create bordertown experiences for many of our students. In her preface to the first edition, Anzaldúa writes "this book is our invitation to you, from the new mestizas." Anzaldúa invites all to consider their positionality within the borderlands, and I am inviting other educators to consider their positionality in the community college classroom.

A watershed moment for me, a White community college instructor in the state of North Carolina, arose with a Latinx student writing a paper about natural healing practices, or *curanderismo*. In the process of drafting the paper, Lulu asked, "Can I include words in Spanish in my paper, or should I take them out?" The answer was, of course, Lulu could include Spanish words in her paper. The paper was completely understandable to a non-Spanish speaking reader, but it did include certain terminology in Spanish. I felt uncomfortable being given the power to control a student's tongue. If I felt uncomfortable, how must Lulu have felt? This question goes deep into a schooling culture which excludes those who do not speak the language of power. In what ways do our course policies and assignments exclude those whose first language is not English? How can we affirm the linguistic identities of those students? How can we privilege the speaking of multiple languages rather than focusing on whether or not a student just speaks and writes in one? The answer to these questions would take an academic career to answer, thus is out of the purview of this paper. However, I remain convinced that as educators we need to commit to practicing teaching techniques that honor and affirm the cultural wealth of our students.

Why North Carolina?

To help the state of North Carolina "close the educational attainment gap," the nonprofit myFutureNC (2019) set the goal of "2 million by

2030," or 2,000,000 North Carolinians holding a postsecondary credential by the year 2030. To meet this goal, community college instruction must speak to the needs of its current and future students, of which Latinx students represent a large and growing portion. North Carolina's Latinx student population grew by 25% since 2010 and in 2020 represented 17.9% of students in North Carolina's public schools and 14% of "first time, full-time students in NC community college" (MacCracken, 2020). Andy MacCracken (2020) with *EducationNC* says it best:

> Today, North Carolina is home to more Latinx people than ever before, and a greater share of students in the Latinx community want to go to college than ever before. Both facts reflect how important the state's Latinx population is to driving toward the myFutureNC statewide attainment goal.

Emblematic of this trend, *Excelencia* in Education, self-described as a Latina-led higher education nonprofit, identifies one North Carolina community college as a Hispanic Serving Institution and nine others as emerging Hispanic Serving Institutions as of 2021. However, Latinx students are not just numbers and recruitment targets to fill our seats. Latinx students are a diverse group that face myriad challenges in attaining their educational goals and possess myriad strengths that need to be recognized. Among those identifying as Latinx are native born and foreign born migrant workers, similar to those depicted in the vignette from *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him* (1971/1995). Moreover, as of 2021, 77% of Latinx populations in North Carolina speak a language other than English at home and come from a range of countries (Carolina Demography, 2021). Achieving a goal like that of myFutureNC is within our capabilities, but it calls for a theoretical reshaping of our teaching practices that more closely aligns to the needs of our changing demographics.

While it is important to keep demographic information in mind, we also must consider the larger diversity, equity, and inclusion goals of our system and how borderlands theory informs these goals. The zeitgeist of the late 2010s and early 2020s is one of polarization and acrimony. Phrases like *critical race theory* and *Black Lives Matter* draw either solidarity or ire and scorn from certain parts of the citizenry, no matter their transformative possibilities for our most marginalized populations. As a state, and largely as a country, we are in a moment where we can retreat from any potential advancements in diversity, equity, and inclusion, or we can provide an educational environment that builds on the work of our contemporaries and predecessors in these areas. With the latter option in mind, The North Carolina Community College System Equity and Inclusion Task Force released their final report on July 31, 2021. The report focuses on the State Board of Community Colleges Code, looking for "elements that may negatively impact students of color and limit opportunities for students, faculty, and staff" and providing relevant policy recommendations that seek to make North Carolina community colleges a national model for equity and diversity (NCCCS DEI Task Force, 2021). One focus area of this task force report, the "absence of equity language" in State Code policy, results in policy recommendations to routinely measure and reward "access and success of Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and historically underserved Asian and Pacific Island populations" at NC community colleges (NCCCS DEI Task Force, 2021). The "absence of equity language" section directly mentions culturally responsive teaching as an "evidence based practice proven to work for these populations" making the adoption of the pedagogy and curricular innovation in the classroom a matter of state sponsored policy (NCCCS DEI Task Force, 2021). Policy or not, though, we as educators face a moral imperative to honor and create space for the lived experiences, identities, and prior knowledge of our students. Whether in the polylithic Latinx population or the "Indio, American Indian, mojado, mexicano, immigrant Latino, Anglo in power, working class Anglo, Black, Asian" whose "psyches resemble the bordertowns and are populated by the same people" (Anzaldúa, 2012, p.109), the borderlands are here in North Carolina and in our classrooms. Borderlands theory offers an opportunity to continue building educational practices which honor the experiences of all of our underrepresented populations.

Conceptual Framework: Structure, Agency, Cultural Capital

A cursory overview of Bourdieu's (1977/2000) theories will serve as an entry point to the discussion of structural power and cultural reproduction. For Bourdieu, the sociology of education was not a subset of sociology, but the main source for understanding how power is produced and reproduced in society. Schools were the "nexus of individuals and institutions," and Bourdieu wanted to unmask the

reproduction of power located in this convergence by "examining the dynamic interaction between individuals and institutions" (McDounough & Nunez, 2007, p. 143). How did this understanding of structure and agency in the field of education come about, and what influence did it have on our understanding of the reproduction of power? After answering these questions, I then introduce Yosso's (2005) theory of community cultural wealth, which criticizes Bourdieu's theories as taking a deficit approach and reorients social capital within the wealth of experiences and cultures of marginalized populations.

Bourdieu: Cultural Capital

Against a backdrop of theories in which human life was dominated by structure, Bourdieu sought to show how individual actors could exercise agency amidst structure. The dominant theoretical field of study in the mid-19th to mid-20th centuries was structuralism, which described underlying structures as that which dominated and gave meaning to human life and societal functions (Levinson, 2011, p. 116). For instance, Karl Marx believed materialist value dominated human life and societal functions, what Levinson (2011) describes as "overweening explanatory power to materialist forces (for example, Karl Marx's forces of production)" (p. 116). The competing theory of structuralism was voluntarism, which posited that individuals acted freely to shape their destiny. At the time of Bourdieu and Passerson's *Reproduction in Education, Society, Culture* (1977/2000), though, theorists were challenging structuralism and voluntarism, as reflected in their attempt to describe how individual actors are at once affected by materialist forces while also acting according to individual agency (Levinson, 2011, p. 117). In his own attempt to prove the "folly and futility of one of sociology's core propositions—that structure and agency are irreconcilale" (McDonough & Nunez, 2007, p.141), Bourdieu encouraged the renaming and reclassifying of the world as a means of contesting power. More specifically, Bourdieu and later Giddens (1979), argue for *practice* as a theory which incorporates structural pressures and human performance. Structural pressures, such as the forces of production, force individuals into certain situations, but that memory informs future practice in the face of such forces, as well as allows for individuals to reshape the "rules and resources" of structure (Levinson, 2011, p. 117). The sociologist goes about observing the agency of the individual in a field analysis, explaining how "rational, thinking, and goal directed individuals pursue their interests yet manage to create and recreate social structure" (McDounough & Nunez, 2007, p. 150). Bourdieu's efforts to describe agency focused on individual accomplishment. Indeed, this is a departure from the structuralist perspective, but a closer examination of Bourdieu's ideas demonstrates that the discussion of structure versus agency is far from over.

Scholars struggled with the conflation of structural power and cultural reproduction, noting that although structural powers existed to reproduce inequality, individuals still demonstrate subjectivity. Pondering the structure of power in education became a theme in academic literature in the 1970s and 1980s, such as Paul Willis' (2017) study of British working class students *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*; Bowles and Gintis' (2011) study of education as a tracking mechanism meant to train future workers for a predetermined position in the exploitative, capitalist economy; and Michael Apple's *hidden curriculum* (2019). A shift occurred, however, which changed the focus from the reproduction of structural inequalities to the methods through which individuals challenge dominance through agency. As Levinson (2011) describes, "Theorists now agreed that the social and cultural reproduction of inequality, if and where it occurred, could not be foreordained by structure; it had to pass through the dynamics of cultural production, that is, the consequential making of meanings" (p. 115). Lest we fall into the trap of what Kristin Ross (1991) terms the *Bourdieu effect*, social inequality foreordained by structure, the tension between the notions of structure and agency must be kept taut for the sake of critical examination (p. xi). Keeping the tension between structure and agency is an important heuristic exercise, for it highlights the importance of recognizing structural power and the resulting inequalities, but also the importance of resisting power in ways that promote a culture of difference.

Yosso: Community Cultural Wealth

At stake between structure and agency are the voices of many underrepresented people, whose cultures are rich but are denied access to the kinds of

theories of learning that can promote this wealth in academic contexts. This is what Yosso (2005) would call *transformative resistance*. Speaking against educators' assumptions that children from underrepresented groups lack social and cultural capital, Yasso channels the voice of seminal feminist theorist and writer Gloria Anzaldúa:

> If we have been gagged and disempowered by theories, we can also be loosened and empowered by theories. Indeed, if some knowledges have been used to silence, marginalize and render People of Color invisible, then Outsider knowledges, mestiza knowledges and transgressive knowledges can value the presence and voices of People of Color, and can reinvision the margins as places empowered by transformative resistance. (as cited in Yosso, 2005, p. 70)

Yosso rejects building theories of education from lack, which result in the stifling and disempowerment of underrepresented populations. Instead, theories must affirm the knowledges and transgressive knowledges of people of color. Yosso sees the Black/White binary as stultifying to discourses on race. Instead, she builds on five tenets from critical race theory to foster a discourse that honors the varied and layered experiences of underrepresented populations. These tenets are 1) "The inter centricity of race and racism with other forms of subordination," 2) "The challenge to dominant ideology," 3) "The commitment to social justice," 4) "The centrality of experiential knowledge," and 5) "The trans disciplinary perspective." The resulting theory of community cultural wealth intends to bring different perspectives into the discourse on race and "transform the process of schooling" (Yosso, 2005, p.74).

While Yosso (2005) claims Bourdieu's (1977/2000) theory of cultural capital is a deficit approach, and that it incorrectly asserts one culture (middle class, White) above that of other cultures, she also claims to build the notion of community cultural wealth from cultural capital theory. Community cultural wealth is the accumulated capital of underrepresented populations through history. Rather than a deficit, it represents the wealth of knowledge, practices, habits, stories, etc., which inform their populations. In Yosso's words, "Centering the research lens on the experiences of people of color in critical historical context reveals accumulated assets and resources in the histories and lives of Communities of Color" (2005, p. 77). Furthermore, Yosso expands on the notion of capital itself, asserting that in order for community cultural wealth to cover the varying discourses of people of color, it must view capital beyond Bourdieu's notion of economic, social, symbolic, and cultural capital. *Aspirational capital* refers to hopes and dreams for the future even in the face of adversity. *Linguistic capital* refers to the various languages and styles of speaking people of color come to know from their cultural environments. *Familial capital* is that which comes from close family, extended family, and community members who instill valuable lessons in children. These lessons are not just for personal survival and well-being, but for the sake of the community as a whole. *Social capital* allows for communities of color to share information about scholarships, legal services, business loans, etc. These knowledges are passed down from individual to individual. *Navigational capital* refers to negotiating bureaucratic structures. Lastly, *resistant capital* refers to the ethos necessary to interrogate and challenge racism (Yosso, 2005). The aforementioned types of community cultural wealth symbolize critical race theory's assertion that underrepresented groups possess multiple sources of capital. Furthermore, they represent Yosso's argument that theory needs to embrace these sources of capital in order to foster a broader dialogue on communities of color.

Through the theory of cultural capital, Bourdieu (1977/2000) posits that education reproduces social inequalities by granting certain students access to cultural capital—the ideas, mannerisms, and ethics of the dominant culture. However, the longstanding structures of power in western culture limit underrepresented individuals' agency. Yosso (2005) builds on cultural capital theory to create a theory that empowers the voices and experiences of people from underrepresented groups and views them as community cultural wealth. Bourdieu and Yosso show us what is at stake in structure and agency, and my discussion of their theories is intended to carve out space for borderlands theory as a transformative space in which community cultural wealth is emphasized and dominant narratives of culture are contested within the community college classroom.

Borderlands and Pedagogy

The theory of community cultural wealth's value lies in its ability to shift away from a deficit lens and

to teach to students' wealth of knowledge. I contend that Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987/2012) offers the educator and students alike the space to "value the presence and voices of People of Color and…reinvision the margins as places empowered by transformative resistance" (Yosso, 2005, p.70). The kneading of the notion of borderlands into a theory forms the crux of Anzaldua's work. The borderlands are a physical place "where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country— a border culture" (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 25). It is also a mental place, as "our psyches resemble the bordertowns and are populated by the same people" (Anzaldúa, 2012, p.109). Anzaldúa terms this mental borderland the *new mestiza consciousness*; the mestiza (mixture of indigenous and European blood) is "in a constant state of mental nepantilism, an Aztec word meaning torn between ways" and "a product of the transfer of the cultural and spiritual values of one group to another" (p. 100). For Anzaldúa, this state of nepantilism is where opposites converge, conflict, and transform. Thus borderlands theory offers opportunity for transformation for ourselves as instructors, for our practice, our curriculum, and our students.

A sizeable amount of research discusses borderlands theory, of which Anzaldúa (1987/2012) is an essential piece, and its relation to pedagogy (Elenes, 1997). Theorists of critical pedagogy draw the most direct line between the two (Elenes, 1997). In her article "Reclaiming the Borderlands: Chicana/o Identity, Difference, and Critical Pedagogy," C. Alejandra Elenes (1997) discusses the contributions of borderlands theory to two prominent theorists of critical pedagogy, Henry Giroux (1992/2005) and Peter McLaren (1995). In Elenes' reading, Giroux sees border pedagogy as a democratic act in which difference is used to "extend the quality of public life" (Giroux, 2005, p. 28). Antiracist in nature, border pedagogy decenters "dominant configurations of power and knowledge" (Giroux, 2005). For community college teachers, this means decentering their own power and encouraging students to draw from prior experience (Elenes, 1997). McLaren's contribution to border theory is the notion that we (educators and students) can use personal narratives against culturally dominant narratives—what Elenes calls "an invocation to incorporate critical narratives as educational practices" (p. 369). Finally, Elenes offers her own interpretation of borderlands theory in education, calling for the incorporation of more Chicana/o concepts of the borderlands into critical pedagogy. Elenes warns theorists of critical pedagogy away from essentialism, instead encouraging them toward an embrace of Chicana/o cultural production and the multiple subjectivities represented therein. Giroux, McLaren, and Elenes show the transformative possibilities of borderlands theory in educational practice. With this direct line between pedagogy and borderlands theory being clear, I want to show the application of borderlands theory to a more current educational setting.

In the introduction to the fourth edition of *Borderlands/La Frontera* (2012), Norma Elia Cantú and Aída Hurtado recall its banning in the Tucson Unified School District's effort to dismantle the Mexican American Studies program, which is a sign of its continued importance to the struggle to value the presence and voices of marginalized communities. In Cati V. de los Ríos' (2013) study of a k12 ethnic studies program intended to "document what precisely these courses offer students, and thus what campaigns against ethnic studies… threaten to undermine and even eliminate," borderlands theory is the main framework (p. 59). As de los Ríos states, "Chicana/o educational scholars utilize a borderlands paradigm as a counter educational theory to examine educational discourses, structures, practices, and experiences that identify and acknowledge the depth and wealth of knowledge production by Chicanas/os, Latinas/os, and other people of color from their perspectives and lived experiences" (p. 61). Borderlands theory forms the backdrop of what de los Ríos (2013) calls *equitable curricular innovation* which "includes a reconceptualization of subject matter and the active recovery, (re)imagination, and (re)investment in indigenous paradigms" (p. 60). Moreover, equitable curricula must not introduce ethnic studies as an add on to an already existing *whitestream* curriculum, but as a curriculum that recovers and restores "counterhistorical narratives as well as epistemologies, perspectives, and cultures of those who have been historically marginalized and denied full participation within traditional discourses and institutions" (de los Ríos, 2013, p. 60). Despite the technical difference between curriculum, as de los Ríos discusses, and pedagogy, the borderlands paradigm applied consistently across practices exhorts educators to counter whitestream narratives of learning in favor of underrepresented and marginal-

ized populations. Borderlands theory offers a challenging fix for those steeped in traditional pedagogies and subject matter, as well as all those who identify with the power and structures from which the pedagogy needs to be recovered and restored.

Recommendations for Practice

The following recommendations for practice stem from a review of the literature on Anzaldúa's (1987/2012) borderlands theory, the recommendations of Giroux (1992/2005), McLaren (1995), and Elenes (1997), as well as from observations and interactions with faculty and students at NC community colleges. The nodes of deconstructing Whiteness, linguistic affirmation, and inclusion of males from underrepresented groups represent a confluence between elements of Anzaldúa's borderlands theory and diversity, equity, and inclusion work at NC community colleges. Elevating the voices and experiences of underrepresented students, I address how NC community college faculty can proactively respond to these voices and experiences through a pedagogy informed by Anzaldúa's borderlands theory.

Deconstructing Whiteness

As I engage with this work, I must interrogate my own positionality. As a heteronormative, cisgender, White male, I am tasked with examining how educators positioned similarly (i.e., who do not identify with a group that has been historically marginalized) leverage Gloria Anzaldúa's (1987/2012) work in their own pedagogy. Elenes (1997) answers this question in a critique of Henry Giroux's (1992/2005) discussion of border crossing in which he identifies himself as a White, male ally of people of color and women. Elenes replies to Giroux, "As people of color are working to deconstruct essentialist construction of subaltern identities, it is necessary to disempower White male identities. That is, progressive educators who are in solidarity with people of color must recognize their own positions of privilege and mark them as such" (p. 371). To truly act as an ally, and to allow a borderlands approach to take root across the curriculum, those in positions of power must deconstruct their racial identity—Whiteness in Giroux's case, my own case, and the case of many other NC community college instructors.

Unlike "many women and men of color" who "do not want to have any dealings with white people," Anzaldúa (1987/2012) sees White people as potential allies and offers specific actions they can take to establish this relationship with people from underrepresented groups (p. 107). Anzaldúa writes directly to Whites describing the tasks necessary to deconstruct Whiteness:

> Individually, but also as a racial entity, we need to voice our needs. We need to say to white society: We need you to accept the fact that Chicanos are different, to acknowledge your rejection and negation of us. We need you to own the fact that you looked upon us as less than human; that you stole our lands, our personhood, our self-respect. We need you to make public restitution: to say that, to compensate for your own sense of defectiveness, you strive for power over us, you erase our history and our experience because it makes you feel guilty—you'd rather forget your brutish acts. To say you've split yourself from minority groups, that you disown us, that your dual consciousness splits off parts of yourself, transferring the "negative" parts onto us. (Where there is persecution of minorities, there is shadow projection. Where there is violence and war, there is repression of shadow.) To say that you are afraid of us, that to put distance between us, you wear the mask of contempt. Admit that Mexico is your double, that she exists in the shadow of this country, that we are irrevocably tied to her. Gringo, accept the doppelganger in your psyche. By taking back your collective shadow the intracultural split will heal. And finally, tell us what you need from us. (p. 107)

The *dual consciousness* refers directly to that seminal point of western philosophy ascribed to the Cartesian dualism—binary relationships, i.e. mind/body, subjectivity/objectivity, us/them, light/shadow, positive/negative. Anzaldúa's borderlands theory eschews Cartesian dualism as a perpetuator of oppression and violence against underrepresented groups, instead forwarding a "radical interconnectedness" (Dahms, 2012, p. 119). In the passage above, Anzaldúa exhorts Whites to deconstruct their racial identities as reinforcing these oppressive types of binary relationships, and acknowledge our participation in the rejection and negation of minority identities that are, in fact, a part of us. Only after this deconstruction can we approach people from underrepresented groups to discuss what we need from

them—what we need to know and do to rejoin this community of radical interconnectedness.

There is no one practice that deconstructs Whiteness for teachers or for students. However, one possible entry point is centering activities and assignments on their own students' identities. For instance, as an instructor of English, I have the option of assigning various types of papers. The first paper I do in my class is a contemplative exercise inspired by Laura Rendon (n.d.) and based on the writings of Norma Elia Cantú's (2002) *Canícula: Snapshots of a Girlhood en la Frontera.* Cantú's recollections of her girlhood on the Texas-Mexican borderland are coupled with related photographs from her childhood. I provide students with these stories as mentor texts and give them enough time in class to interact with them and discuss them with each other. I then ask students to find a picture from home that is representative of their past and then write about it. The final product is to be the photo with a piece of writing that explains the photo's significance to their life, whether it is a story with some fictionalized elements, a personal narrative, a poem, or short story. Through this contemplative exercise the student's identity comes front and center. They are given the opportunity to write into their own story and share it with the class, which gives them an opportunity to claim space for their own personal history in the class. The photo story paper brings out stories from the margins, stories of families immigrating, making foods together, and struggling against poverty. This exercise creates a space for all students.

The first, and most important, part of deconstructing Whiteness, or any other position of power, is recognizing that it is there. Once the locus of power is identified in our identities, then we can begin to set it aside and make space for marginalized identities to "say themselves," or to "fill in the blanks" that would historically have been filled in for them (Elenes, 1997, p. 375). No matter what subject we teach, if we spend the time to identify power, both intrinsic and extrinsic, we can start the process of deconstructing Whiteness and allow marginalized populations to create and assert their narratives.

Linguistic Affirmation

Linguistic affirmation is the second way to merge pedagogy with borderlands theory. Scholars, educators, and administrators need to reassess the ways we, as those who hold power, build relationships with those who are at odds with English, a privileged language of power throughout the community college setting. Unlike Anzaldúa's (2012) time, Chicana/o literature is included in many American literature textbooks and syllabi, and Chicana/o studies is a well-regarded topic across many graduate programs. However, the discontinuation of past racist and oppressive practices does not mean that racist and oppressive practices do not exist in the present. It is not the intention of this paper to offer concrete solutions to this issue, nor is there one answer to this. For example, Richard Rodriguez (1988), a Latinx voice contemporary to Anzaldúa's, argues in his memoir *Hunger of Memory* that bilingual classrooms run the risk of delaying or denying a proper education to non-English speakers. I do not seek to engage in this debate or answer these questions, but to encourage community college scholars, educators, and administrators to consider the ways in which their practices in regards to language might contribute to racism and oppression.

In the introduction of this piece, I discussed my experience with Lulu, the student writing on *curanderismo*, asking whether she could use Spanish in her paper. I want to underscore the importance of intentionally welcoming the incorporation of a student's home language in their writing. In the book *Teaching Gloria E. Anzaldúa: Pedagogy and Practice for Our Classrooms and Communities*, Margaret Cantú-Sánchez (2020) writes:

> Not surprising in a country where many students speak a language other than English at home, it is a sensitive issue and one which many can identify. In these days of cyber bullying and social media communication, students can easily locate viral videos, articles, or hateful comments that target Spanish speakers as un-American, invaders, or criminals. Over three decades after the publication of *Borderlands*, "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" still hits home for many students who can relate to the hurt. (p. 31)

Students who speak Spanish at home, or a language other than English, feel isolated, and need their home languages to be honored in the texts they write and read. Our classroom environments need to be a space where they can share their experiences and knowledge. Doing so ensures equity and the opportunity for facilitating understanding and a sense of belonging between groups.

Anzaldúa (1987/2012) famously wrote: "So, if you really want to hurt me, talk badly about my

language. Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself" (p. 81). Anzaldúa calls the long history of prejudicial acts against speakers of languages other than English "linguistic terrorism" (p. 80). While largely written in English, *Borderlands/La Frontera* also contains Castilian Spanish, Nahuatl, north Mexican dialect, and Tex-Mex. Words in these languages are not translated, thus making its reading challenging for anyone not skilled in these languages. This is the language of the new mestiza, "a patois, a forked tongue, a variation of two languages" that grows from the pain of being scolded by family and teachers for having an accent or speaking in one language or another (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 77). Claiming the right to a new language is a means of recourse for those who live in the borderlands—recourse from "linguistic terrorism" (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 80).

Dagoberto Eli Ramirez and José L. Saldivar's (2020) chapter titled "Untaming the Wild Tongue: *Reconocimiento* and a History of Linguistic Terrorism on the U.S.-Mexico Border" in *Teaching Gloria E. Anzaldúa: Pedagogy and Practice for Our Classrooms and Communities* discusses *translanguaging* efforts at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV). Gloria Anzaldúa attended University of Texas Pan America, one of the two institutions that eventually came together to form UTRGV, and remembers, "At Pan American University, I and all Chicano students were required to take two speech classes. The purpose, to get rid of our accents" (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 76). Ramirez and Saldivar describe translingualism as allowing "students to make full use of their language capabilities, often combining both the English and local varieties of Spanish in class discussions and conversations, without fear of being told their English or Spanish is improper or not in keeping with some standard form of either" (Ramirez and Salazar, 2020, p. 201). At UTRGV the process of translanguaging spurred significant curricular changes, like the creation of a bilingual, first year transition course focused on student success and retention. The assignments of this course featured autoethnography and *testimonio* (testimonial narrative).

The UTRGV example is one of major curricular changes, but I contend that individual instructors in NC community colleges can introduce assignments with an eye towards translanguaging. We can encourage students to share their home language in writings that explore their personal identities and histories. Such assignments can often be implemented across disciplines with adjustments to course content and objectives. For one example of an assignment that encourages this type of translanguaging, please see "The Anzaldúa-Connected Personal, Family, and Community Use of Language Survey" (Appendix A). The assignment asks students to read Anzaldúa's "How to Tame a Wild Tongue"; speak with friends, family members, and community members about their use of the languages presented in the text; observe instances in the community where the use of these languages is taking place; and reflect on their findings as well as their position in relationship to languages in their community. This assignment asks specifically about Chicano languages, but it could easily be tailored to ask about all home languages and dialects.

Inclusion of Males from Underrepresented Groups

I argue that any of these pedagogical suggestions could improve the classroom not just for our Latinx population, but for all students. Do African American students not also have a patois used at home, or words or phrases passed down from ancestors? The intersectionality of borderlands theory and gender studies can help community college instructors build positive and equitable relationships with men of color broadly and help us mitigate the effects of toxic masculinity in schooling.

Anzaldúa's (1987/2012) work is at its core intersectional, as made clear in her definition of the new mestiza consciousness; the mestiza is "in a constant state of mental nepantilism, an Aztec word meaning torn between ways" and "a product of the transfer of the cultural and spiritual values of one group to another" (p. 100). The new mestiza is antiracist and feminist. Anzaldúa notes, "It is imperative that mestizas support each other in changing the sexist elements in the Mexican-Indian culture. As long as woman is put down, the Indian and the Black in all of us is put down. The struggle of the mestiza is above all a feminist one" (p. 106). As books like Moraga and Anzaldúa's *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (2015), Mohanty's *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (2003), and Román-Odio and Sierra's *Transnational Borderlands in Women's Global Networks: The Making of Cultural Resistance* (2011) can attest, borderlands theory is a rich source for feminist theory and

criticism. The presence of feminist readings and feminist informed pedagogies are at once beneficial to all, for they offer a space to consider their relationship to gender and sexuality.

Anzaldúa (1987/2012) discusses positionality in terms of gender and sexuality as the framework for resolving gender conflict between Chicanas and Chicanos. She explains that, as a result of Anglo oppression, Chicanos live in a cycle of "excessive humility"—"self effacement" around gringos, language inadequacy around Latinos, and "racial amnesia" and guilt around native Americans—which results in "a false machismo which leads him to put down women and even to brutalize them" (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 105). Just as Anzaldúa addresses what Anglos need to do to become allies with the new mestiza, she addresses Chicano males by writing:

> Though we understand the root causes of male hatred and fear, and the subsequent wounding of women, we do not excuse, we do not condone, and we will no longer put up with it. From the men of our race, we demand the admission/acknowledgment/disclosure/ testimony that they wound us, violate us, are afraid of us and our power. We need them to say they will eliminate their hurtful putdown ways. But more than the words, we demand acts. We say to them: We will develop equal power with you and those who have shamed us. (p. 106)

Anzaldúa later offsets these blunt comments to her Chicano brothers by saying that she has seen some gentle and vulnerable straight men, "the beginnings of a new breed, but they are confused, and entangled with sexist behaviors that they have not been able to eradicate" (p. 106). Chicanas and Chicanos share a common plight, but what separates them is a toxic "machismo… overlaying a deep sense of racial shame" which results in male oppression of women (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 105). Community college instructors must be keenly aware of the potential for gendered internal conflicts generated through racism...and the possibility of revolving them.

Critical to Anzaldúa's (1987/2012) feminist project is the critique of what we now refer to as toxic masculinity. Equally critical is an opportunity for a "new breed" of gentle and vulnerable straight men to disentangle themselves from sexist behaviors. The effects of toxic masculinity are clearly described in *Borderlands/La Frontera* as a shackling of both Chicanas and Chicanos to gender norms—a shackling which exists to this day and the effects of which are seen across the board in education. The particular problem this section seeks to address is how educators can support men from underrepresented groups in their educational endeavors while also helping to foster a "new breed" of men disentangled from sexist behaviors.

Toxic masculinity. Scholarship suggests toxic masculinity is a factor in the educational careers of men from underrepresented groups. J.M. O'Neil (1981) coined the term *male gender role conflict* to describe the discrepancies and conflicts between individual male identities and the identities imposed upon them by culture. Harris and Harper (2008) discuss the consequences of male gender role conflict in terms of underrepresented male student achievement in community colleges through interviews with four radically different men whom they classified as *the working White mechanic*, *the struggling Asian help seeker*, *the Latino homeboy*, and *the closeted Black gay achiever* (pp. 30-32). Across all their differences, each experienced male gender role conflict in their time in community college, resulting in "increased anxiety, feelings of inadequacy, and frustration" (Harris & Harper, 2008, p. 33). Male students, particularly underrepresented male students, continue to face the challenges of toxic masculinity into adulthood and postsecondary education.

The threats of male gender role conflict to participation in the classroom creates a perfect storm. If we allow underrepresented males to flounder in the classroom due to the expectations of toxic masculinity, we risk their departure from learning situations that could begin the process of disentangling themselves from sexist behavior. Harris and Harper (2008) make a few promising suggestions for "how to understand and help resolve identity conflicts." These include the following:

- Encourage male students to reconsider their negative perceptions of help seeking that many have been socialized to assume
- Provide opportunities for critical reflection on masculinity through journaling, course readings, analyzing popular media, and other assignments
- Increase male students' participation in campus activity programs that facilitate healthy identity development and lead to productive outcomes

- Provide opportunities for bonding by way of facilitated discussion groups and other activities that are popular among male students
- Collect campus level data (interviews, focus groups, and surveys for example) from male students to assess their gender specific needs
- Organize a committee of student affairs administrators, counselors, faculty members, coaches, and student leaders to provide proactive campus wide leadership in addressing issue concerning male students. (Harris & Harper, 2008, p. 33-34)

Indeed, Harris and Harper's suggestions are geared towards helping male students writ large, but it is often the case that good practices that help individuals from underrepresented groups also help all students (Wood et al., 2015). As educators, we can offer men of color a schooling experience that welcomes their talents and gifts and that offers a safe place to learn through failure and success. However, we cannot offer this environment if we do not work intentionally to scaffold it within our institutions, and to reflect Harris and Harper's suggestions in our daily practice in and outside the classroom. By staying in school, men from underrepresented groups have the best chance of eroding elements of toxic masculinity can hold them back, such as negative perceptions of education and sexist behaviors. As teachers, our role is to shore up their sense of belonging and facilitate their learning and retention from one semester to the next.

Conclusion

As North Carolina's demographic populations change, and we continue to work toward lofty goals like myFutureNC's "2 million by 2030," North Carolina community colleges need to consider new pedagogical approaches to reaching our students. The first step in this process is to facilitate a conversation between structure and agency. My conceptual framework engages in the theoretical work necessary for these discussions. Bourdieu's (1977/2000) cultural capital theory relates social inequality to structure, whereas Yosso's (2005) builds off Bourdieu's work to identify cultural wealth in underrepresented communities. Considering these theories helps emphasize the importance of situation pedagogy within a mindset of community cultural wealth.

Springboarding from this conversation of structure and agency, I use Anzaldúa's (1987/2012) borderlands theory as a way to counter whitestream narratives (de los Ríos, 2013) of learning in favor of underrepresented and marginalized populations. I propose deconstructing Whiteness, linguistic affirmation, and inclusion of males from underrepresented groups as potential pedagogical strategies particularly aligned with borderlands theory. No matter the strategy, though, the borderlands are here in North Carolina, and we as community college educators have a moral imperative to fully embrace this new dynamic. Perhaps with the inclusion of Anzaldúa in our work, we might have a chorus of students responding to the question, "Why do you go to school so much?" (Rivera & Vigil-Piñón, 1995, p.97) with one refrain, "Because I see myself there."

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Appendix A

Language Inventory and Reflection Assessment

Read the excerpt from Gloria Anzaldúa's "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" chapter from her *Borderlands* book. Then address the following items over the weekend with family at home and in the community:

1. Briefly discuss with family and friends the background information on Anzaldúa's eight identified Chicano languages we, as a culture, speak. Interview them and document quantitatively the number of these different eight identified Chicano languages they personally speak.
2. Ask the people you interview when it is that they use a particular language from the list. (How do they know when to use which one? What happens when they switch from one to another? Are there any issues they have faced when they opt to *translanguage* or switch between languages midstream?)
3. Go to at least three different venues out in public (store, theater, place of worship, park, mall, etc.) and list four people *languaging*. Note which of Anzaldúa's eight identified Chicano languages we, as a culture, speak are being spoken. Document quantitatively the number of these different identified Chicano languages people out in public are using. Take note of where people are, who they are with, and when certain particular languages are spoken.
4. Reflect deeply about your data about the languages being spoken in our Mexican American community and at home. What did you learn about yourself, your family, and the community at large through this personal research you did?

"The Anzaldúa-Connected Personal, Family, and Community Use of Language Survey" (Cantú-Sánchez et al., 2020, p. 217-219)