

# CHANGING FRAMES: ENGAGING MULTIPLE IDENTITIES IN CULTURAL CONFLICTS

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## Abstract

Border cultures, like Gloria Anzaldúa's Chicano community, provide a unique opportunity to examine the amalgam of two distinct cultures. While attempting to validate both Mexican and U.S. national identities, it is essential to examine the importance of individual and group identities. The article uses a sociological approach to examine the conflict between cultures. How can the people of these two nations create a shared identity? How can cultural intelligence<sup>1</sup> improve international relations?

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**Keywords:** Chicano, identity, cultural intelligence, borders

## Introduction

In the title of her book *Borderlands La Frontera*, Gloria Anzaldúa introduces us to the dual identity of the Chicano. During her early years with her family and community near the Texas border, she was primarily immersed in Mexican culture. Later experiences with those outside her community reshaped those identities and created new ones. The ongoing formation of her self-perception was significant in her writings for the Chicano movement.<sup>2</sup> Her book is a valuable tool for learning about identity creation and transformation in the Chicano community.

The Chicanos were birthed out of over 100 years of turbulent interaction between Mexico and the United States. Numerous border conflicts and migratory movements forged a new existence that is both Mexican and American. Despite improvements in the relationship between these two countries, there remains a need for growth. As evidenced by the American public's response to Mexican immigration, fear of the "other" still has an innate hold. One often thinks of the relationship between Mexico and the United States as governmental. I suggest this characterization is too impersonal, as elected officials reflect their constituency when they create United States' policies. A more comprehensive examination necessitates a look at the connection between the people of the U.S. and Mexico. According to 2006 estimates, there were over 11.5 million Mexican

immigrants in the United States, accounting for over 30 percent of the total immigrant population in the nation (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2009). Since then, the number has only continued to rise. These migrants have settled beyond the United States Southwest, with large populations in other regions of the country.

Unfortunately, the encounters between citizens of the U.S. and Mexico suggest a breach in understanding between the two cultures. The historical and cultural backgrounds of the two groups are such that without proper education misunderstandings and distrust are likely to be the norm. We, the citizens of Mexico and the United States alike, must understand how we differ and where we converge to bridge the chasm of “otherness” and build a shared identification. This end will be founded upon a mutual understanding of what it means to be Mexican and what it means to be American. To envision this concept, the text will first examine how identity motivates action, then it will expand the motivational concept of selfhood to a national level and propose an answer to the question, “How does culture contribute to the unification of a nation?” The Mexican American War (1846-48) affords an opportunity to examine the conflict between U.S. and Mexico national identities as well as how their overlap caused the birth of the Chicano culture. Finally, we will look within Gloria Anzaldúa’s description of evolving and duplicitous Chicano character for ways that conflicting identities coexist.

### **My Identity Made Me Do It**

Burke and Stets described identity as an “agent of action”, expressed in emotional, cognitive, conscious, and unconscious ways. For example, Anzaldúa consciously crafted her narrative centered on her identities as a woman, a lesbian, and a Chicana. However, she may have unconsciously processed symbols based on her identities as well. Burke and Stets define the function of identity as a moderator of perceptions in relation to our self-meanings. By controlling the meanings it perceives, identity tries to minimize discrepancies with how we see ourselves (Burke & Stets, 2009).

Maintaining selfhood is an ongoing process, which observes the flow of meaning. Burke and Stets’ Identity Theory bases the process of maintaining selfhood on four repeating steps. The individual’s identity standard defines acceptable patterns of behavior. For example, the criterion for masculine or feminine varies by culture. Perception creates input, which the mind compares and attempts match up with the memory of the standard. When a person receives an “error message”, representing behavior outside acceptable limits of their standard, they set out to minimize the disparity. For example, if a man perceives his tone is too feminine, he will adjust the tone to match his definition of masculinity. According to Identity Theory if no

course of action will correct the disparity, the individual may become upset, because they are unable to validate their place in their community. The amount of distress corresponds directly to the amount of variance from the identity standard (Burke & Stets, 2009). Although she felt a strong sense of belonging to her people, Anzaldúa defied traditional<sup>3</sup> Chicano gender roles and left home to actualize her sense of self.

Instead of ironing my brothers' shirts or cleaning the cupboards, I would pass many hours studying, reading, painting, writing. Every bit of self-faith I'd painstakingly gathered took a beating daily. Nothing in my culture approved of me. *Había agarrado malos pasos* [I had taken bad ways]. Something was 'wrong' with me. *Estaba más allá de la tradición* [I was beyond tradition] (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 38).

According to Social Identity theory, groups form distinctiveness, reduce uncertainty and contribute to a sense of self-worth (Tint, 2010). Conversely, individual members reinforce the oneness of the group (Burke and Stets, 2009). The many identities of the individual can contradict each other. The conflict between Mexican and United States national identities is exemplified in Anzaldúa's inner turmoil as the two vied for dominance within her Chicano self.

There is a part of me—the Shadow-Beast. It is a part of me that refuses to take orders from the outside authorities. It refuses to take orders from my conscious will, it threatens the sovereignty of my rulership. It is that part of me that hates constraints of any kind, even those self-imposed. At the least hint of limitations on my time or space by others, it kicks out with both feet (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 38).

Anzaldúa describes the perpetual conflict between her identities. Regardless of her apparent antipathy for white American culture, her writing bears a striking independent tone that could be attributed to her U.S. identity. The challenge for Anzaldúa was to find a way that her independence could exist in a collective society.

### **Unified by Legacy and Consent**

While Anzaldúa chose to relinquish aspects of Chicano existence in favor of her individualism, many choose to do the opposite. They will sacrifice or suppress elements of their personality that conflict with their national identity standard. In a speech delivered in Paris in 1882, Ernst Renan defined a "nation" as people or inhabitants in a land with a desire to live together. Without popular consent it would cease to exist (Renan, 1996). Thus, individual decision and will are paramount to the nation. One individual without the collaboration of another is powerless to affect change in his society. However, nationalism is born when people band together in support of "attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity on behalf

of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential ‘nation’” (Smith, 1991, p. 73). As demonstrated by their campaign to influence their citizens to associate themselves with the newly revolutionized Mexican identity, the Mexican government recognized the importance of Renan’s definition of nation. In their nationalist campaign following the 1910 Revolution, their goal was to create a shared “Mexican” culture (Smith, 1991).

Gloria Anzaldúa recognized the dominant influence of culture on beliefs. “We perceive the version of reality that it communicates.” Surface actions of a community are visible evidence of their culture; however, underlying these behaviors are the subtle identities that motivate these practices. Culture is like a pair of tinted spectacles. By switching glasses, or changing cultural perspective, we can see how viewing the world according to a different set of criteria can produce different perceptions of the same event. Octavio Paz summarized the relationship between culture and identity:

Civilization is a society’s style, its way of living and dying. It embraces the erotic and the culinary arts; dancing and burial; courtesy and curses; work and leisure; rituals and festivals; punishments and rewards; dealings with the dead and with ghosts who people our dreams; attitudes toward women and children, old people and strangers, enemies and allies; eternity and the present; the here and now and the beyond. A civilization is not only a system of values but also a world of forms and codes of behavior, rules and exceptions. It is society’s visible side—institutions, monuments, works, things—but it is especially its submerged, invisible side: beliefs, desires, fears, repressions, dreams (Paz, 1991, p.359).

Tradition and power perpetuate each nation’s culture. Citizens either band together in support of nationalism or rebel. In order to maintain peace, nations with overlapping borders (industrial or migratory) face the challenge of validating the other nation’s uniqueness without invalidating their own. The greatest disparity between identities produces the most violent conflict. For example, in the years prior to the annexation of Texas, the U.S. negotiated peacefully with Great Britain to establish the current U.S. northern border without invalidating the independence of the United States. However, the U.S.’s other identity of expansionism conflicted with Mexico’s newly formed sovereignty.

## **Two Stories of One War**

Research has shown a strong correlation between memory and identity. Memory is not a precise phenomenon. Each person and society will build their own history of events based on their shared trauma. Asking someone to forget about the past is like asking them to forget who they are (Tint, 2010). The narratives surrounding the Mexican American War reflect

the nationality of the storyteller. Key events and transparent statements from each side contextualize modern day Mexican and U.S. relations. They reveal facets of both national identities and how their intersection created the Chicano identity.

Conflict over Texas territory lead up to the Mexican American War (1846-48). The Spanish, and later Mexican, government needed a barrier to protect the people from attacks of the indigenous tribes of North America. By granting permits to American citizens under clear stipulations, they believed they would be protecting the northern cities of Mexico as well as developing wild frontier land. Within a few years, the presence of many illegal settlers led Mexico to suspect a United States takeover of Texas territory (Chávez, 5-6). Lorenzo de Zavala, *Viaje a lost Estados Unidos del Norte de América*, warned of the American influence:

Ten thousand citizens of the United States move into Mexican territory every year... Along with their industriousness, these settlers and merchants bring their habits of freedom, thrift, hard work, their austere customs and religion, their individual independence and their republicanism...

[The North American colonists] will be incapable of submitting to the military regime and ecclesiastical government which unfortunately still hold sway in Mexican territory, despite the republican-democratic constitution. They will propose what institutions ought to govern the country, and they will want them to be... a reality (Libura, Moreno and Márquez, 2004, p. 21).

As Zavala predicted, the Protestant settlers of Texas eventually rebelled against the Mexican army and overcame them. However, the treaty that Santa Anna signed under duress was quickly annulled, resulting in several years of skirmishes. With good reason, Mexico predicted that the United States would attempt to annex Texas. In a letter to Waddy Thompson dated August 23, 1843, José María Bocanegra warned that the Mexican government would consider the act of annexing rebellious Texas as declaring war on Mexico (Libura, Moreno and Márquez, 2004, p.303).

Despite the warnings of the Mexican government, U.S. Congress passed the mandate for annexation in 1845. The U.S. Manifest Destiny mindset fed the desire to expand the nation with little concern for the current occupants of coveted territories. President Polk sent an ambassador with the intent to purchase modern day California, Nevada and New Mexico, and to move the border of Texas from the Nueces River to the Rio Grande. Not long after Mexico refused to sell, the United States declared war (Chávez, 2007). Not everyone in the United States government supported the war or its unbridled expansionist goals. Albert Gallatin, Senator from Pennsylvania, wrote:

It has been demonstrated that the republic of Texas had not a shadow of right to the territory adjacent to the left bank of the lower portion of the Rio Norte; that, though she claimed, she never had actually exercised jurisdiction over any portion of it; that the Mexicans were the sole inhabitants and in actual possession of that district; that, therefore, its forcible occupation by the army of the United States was, according to the acknowledged law of nations, as well as in fact, an act of open hostility and war; that the resistance of the Mexicans to that invasion was legitimate; and that therefore the war was unprovoked by them, and commenced by the United States (Libura, Moreno and Márquez, 2004, p.303).

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the war in March 1848. As a part of the treaty, Mexicans living in the disputed territory became United States citizens. The California Land Act of 1851 formed a three-person committee to inspect all Mexican land grants. Owners were required to prove that the land was theirs within two years or forfeit it. Some of the Mexican inhabitants resisted the oppression with force. Others used peaceful methods, such as mainstreaming Mexican holidays. Since the United States did not grant settlers full citizenship, the Mexican community created *mutualistas*, groups which supported collective identity and provided benefits such as funeral and disability insurance (Chávez, 2007). In 1853, the Gadsden Purchase added an additional 29,142,000 Mexican acres to the United States. However, this purchase did not end all border disputes between the two countries (Chávez, 2007).

### **American Settlers and Divine Right**

During the years leading up to and following the Mexican American War, U.S. national identity was steeped in the idea of Manifest Destiny. This concept originated from a statement written by John L. O’Sullivan, an Irish-English New York immigrant:

The far-reaching, the boundless future will be the era of American greatness. In its magnificent domain of space and time, the nation of many nations is destined to manifest to mankind the excellence of divine principles; to establish on earth the noblest temple ever dedicated to the worship of the Most High-the Sacred and the True. Its floor shall be a hemisphere-its roof the firmament of the star-studded heavens, and its congregation of an Union of many Republics, comprising hundreds of happy millions, calling no man master, but governed by God’s natural and moral law of equality, the law of brotherhood... For this blessed mission to the nations of the world, which are shut out from the life-giving light of truth, has America been chosen... (Stephanson, 2009, p.25)

Manifest Destiny assumed that expansion of democracy would improve living standards in the western hemisphere and would be welcomed

by the indigenous citizens of other nations. Less than 100 years after the American War for Independence, O’Sullivan considered the United States as the opposite of Europe. Instead of the monarchies, which fought amongst themselves for power, the United States signified his ideal of “peace, rationality, and freedom” (Stephanson, 2009). O’Sullivan could not imagine other nations being disinterested in the U.S. version of “freedom”. The Monroe Doctrine of 1823 alliterated the United States preoccupation with its “new” form of government and declared itself the protector of the western hemisphere. One reason this unenforceable principle germinated in the American mind was other world powers chose not to prove it wrong. Meanwhile, America pushed the western border further into the “frontier” (Stephanson, 2009). In the end, Manifest Destiny metastasized into a “divine right” for the United States to “liberate” any land it wanted. It served as a powerful political rallying point in elections just prior to the Mexican American War (1846-48).

### **Somos (We Are) Mestizos**

Within the first 50 years of its independence from Spain, Mexico lost over half of its land to the United States. During this time tumultuous time, Mexico was trying to establish cohesion within the country. To solidify its control of the country following the Revolution of 1910, the government needed to establish what it meant to be a Mexican citizen. To accomplish this, they launched a grand nationalist campaign. Artists like Diego Rivera, Siqueros, and Orozco were commissioned by the government to paint murals that exemplified the history of Mexico. This was a surface display of a deeper Mexican identity campaign. Diego’s painting in the *Secretaría Educación* was designed to include all of the people of Mexico; however, the campaign was specifically centered on the *mestizo* (Legras, 2008). *Mestizos* are the descendants of Indian and Spanish civilizations, which first overlapped during the Spanish conquest (Clausen, 2007). Authors such as Vasconcelos, hailed the mixed nature of Mexican ancestry as the source of its greatness. His argument could be carried to the extreme logical conclusion that everything should be mixed, including the existing native populations. The indigenous who would not integrate impeded progress. After the Revolution, the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) sought to revitalize the image of the *mestizo* as the “true Mexican”. Through their alliance with the intellectual community, the PRI espoused the view that the only path to Mexican power was as a Spanish-speaking, united Mexican culture (Clausen, 2007).

The major failure of the movement was its treatment of the indigenous. Languages and cultures of the unassimilated Indian were viewed as impediments to the modernization of the country. Authors like Batalla,

recognized the legitimization of the *mestizo* as important; however, he believed it was wrong to place the *mestizo* culture above all others (Clausen, 2007).

Since the Revolution of 1910, national identity has been a central theme in Mexican thought. Authors such as Octavio Paz and Carlos Fuentes significantly contributed to the movement (Classen, 2007). In his book *El laberinto de la soledad* [The Labyrinth of Solitude], published in 1950, Paz identified the Revolution of 1910 as an extension of “nationality to races and classes which neither colonialism nor the nineteenth century were able to incorporate into our national life (Paz, 1991, p. 175).” Paz described Mexicans as “willing to contemplate horror”; lovers of myths, legends and fantasy; and practitioners of social communion with fiestas and special emphasis on social contact (Paz, 1991, p.23-24). Ironically, the primary thrust his text centered on was the concept that Mexicans are solitary creatures. He does not imply that they are inferior but different and isolated from other nations. Paz attributed Mexicans’ keenness for privacy on the need for protection from outsiders. He even identified the manliness of Mexican speech as another form of protection. “The Mexican *macho*—the male—is a hermetic being, closed up in himself, capable of guarding both himself and whatever has been confided to him.” As for a woman, Paz claimed she cannot be alive until “someone”, meaning man, awakens her. This deprives her of her own selfhood, intellect, and will.

...woman is never herself, whether lying stretched out or standing up straight, whether naked or fully clothed. She is an undifferentiated manifestation of life, a channel for the universal appetite. In this sense she has no desires of her own... The Mexican woman quite simply has no will of her own. Her body is asleep and only comes really alive when someone awakens her (Paz, 1991, p. 175).

Although it could be argued that Paz’s book was merely eloquent propaganda, the text reflects the dominant discourse of the day, coinciding with PRI policy. As such, it opens a window into Mexican culture following the 1910 Revolution. Octavio Paz also reflected on his visit to the United States and the people he encountered. While his conclusions were framed from a Mexican point of view, his observations are worth mention. The Americans he met were self-assured and confident. Americans actively campaigned for reform to the current system while still embracing it as a whole. He believed this was in part due to citizens of the United States believing that their nation would endure despite negative circumstances. Americans believed their world could be perfected. This resulted in a willingness and desire to work long hard hours. Paz considered Americans as realists with a sense of humor and an enjoyment of fairytales and detective stories (1991). Although his book was written 50 years ago, U.S. pop culture



still lauds these genres today. Paz's writing illuminates a few of the contrasts between Mexican and U.S. identities. From the Mexican American War of 1846-48 to the present, these identities have often been at odds in one form or another.

### **When Two Worlds Collide**

Due to their colonial history, both Mexico and the U.S. have a plethora of immigrant origins. Leading up to the war between the two in 1848, the U.S. was heavily populated with those who identified with northwest Europe or Africa, while Mexico's immigrants identified more with Spain or Africa. The intersection of these two "melting pots" formed the Chicano culture. As Anzaldúa's narrative tells us, their existence has been fraught with rejection from both of its parent civilizations.

We have a tradition of migration, a tradition of long walks. Today we are witnessing *la migración de los pueblos mexicanos* [the migration of the Mexican people], the return odyssey to the historical/mythological Aztlán. This time, the traffic is from south to north.

*El retorno* [The return] to the promised land first began with the Indians from the interior of Mexico and the *mestizos* that came with the *conquistadores* in the 1500s. Immigration continued in the next three centuries, and, in this century, it continued with the *braceros* who helped to build our railroads and who picked our fruit. Today thousands of Mexicans are crossing the border legally and illegally; ten million people without documents have returned to the Southwest (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 33).

As Anzaldúa's text indicates, Mexican immigration to the United States has spanned centuries. In fact, it is the longest-running labor migration in the world. Prior to the Mexican American War, one hundred thousand Mexicans were settled in what is now California, New Mexico and Nevada. After the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, the land these Mexicans owned became part of the territory of the United States (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2009). Since then, economic and political trends have stimulated waves of immigration. Mexicans account for over 30 percent of the thirty-seven million immigrants in the United States (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2009).

As we saw with individual character, perceptions that do not align with identity standards cause uneasiness until they can be resolved. When discrepancies cannot be resolved, an individual, or in this case a group, may react emotionally. Immigration policy influences national identity by defining the criteria for citizenship (Fraga and Segura, 2009). As a result, we see highly emotional and entrenched responses to proposed immigration reform. Some in mainstream United States culture fear their way of life will be invalidated by the presence of another. While civilizations cannot coexist without affecting each other, cohabitation does not necessitate one will erase

or replace the other. When considering immigration reform, it is essential to consider the affects on identity of both native born and naturalized citizens.

### **The Chicano is Born**

The U.S.-Mexican border *es un herida abierta* [is an open wound] 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. Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 25).

Anzaldúa identified the border as a place where a new culture is conceived. In her story, the whites of the Southwest considered the dark skinned inhabitants of the region as “aliens” despite many being legitimate American citizens. Cross and Gore in their Cultural Models of the Self-Theory posit that two ethnicities can be “alive” in one person. For some, the longer they live in the new culture the more dominant it becomes. For others, cultures take turns. For example, a Mexican American student displayed this type of “frame switching”. While at school, he spoke English; however, at home, he would “be Mexican again”, evidencing the possibility of a dual Mexican and American self (Cross & Gore, 2003).

For Anzaldúa, the first time she “saw” whites was in high school. “Until I worked on my master’s degree I had not gotten within arm’s distance of them. I was totally immersed *en lo mexicano*, a rural, peasant, isolated, *mexicanismo* (1987, p. 43).” Mexican and American identities are not mutually exclusive; however, to have both, an individual must feel accepted by both. Isolating immigrant groups can keep them from identifying with their new nation for generations. In Anzaldúa’s story, Pedro, a U.S. citizen, was deported. Although he was a fifth generation American, he was unable to speak English (1987, p. 26).

### **The Rise of the Chicano**

A Mexican American is “a citizen or resident of the U.S. of Mexican birth or descent.” The term Chicano is sometimes used interchangeably; however, it also applies to a political movement, which had its biggest push during the 1960s and 70s among U.S. college and university students (Rochín and Valdés, 2000). In some ways, Chicano character is the synthesis of the Mexican and American; however, the unique circumstances surrounding their existence in the U.S. has evolved them into a new culture in their own right. Because Chicanos have often found themselves discriminated against, they have even more need to band together. One of the

greatest concerns regarding the Chicano identity is the fear that their children will be Americanized, effectively wiping out their heritage and disconnecting them from the family (Blea, 1992).

For Anzaldúa, her Chicana personality was based on the resistance of the Aztec woman. Although the Aztecs were a patriarchal society, Anzaldúa believed that the women struggled for a voice. “The Aztec female rites of mourning were rites of defiance protesting the cultural changes which disrupted the equality and balance between female and male, and protesting their demotion to a lesser status, their denigration.” In a similar fashion, the Chicano culture expects the woman to be subservient to the man.

If a woman doesn't renounce herself in favor of the male, she is selfish... For a woman in my culture there used to be only three directions she could turn: to the Church as a nun, to the streets as a prostitute, or to the home as a mother. Today some of us have a fourth choice: entering the world by way of education and career and becoming self-autonomous persons. A very few of us (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 39).

A group centric culture has taught the Chicanos to support the community before looking to individual needs. Primary identity was first as a family role, last as an individual. Since Anzaldúa chose to spend her time studying, reading or painting instead of caring for the family (ironing her brothers' shirts), she was deemed “lazy” and selfish.

In Chicano culture, respect is reserved for the leaders in the community such as grandparents or fathers. Women are usually at the bottom of the power structure and garner little affirmation. Rules enforce the ethnic group's structure. Some communities allow no room for deviance, which Anzaldúa described as anything “condemned by the community” (Anzaldúa, 1987).

Anzaldúa recognized that identities shift over time in cultural, historical, and situational contexts. Throughout her various experiences, Anzaldúa's self slowly evolved. Some of her identities were more dominant at times than others. Although her language, culture, and history varied from dominant U.S. culture, she found unity in difference. This constituted a new identity through what Yarbrow-Bejarano called a politics of articulation. Although people may not share the same natural identification, they can create a shared narrative (1994). For example, a person not of Mexican ancestry could support the Chicano movement, because they identify with the narrative of injustice. Anzaldúa's new *mestizo*, or Chicana, has the ability to recognize her dual identity and accept it (Yarbrow-Bejarano, 1994). She took responsibility for finding a way to integrate her identities in a peaceful way.

## **La frontera o Borderlands: A New Perspective**

How can we use the concept of *coexisting identities* to improve the relationship between Mexican and U.S. cultures? Since identities naturally resist change, it typically requires long periods of time to produce even subtle changes; however, the research of Burke and Stets found four sources of change. First, situations can disrupt meanings in a way that the individual cannot counter. Second, when conflicting identities are activated at the same time, the individual is forced to choose one over the other. Third, due to circumstances and human nature, actions will not always be consistent with the identity standard. Finally, negotiation and the presence of others can result in taking the role of others and adapting for mutual verification (175-176). To produce improvements in U.S. and Mexican relations, this is the type of sociological change we need to see. It requires a move away from ethnocentrism toward greater cultural sensitivity.

Based on the principles of identity formation, there are three actions that each society could take to develop its understanding of the other. Childhood cultural surroundings and modeling create the first stage of character formation. Children need exposure to other cultures at a young age. Teachers have the responsibility to model acceptance of other ethnic groups, as well as to present students with opportunities to learn about them. The second method of identity formation is direct socialization or training. In U.S. society, citizens are trained to think from an American perspective. To increase cultural intelligence, intentional training needs to highlight the dynamics of culture and how a Mexican/U.S. frame might vary the perspective of the same event. To prepare students for an increasingly global world, cultural intelligence training should occur prior to post secondary education. Finally, reflected appraisals, how a person thinks others define him or her, influence how a person sees himself or herself. For example, if a student believes they are considered bright and hard working, they are likely to attempt to maintain that perception. In the example of Chicana women, their culture told them they had three options. Only a few brave women like Anzaldúa were able to challenge that standard.

Modeling, direct socializing, and reflected appraisals imply specific and actual policy changes that could be made, as well as necessary steps in education reform. By looking at the conflict from a sociological perspective rather than political or economical, the heart of the issue remains centered on the people of each nation, their identities, and their relationships. While education and policy reforms may be more all encompassing, individuals can look for ways to create a positive dialog between different cultural backgrounds. In his article on Conflict Transformation, Paul Lederach stated,

While rarely explicitly addressed, identity shapes and moves the expression of conflict. At the deepest level it is lodged in the narratives of

how people see themselves, who they are, where they come from, and what they fear they will become. It is also deeply rooted in their relationships with others (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 17).

Lederach suggests that one transformational practice is to develop the ability to perceive ipseity and relational elements of a conflict and engage them. Finding a place where people can respond to the others identity without reacting is the main challenge (2003). Successful dialog will not merely focus on finding a solution but also on building common ground. Due to the slow changing nature of selfhood, this is likely to be an ongoing learning process. Additionally, Lederach posits that there are more ways to learn about identity and deepen relationships than face-to-face interaction. For example, music, sports and shared work on community parks, etc. offer the opportunity to build a shared existence based on a shared activity and interest. While cultural festivals do not offer an opportunity for ongoing dialog, they create a safe and fun place for families to experience other cultures (2003).

## **Conclusion**

As we saw with isolated, Chicano, border communities, continuing the pattern of isolation between ethnic groups will only lead to more distrust of the “other”. Anzaldúa calls for a reckoning of her three cultures: white, Mexican and Indian. “... if going home is denied me then I will have to stand and claim my space, making a new culture—*una cultura mestizo*—with my own lumber, my own bricks and mortar and my own feminist architecture.” In the United States, there has been fear that Mexican immigrants will challenge what it means to be an American; however, research shows that each individual has multiple identities. In addition to personal identities, such as wife, son, or aunt, there can be dual cultural identities such as Irish, German, Italian, or Mexican American. If the people of the U.S. and Mexico learn to accept each other’s culture, the metamorphosis of the United States will continue as it always has as an immigrant nation. Each group influences the other and in the end makes it stronger.

People innately look at the world from the viewpoint of their cultural identity. By understanding the composition of an alien character, we can interpret a situation from one perspective, then put on another pair of tinted glasses and look at again. Different identities produce different perceptions. Being aware of the difference allows us to interact with cultural intelligence and address our identification needs as well as those of others.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Cultural Intelligence (CQ): “defined as the capability of an individual to function effectively in situations characterized by cultural diversity” (Ang and Van Dyne, 2008).

<sup>2</sup>Chicano movement: A Mexican American is “a citizen or resident of the U.S. of Mexican birth or descent.” The term Chicano is sometimes used interchangeably; however, it also applies to a political movement, which had its biggest push during the 1960s and 70s among U.S. college and university students (Rochín and Valdés, 2000).

<sup>3</sup>Traditional Chicano gender roles refer to a male dominated society that expects women to be centered on work at the home.

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