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Critical Commentary

The first article I analyzed was a chapter out of Ronald Takaki's book, *A Different Mirror: A History Of Multicultural America* titled "Foreigners in their own land." This reading examines how the Mexican-American war impacted the lives of Mexicans, and the resulting oppression they faced in their annexed territories. Mainly, the author describes constant racial prejudice and discrimination that the Mexicans dealt with in a post-war society. Specifically, many native Mexicans had their land stolen, and an enforcement of English and American culture marginalized them even further. However, Takaki also emphasizes the resilience capital that the Mexicans exhibited as they protested against this oppressive culture.

The main purpose of this chapter is to contextualize the Mexican-American war and imply how the resulting treaties and social structures affected the lives of Mexicans. My understanding of the chapter was that the tension following the war was detrimental to Mexicans, as they slowly began to have their culture and land robbed from them. Furthermore, I found it interesting how war and victory is often celebrated in American culture, erasing the history from the Mexican perspective, and the unfair ways they were treated simply based on their skin color and background. I also believe that the intersection of land and self-identity is a major theme in this conflict. The loss of land was much more detrimental to the Mexican people than a simple loss of land. With the usurpation of their land, many Mexican-Americans lost their culture and many suppressed their culture to homogenize themselves with white people. Finally, I thought

about the long-lasting impacts of the Mexican-American war on modern day Mexican Americans. With the loss of their land and generations of wealth, many Mexican Americans must struggle because the properties of their ancestors were stolen from them. Ultimately, the events preceding the Mexican-American war were not contained to those who were involved, rather it caused generational trauma for Mexicans and set them back hundreds of years.

When analyzing this historical event through a critical race theory methodology, it is clear how these historical and systemic injustices were motivated by white supremacy. In fact, American foreigners such as Stephen Austin saw the unclaimed Mexican land as degenerate, and stated, “his sole and only desire since he first saw Texas was to redeem it from the wilderness-to settle it with intelligent honorable and enterprising people” (Takaki 157). Furthermore, many Americans foreigners exhibited their white supremacy, stating that the Mexican natives were “a mongrel Spanish-Indian and negro race” (Takaki 157). Not only did the Americans intrude on native Mexican land, but had a false sense of superiority and tried to perpetuate a racial hierarchy with themselves on the top. I believe this was incredibly immoral and the forced land dispossession and culture erasure that the Mexican natives dealt should never have happened. However, in the face of oppression, the Mexicans demonstrated resistance capital as they preserved their cultural identity and communities in the face of oppression. Through their resilience, they were able to defy the efforts of cultural erasure and empower their small communities to not lose their identity. One important piece of evidence that shows how the generational trauma from the Mexican-American war still affects the current day is the consistent wage gap between Mexican and white families in America. Studies from the Federal Reserve have shown that the average Hispanic and Latino family earns only half of the annual income that their white counterparts are making. On top of this, it is estimated that people of Latino and

Hispanic descent only accrue 15-20% of the net wealth that their white counterparts are making. These inconsistencies can certainly be traced back to the Mexican-American war. Particularly, this issue has been persistent in my community, as there are many portions of California with high Hispanic populations, which tend to be lower funded areas with less opportunity.

The second reading I analyzed was the chapter “La Conciencia De La Mestiza” from Gloria Anzaldua’s book *Borderlands La Frontera*. This chapter is about the concept of mestizaje. This refers to the fluid identity of those that belong to the intersections of different identities. For example, those that identify with different races, languages, and cultures face struggles from belonging to each of those communities that can build on top of each other. Particularly, she speaks of the chicana mestiza, and the struggles of latino women fighting against their own cultural expectations of women and how that clashes with the ideals of feminism.

I found that the main purpose of these readings was to recognize and celebrate the different cultural intersections, particularly that of the chicana mestiza. Furthermore, Anzaldua encourages readers to claim and embrace their heritages, rather than seeing it as a negative. For example, many people at the borders of different identities that are historically oppressed may be ashamed or scared to embrace their identity. However, Anzaldua believes the best way to love oneself and find pride in their identity is to embrace it and find strength in their roots, even in the face of an oppressive society. The chapter concludes with the author empowering her readers, telling them to find their mestizo.

Analyzing this article from my perspective as a feminist, I see this chapter as a strong call to action. It calls for the reader to embrace and celebrate the intersections of their identity. It gives power to marginalized communities and empowers them. I agree with the author's perspective on embracing one’s identity, and believe all people should have pride in their culture

and identity, even if it is once that has historically been marginalized. I also agree with the author's perspective on feminist issues within the chicano mestiza. Particularly, I like how the author challenges traditional gender roles and empowers them to reclaim their diverse heritage that expands beyond social standards. Anzaldua demands from men that, "We need them to say they will begin to eliminate their hurtful put down ways. But more than the words, we demand acts. We say to them: We will develop equal power with you and those who shamed us" (Anzaldua 106). This quote demonstrates the resistant capital that many chicana women use to fight against rigid social constructs. They use this form of cultural capital for collective freedom and the fight for equal rights. I also noticed that navigational cultural capital was relevant, as those in the chicana mestiza have to navigate through their different identities to find opportunities. This concept is extremely relevant in our contemporary world, as an entire sector of feminism, called intersectional feminism has emerged from this idea. The popular newspaper, *The UN Woman*, has embraced this idea, and writes, "An intersectional approach shows the way that people's social identities can overlap, creating compounding experiences of discrimination." In today's world, people come from all different identities, and it is important to understand the different experiences that people live through based on these identities. Intersectionality has affected me in many ways, making me think about the different minority groups I belong to, and the different experiences I have faced navigating life with these labels.