

## EDUCATION IN EVERYDAY LIFE

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*Chicana/Latina Education in Everyday Life: Feminista Perspectives on Pedagogy and Epistemology. Edited by Dolores Delgado Bernal, C. Alejandra Elenes, Francisca E. Godinez, and Sofia Villenas. Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 2006. 292 pages. \$89.50 (cloth). \$29.95 (paperback).*

Reading the preface, I was initially concerned about the coherence of a book on Chicana/Latina education with sections crafted by multiple editors. Alongside editors with their individual styles, the contributors to this volume range from professors to poets to activists, and reflect a variety of positions. I anticipated vastly different chapters with loose connections to one another. After reading through the entire volume, however, I found that the sections complemented one another and although each chapter provided new perspectives and ideas to consider, each maintained its integrity and relationship to the book's title. The authors accomplished this coherence by putting into practice the pedagogy and epistemology that they investigate and describe in their individual careers among Chicanas/Latinas.

Each contribution expands existing theoretical frameworks by incorporating, as the title suggests, Chicana/Latina education in everyday life. This collection successfully redefines “women’s and girl’s everyday teaching and learning as cultural knowledge, politics, practices of well-being, spirituality, and constructions of identities and subjectivities” (x) and challenges the reader to understand and appreciate the voices of women whose perspectives are too often overlooked or marginalized in literature.

Organized according to a woman's life cycle, this book set out to accomplish three goals:

1. To situate Chicana/Latina schooling experiences and show how women and girls navigate spaces and identities in a racialized society
2. To acknowledge women's ways of knowing and their *sobrevivencia* as *education*
3. To contribute to theoretical advances and modes of inquiry useful within the field of education

Each segment opens with a synopsis and alerts the reader to specific contributions of that section. Part one begins with youth and adolescent perspectives; part two addresses traditional college-age students; part three examines mothers' and mature women's perspectives on education, an area that is severely underexamined and neglected in the scholarship; and part four connects the various theoretical advances and explanations that the authors introduce and illustrates how feminist theories inform interdisciplinary scholarship and, specifically, the field of education.

Part one, "Youth Bodies and Emerging Subjectivities," provides young girls' interpretations of their ways of knowing and explaining their lived experiences. It not only shows young girls as active, intelligent creators of knowledge with critical understandings of their positions in society, but it also provides readers with deeper understandings of brown bodies and the power held within them. For example, in chapter 2, Francisca Godínez introduces the voices of young Mexicanas and describes them as *pensadoras* or "active thinkers." Among other illustrations, she demonstrates how the young girls in her study "braid their meanings of success with assertions of rights, responsibilities, and power" (33). Similarly, in chapter 3, Michelle Knight, Iris Dixon, Nadjwa Norton, and

Courtney Bentley introduce us to Youth Co-Researcher (YCR) methodologies and walk the reader through the insights and observations that high school age Latinas articulated in discussions about school engagement and school processes. The students were critical and reflexive, connecting school experiences with broader inequities in society. Part two, “Mujeres in College: Negotiating Identities and Challenging Norms,” explores young adults’ negotiation of the world around them. This section challenges traditional, deficit, assimilationist perspectives of Latinas and demonstrates the complexities of Chicana/Latina lives. In chapter 6, L. Esthela Bañuelos provides an analysis of how Chicanas negotiate the graduate school experience. Specifically, she explores resistance and oppositional consciousness and demonstrates how, similar to the findings of Gloria Cuádras’s work, the women in her study experienced multiple marginalities and negotiated contradictory identities (1996). Part three, “Mature Latina Adults and Mothers: Pedagogies of Wholeness and Resilience,” celebrates the knowledge production of middle-aged women and older Latinas, as well as their empowerment, despite patriarchy and capitalist exploitation. In particular, in chapter 11, Rosario Carillo investigates how humor was used to help manage difficult working conditions. She highlights a group of women who invoke satire and social commentary as transformative practices, utilizing humor to construct and reconstruct themselves. Finally, in part four, “Borderlands, Pedagogies, and Epistemologies,” the reader is provided with real-life examples of how to utilize these new methodologies and frameworks in practice. Each chapter reminds us of the powerful theoretical contributions that *Chicana/Latina Education in Everyday Life* makes to education. All in all, this is an impressive array of scholarship that is communicated in a meaningful, accessible, and useful manner.

Equally impressive, this collection, as a whole, exhibits interlocking themes. These include Götz’s (2004) feelings of “fromness” and “towardness.”

That is, each chapter beautifully illustrates that all aspects of the development process are valid and that as *mujeres*, our experiences both positive and negative are legitimate and shape who we are, who we were, and who we will become. Second, the chapters highlight the multiple identities of women and reinforce the fact that race, class, gender, ethnicity, language, sexuality, and other differences are intertwined. Third, each chapter shows that Chicana/Latina feminist pedagogies and epistemologies “stress the communal processes and the conviction of social justice derived from [Chicana/Latina feminist] ways of knowing, learning, and teaching, for the benefit of [Chicana/Latina feminists] entire communities and beyond” (8). Thus, calls for reforming educational, institutional, and economic systems to benefit all marginalized youth and families are woven throughout the chapters.

Notably, this book promises to be an effective tool appropriate for classroom use. With respect to a pedagogically sound teaching tool, the editors clearly define their objectives and offer contributions that exemplify them. Also, this is a book that can be of interest to readers with little knowledge of women-centered pedagogies or Chicana feminism, as well as to experts on Chicana feminist perspectives and/or women-centered practices. I applaud the editors and authors for creating a reading environment enjoyable for readers familiar with, as well as those unfamiliar with, Chicana/Latina feminist pedagogies.

Another strength of this text is the variety of writing styles and methodological techniques used by the authors: some chose to write informally, while others preferred a more conventional academic style. The diversity of writing styles and approaches reminds the reader that there are multiple appropriate ways to present language and to offer perspectives and stories.

This may be the first book of its kind to explicitly and systematically articulate Chicana/Latina feminist pedagogies and epistemologies within the field of education. At the same time, the intersections of education and other disciplines are purposefully and convincingly attended to and remain one of the texts' greatest strengths. Winner of the 2006 Critics' Choice Award of the American Educational Studies Association, this book should be added to anyone's library because it provides such an excellent resource for scholars, practitioners, and community agents.

### **Works Cited**

- Cuádriz, G. 1996. "Experiences of Multiple Marginality: A Case Study of 'Chicana Scholarship Women.'" In *Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Higher Education*, edited by C. Turner, M. García, A. Nora, and L. Rendon, 210–22. New York: Simon & Schuster.
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