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Chicana/Latina Education in Everyday Life: Feminist Perspectives on Pedagogy and Epistemology

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Delgado Bernal, Dolores C., Alejandra Elenes, Francisca E. Godinez, and Sofia Villenas, eds. *Chicana/Latina Education in Everyday Life: Feminist Perspectives on Pedagogy and Epistemology*. Albany: State U of New York P, 2006. ISBN: 0791468062. \$31.95.

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Upon reading the preface to *Chicana/Latina Education in Everyday Life*, I was reminded of early childhood moments when women in my family would gather around my grandmother's kitchen table to *platicar* (chat). Similarly, editors Dolores Delgado Bernal, C. Alejandra Elenes, Francisca E. Godinez, and Sofia Villenas began this anthology around a kitchen table with *pláticas* about their "understandings of pedagogies that recognize knowledge, power and politics as central to all teaching and learning" (ix). Together they identified a need in the field of education to merge existing interdisciplinary scholarship concerned with nontraditional pedagogies from a Chicana/Latina perspective. These *pláticas* began in a personal space but then shifted to the professional space of the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies where discussion centered on Chicana/Latina ways of knowing, teaching, and learning. Writing *Chicana/Latina Education in Everyday Life* was the next step following these professional discussions; however, the true beginnings of this anthology remain rooted in the personal space surrounding the kitchen table. You see, the kitchen table is a significant Chicana/Latina pedagogical space, a place where daughters learn by listening as *mujeres* (women) offer each other advice and support. Important to community literacy studies is that this space is situated outside mainstream educational institutions and is the place where literacies of a Chicana/Latina community exist. Central to this text are literacies such as *educación* (holistic and moral education), *la facultad* (knowing through experience and intuition), *consejos* (narrative storytelling), *testimonios* (testimonials), and *convivir* (the praxis of living together in a community) that all serve as ways of knowing and instructing young Chicana/Latinas (4-5). To create a text that embodies these above named Chicana/Latina community literacies, Delgado Bernal et al. have gathered a collection of essays that look to nontraditional sites of pedagogy including "women's brown bodies" as they cross boundaries between the personal and the professional (3). This crossing between traditional and non-traditional spaces works toward an exploration of Chicana/Latina's distinct experiences that creates theory, method, and praxis "for building solidarities across diverse peoples in order to transform our world for the better" (1).

Through qualitative studies and essays, the editors present "*mujer-centered*" ways of knowing and teaching that are rooted deeply in "living" Chicana/Latina theory (1). *Chicana/Latina Education in Everyday Life* is one of the first articulations of Chicana/Latina feminist pedagogies and epistemologies in the field of education; however, central to this

text's coalitional politics is the bridge building the editors accomplish in interdisciplinary scholarship. The contributors come from various fields—Cultural Studies, Women's Studies, Education—and many are junior scholars doing ground-breaking interdisciplinary work in education (x).

This anthology is organized into four parts, the first three journeying through Chicana/Latina life cycle beginning with youth, moving next to college-aged women, and completing its path with mature women and mothers. The fourth and final part discusses *feminista* theoretical tools as they inform interdisciplinary scholarship and link together the preceding three parts of the anthology. Each of the four parts is prefaced with an introduction by individual editors, consisting of an overview of the section with brief summaries of each chapter. Additionally, each editor presents thematic issues specific to the topics addressed in each section to encourage readers to contemplate as they engage in the readings that follow.

Part one of *Chicana/Latina Education in Everyday Life*, titled “Youth Bodies and Emerging Subjectivities,” focuses on young Chicana/Latina's everyday teaching and learning, ways of knowing, and translations of power. This part is introduced with a poem by high school student Elizabeth Cruz Godinez and includes chapters by Jo Anna Mixpe Ley, Francisca E. Godinez, Cindy Cruz, and a co-authored essay by Michelle G. Knight, Iris R. Dixon, Nadjwa E. L. Norton, and Courtney C. Bentley. In Part I the authors discuss how Chicana/Latinas braid various identities of gender, race/ethnicity, class, and sexuality toward a process that resists dominant overarching ideology. For example, in her chapter “*Huitzlampan: Surtiendo Invisibilidad*” Jo Anna Mixpe Ley reflects on assimilation during high school and the pain and violence involved in this process. Through her use of Spanish and English in personal narrative and theory the author demonstrates a blending process as her work builds toward a braiding of “spiritual knowledge and practices into teaching and working with Chicana and Chicano youth, families, and communities” (12).

Part two, “*Mujeres in College: Negotiating Identities and Challenging Educational Norms*,” includes works by Michelle A. Holling, L. Esthela Bañuelos, Dolores Delgado Bernal, and a co-authored chapter by Rebecca Burciaga and Ana Tavares. As the title indicates, this section focuses on college-age Chicana/Latinas as they navigate through various experiences in tradition-bound, higher-educational spaces. Influenced by the Chicana feminist theoretical writings of Gloria Anzaldúa, Chela Sandoval, and Emma Perez, the authors theorize Chicana/Latina's lives based on their own experiences or “living theory.” Particular to this section, this theorizing lends itself to the contributors' ability to name and affirm identity through experience in the often marginalizing and discriminatory space of higher education.

Part three of the anthology documents mature Chicana/Latina's knowledge production and the imparting of such knowledge to their families and communities. Titled “*Mature Latina Adults and Mothers: Pedagogies of Wholeness and Resilience*,” this section includes chapters by Sofia Villenas,

Ruth Trinidad Galván, Rosario Carrillo, and Norma González. Of all of the parts in the anthology, this section speaks most to issues of community literacy as it presents mature Chicana/Latinas as members of their communities who possess complex ways of knowing, teaching, and learning crucial to Chicano/Latino “family education and the work of mothering as it relates to the schooling of Latino children” (143). With an audience of educators in mind, the authors of these chapters hope that educators can learn to “create effective, respectful parent—school partnerships, recognizing that ‘parent’ often means mother or grandmother,” and that mature Chicana/Latina voices should be considered when forming social and educational policy (145).

“Borderlands, Pedagogies, and Epistemologies” is the fourth part of the anthology and includes works by Karleen Pendleton Jiménez, Perlita R. Dicochea, C. Alejandra Elenes, and a co-authored chapter by Jennifer Ayala, Patricia Herrera, Laura Jiménez, and Irene Lara. Part IV contributes to the anthology’s overall discussion of Chicana feminist pedagogies and epistemologies through an application of concepts drawn from borderlands scholarship. Borderland theories permit the authors in Part IV to view various elements of educational settings whether formal (e.g., institutional) or informal (e.g., home or community) and take into account “how individuals will their agency in response to institutional biases and conservative forces” (215-216). Similar to Part II, Chicana feminist theoretical writings such as those by Gloria Anzaldúa, Chela Sandoval, and Emma Perez are central to this discussion.

Following the four core parts of the anthology is a final section with short contributor biographies. This section nicely illustrates the variety of ethnic/racial and academic backgrounds of the contributors and further illuminates the true interdisciplinary project of this text.

Overall, the anthology offers a holistic understanding of Chicana/Latina pedagogies as they are created and taught in non-traditional spaces and later maintained by Chicana/Latinas in often marginalizing academic spaces. It is the hope of the editors that this volume will reach an audience of educators and administrators capable of changing policy in both education and social service sectors. Specifically, the editors posit “if teachers and administrators learn to value mothers’ life experiences [...] then the very notion of parental involvement may also be transformed” (5). Although the chapters of *Chicana/Latina Education in Everyday Life* are not meant to be prescriptive, the authors hope they will lend themselves to imagining pedagogical possibilities for Chicana/Latina students in *all* contexts, including both classroom *and* community spaces.

