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TRANSFORMATIVE PEDAGOGY FOR
SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATION: TEACHING
TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION
STUDENTS TO BRIDGE WITH
ANZALDÚAN THEORIES OF SOCIAL
CHANGE

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TRANSFORMATIVE PEDAGOGY FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATION:
TEACHING TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION STUDENTS TO BRIDGE WITH
ANZALDÚAN THEORIES OF SOCIAL CHANGE

A Thesis Presented To

Eastern Washington University

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

English: Rhetoric and Technical Communication

By

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Spring 2014

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Master's Thesis

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ABSTRACT

This thesis discusses the growing challenge facing teachers of technical communication in preparing educators with the knowledge, skills, and perspectives to effectively work with an increasing diverse student population, especially with those students whose cultural, racial, language, professional, and ethnic backgrounds are different from the educator's background. Therefore, Anzaldúan theory offers another productive way of bringing together theory and practice to address the challenge of seeing and practicing technical communication's critical and civic aspects within diverse communities. This essay provides insight into how Anzaldúa theories for social change might fulfill civic objectives.

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I also want to thank my family for encouraging me to apply for graduate school and making me believe that I could obtain a master's degree. They were there to help me along the way, especially during the toughest of times.

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Introduction: Speaking from *Mestizaje*

A Note to the Reader

The texts and symbols presented in this thesis are conceptually designed; that is, they are meant to engage, expand, challenge, and transform technical communication educators. The reader must follow the multidimensional and interconnected theories for social change developed by Gloria Anzaldúa that emulate her endless journeys and border crossings, which are at the core of her epistemologies and subjectivities. Since Gloria Anzaldúa challenges the notion of *linguas francas*,¹ she chooses not to translate or consciously mistranslate her hybrid use of languages as part of her aesthetic and political and transformative strategy. It is important for the readers, especially academic readers accustomed to academic prose and linear lines of logic, to understand that at times they will feel excluded, confused, disconnected, overwhelmed, and exhausted. Although Anzaldúa's intentions are not meant to isolate and exclude readers from her writing, she does refuse to obey given doctrines that would otherwise limit and restrict her theories of multiplicity and fluidity. However, this text will provide conceptual clues that will help readers traveling across my vision of a multicentric and interconnected approach to teaching technical communication in multicultural spaces that center on social justice and diversity.

In addition, readers should be aware that Anzaldúa theories are not linear, and one concept does not move to the next in this essay. Her theories are interconnected and circular. Anzaldúa theories of social changes are meant to be understood in complex and interrelated ways, not operationalized in a linear manner.

¹ *Linguas francas* refers to language used to communicate among people of different native languages through out the world (Dauer, 2005).

However, given my readers' modes of thinking, I outline her theories to help contextualize them. I by no means seek to suggest that her theories can be followed as a formula for social transformation and social action.

My Journey

I am an emerging technical communicator learning to theorize and practice without borders. I am a recent nomadic technical communicator in the search of *mestizaje*, which refers to the phenomenon of transculturation² in relation to the contact zones of where differences and inequalities materialize and intersect. I am a developing border crosser.³ I am a border being⁴ in the complicated landscape of technical communication. In other words, I am learning to move away from a static sense of the technical communicator identity to a repertoire of multiple identities that bridge across singular and binary modes of thinking, producing, and practicing.

However, for the last three years of my postsecondary degree, I held on to the romantic ideal that as an emerging radical communicator, my place was not interred within the university system but out in the world, out within my community from which I came. Shortly after entering graduate studies, I perceived U.S. colleges and universities (and its fields of studies with esteemed scholars) to be solitary and divorced from the social realities of the Chicana/o and Latina/o experiences in the United States. I regarded the university campuses as reservoirs for thought and training facilities to fulfill

² Drawing from U.S. Third-World Feminism, transculturation is used to define cultural shifts induced by the contact between two or more cultures. Transculturation has been used by U.S. Third-World feminist to describe how oppressed groups challenge, apply, and re-create knowledge transmitted to them by a dominate culture (Anzaldúa, 1990).

³ Border crossing is the physical, symbolic, or virtual movement across any boundary. It also refers to the transferring and creating of ideas through a crosspollination process (Anzaldúa, 1990).

⁴ Border is being used to identify my way of thinking and interoperating in the world as in a constant state of change and fluctuation.

capitalistic agendas—pawns for an elite ruling corporate-government—rather than laboratories for social action and humanistic reinvention. I questioned my decision to pursue higher education to study technical communication as a force for positive social change. I viewed my current investment in education as a dismemberment of my body, mind, spirit, and identities. I believed I would inevitably end up severing what connected me to my working-class, first-generation, migrant, Latina/o and Chicana/o experiences, and I would trade my ability to enter my community for a capitalistic skill to make decisions to protect my paycheck.

I became stubbornly determined to prove that as a radical communicator⁵ I could remain independent, unchanged, and transformative exclusively by creating my own radical communication in a struggling world, a world of global warfare and tragedy, without stepping out of my community. This long struggle for autonomy, self-determination, relationship, and transformation was deadened by the conditions of invasion, war, terrorism, and colonialism that have existed for people of color in this hemisphere since the unfortunate arrival of Columbus. After learning that hundreds of years of colonialism, economic globalization, and cultural dominion has endangered Third World peoples, people of color, members of my communities, I became world-weary. I wanted nothing more than to return to my grandmother's kitchen and make *tamales* made of corn.

Absence from the university for a year, I experienced serious philosophical vertigo. My growing understanding of the writing of Gloria Anzaldúa (1990, 2002a, 2002b) forced me to rethink my notions of identity and community and to construct more

⁵ Jason Del Gandio (2008) defines radical rhetoricians as being “capable of manifesting alternative worlds of communicative experience” (p. 15).

inclusive ways of being in the world that are committed to basic human rights, equality, respect for all people, and the planet. I learned the importance of expanding my worldviews to include diversity, solidarity, social justice, and healing. I was looking for a new cultural paradigm and a new sense of belonging to a larger “we” during a time when all of my centralities were deconstructing. It was in the midst of this diffusion that I came to better understand Borderlands rhetoric.⁶ Borderlands rhetoric reflected what my lived experiences as a border being were subconsciously telling me. My lived conditions of crossing borders contributed to my development of a both/and consciousness, a consciousness feeding my desire to develop arguments to inform new ways of being and relating across borders of differences. I was learning to draw from the *topos*⁷ of Borderlands.⁸ I was learning that I could rhetorically employ Borderlands using Anzaldúa theories of social change and consciousness to build and mobilize communities, to forge solidarity across divisions of difference, to pursue agendas of social justice and equity, and to provide contexts ideal for exploring technical communication’s potential contribution in the Borderlands.

In addition, Rude (2004) helped me understand the humanistic and civic elements of technical communication. She demonstrated the ability to teach students to develop their public voices and the practice of engaging in civic affairs by identifying public and civic spaces that could benefit from technical communicators’ knowledge and power. Furthermore, Rude (2004) introduced me to the importance of understanding the social

⁶ Licona (2012) defines borderlands rhetoric as “subversive third-space tactics and strategies that can prove discursively disobedient to the confines of phallogocentrism and its neocolonizing effects over time and space” (p.7).

⁷ The places rhetoricians drawn from to formulate a line of argument (Herrick, 2009).

⁸ Borderlands is often defined in relation to the concept of third space developed by U.S. Third World feminism. Third space is an “interstitial space of intersection and overlap, ambiguity and contradiction, that materializes a subversion to either/or ways of being and reproducing knowledge” (Licona, 2012, p.11).

impact of the technical communicator's work to develop social consciousness and responsible students. Whereas, Scott (2004) illustrated the powerful approach of service-learning programs for fostering socially responsible student action for social change. By integrating cultural studies, he helped me frame my own ideas and visions of preparing students as critical technical communicators, civic-minded citizens, who use their knowledge and power to produce effective and ethical discourse and work toward dismantling exclusive forms of power.

Having experienced some of the critical work focused on understanding social responsibility, civic engagement, and service-learning in technical communication scholarship and having experienced several technical communicators who were living lives committed to social justice, I was inspired to perform my own investigation of exploring the relationships among teaching, social justice, and Anzaldúa's theories for social change. Thus, my journey of making sense of my Borderlands experiences in relation to technical communication manifested into the topic of this thesis. I have shared with the readers my thoughts and experiences about how I came to this crossroad. In what follows, I will describe an ongoing conversation in technical communication that focuses on responding to the issue of increasing student, faculty, practitioner and curricular diversity.

Overall, it is my deep desire to participate in the massive project of redefinition⁹ instilled in me by U.S. Third World Feminism theorists like Anzaldúa (1990), Sandoval (2000), Lorde (1984), and Moraga (2011). But I also hope to inspire the current and future generation of technical communication educators to continue the hard work of this

⁹ In the simplest form, the great redefinition project is about redefining who we are as a continent and as a people in more inclusive and loving ways (Anzaldúa 1990).

project of redefinition. That is, using our teaching as a method to help our students and our communities develop a sense of agency—the belief that technical communicators can make a difference in the messy world that we live in and share.

The Need in Technical Communication

Savage and Mattson (2011) document the increasing importance of developing intercultural lenses to find methods of increasing diversity¹⁰ in technical communication programs. They argue that, given the field's deep involvement with globalization, we need to expand the focus of technical communication to include a commitment to diversity and social justice. Technical communication's involvement in globalization provides wonderful opportunities and benefits for businesses, professionals, and communities, but it also provides opportunities of great discomfort by sweeping “through cultural, social, environmental, and economic domains in destructive ways” (Savage & Mattson, 2011, p. 5). Such arguments identify two fundamental responsibilities for the study, teaching, and practice of technical communication. First, technical communicators have a shared responsibility of learning how to participate ethically within globalization processes. Second, they have the shared obligation of understanding the impacts of such participation (Savage & Mattson, 2011). In relation to the second responsibility, it requires that technical communicators understand and respond to social justice for marginalized groups of people who are negatively impacted by globalization's effects (Savage & Mattson, 2011).

¹⁰ Diversity is a complex term that has complex histories including histories of colonization, domination, and oppression. Savage and Mattson (2011) present various perspectives of what diversity might mean in technical communication (see pages 8-14).

To uphold these responsibilities (and in many ways to begin the dialogue in technical communication), they pose the critical question, “in what ways are technical communication programs addressing issues of diversity—respecting and advocating for underrepresented groups of people?” (Savage & Mattson, 2011, p. 5-6). Based on survey results, Savage and Mattson (2011) provide a foundation for the status of diversity in technical communication, specifically about the issues concerning race and ethnicity. They believe that their study will provide departure points for future researchers to develop further studies concerning diversity and social justice in technical communication. For me, Savage and Mattson’s (2011) work does exactly as they foresaw.

Savage and Mattson’s (2011) research provides the entry points that validate the importance of my vision of expanding technical communication diversity by integrating Anzaldúa’s theories of social justice with current pedagogical approaches in technical communication. The results of their research point to the great need to diversify student and faculty populations in technical communication programs, to integrate diverse cultural perspectives, to better identify with the larger student population and academic disciplines across campus, and to diversify curriculum. Savage and Mattson (2011) call on researchers, educators, and practitioners to employ “imaginative and determined efforts” in order to challenge the resilient obstacles they describe to diversifying technical communication (p. 6). As Savage and Mattson (2011) note:

We hope this study will encourage innovative, hopeful, and determined efforts to overcome the disadvantages that result for all when they are denied equal access to education, economic opportunities, needed tools, or human rights. Technical communication program should not be the last to seek solutions to these problems. (p. 44).

In other words, an important aspect of the future of technical communication must include an emphasis on bridging across differences. From my interpretation, technical communication educators must continue to shift education as an act of social justice. Education becomes an act of social justice when educators make it a reflection of the larger democratic process committed to challenging the status quo and rejecting the privileging of peoples from dominant groups. Educators must learn to shift the classroom to sites of change by empowering technical communication students to be active and critical citizens equipped with social change and technical communication tools. These students, ideally, will question and transforms unjust conditions in society in myriad ways and within various communities (Anzaldúa, 2002b; Freire, 2000; hooks, 1994). The classroom experiences must continue to shift and expand in order to do more than provide content and skills to students. Students must not only be knowledgeable and skilled, but also they should be critical, moral, ethical, rhetorical, civic, and loving.¹¹

Savage and Mattson (2011) contend that technical communicators can become essential agents to address injustices in communities. Technical communicators cannot accept difficult social issues as the status quo. Savage and Mattson's (2011) arguments emphasize that technical communicators must channel their efforts into addressing the suffering in our communities, rather than just amending it. We should not wait until the problems in technical communication discourse have escalated into a situation where they are complex and entrenched. Instead, we must act now and provide possibilities for lasting solutions that lead to positive social change. We must participate in solidarity with

¹¹ Sandoval (2000) defines love as a hermeneutic—"a set of practices and procedures that can transit all citizen-subjects, regardless of social class, toward a differential mode of consciousness and its accompanying technologies of method and social movement" (p. 140).

others who are working for the construction of a benevolent society, a utopian vision where people work toward a justice society where everyone is given an equal opportunity to thrive.

Furthermore, Savage and Matveeva (2011) expand the conversation about the lack of diversity in technical communication by presenting several methods on how technical communication might align with the goals and objectives of selected universities in historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and Tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) in the United States. Specifically, the authors respond to the lack of racial and ethnic diversity among technical communication faculty, practitioners, and students. Their research provides some insights on how technical communication programs can start a dialogue about how to increase diversity among its population of students, faculty, and practitioners.

Savage and Matveeva's (2011) work suggest that HBCUs and TCUs have a number of commonalities that might help technical communication program build partnerships defined by ethical practices. For example, the writers note that the selected universities and colleges share a common experience of responding to systems of oppression, exploitation, and cultural degradation while recognizing how those experiences differ. As such these programs focus on recovering cultural heritage while preparing students to participate in the global economy on an equal footing as their counterparts. Based on the authors' interpretation, these programs seek a curriculum balanced between providing the needed education in the disciplines and in the skills needed by mainstream society and providing the needed consciousness of the indigenous knowledge(s).

These programs seek to have their students educated for contemporary professions and workplaces and to compete in the mainstream marketplace. However, they emphasize that their students make a drastic shift and transform how the profession is practiced. Savage and Matveeva (2011) explain, “they believe that these professions can be practiced in ways consistent with and in support of those people whose identities have been and continue to be shaped by histories and cultures that have often been denied and suppressed” (p. 80). In other words, their students should develop a consciousness that stresses the importance of returning to their communities, contributing to the economic and cultural development, and increasing involvement in social agendas. These program goals help provide the persuasive arguments within participatory action research and ethical practices to begin the discussion of building partnerships to expand the diversity in technical communication student and faculty populations by creating joint degrees, developing collaborative research projects, or sharing facilities (Savage & Matveeva, 2011). Savage and Matveeva (2011) continue to argue that diversifying technical communication will transform “our values, our knowledge conventions, our ways of understanding the world, and our practices” (p. 82).

In addition, Savage and Mattson (2011) and Savage and Matveeva (2011) point out the tendency in technical communication for a number of members to be representatives of well-to-do business and community members of the dominant culture that may operate from a Western and Eurocentric reference. Rarely are these members equipped or versed in issues of diversity, marginalization, colonization, oppression, and/or race and ethnicity, which needs to drastically change if technical communication is to remain relevant and continue to develop as a socially responsible practice for the

greater good.¹² That is, many educators in the field need to start speaking about how to develop multicultural education and social justice education in technical communication classrooms. The growing demand of diversity in technical communication requires employing a new form of discourse regarding citizenship, a discourse that will respect and value all voices and differences.

To expand technical communication programs, it will require using lenses of the “other.” These lenses focus on the multiple voices of the marginalized, the discriminated, the colonized, and the oppressed so that their multifaceted experiences of class, race and ethnicity, gender, and/or sexuality (just to name a few) can be seen in relation to technology. Savage and Mattson (2011) and Savage and Matveeva (2011) reflect a foundational democratic value: if all voices are of value in democratic society, then technical communication needs the lived experiences of those who have been oppressed and marginalized to be echoed in scholarship, practice, and pedagogy in solidarity and with respect.

Technical communication can no longer remain silent on the complex socioeconomic intersections and interconnectedness among race and ethnicity and technology (Savage & Matveeva, 2011). Technical communication can no longer (consciously or subconsciously) ignore the people caught in the contact zones of social justice and technology, requiring a transformation of the borders of technical communication. As Savage and Matveeva (2011) explain:

We must not presume that diversifying our programs by hiring minority faculty and enrolling minority students involves helping them become just like us. Let us avoid missionary zealotry! Our pedagogies, our course designs, our curricula, our

¹² I use this phrase to reference my belief that all people need to embrace the vast-untapped power of our humanity to work in solidarity to produce the knowledge, to create wisdom, and to develop the love needed to improve our world’s quality of life for all.

knowledge, even, perhaps our educational facilities and our institutional structures may well change if we are to genuinely embrace diversity. (p. 82)

This implies that technical communication educators will need to be able to bridge and cross complex borders of the psychological, social, cultural, and/or technological and recreate them in relationship to and solidarity with diverse groups of people. The singular mode of reference to the world (often a Western and Eurocentric reference) will not suffice. Technical communication educators will need to learn to shift—developing the ability to practice various forms of praxis that center on constantly transforming their realities. They will need border theories to help them make the shift. For technical communicators to be committed to an agenda of multiculturalism or diversity, they must also be committed to the practice and teaching of social justice. Such commitments open the discussion for the need of Anzaldúan theory.

The Need for Anzaldúan Theories

What Savage and Mattson (2011) and Savage and Matveeva (2011) have shown is that technical communication needs a massive uprooting of dualistic thinking. Technical communication's educational researchers need to move beyond a Western frame of reference and into a hybrid and multidimensional mode of being. Anzaldúa's theory materializes from her important work centering on Chicana *feminista* perspectives and social transformation. This body of knowledge continues to challenge and decolonize Western modes of educational research and practice. Using multiple methods and epistemologies, Anzaldúa focuses on giving voice to her experiences that have been largely ignored by dominant ideology and discourse. Her methods seek to expose ways to negotiate and navigate through the complex landscape of theory that involves intricate processes of making, living, and rebuilding the self and community and creating living

theory (or theory of the flesh)¹³ based on those experiences. Anzaldúa's theory teaches us how reconstructing self and community is contradictory, complicated, ambiguous, and highly mobile. These theories of the flesh reflect her understanding of the world and how to critically transform oppressive spaces.

What follows in the next section is my perspective of how Anzaldúa's theories of social change can contribute to the educational practice of technical communication by specifically responding to points made by Savage and Mattson (2011) and Savage and Matveeva (2011). Overall, the authors point out five fundamental issues that contribute to the lack of diversity in technical communication. This section will describe the five issues and briefly make connections to Anzaldúa's theories of social change to establish the need of Anzaldúan theory in technical communication.

Multiplying the identity of technical communication

Savage and Matveeva (2011) document that technical communication is too narrowly defined to capture the interest of diverse student populations. Their surveys show that most technical communication courses are framed within the identity of English, business communication, or computer science while remaining silent on critical issues like race/ethnicity and technology. As such, their work implies the need to complicate technical communication's identity. In other words, they describe the need to multiply its identity to reflect the lived experiences of the diverse student population and to move beyond traditional conceptualizations within totalizing references. They remind technical communication educators of the complicated balancing act of preparing

¹³ Theories of the flesh can be understood as the transformation of theory into lived experiences and lived experiences into theory; that theory and practices are produced in everyday lives, communities, and relationships (Licona, 2012).

students to be competitive practitioners in the workplace and preparing students to be agents of social change in their communities.

To begin the difficult work of blurring and expanding technical communication's boundaries requires bursting identity categories in discourse to move beyond the moments of dualistic thinking that often limit and restrict the agency of technical communicators. Technical communicators need theories and practices that enable them to develop multiple identifications with conventional forms of intersectionality (class, race, gender, sexuality, religion, culture). In addition, technical communicators need theories and practices that allow them to build identifications beyond traditional forms of intersectionality by employing cosmic citizenship identifications that focus on the politics of interconnectivity. Multiplying the identity of technical communication and the roles of technical communicators will better prepare them to bridge gaps of differences. Blurring or expanding identity boundaries focuses on understanding how technical communication can connect with other fields of thought, with people who share commonalities, and with people who share commonalities of difference.

For example, in my first undergraduate technical communication course, I was learning about communicating in a technological world. Specifically, I was learning to construct an identity that focused on creating specialized kinds of technical communication for business, industrial, governmental, and educational spaces. However, I was secretly thinking about how these specialized kinds of technical communication could be brought to a community to facilitate empowerment; how am I going to use this knowledge to be a more effective citizen, and what additional Chicana/o Studies class did I need to be an even more effective citizen in my Chicana/o community? Given my many

failures to communicate social change, I saw the larger promises of technical communication: it would help me deal more easily with a variety of audiences, increasing my chances of being heard. I saw the empowerment that technical communication would give me: the ability to shape my environment to facilitate change. While most of my peers were excited about entering the economic market, I was more concerned about entering communities as an agent of social change. I saw the possibilities of moving beyond the traditional technical communication identities in relation to capitalistic spaces.

Anzaldúa theories maintain the relational and interconnectivity of all human beings and the cosmos. She develops holistic models for identity formation that allow for complex formations of solidarity across differences of race, class, gender, sexuality, culture, and other social constructions that limit and restrict our politics of identity. These models do not ignore differences (do not imply sameness), but they do enable subjects to develop new forms of complex and discursive commonalities. Anzaldúa theories support those of us looking to cultivate knowledge of diversity and inequality and to stimulate the possibilities for interconnectedness, social justice, and change in technical communication across all exclusionary spaces. Her theories enable technical communication educators to embrace the contradiction of preparing students to enter the competitive marketplace as professionals and preparing students to enter their communities as critical agents of social change.

Developing multi-dimensional research methods

Savage and Matveeva (2011) report the importance of developing multi-dimensional research methods. Multi-layered methods shed light on the various ways of

resisting the reproduction of dominant Western domains of thought, knowledge, and power relations in technical communication. In addition, multi-faceted methods should show how groups of oppressed people's identities have been constructed by technology and technical communication. In other words, to better understand the complex relationships and impact of systems of oppression relating to technology, technical communication educational researchers will need to expand their frameworks. There is only so much of the experience and social condition that can be understood from singular frameworks that only look at one form of oppression. Technical communication scholars need multi-dimensional methods capable of analyzing multiple oppressions and multiple privileges. Such methods will shed light and support an awareness of how technology and technical communication is socially constructed and structured through overlapping experiences of race, class, gender, sexuality, and culture.

The realization that theorizing from everyday lives and bodies of people and not from abstract and detached perspectives makes Anzaldúa concepts powerful sources and sites of knowledge production and identity negotiation, shrinking the spaces among the community, academy, and workplace. Using Anzaldúa's theories as method enables the creation of epistemological tools that can be used in opposition to dominant ideologies and research methods. Her methods require the rejection of binary and simplistic ways of looking at social conditions. Anzaldúa's critical work requires multiple epistemologies that allow for ambiguity and accommodate contradiction. Her research and inquiry methods illustrate the various ways marginalized people are already living, struggling, and resisting multiple forms of oppressive discourses. Applying Anzaldúa theories to

critically analyze the type of research educators bring into the classroom reduces the totalizing effects of mainstream technical communication.

For instance, during my graduate studies coursework, I was asked too often to read research from the perspective of the powerful. I was overwhelmed by the analytic categories, such as logical dichotomies and abstract individuation, that naturalize social differences in technical communication and rhetoric. Almost in every course, I brought in the perspectives of the communities I wanted to work with upon graduation. However, since these perspectives were not reflected in the curriculum or research methods of the articles we read, it constructed my existence and my communities of color as disadvantaged: the Other, the alternative, or the non-traditional. I was constructed (unintentionally) as not part of the technical arena of concern. Many of my peers only tolerated my existence and application of technical communication as non-traditional. They refused to engage with my perspectives and visions of how technical communication can be practiced in revolutionary ways: I was resisted. However, if these courses are to diversify and attract students of color, the type of research brought into the classroom should be critically analyzed.

For me, my knowledge is the outcome of my relationship with the known and unknown, so it is socially constructed. When research methods ignore my experiences and relationships to the world (when they ignore the voices of people of color), it makes it difficult for me to speak within the biases and power of mainstream technical communication. As a result, I become that one student of color that applies technical communication the wrong way. When students of color are taught about technical communication from a socially constructed worldview based on the knowledge

production of economically and racially privileged men, they will be marginalized and silenced in the classroom.

Transforming the silence into action

Savage and Mattson (2011) advocate the importance of breaking the silence in technical communication about the lack of research on technology and its interconnectedness of social conditions like race and ethnicity. The field largely remains silent on the critical issues of technology and oppression. Savage and Matveeva (2011) argue the importance of working with critical scholars to speak about issues of social change and diversity for those impacted by such interconnectedness of oppression and technology. The breaking of silence will benefit all parties involved in the research projects if done so in ethical, participatory, and democratic ways. Silence must be broken to begin the complicated process of bridging across differences. The cause of the lack of diversity and transformation is not the differences among people, but rather the silence about how oppression and technology work to create inequalities. Without transforming the silence, technical communicators will not be well-informed about how to create strategies for supporting social justice agendas and building bridges of relationships across differences, as illustrated by my inability to transform my silence into action.

Since I had little power and voice in mainstream technical communication as a developing student of color in technical communication, I could not create strategies for supporting social justice agendas based on my lived experiences and visions. I could not bridge relationships across differences with my peers. If technical communication educators are to break the silence in their classrooms, then they will need theories and practices that provide guidelines for building community and dialogue. They will need

Anzaldúa theories to construct and employ third spaces to offer insights into the multiple voiced discourse. Educators need to learn about Anzaldúa grassroots strategies designed to effect change through the circulation and the production of new knowledges, new practices, and new perspectives developed in relation to lived experiences. The collision of established knowledge along with new knowledge produces innovative and informed practices for transforming the silence into action. By challenging silence using Anzaldúa theories, it opens the possibility of developing practices and producing systems that focus on egalitarian and social relationships of equity and social justice.

One approach that gives students of color a stronger voice in technical communication classrooms is developing a shared sense of ownership about the course readings and activities. In my experience, the syllabus was fully developed by the first day of class. Often, my identity and visions were not reflected in the syllabus or course activities. I always had to work in private (outside of the classroom and away from my peers) to explore the connections I wanted to understand in relation to my social justice agendas. I rarely was given the opportunity to bring my experiences and visions into the classroom. Educators can suggest a reading list or course activities, but allow students to add elements to the syllabus that reflect their identities and visions. If technical communication classrooms are to diversify, educators will need to develop strategies that disrupt the silencing effects when a totalizing technical communication curriculum is employed.

Building bridges across differences

There is a unique urgency in Savage and Mattson (2011) and Savage and Matveeva (2011) for technical communication educators to build partnerships (what I see

as bridges) across differences using powerful concepts of diversity. The authors embed concepts of bridges, power of the collective, multicultural voices, and solidarity based on differences. This urgency forefronts the importance of bringing together diverse voices that challenge assumptions and urge bold courses of action; that is, decentering technical communication and redefining it relation to the larger diverse population of students, faculty, and practitioners. In doing so, technical communication can begin the long conversation of critiquing its current state and supporting transformative visions of what it can become in a multicultural and just society—so that technical communication can learn to bridge.

Anzaldúa theories teach technical communicators how to engage in complex community building through solidarity. One of Anzaldúa most cited lesson is the rejection of dividing our sense of self and community by simplistic identity categories. Building multicentric solidarity for social change that rejects singular and monist models of social change and diversity is part of Anzaldúa's design to aid in the great reconceptualization project. Her theories stress the importance of interconnectivity and how parts of the whole, no matter how independent or even how contradictory, interrelate to help define each other and communities in which we live.

Throughout the various graduate technical communication courses, I had a difficult time bridging across the differences. I did not want to expose my experiences, worldviews, and visions. I did not want to be tolerated. I did not want to be viewed as the Other. However, when the course syllabus and classroom activities do not reflect social justice agendas found in Chicana/o and Latina/o communities, it makes it difficult for me to create relationships with my peers that are operating from a traditional standpoint of

technical communication. If these spaces are to become more inclusive, technical communication educators need to determine how to build relationship across differences. They are going to need to develop strategies that reduce the marginalizing effects of students who seek to step outside of the traditional.

One approach is to encourage students to understand the possibilities for technical communication is to have students interview technical communicators who are practicing in different spaces (business, education, and civic). If the views of all students are to be included and supported, then technical communication educators need to figure out ways of demonstrating to students the vast ways technical communication can be practiced. Having the students interview people who are applying their knowledge in various ways helps students step outside of the traditional paradigm. This will help everyone come together based on commonalities while encouraging and validating everyone's individual and communal interests.

Transforming and creating tools for change

Savage and Mattson (2011) and Savage and Matveeva (2011) acknowledge the growing concern in technical communication about society and how social processes function so that educators, researchers, and practitioners can figure out how technical communication can contribute to the social justice agendas for making our world more fair and just. The authors call upon increasing our tools of critical reflection and critical discussion on social justice and diversity to develop a greater awareness of social problems, resulting in the potential transformation of technical communication educators that have largely ignored the need of promoting social justice for all citizens and ignored marginalized voices. Savage and Matveeva (2011) discuss the importance of not speaking

for others but speaking with others. They reflect Paulo Freire's (2000) teachings that as critical educators, our role is not to make people fit our own visions of the world, not to improve a worldview without their participation, but rather to dialogue with people about each other's vision of a better world. Overall, Savage and Matveeva (2011) suggest the importance of transforming technical communication educators and their teaching tools to fully engage in genuine transformation of the field.

Anzaldúa's theories combine social activism and spiritual vision to transform worldviews and to create tools for social change. Technical communicators can learn to recognize the many differences among people, and they can learn to build relationships based on commonalities, similarities, or differences. These sites of commonalities can be used as catalyst for social change and transformation. Such transformations can aid technical communicators in developing socially conscious theories, practices, and tools to employ new forms of resistance, to empower citizens to create actual change in the world, and to combine self-reflection and self-growth to fully engage in social transformation, as made relevant by my exploration of technical communication scholars who have committed to working for social change.

In much of my experience as a student of technical communication, I learned various ways to develop tools for industry and user experience, but I never had the opportunity to apply my tools in a transformative way in relation to social justice. One approach might point to the use of community action projects versus client projects in service-learning classrooms. Community action projects help technical communication students identify sites of transformation and strategies for social change. In many cases, client projects require that students focus on individual and personal concerns. In my

experiences with client projects, my peers were more concerned about their grades and defining each member by their ability to do work. Most students did not have time to critically analyze the client's agenda and use of the documents we were asked to create. These barriers made it difficult for me to move the group to a collective action and socially ethical practice while developing a sense of awareness of the oppression circumscribed in our everyday lives, and how technical communication might challenge that oppression. If technical communication programs are to attract students of color, then educators will need to provide students with the experiential knowledge to understand how to link local community action with larger struggles for social change and technical communication/rhetorical theorizing about those processes of change.

Thus, I have provided a brief discussion about Anzaldúa's relevance to technical communication. As a closing note, I will provide four final reasons why I have chosen to limit my attention of this thesis to Anzaldúan theory. First, feminist perspectives have largely been absent in the formation of technical communication's histories, theories, and practices, or when included they have been marginalized (Durack, 2004). Such practices make it difficult to see and value the contribution of feminist perspectives and theories within and outside the field (Durack, 2004).

Second, feminists have been working toward inclusive definitions and spaces for quite a while through several different multi-centric frameworks (Durack, 2004). They have challenged dualistic thinking and continue to challenge such constructions of the world (Anzaldúa, 1990). Much feminist scholarship emphasizes shifting the point of view of theory, research, and practices from a "value free" standpoint to a more critical

standpoint (Delgado, 2006). These shifts are important to understand and to theorize in order to create more inclusive spaces in technical communication.

Third, they have accumulated a rich scholarship on diversity, social action, social change, and social justice (Delgado, 2006). There is so much knowledge that we can appropriate to inform and expand in ways that are more inclusive and socially responsible. Understanding how technical communication works is not enough. Technical communicators need to learn how to take action to make the social world more equitable, but we need to do so critically and carefully. We must be cautious not to reproduce the same conditions in our attempts to redefine the world that we seek to override. Anzaldúa's theories of social change are a call to progressive social transformation, a call of engagement. Such teachings can help technical communicators generate meaningful and lasting research, methods, and practices that will be more useful to progressive social change in the field.

Last, Anzaldúa's theories reject the notion that women should be responsible for filling the gap of male ignorance. I am consciously moving away from the notion that feminist perspectives must be brought to my attention. Lorde (1984) recognizes such tactics as ways of keeping oppressed women occupied with the master's concerns. In a similar fashion, Anzaldúa (2002b) argues that marginalized groups of people should not bear the burden of cross-cultural work. Everyone is responsible for understanding the challenges facing our society that make it difficult to identify with our diverse human population, especially those whose cultural, racial, language, and ethnic backgrounds are different from the prevailing community.

Transforming the Technical Communication Classroom

With these ideas in mind, I began to revisit the possibilities of teaching in academia. Perhaps the technical communication classroom could be transformed through a critical understanding of humanity's role in the universe. It could become a decentralized space and center for progressive social thought and action with an emphasis on Borderlands spaces. In my vision, technical communication classrooms would become temporary spaces of possibilities for teaching students to enter their fields and to enter their communities as "savvy, questioning thinkers rather than simply as efficient, problem-solving doers," as Jack Bushnell (1999) argues (p. 175). For me, technical communication educators should be incorporating alternative sites of practice and multifaceted interoperations of how technical communicators function in the larger social and technological context.

Specifically, I wish to enter the discussion pointed out by Savage and Matveeva (2011): the growing challenge facing teachers of technical communication is preparing educators with the knowledge, skills, and perspectives to effectively work with an increasing diverse student population, especially with those students whose culture, race, language, professional, and ethnic backgrounds are different from the educator's background. As Savage and Matveeva (2011) argue, the first step begins with a commitment to challenge our common sense perspectives about the world, about the technical communication scholarship and profession, and about how to teach it and learn it. I argue that Anzaldúan theory offers a productive way of bringing together theory and practice to address the challenge of seeing and practicing technical communication's critical and civic aspects within diverse communities.

Anzaldúa's theories expand the possibilities of empowerment for technical communicators to function as agents in solidarity for social change within oppressed communities. These theories demonstrate alternative sites for constructing technical communication as socially responsible, diverse, and transformative. Furthermore, Anzaldúan theory aids technical communication programs in enhancing civic learning by using indigenous genres that actively demand citizen-subjects to learn how to negotiate, survive, and transform current social conditions, and to construct more inclusive spaces that shape our world in more meaningful ways. Anzaldúa's spiritual and political legacy helps technical communicators extend the frontiers of our field of study. Anzaldúa's methods of self-transformation resonates across a broad spectrum of people living with oppressive social conditions. Her legacy inspires scholars to look inside and outside the academy to rethink past models and methods of social change and diversity and turn inward and outward to build new foundations for constructing a more just and inclusive world.

Technical Communication and the Call for Social Responsibility

Before exploring Anzaldúa's theories for social change in more detail, it is important to situate the purpose of this essay within dialogues of critical perspectives of research and pedagogy in technical communication. Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren (1994) argue that critical thinkers who are committed to exploring issues of pedagogy and cultural studies must begin with dialogue. Given this assertion, it is crucial that critical thinkers who seek to expand or shift scholarship and teaching practices emerge themselves in the change that is already happening in the field. In technical

communication, the transformative shift is already happening in the discussion of empowerment and social responsibility.

Technical communication, as I have come to understand, continues to shape human lives in many ways, including but not limited to the social, cultural, political, and economical (Agboka, 2012, 2013; Blyler, 1998; Boiasky, 1995; Durack; 2004; Lay; 2004; Sullivan, 1990; Sun, 2009; Thrush, 1993). As an emerging scholar and practitioner who is constructing a commitment to social justice, activism, and healing from an Anzaldúan perspective, I have a stronger connection with the critical, social, and political elements of technical communication—just to name a few. Technical communication, broadly defined, has much to offer a community in change or a community seeking change (Allen, 1999; Sullivan, 1990). Carolyn Miller (1990) argues that “we need to conceive of technical communication broadly and generously, not as a career path or job description based on current or past experience, but as a network of social practices and needs” (p. 108).

In response, Allen (1999) offers an understanding of technical communication in relation to social consciousness—that as a discipline technical communication is becoming more aware of the social components and consequences of its mastery of technical literacy. In addition, she reviews major turning points in the field to document changes in the historical, ideological, and theoretical components that affect the perceptions of technical communication’s humanistic value. Allen (1999) defines humanism in the following way, “an awareness of the best humans have to offer: flexibility, resiliency, critical thinking, a sense of ethics or morality, and potential for

growth” (p. 228). The author explores technical communication from the historical Civil Rights Movement to move beyond a theoretical and postmodernist perspective.

In doing so, Allen (1999) demonstrates stronger connections between technical communication and humanism. As a result, she asserts that at the core of technical communication is the mission “to relay knowledge” for a strategic purpose (using rhetoric), which aligns with the same equalizing and social justice agendas demonstrated in the Civil Rights Movement (p. 230). As she states, “when A holds the same knowledge as B, the scene is right for equality” (p. 230). In other words, Allen (1990) adds another understanding to the technical communicator as bringing about equity among various sections of the population where information and technology access and use is highly guarded and restricted. Allen (1999) explains:

The inclusion of women, people of color, and those without money and power in the consideration of the governance of the nation are mirrored in the concerns for these same groups within our profession and within our readership. Making information available to those groups, in short, removes a primary element of powerlessness and disenfranchisement: lack of information or ignorance. (Allen, 1999, p. 230)

Ultimately, Allen (1999) shows that technical communicators and information play a vital role within communities when operating in social agendas—that technical communicators are humanists who have the potential to challenge the social orders that abandon social consciousness and favor the good of the very few. As Allen (1999) concludes, “the evolution of social consciousness has drastically altered the technical communication progression, moving us beyond the ‘I’ of being good writers toward the ‘we’ of creating meaning and significance that sustains a progressive professional and social community” (p. 234).

However, information and communication is passive by itself. It begins to have humanistic and civic value for a democracy when citizens turn it into knowledge and apply it for social and civic action purposes. Unless citizens interpret, evaluate, discuss, challenge, modify, deconstruct, reconstruct, apply, and employ the vast supply of information and rhetorical strategies, they cannot support social and civic action, let alone wise, ethical, and social responsible action. Thus, information and communication developed and used by citizens creates powerful sources and sites of knowledge, which can support effective civic engagement.

As such, different institutions and groups of people have created vast resources and are motivated to perform civic actions, mostly defined by their lived experiences and visions of the future. There are also new tools and technologies available that may aid these institutions and people for developing social and civic action. For instance, Bakardjieva (2011) demonstrates how citizens went out into the streets to challenge a decision by the Supreme Administrative Court to take territory in the south-east of Bulgaria and remove its protection as a natural reserve. Bakardjieva (2011) draws connections between how their actions and acts of civic engagement were enhanced by technology tools such as blogs, websites, and text messages. Nevertheless, it is difficult to argue that these new technologies and communications media are adequate to the task of civic renewal and empowerment (Blyler, 1994). Regardless, one important dialogue is clear: proponents of civic engagement argue for renewal and rebuilding of our public sphere with new materials and approaches (Bakardjieva, 2012; Barnhurst, 2011; Chen et al., 2012; Luo, 2014; Zúñiga et al., 2014).

Similar conversations are happening in technical communication. Technical communication educators are arguing the importance of teaching students to be active citizens who use information and communication for socially responsible civic action (Clark, 2004; Bowdon, 2004; Dubinsky, 2004; Eble & Gaillet, 2004; Ornatowski & Bekins, 2004; Rude, 2004; Scott, 2004). Although each of the above noted scholars contribute important elements to the conversation in technical communication about civic engagement, they point to the importance of having technical communication students analyze, critique, and practice with technical communication's political and civic dimensions. These authors share the belief that students need to become more aware of the political dimension of technical communication; they should, as result, become more civically active to participate in addressing, with solidarity and respect, the social needs of communities. These scholars are highly concerned with preparing the next generation of informed and civic-minded citizens who can effectively participate in democratic ways to help construct more just and fair ways of being in our communities, our society, and our world: they are highly concerned about teaching civic engagement and constructing a socially responsible practice of technical communication.

The Challenges of Social Responsibility

These notions of preparing students to exercise political power to pursue issues concerned with quality of life and human conduct¹⁴ is not without challenges in technical communication. Dubinsky (2004) points out several interconnected challenges of what Sullivan (1990) calls a "technological mindset" (p. 375) or what Blyler (1994) identifies

¹⁴ Civic engagement is broadly defined within the context of teaching. Technical communication educators prepare students to exercise political power by pursuing social needs concerning the quality of human life and human behavior that benefit the common good for all groups of people involved (Cherry, 1988; Hauser, 2000; Sullivan, 1990).

as a “technocratic consciousness” (p. 142). Sullivan (1990) references the ongoing debate between teaching a set of technical skills practiced by specialist and teaching the humanistic aspects of technical communication, understanding how meaning is constructed and consequences of such meaning are deducted by some source of power. This debate reflects the long standing conversations of humanism versus vocationalism in technical communication. In other words, it poses a critical question that seeks to understand the power relationship between technical communication discourse and scientific/technological interests (Blyler, 1994). What role technical communication programs play in light of scientific/technological interests? What purpose do technical communication programs have in regards to community and quality of life?

Echoing Carolyn Miller (1979), Rutter (1991) challenges the narrow definition of technical communication as a transparent delivery system for science, technology, and other positivistic endeavors. He critiques positivistic thinking, showing that scientific and technological arenas are far from objective and risk-free and identifies the differences among applied rhetoric and the mastery of rhetoric for the use in public spaces. First, Rutter (1991) draws on Kuhn’s concept of paradigm shifts in scientific knowledge (Kuhn, 1996) to demystify the false representation of objectivity and universal truth in acclaimed monolithic knowledge. Second, he calls for a re-centering of rhetoric in scientific and technological discourse communities to move closer towards Aristotle’s rhetoric, arguing that the current status of rhetoric is “an applied rhetoric, not Aristotle’s art of finding the best available means of persuasion so much as the knack of imparting to technical prose the proper degree of polish” (p. 143).

Ultimately, Rutter (1991) makes the case of broadening the definition of technical writing to include “liberal education grounded on oratorical traditions that emphasize the mastery of rhetoric for use in the active life” (p. 149). In a similar fashion, Miller (1991) argues technical communication should expand beyond the borders of “the processing of technical information” (p. 64). She calls attention to the importance of redefining technical communication as more than “a value-neutral *techne*” to a socially responsible practice, as a “social *praxis*” (p. 57-64). Miller (1991) believes that technical communicators should function and act as socially responsible citizens who “can say the right thing at the right time to solve a public problem because they know how to put the shared beliefs and values of the community into practice” (p. 57).

Although Rutter (1991) and Miller (1991) argue the importance of expanding definitions of technical communication and its practice, Blyler (1994), Bushnell (1996), Sullivan (1990), and Katz (1993) identify their criticisms in terms of oppression, domination, indoctrination, and disempowerment. For Sullivan (1990), defining technical communication in ways that remove the humanistic aspects is unjust and inhumane. For example, he asserts that “our present way of defining technical communication as discourse appropriate for industry is equivalent to defining it as rhetoric appropriate for slaves” (p. 380). Overall, the lack of agency for many technical communicators in the workplace makes it difficult for them to develop a sense of social responsibility (Sullivan, 1990).

Likewise, Katz (1993) challenges attempts to make technical communication a more responsive tool for industry, defining the domination of discourse by scientific and technological ideologies as problematic. As Katz (1993) explains, these politics, if left

unexamined, dominate discourse through “its initiatives and power, which is rooted in the ideology of expediency based on a rational deeply embedded in Western culture (p. 58). What Sullivan (1990) and Katz (1993) point to is the danger of uncritically importing paradigms of the workplace, which turns technical communication programs into facilities or training grounds for future employers to draw from.

Bushnell (1996) strongly challenges the act of training students versus teaching students. He argues against the importing of workplace paradigms into the technical communication classroom because educators start to train students as positivist thinkers versus critical thinkers. Such paradigms deny technical communicators’ the power to yield language and communication to shape communities (Bushnell, 1996). Instead, when discourse is dominated by the alliance of science and technology, technical communication students are taught how to transmit information to communities while ignoring the humanistic aspects of communication behind the veil of objectivity and risk-free communication (Bushnell, 1996).

Under such constructions of the technical communication classroom, students are not asked to question, to resist, or to transform. They are not asked to critically think about the implications or to take social responsibility for their work (Bushnell, 1996). For Bushnell (1996) there is no such thing as a “neutral, merely informative document” (p. 176). Technical communication and its documents are as ideological as any other form of writing or language (Bushnell, 1996). As such, for students to be successful in technical communication, they need to understand and recognize “how language works and who *it* works *for*” (Bushnell, 1996, p. 176). Technical communication programs’ mission must move beyond workplace readiness and include the preparation of students to be critical

thinkers, recognizing that technical communication is far more complex than the transmitting of information or an enterprise based on describing and informing (Bushnell, 1996).

The Problem of Social Responsibility

Given the challenges surrounding social responsibility for technical communicators, several scholars have questioned if empowerment is even possible (Blyler, 1994; Bushnell, 1999; Katz, 1996; Sullivan, 1990). This section highlights the debate about the technical communicator's empowerment and ability for social responsibility. Blyler (1994), Bushnell (1996), Sullivan (1990), and Katz (1993) demonstrate the tendency for technical communication educators to make discourse submissive to the alliance of science and technology, resulting in the indoctrination of students to fill the roles of transmitting knowledge in our society. Limiting the roles of technical communicators removes their power to become politically aware and socially active, and it makes empowerment difficult to obtain (Blyler, 1994).

Rutter (1991), Miller (1991), Sullivan (1990), and Bushnell (1996) believe in light of these challenges, empowerment for technical communicators is still a possibility. Positioning their claims in the liberal humanist and classical tradition of rhetoric, these authors assert the importance of identity and knowledge over skills and doing. Their arguments highlight that student thinking is more important than the tools used to perform. For example, Rutter (1991) argues "what kind of person an orator is determines the success of what an orator does" (p. 136). Rutter (1991) calls on technical communication educators to give students opportunities to develop their civic orientations to their profession and communities. In like manner Miller (1991) relies on

Aristotle's definition of *phronesis* and urges educators to provide opportunities for students to engage in social problems and shared beliefs and values by engaging a problem-solving approach. The problem-solving approach will help students understand how problems are shaped and communities are formed (Miller, 1991). In this way, technical communication students would be empowered to yield the power of language and communication to shape documents and understand the implication of those documents in the larger community.

However, Sullivan (1990) takes a more critical look at empowering technical communication students. Regardless of the challenges, he believes that empowerment and social responsibility is still possible, but it requires critically analyzing the larger social and political contexts. Sullivan (1990) maintains the importance of developing critically, sound strategies for socially responsible action in order to demystify existing power structures that limit and restrict the roles of technical communicators. Drawing on Aristotle's notion of *praxis*, he positions the use of public forums in instruction. From his perspective, the forums reveal "the possible clash between the values of audience in industry, heavily influenced by the profit motive, and the concerns of the public" (p. 383). These clashes should help students develop their critical abilities to resist the totalizing effects of technical genres (Sullivan, 1990). By developing resistance and knowledge about the impact of their work, he believes that students "transform present practices and open up opportunities for public social action" (p. 384).

Despite his controversial view of technical communication, Bushnell (1996) believes that technical communication students can become aware of the limited possibility of moving beyond the demands and domination of the corporate power

structures. He outlines several issues that need critical examination. First, the author argues against the uncritical import of the corporate paradigm into the technical communication classrooms. He asks educators to stay focused on teaching our students to yield the power of language and communication in socially responsible ways, while critically analyzing approaches that train students to fulfill corporate agendas.

However, Blyler (1994) is not fully convinced that technical communicators can be empowered to act in socially responsible ways and engage in civic action. Given the power of technology over human life and the technocratic consciousness, she argues technology is removing the public's ability to make democratic decisions and engage in decision making practices: a process she identifies as depoliticization. As Blyler (1994) explains, "people no longer have a voice in decisions that bear on their social lives because all problems are resolved back into technical ones" (p. 134-135). The political function is deteriorating in relation to these massive scientific and technological discourses (Blyler, 1994). However, the author does recognize the power of resistance and transformation and the function of critical social sciences as a powerful discourse to regenerate civic action. Given the communicative situation she analyzes, empowerment and civic engagement when placed against science and technology may be difficult to effect (Blyler, 1994). On a closing note, Blyler (1994) calls for research that explores the issue of empowerment and professional discourse, "so that both the possibilities *and* the limitations of empowerment may be fully understood" (p. 142).

A Response to the Problem of Social Responsibility

Dubinsky (2004) also documents the difficult task of balancing rhetoric as a "virtue linked to public deliberation and effective citizenship with one of rhetoric as a set

of skills associated with job preparation” (p. 245). When the rhetoric of virtue is pushed too far, it becomes totalizing, or when the rhetoric of virtue is muted, it becomes too narrow and instrumental, resulting in issues of power relations (Blyler, 1994; Dombrowski, 2000; Dubinsky, 2002; Faber, 2002; Sapp & Crabtree, 2002; Selber, 1994). Dubinsky (2004) believes that one possible solution is to study and teach what Hauser (2004) identifies as “rhetoric’s complexity and rhetoric’s importance to democratic life” (p. 245). Hauser (2004) defines rhetorical democracy as a “rhetorical form of governance in which all citizens are equal, everyone has say, everyone has a vote, and all decisions are based on the most compelling arguments” (p. 1). The authors who have responded to Blyler’s (1994) call for bridging the gap of empowerment and civic engagement in technical communication challenge traditional roles of technical communicators, create new roles for technical communication in the civic arena, and explore how technical communication curricula might be shaped to prepare students to fill not only industry roles but also civic roles.

Ornatowski and Bekins (2004), on the other hand, argue for a more symbolic/rhetorical construction or reconstruction of communities. They believe that the concept of community is often used in limiting ways that restrict the role of the technical communicator in communities. Redemptive constructions of community cannot account for the “complexity, integration, interdependence, and technologization of the world in which all of us, including technical communicators, actually live and work” (p. 264). Such constructions that are symbolic and rhetorical demonstrate that technical communicators are co-creators of communities that raise civic and ethical concerns that should not be ignored (Ornatowski & Bekins, 2004). Technical communication, like all

communication, plays a powerful role in how communities are constructed, sustained, and transformed (Ornatowski & Bekins, 2004). Therefore, students must be taught to critically understand the relationship between their rhetorical actions and the impact that those actions might have on the community (Ornatowski & Bekins, 2004).

Whereas, Carolyn Rude (2004) argues for the creation of new knowledge about the uses of texts for advocacy and social change. Rude (2004) claims that technical communicators are already positioned to support roles in civic settings, but these roles do not exhaust the potential. According to Rude (2004), technical communicators can “contribute their knowledge of rhetorical situations, audiences, genres, media, and language to the tasks that engages citizens in debate on policy” (p. 271). However, she contends that if students are going to be prepared to engage in civic engagement, then they will need knowledge on how substantial social change is enacted through repeating rhetorical acts. She calls for an expansion of the rhetorical canon of delivery, arguing for a more comprehensive understanding in relation to rhetorical situations. In other words, technical communication students need knowledge of the various processes for supporting social change and an understanding about how rhetoric can enhance those processes, which requires critical examination of rhetoric in civic settings (Rude, 2004).

In a similar fashion, Bowdon (2004) argues that technical communicators are uniquely positioned to function in communities as public intellectuals. Bowdon (2004) believes that “technical writers don’t have simply the opportunity to engage in textual activism; in many cases they have no alternative” (p. 325). In other words, given the complexity of our social structures, our current situations on social issues demands that all people, including technical communication educators and practitioners, develop a

critical awareness and willingness to be civically engaged for the greater good as public intellectuals. Such work results in the technical communicators contributing to public knowledge about complex issues that shape our lives (Bowdon, 2004).

To further extend Bowdon's (2004) notions of public intellectuals, Eble and Gaillet (2004) encourage technical and professional communication programs to take on the challenge of redesigning their curriculum to include how technical communication students can become community intellectuals. They call educators to better balance the emphasis among functional literacy, ethical literacy, and critical literacy. The writers believe that technical communication courses should provide students opportunities to master skills, but also they should provide students opportunities to develop agency and ethical action within a civic rhetoric and moral humanistic framework (Eble & Gaillet, 2004).

By expanding our understandings about the relationship between technical communication and the public good, Ornatowski and Bekins (2004), Rude (2004), Bowdon (2004) and Eble and Gaillet (2004) shed light on the important roles technical communication and technical communicators have in civil discourse and about their empowerment to take social responsibility. These realizations are important for technical communication educators, who should be incorporating such findings into their curricula to prepare students to fill civic roles. They continue the important dialogues of realizing the possibilities and limitations of empowerment in relationship to the larger contexts.

There is no denying that a perceived outcome of technical communication service-learning pedagogy is civic engagement (Bowdon & Scott, 2006). Although many scholars who champion the humanistic aspects of technical communication claim civic

values can be imparted to students during their time in classroom, varying ideas exist about what this means for students who identify with Chicana/o and Latina/o perspectives, for students who have a deep desire to develop oppositional consciousness, for students who want to be exposed to a rhetoric of resistance, for students who wish to construct and employ apparatuses necessary for decolonizing globalization, and/or for students who hunger for social transformation. There is little research on the diversity of how these students can straddle the complicated professional identity and civic identity of technical communication to fill the needed civic roles in the communities in which they identify (for example, the Chicana/o and Latina/o community), as Savage and Matveeva (2011) would argue. In other words, there is a lack of discourse that focuses on how technical communication educators can bridge the civic roles of technical communicators with the social justice desires of students in terms of race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, class, power, or other social conditions.

My Response

During undergraduate studies, many students of color engage in the process of self-development, self-discovery, and growing awareness of the social conditions that have deeply shaped their lives and their communities. Some students undergo this process by learning about their radicalized, gendered, classed, and sexualized identities and socially constructed histories, particularly in cultural studies, Women's studies, Sociology, and LGBT courses. Students of color also develop these perspectives in participation in student organization that often teach them how to engage on campus as students activists (Muñoz, 1989; Garcia, 1997; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998). Therefore, if one of the goals to increase diversity in technical communication is to

attract more students of color, as Savage and Matveeva (2011) suggest, then technical communication educators are going to need to create innovative teaching approaches.

These approaches should focus on preparing students to effectively compete in globalized marketplaces, but they do so by developing students' skills, knowledge, and critical thinking through decolonial perspectives and social justice praxis. Based on Anzaldúa theories of social justice and multiplicity, I define the opportunities technical communication educators should be considering when develop these innovative and critical teaching approaches. Students should have opportunities to challenge all types of oppression in their communities. Students should engage civically with organizations who seek to address the holistic oppressive social conditions in underrepresented communities, meaning that two forms of social conditions must be examined. Students should have opportunities to form multiple identities around the role of the technical communicator in various contexts; the opportunities must teach students how to make distinctions like Chicanas and Chicanos, women and women of color, lower class and upper class, and/or critic and activist. Students should have opportunities to examine specificity, intersectionality, and interconnectedness of social experiences to understand the multiple ways technical communicators can form solidarity and work towards transforming spaces of exclusion and oppression. Students should have opportunities to develop strategies for social change based on lived experiences of those who are already working to transform their own social conditions. Students need to have the opportunities to rethink tendencies to rank oppression and social conditions; they need to learn to form relationships on solidarity. Students should have opportunities to challenge, redefine, and reconstruct existing stories that marginalize, silence, or oppress groups of people.

Students should have opportunities to use interdisciplinary knowledge from critical social sciences like ethnic studies, women's studies, history, humanities, rhetoric, and/or law to inform their developing and responsible practice; they should have opportunities for critical self-assessment and self-reflection to develop a commitment to lifelong learning and continued improvement of their skills as well as commitment to social justice issues.

I argue that Anzaldúa's theories of *nepantla*, *conocimiento*, new tribalism, and spiritual activism can enhance technical communication programs' philosophy of social justice and diversity. In the following section, I will outline her theories to help better define the theoretical framework and provide an example. The example is not aimed at defining how to use this concept. Anzaldúa theories are not meant to be prescriptive. As educators bring in her theories to the classroom, they will experience the contact zones. Educators must use those experiences to shape their strategies. These strategies will change constantly from classroom to classroom.

Nepantla, Conocimiento, New Tribalism, and Spiritual Activism

Therefore, in this section I wish to introduce Gloria Anzaldúa's shift out of the Western frame of reference into a hybrid and multidimensional methodology of thinking and communication. Such a shift emerges out of Chicana *feminista* perspectives and cultural practices that challenge and decolonize Western and nationalist modes of thinking and communication. Specifically, it focuses on Anzaldúa's theories that emphasize the importance of decolonizing educational research, practice, and its application to social justice education. I outline how *nepantla*, new tribalism, and spiritual activism provide benefits for developing decolonial social justice points of

discussion for praxis for making the technical communication more inclusive of Chicana/o and Latina/o students.

The struggle for social justice is not easy for any group of peoples of any one profession. The education for social justice is just as complex and difficult to effect. Moving from different communities and perspectives, what Anzaldúa might call border crossing, is difficult. Border crossing requires negotiating multiple contact zones riddled with tension, confusion, and fear. For Anzaldúa (2002b), the path for social justice is not linear. It requires subjects to learn how to navigate difficult landscapes in circular motions and enter multiple points of encounters with injustice (Anzaldúa, 2002b). Anzaldúa's (2002b) theory of *nepantla* refers to this complex idea of middle grounds, the spaces between clashing borders. This space of multiplicity is seen as a space of renovation, conscious raising, and transformation. It is an indigenous concept that refers to the in-between spaces (Keating & González-López, 2011). The experiences from *nepantla* develop critical and expansive perspectives. Often referenced as a third space, this ability to critically analyze dichotomies produces more interconnected and complex forms of being in the world (Anzaldúa, 2002b; Sandoval, 2000).

As Anzaldúa (2002b) explains, "living in *nepantla*, the overlapping space between different perceptions and belief systems, you are aware of the changeability of racial, gender, sexual and other categories rendering the conventional labeling obsolete (p. 541). It is the juxtaposition where different perspectives conflict, and where subjects question and reflect the major tenets, ideas, principles, and identities inherited in binary or normative systems, particularly normative beliefs that relate to class, gender, ethnicity, race, culture, sexuality, and/or nationality (Anzaldúa, 2002b; Keating & González-López,

2011). *Nepantla* is an intellectual and epistemological space where subjects learn to engage in profound social justice and engagement (Anzaldúa, 2002b; Keating & González-López, 2011). As such, *nepantla* provides technical communication educators working with students who seek to engage in civic action and social justice in underrepresented communities the entry point where transformation and the difficult task of addressing the contact zones of conflict and injustice can begin.

Nepantla is one of the seven stages of Anzaldúa's (2002b) *conocimiento*. Spanish translation of *conocimiento* means knowledge or consciousness, but Anzaldúa (2002b) uses it to describe her spiritual epistemology. With this methodology, Anzaldúa (2002b) uses this theory to expand and discuss the transformative abilities of her early theories of *Borderlands*¹⁵, *mestizaje*,¹⁶ *mestiza* consciousness,¹⁷ and *la facultad*.¹⁸ *Conocimiento* reflects a both/and consciousness that focuses on interconnectivity. *Conocimiento* emerges within oppressive spaces and requires a deepening of social justice and transformation to illustrate the healing power of spiritual activism (Keating & González-López, 2011).

One of the stages of *conocimiento* is identified by a jolt; something propels subjects from one space into another space, or when two or more spaces collide

¹⁵ *Borderlands* signifies complex and multi-layered and interrelated contact zones where differences collide, conflict, and transform. These metaphoric spaces are extremely painful because one space is usually hegemonic and the other space subaltern. However, *Borderlands* are powerful sites for transformation (Keating & González-López, 2011).

¹⁶ *Mestizaje* is a Spanish word for "mixture" that is used to refer to transformed combinations when faced with binary or dualistic ways of being. It is the powerful product of bringing together contradictions that are employed to create profound social change (Keating & González-López, 2011).

¹⁷ *Mestiza* consciousness is the consciousness of the *Borderlands*, or the both/and consciousness that challenges binary and dualistic thinking and includes a transformational tolerance for contradiction and ambiguity (Keating & González-López, 2011).

¹⁸ This term states the intuitive form of knowledge incorporates and moves beyond logical thought and empirical analysis. *La facultad* is a critical consciousness that is able to see underlying structure that seeks to divide and disempower people for being different (Keating & González-López, 2011).

(Anzaldúa, 2002b). During this stage moments of critical awareness emerge to reveal the complexity of life that break down the binary or normative systems (Anzaldúa, 2002b). Subjects start to develop new worldviews, new perspectives, and new theories about being in the world. They start to make their shift from the singular to the multiple; they start to deconstruct dualistic systems of belief (Anzaldúa, 2002b).

However, deconstructing one's worldview is difficult and uncomfortable to say the least. The *Coatlicue* state, according to Anzaldúa's mythology, is built from the indigenous mythology of Amerindians, *Coatlicue* (Serpent Skirts) is the goddess that represents life and death. She is also the mother of the gods. *Coatlicue* was murdered by her daughter *Coyolxauhqui* and other children (Keating & González-López, 2011). The *Coatlicue* state is a pivotal aspect of Anzaldúa's epistemology. It denotes the resistance of new knowledge and identifies various psychic states like depression or paralysis triggered by Borderlands. To survive Borderlands and overcome *Coatlicue* state, subjects must juxtapose and transmute contradictory forces in spite of self-division, symbolic mutilation, cultural confusion, and shame (Keating & González-López, 2011). *Coatlicue* state symbolizes the difficult process of developing a voice when revealing worldviews collide with multifaceted and interconnected worldviews. It reflects the struggle of developing a voice in the contact zone and the demanding task of being heard and recognized.

Anzaldúa (2002b) theory of new tribalism is helpful for social justice actors to move in solidarity with different communities beyond the *Coatlicue* state to where everyone has a voice and everyone is given the opportunity to be heard and recognized (Anzaldúa, 2002b). Given the difficulty people have in understanding differences and

how conventional and institutional identity categories disempower people whose identities fall outside of the normative, Anzaldúa (2002b) developed the concept of new tribalism to help subjects move beyond duality and division. It is a powerful rhetorical move that defines community, solidarity, and relationship by “who we include” versus the long standing rhetorical method of defining by who we exclude (Anzaldúa, 2002a, p. 3). New tribalism encapsulates and expands her earlier theory of *nos/otras*.

Nos/otras is the theory of intersubjectivity. *Nosotras* is the Spanish word for the feminine “we.” This indicates the collective identity or consciousness. By dividing the word, Anzaldúa affirms the cosmic connection or consciousness, but she recognizes the sense of separation in contemporary constructs of life. Furthermore, “*nos*” means “us” and “*otras*” means “others.” Joined together with the backslash it reflects Anzaldúa spiritual promise of healing because we are all connected: “we contain the others; the others contain us (Keating & González-López, 2011, p. 244). Anzaldúa does not imply sameness with this concept. She still recognizes the differences that make “us,” but she uses this theory to bridge “we” and “us.” (Keating & González-López, 2011).

Therefore, *nepantla*, *conocimiento*, the *Coatlicue* state, and new tribalism offer technical communication educators several concepts for teaching Chicana/o and Latina/o students how to engage with social justice and human rights through a socially responsible practice. When confronted with difference in dominant culture, Chicana/o and Latina/o students need theories and strategies to navigate and challenge contested spaces. They will need to learn how to counter the oppressor’s tools of colonizing, enslaving, and subordinating groups of people. They will need to recognize when they are in *Coatlicue* state and how to use that state to inform *conocimiento*. They will need to

effectively enact new tribalism with not just people who are at the bottom of the hierarchy system, but with those who are willing or unwilling to form alliances, even if they are at the top of the hierarchy system. They will need to learn how to develop as rhetorical and ethical technical communicators and *nepantleras/os*. *Nepantleras* refers to a unique type of facilitator who creates bridges between worlds. *Nepantleras* live in many worlds given their complexity and multiplicity, resulting in painful negotiations. These experiences formulate transformative perspectives, perspectives from the cracks, to create holistic and interconnected theories and strategies that center on social change for all people. *Nepantleras* employ these theories and strategies to reconstruct restrictive ways of being in the worlds (Keating & González-López, 2011).

Providing students with opportunities to work through *Coatlicue* state and new tribalism empowers them to use technical communication and Anzaldúa theories for social change in practice. The praxis of Anzaldúa's theories is defined as spiritual activism (Anzaldúa, 2002b). Spiritual activism is "spirituality for social change, spirituality that posits a relational worldview and uses this holistic worldview to transform one's self and one's world" (Keating, 2008, p. 54). Spiritual activism is about developing a socially responsible practice of transforming social injustice. Spiritual activism focuses on transformation or what she calls shifting (Anzaldúa, 2002b). Shifting is transforming one's self through self-reflection and self-change ("inner acts"). These inner acts require critical reflection to understand critical points of conflict that motivate subjects to deal with the personal oppression and seek out transformation for the larger issues of oppression ("outer acts"). Spiritual activism begins with the individual trying to

cope with oppression but moves outward to the world to expose, challenge, and shift unjust social systems and structures (Anzaldúa, 2002b; Keating, 2008).

In addition, spiritual activism also employs the powerful notion of love,¹⁹ the healing of our wounds. Anzaldúa (2002b) explains, “change requires more than words on a page—it takes perseverance, creative ingenuity, and acts of love (p. 574). Spiritual activism encourages subjects to move beyond resistance and oppositions when their work is no longer needed, when the bridge becomes irrelevant. For Anzaldúa (2002b), the acts of love are important to heal the wounds caused by the multiple ways groups of people are oppressed and wounded. She urges the vital process of deconstructing what divides and controls us to find understanding and community, to find new spiritual activism, new tribalism, and love (Anzaldúa, 2002b).

As such, spiritual activism provides additional concepts for technical communication educators for teaching Chicana/o and Latina/o students to develop inner works that inform their outer works for social justice within a socially responsible practice. Reflecting on lived experiences, particularly lived experiences involving social issues, promotes the development of knowledge, skills, and thinking capacities that are vital for students to deal with complexity. Reflection is vital to the process of developing or transforming technical communication tools for social change.

Overall, Anzaldúa theories of social change offers technical communication educators a transformational perspective to consider when serving marginalized students of color. Her theories assist educators to develop programs that transform several fronts of inequality. First, an Anzaldúan framework addresses the lack of students of color using

¹⁹ See reference 11.

technical communication as a socially responsible practice to address issues of injustice in their communities. Second, it addresses the lack of diversity in technical communication curriculum that contributes to a profound understanding of how capitalism and technical communication's participation negatively skews life opportunities for people of color. Adopting and adapting Anzaldúa philosophy for social change as a framework for educational equity means that technical communication educators and students will need to expose oppression and present responsible solutions for addressing it.

Pedagogical Implications

Although many theoretical and disciplinary perspectives can inform technical communication teaching, the actual influences of the field's scholarship have traditionally come from a limited set of disciplines (Savage & Mattson, 2011; Savage & Matveeva, 2011). This section brings together Anzaldúan theory to expand the existing teaching framework found in technical communication. It is important to understand that if technical communication courses are to become relevant to Chicana/o Studies and its students, then current technical communication teaching frameworks will need to expand to include teaching tenets of Anzaldúa's scholarship (as one possibility). In the following section, I outline recommendations for applying her theories to technical communication.

Move Beyond Mirroring Professional Communities

Constructivists argue that teachers can best facilitate students' acculturation if the classroom activities reflect the professional communities students will seek to enter (Thralls & Blyler, 2004). The focus here is to socialize and initiate students to the intellectual and social conventions in the workplaces (Thralls & Blyler, 2004). However, the mirroring of professional communities extremely limits Chicana/o and Latina/o students' ability to engage in *Nepantla* with communities dealing with social justice issues. Mirroring professional communities removes the opportunities for students to learn how to apply technical communication strategies as possible ways of addressing those complex issues; it removes the *conocimiento*. Student's attention should focus on instances of diversity and oppression. Technical communication classrooms should focus more on raising awareness about the various forms of "ism" that exist in their lived communities and how technology enhances those forms of oppression. In addition, students should identify their own social identities and experiences with reference to multiple forms of oppression (for example, race, sexuality, and technology). They should be given chances to explore and analyze the institutional and systemic relationships among dominant and targeted subordinates and how those relationships are reproduced through technology.

What I am suggesting is that technical communication educators need to probe their assumptions and analyze their choices; they must enter *Nepantla* and develop *conocimiento* about the following question. What happens when we focus too much on mirroring the professional spaces of technical communication? How does focusing on the

professional spaces limit access and interest for students of color? How can we better balance the classroom with professional and social transformation mirroring?

My experiences as a technical communication student of color left me at the end of each quarter with a deep desire to know more about the historical backdrop of past and present technical communicators' organizing for social change. I wanted to understand the theoretical frameworks of technical communication documents within these organizations. For example, how can technical communicators create an annual report that serves its function of providing financial information and activities and be used as tool for social change? I wanted to experience in deeper ways how technical communication theories and practices can be applied to contemporary social issues. I wanted to explore the aspect of technical communication that could fit within a social movement.

Move Beyond Collaboration

Constructionists believe that classroom activities encouraging collaboration will best facilitate collaborative skills and acculturation to professional communities (Thralls & Blyler, 2004). However, collaboration does not teach students the importance of new tribalism. Collaborative learning techniques at best teach students to tolerate differences so that they can work together to complete the large project that requires the *division* of labor. Instead technical communication classrooms should endorse classroom activities that require Chicana/o and Latina/o students to practice the formation of new tribalism. Students should be given projects that allow them to critically analyze characteristics of social identity and social group membership, the dominant and subordinate social status of those identities, and how some identities are systemically privileged and empowered

and others are marginalized and disempowered. Students need to learn how to define themselves by the people they include versus the people they exclude and how to tolerate individual professional development. Students need to learn how to labor in solidarity. Students must not avoid conflict, but embrace an important development for solidarity, an important stage for transformation. Students need to experience difficult moments in group dynamics when diverse groups work together when engaging in critical projects.

Educators should analyze how they construct the learning environment and how much time is given to students to form solidarity. One method might require building social identity development models using Anzaldúa theories about identity, activism, and healing. Often as a student of color in technical communication courses, I was not able to negotiate my identities with my peers nor voice my commitment for social justice. By employing strategies to have students express and develop their social identities, educators can help students negotiate the various reasons why they have enrolled in the class. It helps to remember that students are likely to have different understandings of technical communication and its relationship to oppression. Many might see it as a “value free” profession and requires no attention to issues of racism, sexism, or classism. At the same time, other students might have experienced development in relation to specific social justice topics given their lived experiences and want to learn how technical communication might fit a social justice agenda.

Social identity development models provide an important tool for educators in a multicultural space. It allows educators to anticipate and understand these different perspectives in the classroom. These perspectives expand and become more multi-faceted for all students in the classroom. This expansion process is the development process of

finding commonalities among differences. In addition, a social identity development model helps educators anticipate and plan for potential collision in the classroom when differences meet. Regardless of where students stand about their perspectives on technical communication, they will need to realize that all perspectives limit world views, and they will tend to generalize to what they feel, think, and do in society.

Expand Problematizing Discourse

Champions of liberatory pedagogy advance that problematizing discourse and social interaction reveal to students the ideological work of discourse (Thralls & Blyler, 2004). Such practices reveal to students the importance of developing ethical and egalitarian social relations. Myers (1986) defines the work of problematizing discourse as “awareness that one’s course is part of an ideological structure that keeps people from thinking about their situation, but also a belief that one can resist this structure and help students to criticize it” (p. 169). Liberatory pedagogy advocates argue that if students learn to become technical critics, then they are empowered to function as agents of social change; they will have the ability to shape rather than be shaped by normalized social structures and institutions (Thralls & Blyler, 2004).

However, such approaches greatly limit Chicana/o and Latina/o students to engage in the equally important aspect of spiritual activism of learning to love, learning to heal, and learning to move beyond power relations. Students need to do more than analyze rhetoric that situates language conventions within ideology that normalizes, privileges, the dominant social systems. Students need more than the critical ability of understanding how language transmits and reproduces these systems of inequality and oppression. The formation of a critical and oppositional consciousness is vital for

transformation, but it is not the only aspect that contributes to liberation. As Anzaldúa (2002b) explains, acts of love are just as important to genuinely engage in social transformation.

Students need opportunities to rhetorically analyze how the discourse of love functions as a necessary corrective to the violence of systems that control and oppression. For Anzaldúa (2002b), love is an important element for the liberation of human beings caught in the structures of domination and subordination. Students need to learn how to take socially responsible action, but they need to know how to heal those contested spaces of domination and transformation. Thralls and Blyler (2004) claim that “problematizing community discourse facilitates” a process that gives “students a way to identify and challenge the authority claims implicit in community norms” (p. 116). As important resistance is to challenging power, these practices still create simplistic identity categories—the oppressed and the oppressor, the authority and the resistance, the colonized and the colonizer, the marginalized and the transformed, and the conscious and unconscious.

Anzaldúa (2002a, 2002b) exposes the ways conventional social thinking with its rigid and binary identities and oppositional identity categories are used to limit and restrict human beings from developing new tribalism, from healing from past wounding, and from forming solidarity and working towards liberation. Anzaldúa (2002a, 2002b) calls for controversial change to move beyond restrictive identity formations, including Chicana, woman, and *mestiza*. As such students need opportunities to develop their cosmic citizenship to employ a politics of interconnectivity, new tribalism. Students need to learn about the interconnectedness of all human beings.

To facilitate this process, I suggest that students need to explore the remote places that lie outside of technical communication borders, including the everyday borders of their lives. The realization of *nepantla* holds the potential to start the shift of their inner and outer acts and to begin the long journey as cosmic citizens. They need to learn the importance of how technical communication can be transformed to aid people looking to resist, to transform, and to love. However, students also need to understand technical communication as a profession. Balancing the course readings with professional preparation and activism will help students conceptualize the potential technical communication has in the workplace and in the public spaces.

A Call for Expansion and Interconnectivity

At this historical juncture in technical communication, social justice and education are necessary because a high level of inequality exists in the technical communication arena and the spaces in which technical communicators live and work. The lack of diversity in scholarship, program curriculum, and community is alarming (to say the least). I have argued in this thesis that Chicana feminist theory, specifically Gloria Anzaldúa's theories of social change, injects the needed amount of humanism, spiritualism, criticalness, and innovation to construct new frameworks for human rights and social justice education pedagogy and praxis in technical communication. Such work that bridges indigenous perspectives with technical communication (in my mind) has monumental implications. Given the purpose and restrictions of this thesis, it focuses on beginning the difficult process of diversifying technical communication by initiating much needed dialogues of how to bring in decolonial social justice pedagogies and praxis into the technical communication classrooms.

As an aspiring technical communication educator seeking to teach using transformative pedagogies for social justice education, such shifts require critical reflection on my role as an educator in technical communication through Chicana feminist lenses that focus on social justice and human rights. Such lenses will help me diversify technical communication's classroom practices in social justice education. In addition, my continued commitment to indigenous perspectives, particularly those found in Chicana feminist thought, will guide my own work of re-thinking the social justice framework in technical communication and ability to engage in decolonial social justice praxis as a technical communication educator, practitioner, humanist, and activist.

However, it is vital for me to note that while I honor the work of human rights and social justice scholars and activists in technical communication, it is difficult (even unsettling) for me to understand that the writings and voices of women of color are still marginalized in many fields of thought. Even more surprisingly to encounter such marginalization in arenas that pursue social justice agendas. These citizens must work in solidarity with people of color, with women of color, in order to bring about transformation that they seek. It is important for those of us that engage in this type of work to not define ourselves by "people like us" or "people not like us." Instead, we need to learn to define ourselves by what we include.

The women in my home, personal, professional, and academic life, and the women supporting me through this thesis have been so vital in the construction of my worldviews and visions. I do my best to apply their teachings to my own life, to my own work, and to my visions for the future.

Their philosophies, theories, epistemologies, and practices have helped me to look inward to understand how encountering their work transforms me and changes the way I view the world (past, present, and future). To honor and respect their teachings and dedication to my development, I attempt—to the best of my ability—to take my transformations outward to bridge *her* work to other spaces of my communities. In doing so, I hope to disrupt prevailing views that see Chicana and women subjectivities as local and applicable only to Chicanas and other women. Chicana subjectivities have proven to have an outstanding commitment to humanitarian work, human rights, and social justice. Anzaldúa legacy centers on building bridges and commonalities among differences to work towards the common good of all people, the planet, and the universe.

Nevertheless, there is still a lot more work to be done if technical communication is to fully engage in the type of transformation argued for by Savage and Mattson (2011) and Savage and Matveeva (2011). There are still plenty of opportunities for technical communication educators to rethink the irresponsibility that is embedded in current modes of thinking that only focus on teaching students how to enter the workplace. As Savage (1996) argues, “it seems we need to explore alternative possibilities for the practice of technical communication” (p. 322). The daunting task of the constant reconstruction of technical communicators as empowered authors that employ socially responsible practice will play a key role in developing new forms of knowledge, practice, and teaching in technical communication that benefit the entire community and not just employers or the individuals. Regardless of what elements are used to give such goals shape in technical communication, educators will need to make humanistic commitments about the ways technical communicators think, produce, and apply in relation to

technologies and the social conditions of those who will aid in the social agenda of diversifying technical communication.

Such commitments call for expansion on the ideas presented in this essay. It will also require more interconnectivity with Anzaldúa theories of social change and service-learning models in technical communication designed to promote civic engagement. It is my hope that such work can help technical communication students find alternative sites of practice in which they can fully engage with issues of civic engagement, transformation, and social justice as Anzaldúa outlines in her theories. I am only just beginning my journey of understanding. As an emerging technical communication educator how can I engage myself and future students in decolonizing praxis and how Chicana feminist transformative pedagogies can provide the tools to engage in significant transformative endeavors.

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