

# Rethinking belonging through mestiza consciousness: Student accounts of diversity, equity, inclusion, and exclusion in a campus newspaper

Mariam Betlemidze, Ph.D.



Department of Communication Studies



## Abstract

A campus newspaper is uniquely positioned to cover students' cultural dynamics and serve as a catalyst for student's self-actualization through non-fiction storytelling. I analyzed 146 media articles written by students of CSUSB on issues of racial justice, equity, diversity, inclusion, and exclusion published in 2016-2020. The articles manifested the following thematic topics: 1) first-generation student experiences; 2) recognizing and navigating imposter syndrome; 3) racial representation among Black students; 4) diversity events bring awareness, and 5) commentary of racial representation in the entertainment industry.

## Sample

The project offers a qualitative study of 145 articles on diversity, equity, inclusion, and exclusion in a student newspaper Coyote Chronicle from Fall 2016 through fall 2020.



## Theoretical framework:

The paper relies on Gloria Anzaldúa's concepts of borderlands, mestiza consciousness, mestizaje, and nepantla to explain the complexity of students' cultural and economic backgrounds. The research project contextualizes Anzaldúa's work within a new materialist feminist framework.



## Goal

The project aims to challenge binary oppositions between materiality and discourse to shed light on community building's intricacies through a student newspaper on two campuses of a Hispanic-Serving Institution.

## Method

Critical-cultural and rhetorical analysis I conducted a close-textual and visual analysis of articles.



## Findings

- 1) Students are often unaware that they are first-generation students and do not know where and how to find resources.
- 2) By attending events dedicated to first-generation students, Chronicle writers and event participants often are baffled by the multi-faceted issues raising from the imposter syndrome, which often leads to self-actualization and realization.
- 3) Black students often end up lamenting the lack of continuity is raising up the issues of Black student recruitment, support and engagement in leadership student positions.
- 4) Majority of articles covering diversity events complement university efforts in raising awareness and appreciate the opportunity;
- 5) Movie and TV show reviews published in the Chronicle by students often pay close attention to the issues of representation in the entertainment industry and combating stereotypes.

## Conclusions

The work of students in the Chronicle as journalists and as interviewees shows their search for belonging and self-actualization. Students constantly navigate ambiguity, spaces of in-betweenness, and uncomfortable transformation as they work with faculty from other cultural backgrounds. Placing the analysis of student articles on diversity alongside my participation in the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Community, I see a greater need for student-faculty collaboration that would move beyond the usual platitudes.

## References

1. Alaimo, S., Hekman, S., & Hekman, S. J. (Eds.). (2008). *Material feminisms*. Indiana University Press.
2. Anzaldúa, Gloria. 1987. *Borderlands/La frontera: The new mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute
3. Coyote Chronicle (n.d.) [Web site]. Retrieved from [www.CoyoteChronicle.net](http://www.CoyoteChronicle.net)
4. Sandoval, Chela. *Methodology of the Oppressed*. Vol. 18. U of Minnesota Press, 2013.

