

Mini Course

Module I IDENTITY

Required:

Text: Rodolfo F. Acuña, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos* (New York: Pearson, 2014).

Reader: Rodolfo F. Acuña, ed., Guadalupe Compeán ed., *Voices of the U.S. Latino Experience* [Three Volumes] (Santa Barbara: ABC CLIO Books, 2008). Do not buy the book (too expensive); access the E-Book through your university library.

I. Definitions

Identity:

a) Rodolfo F. Acuña, “The Word Chicana/o”

Words have meanings, meanings that are supposed to be linked to reality. In creating a historical narrative, the meanings should be clear and best describe the reality of the times. Meanings can be obscured for political purposes; we often call this doublespeak: we say one thing and mean another. The Chicana/o Public Scholar argues that the word Chicana/o best describes the area of studies called Chicana/o Studies, and it expresses the idealism that we as a community should be striving for. The Mexican American generation proactively fought for our civil rights, demanding equality under the law as Americans. The Chicano Movement demanded equality as human beings and asserted the right to call themselves what they pleased. It was under the Chicano watch that entitlements were dramatically broadened and larger numbers of people of Mexican origin entered colleges and universities. They demanded their rights and did not see education as a privilege.

Just calling yourself a Chicano or any other word is not enough. You can call yourself a Christian but that does not necessarily make you a good person. “Words have meanings, meanings are supposed to be linked to reality.” The word Chicano in Spanish is gender neutral. But, many Chicana/o scholars felt that words should be transformative. Sexism was a problem that was tearing the movement apart. Chicano Studies became Chicana/o Studies to denote the equality of the sexes and underscore that gender discrimination damages our humanity as much as racism does. The redefinition of the word led to an examination of homophobia. Thus, the meaning of the word Chicana/o expanded reality.

The 1970s and 1980s saw large numbers of Mexican and Latin American immigrants. We failed to link the meaning of the word Chicana/o to the reality of the immigrant population that now rivaled the second generation in numbers. The Mexican American and Chicano Generations had widened the entitlements of all immigrants. However, many of these immigrants held on to old definitions, such as equating the word Chicano to chicanery or low class. Many continued to link their struggle for equality to their home countries rather than linking it to their new reality. At the same time, the arrival of millions of Mexicans and Latin Americans dramatically expanded the

“Latino market.” Government agencies and commercial enterprises looked upon the Mexican American and Latino as commodities and linked these new definitions to illusions.

To broaden the discourse, we are including articles by the martyred Ruben Salazar, Frank del Olmo, and Cheech Marin.

Ruben Salazar, “Who Is a Chicano? And What Is It the Chicanos Want?,” Los Angeles Times, Feb 6, 1970; pg.

B7 <http://forchicanachicanostudies.wikispaces.com/file/view/Ruben%20Salazar.pdf/61339512/Ruben%20Salazar.pdf>

Frank del Olmo, “Latinos by Any Other Name Are Latinos,” Los Angeles Times, May 1, 1981;) pg. D11

<http://forchicanachicanostudies.wikispaces.com/file/view/Frank%20del%20Olmo.pdf/61343630/Frank%20del%20Olmo.pdf>

Cheech Marin, “What is a Chicano: Who the hell knows?” May 3, 2012 <http://cheechmarin.com/2012/05/03/what-is-a-chicano/>

Cheech: To me, you have to declare yourself a Chicano in order to be a Chicano. That makes a Chicano a Mexican-American with a defiant political attitude that centers on his or her right to self-definition. I’m a Chicano because I say I am.

But no Chicano will agree with me because one of the characteristics of being Chicano is you don’t agree with anybody, or anything. And certainly not another Chicano. We are the only tribe that has all chiefs and no Indians. But don’t ever insult a Chicano about being a Chicano because then all the other Chicanos will be on you with a vengeance. They will even fight each to be first in line to support you.

It’s not a category that appears on any U.S. Census survey. You can check White, African-American, Native-American, Asian, Pacific Islander and even Hispanic (which Chicanos hate). But there is no little box you can check that says Chicano. However, you can get a Ph.D. in Chicano Studies from Harvard and a multitude of other universities. You can cash retirement checks from those same prestigious universities after having taught Chicano Studies for 20 years, but there still no official recognition from the government.

No wonder Chicanos are confused.

So where did the word Chicano come from? Again, no two Chicanos can agree, so here is my definition what I think. In true Chicano fashion, this should be the official version.

The word “Chicano” was originally a derisive term from Mexicans to other Mexicans living in the United States. The concept was that those Mexicans living in the U.S. were no longer truly Mexicanos because they had given up their country by living in Houston, Los Angeles, “Guada La Habra,” or some other city. They were now something else and something less. Little satellite

Mexicans living in a foreign country. They were something small. They were chicos. They were now Chicanos.

If you lived near the U.S.-Mexican border, the term was more or less an insult, but always some kind of insult. In the early days, the connotation of calling someone a Chicano was that they were poor, illiterate, destitute people living in tin shacks along the border. As soon as they could get a car loan and could move farther away from the border, the term became less of an insult over the years. But the resentment still lingered.

Some ask “Why can’t you people just all be Hispanic?” Same reason that all white people can’t just be called English. Just because you speak English or Spanish does not mean that you are one group. Hispanic is a census term that some dingo in a government office made up to include all Spanish-speaking brown people. It is especially annoying to Chicanos because it is a catch-all term that includes the Spanish conqueror. By definition, it favors European cultural invasion, not indigenous roots. It also includes all Latino groups, which brings us together because Hispanic annoys all Latino groups.

Why? Because they’re Latino and it’s part of their nature. (Aren’t you glad you asked?)

So what is a “Latino?” (It’s like opening Pandora’s box, huh?) “Latino” is refers to all Spanish-speaking people in the “New World” – South Americans, Central Americans, Mexicans, and Brazilians (even though they speak Portuguese). All those groups and their descendants living in the United States want to be called Latinos to recognize their Indian roots.

Mexicans call it having the “Nopal” in their face, that prickly pear cactus with big flat leaves that Mexicans eat, revere, and think they look like. When you go to Mexico and walk down the street in Mexico City, it’s like walking through a Nopal cactus garden. Nopal is everywhere.

For Latinos who don’t want to be so “Nopalese,” there’s always “Mexican-American.” Or the dreaded “Hispanic” that should only be used when faced with complete befuddlement from the person asking what you are.

Because I am the only official version of what being Chicano is, I say Mexican-American is the politically correct middle ground between Hispanic and Chicano. Like in the song I wrote to be sung by a Chicano trying to be P.C. “Mexican-Americans; don’t like to just get into gang fights; they like flowers and music; and white girls named Debbie too.”

All those names made it confusing for me growing up. I lived in an all-black neighborhood, followed by an all-white one, and other kids in the always called me Mexican in both neighborhoods.

It never bothered me until one day I thought to myself “Hey, wait a minute, I’m not Mexican.” I’ve never even been to Mexico and I don’t speak Spanish. Sure, I eat Mexican food at family gatherings where all of the adults speak Spanish, but I eat Cheerios and pizza and hamburgers more. No, I’m definitely not a “Mexican.” Maybe I was “Mexican-ish,” just like some people were “Jew-ish.”

These thoughts all ran through my mind when I chased down an alley by five young African-American kids. “Yo, Messican!” they called out in their patois. I stopped in my tracks and spun around. “I’m not a Mexican!” I shouted defiantly. They stopped too, then stared at me. The leader spoke, “Fool! What you talking ‘bout? You Mexican as a taco. Look at you.”

“No,” I said. “To be a Mexican, you have to be from Mexico. You’re African-American. Are you from Africa?”

“N-. You crazy. I’m from South-Central, just like you.”

“That’s exactly what I’m talking about!” I said. “Did anybody knock on your door and ask you did you want to be African-American?”

“Hell no! The social workers don’t even knock on our door, they too scared,” he said, cracking everyone up.

“Then why you letting people call you whatever they want? What do you want to be called?” I asked.

He looked at the others, thought about it for a few seconds and then said proudly, “I’m a Blood.”

“Ooo-kay,” I said making it up as I went along. “Then you’re a Blood-American.”

That seemed to go over well. They all nodded. “Yeah, we Blood-American.”

“Well, then go out and be the best Blood-Americans that you can be. Peace, brothers, I got to blow.” I walked away and so did they. Self-identification saved the day. Yet, I still was dissatisfied with what I wanted to call myself.

When I got home, there was a party going on. A bunch of relatives had come over for dinner and everybody was sitting around gabbing and drinking beer. My Uncle Rudy was in the middle of a story: “So, I took the car into the dealer and he said, ‘Yeah, the repairs gonna run you about \$250.’ Two-fifty? Estas loco? Hell, just give me a pair of pliers and some tin foil. I’ll fix it – I’m a Chicano mechanic. Two-fifty, mis nalgas.”

And that was the defining epiphany. A Chicano was someone who could do anything. A Chicano was someone who wasn’t going to get ripped off. He was Uncle Rudy. He was industrious, inventive, and he wants another beer. So I got my Uncle Rudy another beer because, on that day, he showed me that I was a Chicano. Hispanic my ass, I’ve been a Chicano ever since.

Cheech Marin, Originally published in the Huffington Post. This is the first article in a three-part series on “What is a Chicano” by actor, director, and art advocate Cheech Marin.

II. The Study of Chicana/o

Rodolfo F. Acuña, "Chicana/o Studies: What are they?," October 2010

It has been forty years since the first Chicano Studies programs were initiated on campuses throughout the United States. This accomplishment is a tribute to the tenacity of less than a couple of hundred students who were concerned about the failure of the schools to educate Mexican American students, pointing to the horrendous dropout rate in the public schools.

Since then few scholars of any race have examined this historic phenomenon, treating CHS just like any other product of the sixties, forgetting how and why they came about. In many cases it has become the preoccupation of many Chicana/o faculty members to prove their legitimacy. It is not uncommon for them to claim this legitimacy by arguing that Chicana/o studies is a content field distinguishing CHS programs from service departments and pedagogical fields such as education.

Every wave of scholars for the past forty years has ignored important epistemological questions. Because of this, we have to suffer through a rash of conferences rehashing movement events without dealing with the genesis of individual programs or the nature of CHS. Instead of probing how and why CHS came about, we theorize what it is and avoid an epistemological understanding.

Few scholars have attempted to answer why the development of CHS has been so uneven. They have not dealt with basic questions such as the historical differences within southwest states themselves. For instance, Texas and California are often as different as the disparate Central American nationalities. Population and modes of production in these states differ; even within the states, there are the distinctions (e.g., northern and southern California, El Paso, the Rio Grande Valley, and San Antonio).

Under the sway of the elitism of the academy, many CHS scholars claim that CHS is a content field. They claim that they are just as rigorous as the other disciplines. It is common in academe for the hard sciences to occupy the top of the pyramid, followed by the social sciences, the humanities, and the arts with education occupying the lowest step—research rules, not teaching.

In academe, rarely are teaching methods discussed. Methods more often refer to research methods. Within this logic quantitative techniques trump qualitative evidence. Similarly, research institutions trump teaching colleges with the state rewarding researchers more generously. The teaching load at research and teaching institutions is distinguished by the actual time devoted to teaching. Professors at research institutions teach lighter loads, get more sabbatical time, and get more grants to fund research.

This pecking order has influenced the development of the disparate programs. For instance, it has only been until recently that the Chicana/o studies department at California State University at Northridge has been able to attract Chicanas or Chicanos with doctorates from tier one institutions. I have spoken to Chicanas/os who professed their commitment to the revolution who said they had not gotten a PhD to work the same hours as a high school teacher.

This attitude was common to Chicanas/os across the board, regardless of gender or whether they were Marxists, feminists, or nationalists, and it profoundly affected the development of what is today called Chicana/o studies.

In considering outcome, it would have been important to define and debate teaching methods. My first proposition is that there is a difference between Chicana/o studies programs that are defined by a curriculum rather than an individual course in the traditional disciplines. For instance, Chicana/o history is not Chicana/o studies, it is a field within the discipline of history where common historical methods are used to research, study, and teach that corpus of knowledge of Mexican American people. In the same vein, Chicana/o literature does not study, research, or teach CHS but it is a field within the discipline of literature.

My second proposition is that Chicana/o studies are not defined by content, but rather they are bound together by a pedagogy that defines their purpose. It is the foundation used to motivate and teach Latina/o students. The content is an important motivational tool to inspire students to learn and to correct the negative self-images that have come about through the process of colonialism. This is not unique to Mexican Americans. The national question raged in Europe during the latter part of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries.

Hence, content fields studying CHS should have developed within the context of a pedagogy, which should have given it a sense of purpose.

Other than perhaps at California State Northridge, the focus has been on the development of content fields. Little integration has taken place. There has been an artificial pursuit of finding a common research methodology which is almost impossible. It is not enough to say that a multidiscipline approach is part of its course of study. A more natural linking is pedagogy.

In struggling toward an identity for Chicana/o studies, I have tried to convey this particular vision to colleagues. However, they often ignore me and I am certain that they write it off as *cada loco con su tema* (every madman to his own opinion).

I did not find much of an audience until I came into contact with La Raza Studies program at the Tucson Unified School District. Today Chicana/o studies is under attack by conservatives and neo-Nazis who say that it is unpatriotic because it teaches about Mexicans and emphasizes teaching methodology using the principles of Paulo Freire, John Dewey, and Edwin Fenton—rejecting the model that students should be warehoused.

This flies in the face of the goal of educating students. The Tucson outcome has been more than encouraging. Currently, Latino and African American males have the lowest third grade reading test scores in the nation. The Latino high school dropout rate nationwide hovers around 56 percent, higher if the dropout from middle school to high school is included. Only about 24 percent of graduating Latinos go on to college, mostly to community colleges.

Tucson's Unified School District's Ethnic Studies and Mexican American Studies programs has reversed these trends. The dropout rate in this program is 2.5 percent. Students in the program

significantly outperform their peers on the state's standardized AIMS tests and 66 percent of these students go on to college.

This semester the program is offering 43 sections and serves 1500 students in six TUSD high schools, with similar programs at the middle and elementary school levels. “The classes are designed to be culturally relevant – to help the students see themselves in the curriculum and make them see why education is important for them. If they see themselves in the educational literature, they find more reasons to read and write, to research and draw conclusions.”

Central to La Raza Studies is the use of critical theory which essentially means that they use the Socratic Method, a powerful, teaching tactic for fostering critical thinking. It focuses on giving students questions, not answers. It has been used in the better law schools to prepare American law students for Socratic questioning.

Apparently, critical thinking threatens many white Americans who do not want Mexicans questioning their version of the truth. In the late 1960s, California Superintendent of Schools Max Rafferty called a reform movement advocating a similar inquiry method of teaching social science subversive because it taught students to question.

Logically, Americans should be elated that Mexicans are learning and are motivated to go to college. So why are they trying to eliminate it? The truth be told, they don't want Mexicans to succeed. They want them to live up to the stereotype and to be subservient. They don't want competition for higher paying jobs; they don't want to endanger their poorly paid reserve labor pool.

People in La Raza Studies are serious about their pedagogy. This past July they held the 12th Annual Institute for Transformative Education in partnership with the University Of Arizona School Of Education. The institutes feature educators from across the United States. <http://www.tusd.k12.az.us/contents/depart/mexicanam/index.asp> . The presenters and the participants are multiracial, (e.g., scholars such as Pedro A. Noguera, Executive Director, Metropolitan Center for Urban Education New York University, and Angela Valenzuela, University of Texas Austin). Their focus is to improve teaching effectiveness.

For the past forty years, every reform measure that involves better teaching has been shot down by the American electorate—bilingual education, affirmative action, racial integration, smaller class sizes, etc. Even though programs such as La Raza Studies prove that programs work when they are properly thought out and supported, a pretext is almost always found to eliminate them.

Americans want to continue the same old blame game. In the 1920s they blamed Mexican culture and sought to Americanize Mexican American youth. In the sixties they blamed the parents, the Mexican family. Today they are blaming the teachers.

The bottom line is that the United States has effectively saved trillions of dollars in capital by draining professionals trained from other countries; at the same time, it outsources well-paying technical jobs and production to poor countries. The United States does not need an educated workforce. It goes back to “why educate Mexicans, who's going to pick our crops?” Rather than

educating Latinos, the solution is to not educate them, but to build more prisons. Keep them south of the border, and if we need them, rent them, like we do U-hauls.

III. They speak....

What is a Chicano? <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v8npwn61ZXk>

I Am Joaquin part one of two: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U6M6qOG2O-o>

Read the following articles on identity

Finding Identity Within the Chicano Movement

<http://voices.yahoo.com/finding-identity-within-chicano-movement-6695464.html>

Chicano Identity in Literature

<http://www.enotes.com/chicano-identity-literature-93-salem/chicano-identity-literature>

Dr. David Sanchez [Moderator], "The Word Latino excludes the Native American," Mexican American University (December 9,

2005) http://www.mexicanamericanuniversity.com/forum/view.php?site=mexicanamericanuniversitycom&bn=mexicanamericanuniversitycom_mauforum2&key=1126577705

What does the author say about identity? Do you agree, why or why not?

IV. Where Latinos Live

A map of America's Hispanic population, county by county.

By Nick McClellan|Posted Monday, July 9, 2012, at 6:36 AM ET

http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/map_of_the_week/2012/07/map_of_america_s_hispanic_population_county_by_county.html

Seth Motel and Eileen Patten, "Characteristics of the 60 Largest Metropolitan Areas by Hispanic Population," Pew Hispanic Center, September 19, 2012

<http://www.pewhispanic.org/2012/09/19/characteristics-of-the-60-largest-metropolitan-areas-by-hispanic-population/>

Jeffrey Passel and D'Vera Cohn, "Unauthorized Immigrants: 11.1 Million in 2011," Pew Hispanic Center, December 6, 2012,

<http://www.pewhispanic.org/2012/12/06/unauthorized-immigrants-11-1-million-in-2011/>

Jeffrey Passel and D'Vera Cohn, "How Many Hispanics? Comparing Census Counts and Census Estimates," Pew Hispanic Center, March 15, 2011

<http://www.pewhispanic.org/2011/03/15/how-many-hispanics-comparing-census-counts-and-census-estimates/>

Jeffrey Passel, D’Vera Cohn and Mark Hugo Lopez, “Hispanics Account for More than Half of Nation's Growth in Past Decade:Census 2010: 50 Million Latinos,” Pew Hispanic Center,” March 24, 2011

<http://www.pewhispanic.org/2011/03/24/hispanics-account-for-more-than-half-of-nations-growth-in-past-decade/>

Seth Motel and Eileen Patten, “The 10 Largest Hispanic Origin Groups: Characteristics, Rankings, Top Counties,” Pew Hispanic Center, July 12, 2012

<http://www.pewhispanic.org/2012/06/27/the-10-largest-hispanic-origin-groups-characteristics-rankings-top-counties/>

Seth Motel and Eileen Patten, “Statistical Profile, Hispanics of Mexican Origin in the United States, 2010,” Pew Hispanic Center,” June 27, 2012

<http://www.pewhispanic.org/2012/06/27/hispanics-of-mexican-origin-in-the-united-states-2010/>

V. Art and the Chicana/o

How do the arts express identity? See: Art and Ethnic

Politics, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ejymct6ipMQ&feature=related>

Exploration with Painter Malaquias

Montoya, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3zRxSnDVKVg&NR=1> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NGuD8wD2Bl8&feature=relmfu>

Latino art & Latino artist videos and articles at Latinopia.com

<http://latinopia.com/category/latino-art/>

JUDY BACA – IN HER OWN WORDS

<http://latinopia.com/latino-art/judy-baca/>

HARRY GAMBOA, JR. – IN HIS OWN WORDS

<http://latinopia.com/category/latino-history/latinopia-event/>

VI. Epistemology

Students always ask why scholars differ in their interpretations of history. The answer is that they often arrive at different conclusions from how they derived their knowledge. For example, the debate over creation: A person basing his or her knowledge on faith may reach a different conclusion than one basing it on science. A recent article in the Smithsonian Magazine demonstrates this. In Simon Baatz, “Leopold and Loeb's Criminal Minds,” Smithsonian magazine, August 2008, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history-archaeology/criminal-minds.html> the author retells the story of the famous Leopold and Loeb trial where two teenage friends killed a 10 year old boy because they wanted to commit the perfect crime. The following

from the Baatz article cited above; the whole article can be obtained by clicking on to the Smithsonian link above. How do you think this piece pertains to the class?

The question of who was to blame for the Mexican Texas and Mexican American Wars involves different interpretations. A majority of Americans and a host of American historians blame Mexico. Because I have taken the opposite view some historians have attacked me. But what it comes down to is Faith versus the documents. See <http://www.tamu.edu/ccbn/dewitt/dewitt.htm> for a host of primary documents dealing with both. The question in the Smithsonian article would be how and why did the psychiatrist differ? The answer sheds light on the Mexican American War.