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Hybridity as Cultural Capital on the US/Mexican Border

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction for the degree Master of Arts

in

Anthropology

by

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Committee in charge:

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2007

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University of California, San Diego

2007

For EB

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Hybridity as Cultural Capital on the US/Mexican Border

By

Theodore Karwoski Gideonse

Master of Arts

University of California, San Diego, 2007

Professor Nancy G. Postero, Chair

The question posed in this paper is: What are the cultural, political, and

psychological processes that change hybrid experience and identity into cultural capital?

In order to answer this question, I first examine the history of the US-Mexican border, the

development of hybridity at that site, and, utilizing theories of power and practice, how

hybridity can become cultural capital. In the second chapter, I look at several recent

ethnographies of the US-Mexican border to see how people make use, or do not make

use, of their hybridity, and I examine how the three ethnographers' theoretical positions help or hinder their analysis. I eschew the limited discourse-based model of identity in the third chapter, and instead put forth a psychodynamic theory of identity construction that allows for the use of hybridity as cultural capital. Finally, in the conclusion, one of my informants explains his own strategic use of practices and knowledge that he learned while negotiating life in the border zone, and I offer some final thoughts about the situational reasons for the development of hybridity as cultural capital.

Juan Pablo was born in the Tijuana, the ninth of ten children. Growing up, he was under-educated and his family had little money. And when he came out as gay at 18, his father and older brothers rejected him. His family life was now even less certain than his economic prospects. But Juan Pablo could see California, which meant he could see both wealth and sexual freedom. Just as millions of Mexicans had before (and after) him, Juan Pablo crossed the physical border with ease. But unlike most of those millions, Juan Pablo was able to socially and economically integrate into the upper middle class of Anglo San Diego. When I met him more than 20 years later, Juan Pablo was the center of a large group of upwardly mobile gay and straight San Diegans. He co-owns a thriving hair salon, and many of his clients are wealthy Republican women from the upper crust of San Diego. He has not assimilated, at least not in the way that so many immigrants to the United States have in past, eradicating their accents, whole-heartedly embracing American culture and denying their culture of origin. Juan Pablo does not hide his Mexican-ness; he still speaks English with a thick accent, his home is decorated with Mexican folk art, and most of his friends know that he is an illegal alien. In fact, some support his illegality by using their names and addresses on phone and business accounts that he needs to work and live. While most people who live on the US-Mexican border have schemas for dealing with multiple cross-cultural situations—shopping, crossing the border, conducting business—few knowingly use their hybridity to gain and exercise power. But Juan Pablo has.

The question I am posing in this paper is: How did Juan Pablo turn his hybrid experience and identity into cultural capital? What are the cultural, political, and psychological processes that change hybridity into cultural capital? In order to answer this question, I first examine the history of the US-Mexican border, the development of hybridity at that site, and, utilizing theories of power and practice, how hybridity can become cultural capital. In the second chapter, I look at several recent ethnographies of the US-Mexican border to see how people make use, or do not make use, of their hybridity, and I examine how the three ethnographers' theoretical positions help or hinder their analysis. I eschew the limited discourse-based model of identity in the third chapter, and instead put forth a psychodynamic theory of identity construction that allows for the use of hybridity as cultural capital. Finally, in the conclusion, Juan Pablo explains his own strategic use of practices and knowledge that he learned while negotiating life in the border zone, and I offer some final thoughts about the situational reasons for the development of hybridity as cultural capital.

SCAR TISSUE OR TATTOO?

Hybridity and cultural capital at the border

> 1950 mile-long open wound
> > dividing a *pueblo,* a culture,
> > running down the length of my body,
> > > staking fence rods in my flesh,
> > splits me   splits me
> > > *me raja   me raja*   (Anzaldúa 1987:24)

In her manifesto-memoir *Borderlands*/La Frontera, Gloria Anzaldúa describes the border that separates the United States and Mexico in violent terms—as a gash, a wound, and a barbed, steel curtain. It is both a deep, seeping cut in the flesh of a heavily personified Aztlán, the mythical and metaphorical homeland of the Chicano/a, and it is the tool, the weapon, the knife shredding the land, her skin, and the souls of her people. Anzaldúa's metaphor seems somewhat contradictory. How can the border be the knife *and* the cut? Yet, it is both. The border is both wound and weapon. In order to understand this paradox, I will first briefly trace the history of the US-Mexican border and then explain Anzaldúa's call to arms. I then examine her notion of the "new mestiza," first, through the lens of theories of hybridity, and second, through theories of practice and power. Finally, I explain how hybridity can be strategically employed, like "cultural capital," and therefore a tool for socioeconomic success.

The border between the United States and Mexico

For decades after the border was "drawn," it was a simply a line on a map. The land itself was unmarked except for the rare customs office or along the Rio Grande, the only geographic feature that coincides with the political boundary. Eventually, in the 1880s, the United States government marked the border by erecting hundreds of white stone obelisks from the Pacific to the Gulf of Mexico; from the base of each obelisk, a traveler could see another to the west and another to the east. At the time, the border was only a nationalistic theory. It was porous; Anglos and Mexicans crossed at will, often not even knowing that they were crossing the line in the dirt, or sand, or under the river. Nevertheless, the border mattered. "Indeed, this lack of concern with firm demarcation of the boundary was a sign of its *de facto* categorical absoluteness between the two nations, born of military conquest," writes Michael Kearney (1998:119). The border was both a nationalist and a racialist project. As Benedict Anderson (1983) explains, the nation-state needs absolute boundaries as much as it needs nationalism, and the United States needed the "Anglo Self and the Mexican Other" (Kearney 1998:119) not only for its self-definition, but also for its self-perpetuation.

The border, and what it creates, is inherently political, drawn during negotiations between political entities, by governments in the throes of complex power struggles. With the signing of Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, the United States increased its size by 50% and Mexico was severed nearly in half. Eight thousand Mexicans were left on the northern side, living on what had been claimed by Americans as their Manifest Destiny, taken after a nakedly imperialist war. Nicholas P. Trist, the problematic envoy the United States, and the Mexican government wrote both the line in the sand and the idea of citizenship into the treaty. The people who were living in what would become the border

zone became United States citizens, but it was a decidedly second class citizenship. First, their land was taken away, and then, as white settlers mobbed the southwest, their local political power vanished as well (Camarillo 1979).

These new Americans on the northern side of the border were no longer politically Mexican, but they were still ethnically marked. And they suffered for it, not only because of the racism of their conquerors but also because they economy of the United States was an aggressive capitalism, while the Mexican economy, especially in the northern territories, closely resembled feudalism (35-37). They did not compete well, and as they settled into their new roles, they settled into the underclass. The border disenfranchised the southwest's most entrenched inhabitants. They were no longer Mexicans; they were not yet Americans. The mythical American was white, free, Protestant, and constantly pursuing happiness. Treated better than the Native Americans and the soon-to-be freed Blacks, the now Mexican-Americans were, nevertheless, still forced into the yoke of the Anglo-American, relegated to the worst jobs and the worst barrios (53-78). Anzaldúa writes, "We call ourselves Mexican-American to signify we are neither Mexican nor American, but more the noun 'American' than the adjective 'Mexican' (and when we are copping out)" (Anzaldúa 1987:85).

Hybridity, the new *mestiza,* and the power of the state

Anzaldúa thought that calling herself an American was "copping out." But she also knew she was not yet, nor ever would be, a Mexican. She was something else, a hybrid, interpellated as a Mexican by the Americans, as an American by the Mexicans, as nothing—or maybe better, something unnamed—by herself. But Anzaldúa insisted on

re/claiming her identity, absconding with the term "mestiza/o" from its colonial, racist

routes, and creating, or at least advocating, an empowered ethnic category.

> From this racial, ideological, cultural and biological cross-pollinization, an "alien" consciousness is presently in the making—a new *mestiza* consciousness, *una conciencia de mujer.* It is a consciousness of the Borderlands (99)… The new *mestiza* copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity… She learns to juggle cultures… (101)

Like W.E.B. Du Bois's "double veil" was for African-Americans (2005),

Anzaldúua's mestiza/o hybridity was not simply a byproduct of violence, but also, using

Roseberry (1996), a language of contention, created by the border, for the border, by the

mestiza/os, by necessity, for both the Americanos and the Mexicanos, for both Mexico

and the United States. As Wilson and Donnan write, "[t]he new politics of identity is in

large part determined by the old structure of the state. In fact, the new politics of

representation, redefinition and resistance would be nowhere without the state as its

principle contextual opponent" (Wilson and Donnan 1998:2). Much has been made about

the deterritorialization of economies, polities, and identities in our postmodern world;

nearly every study of transnationalism and border experience begins with a description of

ironic juxtapositions of local and global imagery (a sushi bar in Sao Paolo, a Peruvian

mango farmer wearing a Disney "Pocahontas" t-shirt, Sisqó's "Thong Song" playing in

cab parked outside the Hagia Sofia). But rather than the aesthetics, or humor, of floating

signifiers and postmodern discourse, it is the territorialized—the localized—effects of

this cross-pollination that matters to human experience and, perhaps just as importantly,

to the political ramifications of that experience. Despite rumors to the contrary, the state

is alive and well and doing everything it can to perpetuate itself, its power, its hegemony

(Wilensky 2002: 637-638). Anzaldúa claims that hybridity, or mestiza-ness, is one way that civilization's discontents on the border can contend.

Obviously, the concept of hybridity is not new. Pliny the Elder used the word (or its Latin version) to describe people who immigrated to Rome, and Bakhtin used it in the early 20th century in discussing the parallel existence of vernacular and "proper" languages (García Canclini 1995:xxiii). And, of course, since the advent of genetics 150 years ago, hybridization has been key to the biological sciences. In the last 20 years, however, it has been appropriated by the social sciences in discussions of the effects of globalization, transnationalism, and border-crossing. For the purposes of this paper, I will use Mexican anthropologist Néstor García Canclini's definition (as awkwardly translated by Bruce Campbell): "I understand for hybridization sociological processes in which discrete structures or practices, previously existing in separate form, are combined to generate new structures, objects, and practices" (xxv).

Based on a simple interpretation of this wording, everyone and everything could be described as hybridized. In fact, we are *all* hybrids; our self-concepts and sets of schemas are mixtures of multiple ways of being. But most of our schemas are mundane in their functionality, and our hybridity barely registers in the political economy. Being an Ohioan, a New Yorker, and a Californian certainly makes it easier for me to deal with both large and small cities and both conservative and liberal populations, but whatever ripple I may make with this ability is nothing compared to Juan Pablo's hybridity, which has helped him leap classes and cultures. Hybridization is not mathematically random; it is a result of power struggles, of inclusion and exclusion, of subordination and resistance, "amid systems of production and consumption that at times operate coercively" (xxxiv).

Some hybridizations are much more dramatic, both politically economically, than others; some have greater material consequences. And in a highly contested space like the US-Mexico border zone, hybridization is naturally more politically explosive. (Nevertheless, not everyone utilizes their hybridity effectively; I will come back to this point in my conclusion.)

Many of these hybridized subjects who are so interesting to social scientists are transmigrants, the numbers of which are increasing exponentially as the globalized economy creates more reasons and opportunities to move from one country and one culture to another. Roger Rouse contends that it is the most exploited of these transmigrants—the Mexicans on the Aguililla-Redwood City circuit in his research, or Salvadoran domestics in Madrid, or Indonesian sex workers in the red light district of Amsterdam—whose "circumstances and experiences" provide "the most significant materials" for study (Rouse 1991:9). While these people are not forced at gunpoint to leave their homes, travel to find work, and then send back remittances, they are coerced by the pocketbook and by depressed conditions at home that are beyond their control to change. Rouse explains how Aguililla, a small rural town in Southwestern Mexico, cannot sustain itself without remittances coming from its children who live in Redwood City, California. The Aguilillans do not plan to stay in California; rather, their migration is a temporary and needed economic process integral to the system that operates in Aguililla. Like the national border and the nationalisms that make this process difficult and dangerous, this circuit is self-perpetuating. "[T]he way in which at least some people are preparing their children to operate within a dichotomized setting spanning national borders suggests that current contradictions will not be resolved through a simple process

of generational succession" (14). What Rouse is describing here is hybridization, taught to children by parents, who know that this way of being is economic necessity.

And it is understood and negotiated in relation to both the disaster of late 20th century global capitalism and the state's monopoly power over who is and is not allowed to pursue their happiness—and where they can do it. For the state uses the border to control who is allowed *in* the state and who belongs *to* the state. "It stamps or refuses to stamp passports and papers which are extensions of the person of the traveler who is 'required' to pass through official ports of entry and exit," explains Kearney (1992:124). Not only are the undocumented transmigrants contesting the state—contesting the state's power—by illegally crossing the border, but they are also resisting (and refusing) the identities that the state is attempting to impose on them—citizen, worker, peasant, Mexican. But for many of these transmigrants, this resistance only can get them so far— at least at first. Kearney uses an ethnographic vignette to further explain how this works. A South American intellectual has taken in two illegal border-crossers and is explaining to them how the system works:

> They, of course, then ask him why things are arranged this way, and by a Socratic questioning he elicits the answer from them: because they run scared all the time and are desperate to get work before they are apprehended and sent back to Mexico, they accept whatever wage is offered and then work like fiends and otherwise do what they can to satisfy their *patron.* In short, in a lesson that could have been taken from Foucault, he brings them to understand that the surveillance activities of the Border Patrol are not intended to prevent their entry into the United States to work, but instead are part of a number of ways of disciplining them to work hard to accept low wages. (128)

While resistance is built into this vicious cycle, the everyday resistance of illegal border-crossing and working without documents is, to use James Scott's phrasing, a weapon of the weak (1985).

Many of these migrants are unskilled in two ways: as workers and as power brokers. According to Foucault, "[p]ower is *not* something that is acquired, seized, or shared, something one holds on to or allows to slip away" (Foucault 1976:94, emphasis mine). Foucault claims that we only behave based on what power allows us to do; we are fooling ourselves into thinking that "it results from the choice or decision of an individual subject" (95). Nevertheless, Foucault writes, "there is no power that is not exercised without a series of aims and objectives" (ibid). Based on Foucault's own rhetoric, power is like physics or biology. It just *is.* But based on that logic, something has to do something to make power *powerful*. For power to work, it needs to be poked, prodded, to be used. For it to be used, it needs to be known. It is not used by instinct. Foucault is most concerned with "local power relations" and how they work, how strategies operate in the field of force. They work because one person *knows* how to have power over another, because he or she strategically manipulates the systems of regulation and control. I would argue that knowing power is having power; understanding your hybrid practices and knowledge means that you can *use* your hybridity, which means that you know and have power. Rouse's transmigrants, of course, know that they are transmigrants, but because they have not learned, consciously or unconsciously, the schemas and practices of their host culture, they are not yet hybridized. And it is not certain that when they have these schemas and practices that they will consciously, let alone strategically, employ them.

Habitus and cultural capital

Two of concepts of Bourdieu are helpful in fleshing out this idea: habitus and cultural. Habitus is a set of dispositions or schemas or perception produced by the "conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence" (Bourdieu 1980:53). It is the "feel for the game" (66), being able to play the game without really knowing the exact rules. It is consciousness embodied, and yet it is the result of an unconscious process of learning the right way to be, to act, to be an agent. It is everything from how you walk, talk, see, and think, to how you eat, drink, and order around the servants. You a have a national and neighborhood habitus, and you have class habitus, too. Habitus is the collection of skills needed to wield power—or for that matter, to be subjugated. Transferred to economic relations, habitus can become "cultural capital," which is Bourdieu's term for the advantages that a person has and uses to succeed socioeconomically. His example in *The Logic of Practice* is a diploma, a piece of paper that is transformed into a cultural tool, in a similar way that money is transformed into economic tool. The educational system, especially in Bourdieu's France but also in the United States, too, helps to reproduce the capitalist system, whether in paper form or in the ether: "The most successful ideological effects are the ones that have no need of words, but only of *laissez-faire* and complicitous silence" (133). But cultural capital is not monopolized by the upper classes; in fact, it is relative.

In his book *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio* (1995), medical anthropologist Philippe Bourgois shows how cultural capital is earned, spent, devalued, and mismanaged. Primo and Caesar, Bourgois's two main informants, are part-time crack dealers trying and failing to obtain and keep "legit" jobs. Everyone in their neighborhood

grew up with more or less the same habitus, but some, like Primo and Caesar, acquired the capital to succeed as crack dealers and street kids. Others developed the capital to succeed outside El Barrio—to be able to speak the language, verbal and physical and mental, of the white collar economy in the other parts of Manhattan. When Primo and Caesar try to succeed in office jobs, they fail; their money is no good. Worse, though, is that the masculinist pride that served them so well on the street prevents them from being able to earn new capital for new situations. "She would call it, 'Make an inventory,'" Primo says of his boss. "I don't know what the hell those things were – an inventory? Anyway, the closet was a mess. So I just like thought, 'I should throw some of this shit away just make it look neater.' So I just threw it all out…" (Bourgois 1995:152). In his cognitive dissonance, he becomes angry at his boss, the (white) world, and, only as an afterthought, himself. Primo's problem is not just a lack of vocabulary, but rather a habitus malformed and a cultural capital maladapted to deal with the dominant "legit" economy.

The two illegals in Kearney's vignette were similarly mystified by their experience crossing the border. If they ever developed a hybridized habitus, then their education started that night, when Kearney's informant explained the ways of the border. More likely, though, they worked for a while, sent back some money, worked some more, and then returned to where they grew up. The vast majority of illegal migrants, of transmigrants, may develop hybridized habiti, but they do not necessarily know how to make strategic use of these multiple and various schemas and practices. These are most oppressed of the undocumented workers, capable of doing the work and surviving in the United States, but they are still trapped in systems of exploitation, unable to escape

because they do not have the cultural capital to buy themselves freedom. Bourdieu describes the habitus as unconscious, but I think this description only works in a general, theoretical habitus. For we can become aware of our habitus, and once we become aware of it, we can make strategic use of it (just as knowing power means having power). The most successful of the immigrants, border-crossers, and dual citizens (legal and illegal), are those who are fully aware of their hybridization, who speak the language of two cultures, and who utilize this knowledge to make better lives for themselves.

Strategies and tactics

The French theorist Michel de Certeau's distinction between strategies and tactics helps explain the difference between hybridity as cultural capital and hybridity as a weapon of the weak. For him, a strategy is "the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power … can be isolated. It postulates a place that can be delimited as its own and serve as the base from which relations with an exteriority composed of targets and threats … can be managed. … It is an effort to delimit one's own place in a world bewitched by the invisible powers of Other" (de Certeau 1984: 35-36). While de Certeau is explicitly referring to institutions and their practices—his strategy is the "typical attitude of modern science, politics, and [the] military" (ibid)—I believe his definition of strategy can also be used to describe the conscious and careful manipulation of power relations in everyday life by singular agents. In this case, having a complex understanding of one's hybridity and place in the field of force can lead to one developing strategies for negotiating that field of force.

De Certeau's definition of tactics can also be applied to the individual, even though he describes tactics in terms of war: "It does not … have the options of planning general strategy and viewing the adversary as a whole within a district, visible, and objectifiable space. It operates in isolated actions, blow by blow. It takes advantage of 'opportunities' and depends on them, being without any base where it could stockpile winning, build up its own position, and plan raids. … In short, a tactic is an art of the weak" (37). Tactics are reactive, while strategies are proactive. In de Certeau's discourse, tactics could be methods for evading capture, while strategies could be used to win the war.

Rouse's transmigrants were using tactics, while Anzaldúa was, and Juan Pablo is, using strategies. As Anzaldúa writes, "Indigenous like corn, the *mestiza* is a product of cross-breeding, designed for preservation under a variety of conditions" (103). For Juan Pablo, the border was not a scar, let alone a constantly seeping wound. It is a tattoo—something "designed for preservation." The border marks him, for sure, but it is of his own design, used for his own purposes.

"I KNOW THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND CAN DEFEND MYSELF."

Strategic uses of hybridity in recent ethnographies of border identity

> Then, if somebody identifies herself as Chicana it's because she is
> Chicana, and if not it's because she's Mexican. But personally, I do not
> see the difference. I see them the same. Maybe because I know the English
> language and can defend myself. (Bejarano 2005:131).

The above quote comes from one of anthropologist Cynthia Bejarano's

informants, Leslie, a teen-ager from a major border city in the United States, who was

asked about the problem of self-identification among her classmates. It is a telling quote,

expressing, I think, language and identity hierarchies in a seeming attempt to sound

egalitarian. In her ethnography of Latino youth on the border, Bejarano depicts the

struggle that hybridity brings to her subjects' lives, the struggle for self-definition in

complex fields of power. What is especially interesting about Bejarano's book is that she

captures hybridity in adolescence, when children are trying to negotiate between

competing forces of national and ethnic pride, between shame and self-confidence, and

between the different goals of family, friends, and self.

These competing forces and both the internal and external conflicts this

competition engenders are central to not only Bejarano's book, *¿Qué Onda? Urban*

Youth Culture and Border Identity, but also three other recent ethnographies of the US-

Mexican border, Pablo Vila's two books—*Crossing Borders, Reinforcing Borders:*

Social Categories, Metaphors, and Narrative Identities on the US-Mexican Border

(2000) and *Border Identifications: Narratives of Religion, Gender, and Class on the U.S.-Mexico Border* (2005)—and Norma González's *I Am My Language: Discourse of Women & Children in the Borderlands* (2001). In all four books, border dwellers—whether they call themselves Mexican, Mexican-American, Chicano, Fronterizo, or American—are shown to be constantly self-defining, and not just because an ethnographer is asking them who they are. Their ethnic and national identities are always in conflict, and it is language ideologies, of the use and misuse of English and Spanish, that are most often the prime movers of this conflict. The conflicts are not academic; they are not simply based on in-group, out-group bias. They are integral to figuring out how to be successful in this highly contested space. While these three ethnographies each provide valuable data on the experience of living on the border, they each have quite different theoretical positions, even if all three start from border theory, either to respond to it or to embrace it fully.

Border theory is problematic, which is why I have been treating Anzaldúa's work not as theory but as evidence. Her "theorizing" is mostly descriptive, and mostly descriptive of her own experiences, even though she often uses the first person plural. Her work is powerfully moving, but it is no more "theory" than Don DeLillo's *White Noise* (on postmodernism), Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* (on religiosity), or Stanley Kubrick's "2001: A Space Odyssey" (on the conflict between man and machine). All of these works show their creators theorizing about the potential human experience, but they are not *predictive,* let alone totalizing, explanations for that experience. Anzaldúa's work resonates with those who are in similar situations or who have had similar experiences, but that is not enough, for me, as a way to explain behavior in an

academic sense. It is neither broad enough in scope, nor specific enough in processural detail. As Pablo Vila writes, border theory was "invaluable to me as a point of departure to understand the border, but once there, interviewing people and getting their narratives, I severed my ties with the literary narratives of Anzaldúa, [Renato] Rosaldo, [Guillermo] Gómez-Peña, and the like and started to pay attention to the narratives of my interviewees" (2005:229). While his attention to those narratives is also problematic (as I will explain below), Vila's decision to break away from border theorists, and look back to such figures as Foucault and Laclau, seems wise. Bejarano, however, uses border theory as the main paradigm for analysis in her ethnography, and the book suffers for it. Norma González was also influenced by border theory. But she, too, rejects its omnipotence, for similar reasons similar to Vila's. Her approach, despite the title of her book, is based less on discourse theory than on a psychodynamic theory of identity. And, ultimately, it is the most persuasive.

¿Qué Onda?

Bejarano spent four years in a high school in a major border city that she does not name studying the subcultures of Latino adolescents, "the jocks, racers, break-dancers, pin monkeys (band members), and ravers (partygoers)" (2005:ix). She had a particularly easy time earning the trust of her informants, at least compared to most ethnographers' experience, because she both was Latino and looked substantially younger than she was. In fact, many students and teachers thought she was another student. Teachers asked her for hall passes and boys asked her out. She chose to work in a school because "it is a central place where identities are created among young people" (4), and as Suárez-

Orozco and Suárez-Orozco explain, "schools often capture and recreate certain class and ethnic inequalities permeating the larger sociocultural environment" (quoted in Bejarano, ibid). The identities of her informants, she says, were "directly influenced by the geopolitics and sociocultural implications… circumscribing their lives" (3), and conflicts between and inside her informants concerned the various ways that they fell "along a wide continuum of 'Mexicanness'" (4), as defined by their distance from, and performance of, their Mexican heritage.

Bejarano's theoretical position is based on immigrant youth studies—which highlights the experience of stigmatized identities, ethnicities, and languages—and an enormously romanticized border theory. While she references Norma González to explain that the metaphors of the border are problematic when dealing with actual borders (Bejarano 2005:32), she nevertheless uses the highly metaphorical language of Anzaldúa, Gómez-Peña, and others throughout the book as predictive theory. She even takes exception with Vila's criticism of them, saying that she views their work "as a starting point to explain the difficulties and nuances in these identity-seeking processes" (193). This is somewhat disingenuous, as her chapter on border theory begins with Anzaldúa and Gómez-Peña and ends with her own manifesto-ish description of border theory as

> a compilation of theories, writings, schools of thought, disciplines, and lived experiences. It stems from cultural identity and cultural studies, from the hands of theorists, methodologists, educators, border crossers, creative writers and songwriters, artists and most importantly, communities, families, *compadres* (godparents), *abuelitos* (grandparents), and *nuestra cultura* (our culture). In fact, this is a living theory that breathes, moves you to feel, impassions and brings to life sentiments, songs, art, literature, hardships and *cuentos*…It speaks deeply to the intersections of race, class, gender, linguistic codes…hegemony, internal colonialism, internal

oppression… *Duré un tiempo hasta que se me prendío el foco* (It took some time before the light turned on in my head) that this theory could package all of these issues within a borderlands context and accurately describe the complexities in these young people's lives and within my own border narrative. (55-6)

The hyperbole and almost absurd lack of specificity of her language exposes the lack of rigor to her theoretical position. In fact, she has no theoretical position on identity formation, even though that is the nominal goal of her research.

Despite this lapse, Bejarano is able to describe clearly the performance of identity, the complicated and fraught ways that her informants deal with their class and ethnic positioning. Rarely, she contends, have Latino youth been thought of as a heterogeneous population, but her research shows that "there are multiple distinctions in the ethnic identities of people of Mexican descent along the U.S./Mexican borderlands" (3). The main distinction is between youths who call themselves Chicano (a term of unknown origin referring, usually, to being American-born and of Mexican heritage) and those who identify as Mexican (referring, usually, to having been born in Mexico). The political ramifications of these identities preoccupy much of her analysis. She focuses on the hierarchies within Latino youth, and the *vergüenza,* or shame, associated with less-than-perfect use of either English or Spanish, specifically how language mastery affects the hierarchy and feelings of self-worth. This falls into one of the traps of academic identity discourse, as described by anthropologist Roger Rouse: focusing on "issues of prejudice and disenfranchisement" (1995:362). By privileging the pain and shame of the border experience, on the strife between her informants, and not on their experience with the greater world, Bejarano elides whatever cultural capital that these teen-agers have earned from their experience as hybridized border dwellers.

Her discussion of being empowered by their experience only comes towards the end of the book, and it seems somewhat hypothetical: "Being situated within this middle zone [along the "continuum of 'Mexicanness'"] *may* have been rewarding to these kids, since they could fluidly move from one identity to the other" (Bejarano 2005:182, italics mine). She again quotes Leslie, the girl whose words open this chapter. In my reading, Leslie uses her identities knowingly and strategically:

> Many identify as Chicanas because they don't know how to speak in Spanish. I think that is the reason. I want to consider myself as Mexicana, but I am not sure if I am in that category. I use Chicana because that way people wouldn't say, "She is Mexicana, but she can't speak or write in Spanish." I use it to my preference, for example, on an application I write down that I'm Chicana because this way they I'm here legally. I have my Social Security number, so they can't discriminate for any reason. That's when I use Chicana more, or when they ask, I say I'm Chicana so that they will know that I have my legal papers. But when we go out to have a good time and go out to dance, then I am a Mexicana. (183)

Bejarano attributes some of her informants' "ability to blend in well and use both identities" to growing up in multi-generational families where some members are Mexican-born and others were born in the United States. While Bejarano does not describe the mechanisms that allow this "unique situation" (184), it can be inferred that her informants developed a strategic form of hybridity—hybridity as cultural capital—by living with family members with distinctly different ways of being. Another of Bejarano's informants, Blanca, also crisscrossed between Mexicana and Chicana, and she grew up with siblings who were born in the United States and born in Mexico. If the micro-physics of power construct our subjectivities, then the power relations in her family, a ricochet of both Mexican and Chicano ways of being, would cross-pollinate, creating Blanca's hybridity. Blanca, however, does not see this hybridity to be as useful

as Leslie does. In fact, she feels the opposite, because her family is in constant conflict about the legal status, so the dueling identities in her home are a constant reminder of their tenuous existence (183-4).

Pablo Vila's *Crossing Borders, Reinforcing Borders* and *Border Identifications*

Vila's ethnographic project was enormous: seven years of fieldwork in El Paso and Juárez that yielded two full books. As mentioned above, Vila departed from the border theorists soon after he began his research. He explains that "those authors tend to homogenize the border, as if there were only one border identity, border culture, or process of hybridization. I think, instead, the reality of the border… goes well beyond that consecrated figure of border studies, the border crosser" (2005:4). He contends that there are four separate borders, each with distinct cultural processes and experiences: "Tijuana-San Diego-Los Angeles, the Sonora-Arizona border…, Juárez-El Paso, and the Lower Rio Grande Valley-Tamaulipas border" (2000:6). So, when he refers to the border, he is only referring to the part he studied. However, the theory of identity construction that he advances in the conclusion of his book is applicable, at least in Vila's rhetoric, throughout the world.

Vila is specifically interested in narratives of identity, and he was fascinated by the repetition of similar narratives among so many of his informants. The similarity and the rigidness of the narratives—of poverty, race, regionalism, religion, gender and class—lead him to the belief, following discourse theorists James Holstein and Jaber Gubrium, that "the power to confer identity falls into the sphere of the narrative plot, whose articulatory function consists in transforming happenings into events, that is,

meaningful episodes in the story of the character being constructed" (2005:18). As

encouraging as his desire to show how "people, in interaction, construct their

identifications" (230) is, his use of Holstein and Gubrium, who are synthesizers of

Foucault, leaves the explanation solely within discursive analysis and narrative theory.

Vila agrees with Foucault and Althusser, as do I, that "individuals are constituted as

subjects through the discursive formation," but sees as problematic, as do I, that they

leave "unanswered why the subject invests in one particular version of a subject position

and not another one" (231). Vila then quotes Stuart Hall (1996), who stridently contends

that "there is *no* theorization of the psychic mechanism or interior processes by which

their automatic 'interpellations' might be produced, or—more significantly—fail or be

resisted or negotiated" (quoted in Vila 2005: ibid, emphasis mine).

Vila's eventual response to Hall does not come from social psychology or

psychoanalysis. Instead, Vila contends that the narratives, and the discourses, available to

people from which they develop their identities contain "privileged signifiers…

hegemonic interpellations, metaphors, and narrative plots that had conquered… the

common sense of the regions" (240). The question that is not answered is what privileges

the signifiers, what makes one narrative schema more powerful than another. While

Foucault would contend that the micro-physics of power are at work, that relations

between actors are what favor one narrative over another, Vila instead gives agency to an

inanimate, and theoretical, thing: "The sedimented narrative plots, although not used as

templates, still have the power to actively participate in the selective process of meaning

construction" (241). My problem with this statement, and the many others like it in Vila's

book, is that it makes it seem as if humans are not involved in the process of giving

power to the plots, narratives, or discourses that are defining their identities. While Vila

would most likely say that we *do* give power to various discourses, he constructs his

theory in such a way that identity is treated, in psychological anthropologist David

Linger's words, "as an overwhelmingly extrapersonal phenomenon" (Linger 2005:189).

Such a position, Linger says, "seem untenable to many psychological anthropologists

[who] have questioned the premise that lived identities correspond to or are simply

cobbled from virtual identities" (ibid). Vila's theory of identity construction, of his

privileged floating signifiers, seems to describe identities that have their own agency, that

ascribe themselves onto subjects. I do not think we are so passive. While trying to

distance himself from the metaphorical theories of García Canclini and Anzaldúa, Vila

nevertheless creates a theory just as experience distant.

Despite his conclusions, Vila's data is copious, and within it, there are several

interesting examples of how people in the Juarez-El Paso area negotiate their hybridity

and accrue cultural capital. Vila contends that because one of the major discourses on the

border is "'all poverty is Mexican'… the constitution of a valued social identity is

relatively straightforward for some middle-class Anglos and relatively difficult for many

people of Mexican descent" (2000:129). Immigrant Mexicans do not have the Chicano

discourse—which Vila describes as "a structured, social, and collectively developed

discourse that blames poverty on discrimination" (ibid)—that helps ground the identities

of many Mexican-Americans, and as they spend more time in the United States

undergoing the process of hybridization, they are considered less Mexican, either by

themselves or by their compatriots on the other side of the border—even if they want to

remain "Mexican." Vila explains the conundrum, through the experience of Martín and

Patricia:

> What Martín and Patricia are doing (like many Mexican immigrants I
> interviewed) is constructing their identities as Mexican immigrants
> through a constant imaginary dialogue with the native Mexicans living in
> Mexico, continually explaining to them that they (emigrants) are "still"
> loyal Mexicans, not traitors or Pochos [Mexican slang for Mexican-
> Americans]. Here we are dealing again with the "double mirror" in the
> process of identity construction: the way I think the "other" sees me. This
> double mirror is an inescapable feature of that process; my comments
> about the "other" are usually highly influenced by the way I suspect the
> "other" sees me. In this sense some interviewees seem to be asking the
> Mexican nationals not to think about the emigrants as the "other." Their
> wish is still to be considering part of the Mexican national "us." (143)

Martín and Patricia's interview is telling. They bitterly describe how their Mexican

friends and family reject them because they live in the United States and therefore must

be Americanized, but they also other themselves from the Mexicans by calling them poor

and ignorant and claiming that they are dirty and rude. Both Vila and Martín see the

irony. Martín "fully acknowledges that he has somehow departed from what is supposed

to be a 'Mexican way of behaving.' Consequently, regardless of his beliefs about 'being

changed so little,' and his desire not to be confused with a Pocho, Martín also

acknowledges he is, somehow, a Pocho himself, at least in relation to dirtiness and

cleanliness" (148). While he seems conflicted about how his hybrid habitus has been

interpreted by his former countrymen, in mocking the Mexicans who think he is a snob,

Martín is consciously using his knowledge about his hybrid identity to empower himself.

I Am My Own Language

Norma González has the same theoretical ancestry as Bejarona and Vila—inspired by Anzaldúa, Rosaldo, and Gómez-Peña, and in many ways, as politically motivated in her research as Bejarano—but her synthesis of border theory, anthropology, linguistics, and politics is much more focused and realistic. (She also weaves her own memoir into the ethnography in a much more literary, and effective way, than Bejarano does.) Responding to one of the more quoted lines from Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/*La Frontera, "I am my language" (1987:59), González asks a number of questions, most importantly, "How do multiple languages interpenetrate and reconstruct multiple identities of women and children [in Tucson]?" (2001:xix). She is also specifically interested in their experiences with hybridity. Unlike Vila, though, she sees her informants actively negotiating their hybridity, using it to better their children's lives. González writes, "Through the complex dynamics of resistance, incorporation, and accommodation, with the constructs of structure and agency, many of the women in this book have struggled to generate an ethos, at times in direct contradiction to their own upbringing, with which their children will flourish" (xx). Key to her argument is that emotions are socially interpreted (and perhaps constructed) through the mediation of language. For children, *everything* is emotion, and as language is used by parents, with different affects for different concepts and in different languages, they develop subtle and not so subtle associations with different idioms and ideas. And every relationship is different, creating different shared language ideologies. "Each household and care-giver-child dyad or polyad has the capacity to respond particularly to the affective and evocative dimensions or race/class and minority status" (59). The construction of the child's hybridity, then, is a specific and unique dialogue.

González describes the process as similar to a double helix, "a dialogical staircase… of intertwining responses between adults and children, both being touched by and affected by the links between them, transmitting on an individual level the unique and particularistic version of each generation's social memory" (61-2). The metaphor is based on Holland et al's synthesis of Vygotsky and Bakhtin that will be discussed in the next chapter. Her use of this particular theory of identity construction is especially useful because it is allows for both the agency and the resistance of actual human beings. They are not chained to the structure, nor are they victims of discourse: "These women are not trapped by the liminality of their status, passively bemoaning their marginality" (76). González uses Holland et al's idea of "identity in practice" to explain how her informants are constantly creating and recreating ways to "ensure their children's success" (ibid). Here, Anzaldúa's "new mestiza" is a good referent: she takes what works and throws away what does not. González's informants tinker "with the intergenerational forms bequeathed to posterities to assemble inventive bridges that span the gaps between tradition and practice" (77).

González discusses three women who actively "author and arrange their social fields through the mediation of structure and agency. Although they may author figured worlds, however, they do so within a prism of social memory, a Discourse that has been constructed around particular fields" (ibid). The women pick and choose from available memories and ideologies to most effectively raise their children and manage their families. Iris Gallard's childhood was not idyllic, at least not to her; her mother neither baked nor sewed, and much of the traditional mothering was left to Iris once she became

a teenager. When she became an actual mother, she virtually stopped working and devoted her energies to traditional child-rearing.

> One could categorize the parental involvement with the Gallardo children as incorporating an extensive array of the transmission of knowledge through the household activities of cooking, sewing, arts and craft, mechanical and construction repairs, and gardening activities—the "funds of knowledge" of the family. Yet Iris struggles mightily to provide what she sees as a stable upbringing, stressing what she feels she missed as a child. Her "agency" does not spring from nowhere, and she draws from Discourses that in some ways belie her lived experiences. (82)

Raquel Salazar, on the other hand, felt that her childhood was too traditional, and thus ineffective. She left the Catholic Church and joined an evangelical church, and her child-rearing method is much more protective and directive. Raquel says, "I mean, you know, I don't want him to grow up to be a priest, but I want him to learn the right morals because of society right now is getting so bad" (83). Gonzalez explains, "The reproduction of the models on which she and her husband were raised are inadequate for her…[So] she consciously and actively assembles a framework on which to hang their everyday existence" (86). Finally, Maricela Benavides is "vitally active participant in all aspects of her children's lives" (91). She wholeheartedly, and knowingly, embraces traditional Mexican family culture, surrounding her children with relatives, to prevent them from becoming too Americanized, to prevent the family from dissipating as many Mexican-American families have (or seem to have). "Amplifying and elaborating themes of familial solidarity, investment in children, and frugal living, Maricela [draws] from the past to reach to the future" (92).

However, despite her informants' ability to construct their own identities and influence the development of their children's, González notes that they are still subject to,

sometimes even submissive to, the hegemonic processes that they are fighting. She explains that two of her informants told her that they wanted their children to be fluent in Spanish, but not at the expense of fluency in English, which is the key, they say, to economic success. While they are politically in favor of bi-lingual education, in their own homes they "enact… the ideological stance that [English-only politicians] espouse… In true Gramscian fashion, they consent of the subaltern is instrumental in validating the dominant ideology" (165). While this is an accurate description of Gramscian consent, it is also an example of these women's realpolitik understanding of what is needed for their children to succeed. It is informed consent.

For Bejarano, Vila, and Gonzalez's informants, hybridity is habitus; simply by living near the border, they have schemas and practices that work in American, Mexican, and mixed contexts. But those that developed hybridity as cultural capital did not do so because of the simple accident of their geographic location. Rather, a complex and rare mixture of family background, educational and occupational opportunities, and a powerful desire for socioeconomic advancement helped motivate these border-dwellers to make strategic use of their hybridity. Fully integrating one's hybrid identity is a fraught and complex process, and present identity models rarely account for hybridity, let alone a hybrid identity as cultural capital. I will attempt to provide such a model in the next chapter.

PIVOTING INTO HYBRIDITY:

Identifying identity within anthropology

> REPORTER: If you love your country so much, as you say you do, why do
> you live in California?
> GÓMEZ-PEÑA: I am de-Mexicanizing myself in order to Mexicomprehend
> myself…
> REPORTER: What do you consider yourself, then?
> GÓMEZ-PEÑA: Post-Mexico, pre-Chicano, pan-Latino, land-crossed, Art
> American... it depends on the day of the week or the project in
> question. (Canclini 1995:238)

Mexican performance artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña mostly focuses his art on

issues concerning the border, in both the literal and figurative senses, that divides the

United States and Mexico. Unlike Gloria Anzaldúa, Gómez-Peña is visual, ironic, and

humorous. Like Anzaldúa, he uses his self-identified hybridity as a weapon; his website

proudly proclaims that it is "a site to give Pat Buchanan a coronary." Much of his art

juxtaposes familiar American and Mexican iconography with sexual and violent

imagery—all to confront the viewer with his experiences with racism, colonialism,

imperialism, and confusion. And he declares himself—and his generation—to be the

owner of nearly infinite identities. "Since they live in the interval, 'in the crack between

the two worlds,' and since they are 'the ones who didn't go because we didn't fit, the

ones who still don't arrive or don't know where to arrive,' they decide to assume all

possible identities," Canclini writes of Gómez-Peña's generation (as Gómez-Peña sees

them) (ibid). At the same time, he is speaking to multiple peoples who are interested in

the same sorts of political projects. In the introduction to a collection of scripts for his

performance pieces, Gómez-Peña writes,

> [This book] should speak to politicized artists, students, journalists,
> activists, teachers, technopirates, alternative rockeros, utopian thinkers,
> radical cultural organizers, anarchists, and border crossers of all sorts – to
> anyone who is currently thinking out loud and fighting to recover the
> freedoms that our political and corporate classes have stolen from us so
> efficiently…" (Gómez-Peña 1996:ii)

Gómez-Peña wages war with his art, which is an extension of his hybrid—or depending

on the observer, his *fragmented*—identity. Gómez-Peña is an identity politician.

Gómez-Peña's art is a classic example of postmodernism, at least as the term is

used by literary and art critics. His art is "schizophrenic" and relies on pastiche. Literary

theorist Frederick Jameson would say that Gómez-Peña's art is a representation of

Gómez-Peña's psyche, of his postmodern condition, of his "schizo-fragmentation"

(1991:372). Gómez-Peña might agree with Jameson, to a certain extent. But he would

much more likely agree with psychological anthropologist Claudia Strauss's criticism of

Jameson, that "postmodern theoretical and artistic fragmentation [may be] a deliberate

representation by the artists and theorists, a statement about the world rather than a

reflection of it" (1997:364). Jameson's influential description of the postmodern

condition has created numerous problems for the study of identity, as it throws into

question the nature of identity itself. If identity meant "sameness" or "selfsameness," as

its traditional definition was, how can someone have multiple identities or be a

"fragmented subject" (in Jameson's terminology) and not be, to put it bluntly, mentally

disturbed? It is a "contradiction in terms" (Sökefeld 1999:417). The schism in its

meaning, in addition to its overuse by academics of multiple and not necessarily overlapping disciplines, has made "identity" an albatross for academia, and for anthropology especially. In fact, after several decades of theorizing about identity in political science, anthropology, and psychology, a number of academics have called for its removal from academic discourse—mostly because the term meant too much, and thus too little, at least to them. However, much of the distaste for academic identity discourse seems to stem from the politics of the discourse, its Babel-like terminology, and, it seems, because it is the primary discourse of Cultural Studies, which Strauss says is suspect for inferring "general forms of consciousness from art works or theories crated for an elite audience" (363).

Nevertheless, I do not think hybridity can be approached without identity, and the functioning of a hybrid identity can only be examined through the anthropology of the self. To fully explain this, I will first examine and critique how anthropology has traditionally dealt with identity, and then I will examine Holland et al's "practiced identities," the general model for identity construction that I think is most effective. Combining Holland et al's model with the work of Claudia Strauss and Martin Sökefeld, I will explain how a hybrid identity is formed, integrated, and strategically utilized.

History and semantics

Folklorist Roger D. Abrahams points out that our modern meanings of identity and identification originated in Renaissance and Enlightenment attempts to deal with the diversity of not only flora and fauna but also the multiplying populations of the world. People were given descriptions and categories, Abrahams argues, usually by the

government as a means of Foucaultian surveillance—to be named was to be identified was to be controlled. Eventually, Freud introduced "identity" to the social sciences, but it was Erik Erikson in the 1960s who expanded its meaning and popularized it through his bestselling books, *Childhood and Society* and *Identity: Youth and Crisis,* which reformulated psychoanalysis by displacing "the Freudian narrative of guilt-inspired family romance" with the "psychosocial narrative" (Abrahams 2003:201). Sociologists Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper note "other paths of diffusion" besides Erikson, including the use of identity and identification in studies of ethnicity, role and group theory, and symbolic interaction (2000:3).

However they developed, after the 1960s, issues of identity were folded into the rhetoric of subsequent social movements and subsequent academic analyses, and identity came to mean many different things to many different groups of people, some seemingly contradictory and some quite vague. "Already in the mid-1970s," write Brubaker and Cooper, "W.J.M. Mackenzie could characterize identity as a word 'driven out of its wits by over-use,' and Robert Coles could remark that the notions of identity and identity crisis had become 'the purest of clichés'" (ibid). Nevertheless, identity had a rather clear, and agreed-upon, meaning. As mentioned above, identity meant "sameness" and "selfsameness," which are explained (and combined) by Erikson: "The term 'identity' expresses such a mutual relation in that it connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself (selfsameness) and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential characteristics with others" (quoted in Sökefeld 1999:417). But after the rise of poststructuralist deconstruction, such meta narratives were torn apart, and "[w]hereas it as once defined by sameness and unity, both qualities have given way to difference and plurality" (ibid).

At the same time, the term was ensconced in popular discourses of politics and psychology, and it came to mean many different things to many different people. Brubaker and Cooper call this problem, tongue planted firmly in cheek, an "'identity' crisis – a crisis of overproduction and consequent devaluation of meaning" (Brubaker and Cooper 2000:3).

Brubaker and Cooper's main criticism of the academic discourse of identity is about semantics. The word "identity" has too many meanings, and so they suggest different terminology that they hope will simplify matters. To signify the process of identity construction, of the self or another, they suggest "identification," mainly because it is more closely aligned, linguistically, with the verb "identify." Instead of "identity," in its lone use, Brubaker and Cooper prefer "self-understanding… a dispositional term that designates what might be called 'situated subjectivity': one's sense of who one is, of one's social location, and of how (given the first two) one is prepared to act" (2000:17). Finally, for describing the experience of belonging to a collective identity, Brubaker and Cooper like the neologisms "connectedness" (having some sort of relationship) and "groupness" (imagining solidarity with a group) and the more traditional word "commonality" (sharing similar traits) (20). Despite the tenor of their argument, in which Brubaker and Cooper harshly (and perhaps unfairly) criticize the use of "identity" by other academics, I believe their suggested terminology is more specific and useful than the vagary of [adjective] + "identity" (e.g. ethnic identity, gender identity, political identity) that is often seen in academic discourse.

Roger Rouse is less concerned with semantics than he is with politics. He believes that academic identity discourse assumes that identity is a universal experience and that

because of this, more nuanced descriptions and analyses are avoided or overlooked. His critique examines the politics of the logic of identity, and rather than the simple "over-production" of identitarian discourse, he is concerned with the political economy of that discourse. "[W]hile many [academics] are keenly sensitive to the politics that surround the dominant deployment of particular identities," Rouse writes, "they fail to explore the limits of the key ideas means that they are blind to the politics associated with the logic of identity itself" (Rouse 1995:359). His critical history focuses on the how identity concerns shifted from one's role, or how one practiced one's identification, to what one actually *was*—"the bearers of perduring personalities… susceptible to ranking according to a single norm and standard" (361). This identification process was actually panoptic surveillance that enabled governmental control. But Rouse also points out that these new identification processes coincided with the increased influence and spread of capitalism and thus, as well, on the emphasis of "proprietorship in the self… [which] helped legitimate a system based on the primacy and privilege of private property" (ibid). And so, Rouse contends, people were encouraged to see themselves as geopolitical and racial beings (and to agitate for representation as such), and not as people located within a class structure who shared positions within that structure with other people who may look different or hail from a different location. "By privileging issues of prejudice and disenfranchisement" in their political ideologies, many exploited groups focused more on changing "attitudes and feelings" than on developing "coalitional groups that [could] link people across established lines of social difference" (362).

In fact, Rouse claims, when such coalitions that bridge racial and geopolitical boundaries are formed and begin to question the structure of the class system (and not

just the racial system) they provoke a reactionary identity politics—which is perhaps the

opposite of their intent. This is precisely what happened when the discourse of identity

was formed in the 1950s.

> By largely rearticulating the central terms of bourgeois ideology and
> practice, the emerging discourse [of identity] took a moment of incipient
> and potentially explosive class conflict [after World War II] and helped
> reaccommodate it within classic liberal concerns over the assimilation of
> the individual to society and the attitudinal factors affecting the relations
> between subgroups, while the recent proliferation of the discourse has not
> only done much the same in the contest of the two deepest recessions
> since the Great Depression, but also, through its growing emphasis on
> multiple and multi-local identities and the capacity to move fluidly
> between hem, at least reflected if not supported the attempt to forge
> flexible work-related subjectivities better suited to the volatile and fluid
> labor markets that characterize post-Fordist and transnational conditions.
> (363)

In showing that the history of the discourse of identity is embedded in Western political

history (as well as the history of governmentality), Rouse claims that the discourse is not

applicable to non-Western peoples. And ultimately, it seems, identity politics and the

discourse of identity is partly to blame for the solidification of global capitalism's

dramatic inequality. Nevertheless, Rouse, like Brubaker and Cooper, does not believe

that "identity" should be done away with. "It is clearly significant both empirically and

analytically," he writes. "What I am advocating, however, is a much greater attention to

the history and politics of both the term itself and the ideas associated with its use" (374).

Identity discourse vs. the practice of identity

While their major criticisms of identity discourse are valid and their solutions

useful for making more complete inquiries into identity, Brubaker and Cooper and Rouse

do not answer several pressing questions. How can we bridge the gap between the old

and new descriptions of identity, from "sameness" to "fragmented"? Brubaker and Cooper throw away the concern at the end of a section—"it is not clear why what is routinely characterized as multiple, fragmented, and fluid should be conceptualized as 'identity' at all'" (Brubaker and Cooper 2000: 6)—and never revisit it. Rouse does not explain how identity can be a valid analytic concept if it is not applicable to large populations of non-Westerners. Rouse contends that his informants, transmigrants from rural Southern Mexico, developed individual identities because of their interaction with globalism and the late capitalism of United States; before that, "the crucial question was not 'Who am I?' but 'Where do I stand – and how do I conduct myself – in relation to others?'" (Rouse 1995:368). (This exposes Rouse's own Western bias, as the latter is clearly identitarian discourse, just simply a sociocentric one, while the former is an egocentric discourse that is perhaps more familiar to Rouse.) Brubaker and Cooper and Rouse all examine identity through discourses about identity rather than analyze identity through how it is experienced. David Linger describes such a view: "Identity niches are carved out by public discourses… [and] persons occupy, or are prodded or coerced into, one of the shifting identity niches afforded them" (Linger 2005:189). This etic way of looking at identity formation leaves too much room for error. It depends too much on logical responses to discourse and one-to-one correspondence between virtual and lived identities. How Gómez-Peña's strategically utilized hybridized identity—or the identities of Juan Pablo, Anzaldúa, and the informants of Bejarano, Vila, and González—could be explained in this sort of schema is unclear. It seems that many psychological anthropologists agree.

Following calls for anthropologies of self-consciousness from Anthony Cohen

(1994) and Nigel Rapport (1997), German psychological anthropologist Martin Sökefeld

suggests a split between identity and self, explaining that multiple and seemingly

conflicted identities are managed by an integrated self. He goes even further by

contending that the self is a universal human trait, and the debate over the existence of

the non-Western socio-centric and the Western ego-centric selves is beside the point. He

uses Hallowell's definition of the self (1955), as "that reflexive sense that enables the

person to distinguish self-consciously between him- or herself and everything else"

(Sökefeld 1999:424). If the self is reflexive, Sökefeld argues, than it is not passive, but

agentive. It needs to be agentive in order to manage identities, to negotiate and monitor

outcomes. Even more radical is Sökefeld's conclusion, which is antithetical to views of

most cultural anthropologists.

> All humans are able and required to act, which means that there is no
> culture (or identity) acting for them or uncontradictably prescribing which
> mode of behavior must be chosen in any situation. This becomes utterly
> clear in situations of plural identities, where individuals are obviously not
> bound to a cultural consensus but exposed to a plurality of conflicting
> perspectives and interests and must… make their way through a maze of
> different identities. (430)

Sökefeld's "consciousness model" is just that—it creates a subject who is awake and

aware, reflective and creative. Linger expands on this, explaining that "mediating

between public representations and subjectivity is an active, creative, self-conscious,

biographical human agent; no interpretation of symbols can yield an account of

subjectivity, which is irreducibly personal" (Linger 2005:197).

One highly persuasive theory on the construction of identity that dovetails nicely

with the Sökefeld's model is put forth in *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds* (1998),

in which anthropologists Dorothy Holland, Debra Skinner, Williams Lachicotte, Jr., and Carole Cain synthesize ideas from Vygotsky, Bakhtin, and Bourdieu. For Holland et al, identity and society are both historical products and intricately intertwined. Identity is not "sutured," or simply attached, to society, as Stuart Hall (1996) suggests (quoted in Holland et al 1998:33), but rather the two co-develop. They are constantly in dialogue: *Identity is practiced.* There are four main contexts to Holland et al's "practiced identities." First, there are "figured worlds," which are similar to imaginary or intentional communities: "They are the frames of meaning in which interpretations of human actions are negotiated" (Holland et al 1998:271). Holland et al's insight is that these worlds have discourses of speech, gesture, symbols and meaning. The second context is "positionality," which refers to the power and status within the figured world: How actors dominate, resist, and strategize within the worlds. Third is the "space of authoring," the process through which one become part of the figured world—by arranging, writing, and embodying various and sometimes conflicting discourses. Finally, "making worlds" is the grand extension of figured worlds, when an imaginary world expands so far into the media and the culture "through which even distant others may construe their lives" (272).

Holland et al's idea of the figured world is helpful in understanding of hybrid identities, which involves the constant negotiation and performance of various identities and various worlds—in Juan Pablo's case, they are as vast as Mexico and the United States and as specific as barrio Tijuana and gay Hillcrest. Holland et al point to one of Vygotsky's late essays that describes how children, for the purpose of play, suspend the standard, everyday meaning of objects and ascribe different meaning to them (50). When they play, they react to different, imagined meanings to objects—a walk-in closet is the

Bat Cave, the bathroom is a beauty parlor, a stick is a gun, or a hairbrush is a microphone. Vygotsky was especially interested in how objects were given meaning and became mnemonics for behavior and ideas. An object then becomes a "pivot," which the child uses as a mediating device to transport himself into the play world. The hairbrush could be a pivot. Lying on the dresser, it is just a brush. Picked up and held in a certain way, a child pivots into a world where he is a pop star. As the child grows older, however, the object may not be needed to enter the imaginary world, and games become less pure fantasy, but being able to travel to the land of make-believe is still needed to play. This ability to play is linked to the ability to function in an institutional world, where you are given a role to play, and the game is much more serious. Thus, play is linked also to culturally figured worlds "peopled by characters from collective imaginings," worlds like academia, crime, Dungeons & Dragons, and Alcoholic Anonymous (51). These are

> socially and culturally constructed realm[s] of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others. Each is a simplified world populated by a set of agents… who engage in a limited range of meaningful acts or changes of state… as moved by a specific set of forces. (52)

Figured worlds are not only thoroughly imagined (with roles given, defined, narrativized, and embodied), but also constantly practiced. All of this is done within structures of power and position that Bourdieu referred to as a "field of power" or "structure-in-practice" (58). The field is basically a game—it is performed, practiced, and played by better and worse players—and that is why Bourdieu referred to the *habitus* as the "feel for the game" (Bourdieu 1990:67). Every game has rules and game pieces, the

latter of which Holland et al refer to as "artifacts"—or to use Vygotskian terminology, they are pivots. In AA, the pivots would be both the chips that members earn with each completed step as well as the stories that members tell of their alcoholism. The pivots enable the actor to enter the figured world, "to shift the perceptual, cognitive, affective, and practical frame of activity" (Holland et al 1998:63). Pivots are also means of self-control, because they help to frame our emotions and experiences, and to narrate our history-in-person. They are the foci of the discourse of the figured world.

Holland et al's best example of a pivot is the personal story that a member of AA tells at meetings and when he is taking his 12th step, "carrying the message to alcoholics who still suffer" (77). One of the basic tenets of AA is that while alcoholism is a disease, it is not something one has; rather, one *is* an alcoholic. It is a state of being—an identity. "This is a situation in which one of man's basic assumptions must be changed or reorganized, in which one must learn a new understanding of one's problem, one's self, and what the world is like" (70). Neophytes must learn this, and one of the most important methods is listening to and telling personal stories of alcoholism. The structure, symbolism, and message of the story are learned through telling and re-telling and through active, critical listening by other members of AA. As it is honed, as the story is solidified, so is the self-history, and thus the self-understanding, of the teller. The storyteller becomes an alcoholic by telling the story, not only internally, through a fossilized understanding of past actions, but also by taking part in a ritualized group activity. As he becomes a master storyteller, an old-timer in AA, he helps neophytes learn how to tell the story, how to understand themselves as alcoholics. It is a feedback loop.

The integrated narrative self

I would argue that the pivots of a hybrid identity are much more varied and disorganized than those of such strongly structured communities like AA or the Catholic Church, with the Lord's Prayer, or the American gay community, with the coming out story. In order to manage this confusion, people must learn how to describe themselves in this context of multiple, conflicting schemas. In an ethnographic vignette, Sökefeld describes how one of his informants in rural northern Pakistan was able to negotiate the complex, fraught, and potentially violent conflict between his Sunni and Shiite neighbors and relatives. Sökefeld writes that "Ali Hassan's sense of self as exhibited in his management of identities is quite strong. His management of identities is far-sighted and quite ingenious. He is very conscious of the differing and conflicting demands raised by different identities and tries to make his way without being torn apart by them" (1999:425). Sökefeld talks of the "narrative self" (ibid), a coherent and strategic self-description. He explains, "The narrative self results in the creation of a personal image. This image had to relate to the identities embraced by the self… Identities can be considered as building blocks for the construction of an image of the self. The blocks are not simply laid as they are supplied but are trimmed and given forms that can be incorporated into a more or less integrated whole. That is, identities are interpreted by the acting human being in specific ways" (426). Gómez-Peña's wry self-description is an example of this process, perfected. He is not in conflict with himself. Rather, he is using the perceived conflict of his hybridity to disarm his interrogator.

But how, and under what circumstances, are these schemas integrated? Claudia Strauss offers a potential model for the internalization of hybrid experience with her

discussion of heteroglossia, or "multiple, often conflicting points of view" (1990). In

interviewing working class men in Rhode Island, Strauss noticed that they espoused

opinions both in support of the status quo and in criticism of social and economic

structures that prevented them from getting ahead. In response, Strauss proposed three

different methods of internalizing heteroglossia:

> Horizontal containment occurs when two sets of beliefs are learned in
> separate contexts, each in a more or less equally theorized form. As a
> result, these sets of beliefs are internalized in separate, largely
> noninteracting, cognitive compartments. While they are equally accessible
> to consciousness and equally easy to articulate, the contexts and the voices
> in which they are expressed are likely to be distinct. Vertically contained
> beliefs are, like horizontally contained beliefs, held in separate, largely
> noninteracting, cognitive compartments and expressed in different context
> with different voices. Unlike horizontally contained beliefs, however, one
> set of vertically contained beliefs is learned more as theory, and hence is
> verbalized with greater ease, than is the other. The more implicit set of
> beliefs need not be repressed in a Freudian sense; I use a metaphor of
> verticality only to suggest that theorized beliefs come to awareness more
> readily than untheorized ones do. Integrated beliefs, finally, are
> internalized in a single schema, or set of closely connected schemas, rather
> than in compartmentalized, distinct ones. They are equally easy (or
> difficult) to articulate and are expressed in a single consistent voice.
> Integrated beliefs are internalized in a selective combination that rides
> roughshod over the ideological boundaries establish in academic
> discourse. (315)

Using Strauss's model, then, we can examine how some the hybridized subjects

mentioned previously in this paper internalize their schemas. Of Bejarano's two teen-

aged informants, Leslie had quite neatly integrated her schemas, while Blanca's were

contained vertically, her Mexican-ness usurping her Chicana-ness. Martín, Vila's

somewhat hypocritical informant, seemed to have contained his beliefs in a horizontal

fashion; he seemed unaware of the contradictions. Gómez-Peña, Ali Hassan, and the

three mothers mentioned from González's ethnography had cleverly—and strategically— integrated their schemas. As has Juan Pablo, as I will explain in the conclusion.

A model

First, though, I would like conclude this chapter with a model for an integrated, hyper-cognized, and empowered hybrid identity. Based on the previously discussed ethnographic examples and theoretical explanations, the following are the requirements for developing cultural capital in the form of hybridity.

1. *Bilingualism:* While it is obvious that it would be difficult to develop any hybridity without knowledge of the two languages of the cultures that are being hybridized, it is not simply bilingualism that is needed, but a nuanced understanding of slang, colloquialisms, and non-verbal communication in both cultures. This sort of fluency takes years to achieve, which is why the mothers in González's study were so concerned with their children's language education and why Bejarano's Leslie—who was fully fluent in not only Spanish and English but also Mexican and American—felt more at ease in her border culture than Bejarano's less fluent subjects, like Blanca. This sort of language mastery is a point of pride for border citizens, and it is extremely valuable cultural capital, to some perhaps even more so than a high school or college degree.

2. *Schemas and practices for more than one cultural milieu:* Usually these will be developed simultaneously with language skills. Similarly to acquiring language, the basic cultural grammar that one picks up after a few months—local driving etiquette or knowing how to tip at a restaurant, for example—is simply a base on

which to build a deep understanding of how a second culture functions. Having that deep and preferably flawless understanding of the cultural practices is needed to live and work comfortably and successfully in either culture or, in the case of border zones, both simultaneously. Again, like language, mastering the practices and internalizing the needed schemas of another culture—developing a second or hybridized habitus—is enormously valuable and can lead to numerous economic and social advantages.

3. *Subject position:* While anyone living in the border zone will probably develop a certain amount of hybridity through the osmosis-like appropriation of the local habitus, few will reach the mastery of Leslie, Juan Pablo, or Ali Hassan. This is not simply because of their innate abilities, though clearly all three are quite bright. Rather, their positions in the field of force helped determine what was possible for them. Ali Hassan had both a great deal of economic and social power in his town, and Leslie grew up in family that was not concerned about its members' legal status. Her family was stable and middle-class, and Leslie was able to devote more time to education than, say, the children of migrant workers, who may need to work when others are in school. Juan Pablo grew up in a very poor family, but his sexuality gave him access to the gay community, where class-jumping is easier. (Also, as in many minority communities, gays are protective of their own, and community protection is integral for the survival of illegal immigrants.) More than any other factor, class is going to determine whether one has the opportunities and outside help and encouragement needed to develop the language and cultural skills for masterful hybridity. But other factors, like sexual

orientation and political or artistic inclinations (like Anzaldúa and Gómez-Peña), can be just as important in the transformation of hybridity into cultural capital.

4. *Integrated heteroglossia:* Managing the multiple and often conflicting schemas and identities that hybridity brings can be enormously difficult. As mentioned above, few of Bejarano, Vila, or González's informants had integrated their heteroglossia; many horizontally or vertically contained theirs. But those who were most comfortable with their hybridity were able to integrate their schemas, creating a Hallowellian self that was without internal conflict (or at least without conflict or confusion about the use of cultural practices and schemas). While it may seem that this sort state would be hard to be consciously recognized, it seems that it is only some sort of awareness—Sökefeld's "consciousness model"—of conflicting schemas that can lead to their integration.

5. *A narrative identity:* Consciousness of the four previous factors and their relationships with each other can lead to the development of what Sökefeld calls a "narrative identity," which is, again, a coherent and *strategic* self-description. Using one's hybrid identity strategically—and not tactically—would mean that one's self-knowledge, linguistic skills, and cultural dexterity have been transformed into cultural capital. Like a college diploma, this hybridity is earned and utilized to gain economic, social, and symbolic power.

6. *Motivation:* None of the above situations will lead to strategic use of hybridity without one having the motivation to earn the much-needed cultural capital. The motivating force is rarely a simple desire for economic betterment. It is more powerful and more complex than simple Freudian drives, and this is an area that

needs to be researched, and it is where I plan to focus my fieldwork. In Juan

Pablo's case, for instance, the motivation for earning his cultural capital was

embedded in an emotional history deeply influenced by the cultural reaction to his

gayness.

I spent Christmas with Juan Pablo last year. When my husband and I arrived at his rented house, a two bedroom Craftsman with a Jacuzzi and an enormous garden in the recently gentrified San Diego neighborhood of South Park, Juan Pablo and several of his friends were making tamales. Juan Pablo was teaching the Anglos how to make Mexican food, and the Anglos were refusing to follow directions. While half of the tamales were made in the traditional fashion—with chicken or pork inside corn meal dough—Juan Pablo's friends kept sneaking in very untraditional ingredients. When we finally ate (after much drinking and goofing around) I discovered raisin tamales, pineapple tamales, apple tamales, and chocolate tamales, the last of which Juan Pablo was especially amused by.

When I asked him later about how he felt his non-Mexican friends felt about his Mexican-ness, he said, "I think they think it's funny. My friends, the gringos… have an interest and a desire to learn. Who would have thought that with only one Mexican in the group that we'd be making tamales at Christmas?" By "funny," Juan Pablo does not mean that that his friends think Mexico is funny, but rather that Juan Pablo's occasionally ironic Mexican-ness, his self-deprecating humor about being Mexican, and his careful use and abuse of Mexican stereotypes is funny. It is also, I think, strategic: He likes the attention brought by being different and accepted—even loved—for that difference. While many immigrants down-play their difference in order to fit in, Juan Pablo uses his difference as his central attraction. And it is not only his ethnicity. He dresses outrageously, in what some might call a glam rock style, and he often has long, braided beard. Before he started losing his hair, he had a Mohawk. (In fact, he had one when I

met him several years ago.) And Juan Pablo does not only need his friends for affirmation; he is not simply trying to get attention. He needs them because they protect him from the government. His business is in one friend's name, and his apartment in another's. He does not have a driver's license (and could not get one if he tried) and relies on friends for rides to the supermarket and the doctor's office.

Juan Pablo's social and economic success is what initially made me interested in hybridity. I have explained how the political history of the US-Mexico border led to a local habitus that is often a hybrid of Mexican and American habiti, and which, depending on the situation, could be transformed into cultural capital for the exercising of power. In four recent ethnographies of the border identity, hybridized subjects are using their hybridity, but very differently and not nearly as successfully as Anzaldúa, Gómez-Peña, and Juan Pablo have. After examining how identity has been treated in anthropology and how, I think, it should be treated, I explained how the integration of conflicting schemas can lead to the ability to use one's identity—and one's hybridity—to gain power. It is, of course, possible to survive as an un-integrated hybrid, and so more research is needed to be able to theorize *why* one would do so much psychological and cultural work to develop a narrative self, to broker power with one's hybridity.

Juan Pablo's motivation, however, is telling and could perhaps lead to a wider inquiry. While he could have "survived" in Tijuana, Juan Pablo left home, he says, "for a better life." But that is an understatement. He could not be gay and live at home, he felt, and if he was out, he would have trouble working in Tijuana as well. When it comes to acceptance of gays and lesbians, Tijuana has changed dramatically since the 1980s when Juan Pablo left home (Gideonse and Williams 2006), but at the time, his only real option

was San Diego (the gay-friendly Mexican cities, Guadalajara and Mexico City, being too far away to move to as easily). He did not become truly motivated however, for several years. He dropped out of beauty school, had his passport taken by a border guard when he tried to cross while drunk, and he ended up working illegally (using a stolen social security number) at a flower stand in Hillcrest. Then he found out that he had HIV.

"When I tested positive, that was the mark, right there," Juan Pablo says. "I was making no money. I had a shit apartment. I was living with these crazy bitches in Chula Vista. I tested positive when people were dying. I had a huge depression, and I finally decided that I could embrace it and go down now, partying my ass off. Or I could get out and be successful. Be well. That was my two choices. Kill myself or get it together and really, really work it." He decided to work it. He finished beauty school, got licensed, and started working at successful salons, eventually working at Vidal Sassoon in San Francisco half of the week. He had to learn English in order to be successful, so he did. He had to develop an American habitus, or at least one that was sufficiently hybridized to make his clients feel comfortable, so he did. But he also refused to give up being Mexican; he was too proud for that, he says. While he says that he initially wanted to prove to his father and his brothers that he could be successful, to prove to the world that he could be successful, eventually that became unnecessary. "You just start feeling good about yourself, and you just to do it for yourself."

Juan Pablo earned his cultural capital because of a necessity not only to prove to his father that he could be successful but also to prove to himself that he could be successful—despite the fact that he was Mexican, gay, and HIV-positive. Success, however, is relative. While he makes more money that anyone else in his family, Juan

Pablo is not safe. A police officer could stop him for jaywalking and suddenly he could be deported. But by strategizing, by utilizing his carefully honed cultural skills, he protects himself, from the American government, Mexico culture, and his own self-doubt.

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