

BOOK REVIEW

Building Bridges in Communication Studies: Towards a Social Justice Imperative

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This Bridge We Call Communication: Anzaldúa Approaches to Theory, Method, and Praxis edited by Leandra Hinojosa Hernández and Robert Gutierrez-Perez. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019. Pp. 406. Hardback \$115.00 (paper).

This Bridge We Call Communication: Anzaldúa Approaches to Theory, Method, and Praxis, edited by Leandra Hinojosa Hernández and Robert Gutierrez-Perez, calls us to disrupt traditional academic narratives and its forms. Thus, in the spirit “to tell stories of praxis,” I want to begin with a personal reflection. But first, it is critical to note that there is no denying the ways in which Gloria Anzaldúa’s deep and rigorous embodied writing has deeply affected vast scholarly inquiry within Chicana/Latina studies, education, ethnic studies, sociology, and transborder studies. Her theoretical frameworks and conceptual formulations have reimaged how we engage with and develop theory, the importance of lived experiences in knowledge production, and the vital role that writing has in claiming a space for ourselves within the confines of academia. More than thirty years ago, Anzaldúa’s body of work inspired me, as an undergraduate majoring in communication with a minor in Chicana/o studies, yet I struggled to combine my two scholarly passions. Communication as a discipline was not engaging with Gloria Anzaldúa’s explorations of nepantla, borderlands/la frontera, identity, language, and hybrid writing when I entered my communication doctoral program in the early 1990s. In fact, I was actively discouraged from including Chicana/o/x studies into my scholarly inquiry

of communication and media. One professor told me that Chicana/o/x studies belonged in education and gender studies, but not in the field of communication: “It doesn’t make sense nor does it fit in.” I knew he was wrong, but the power dynamics of graduate school made it difficult for me to tell him how mistaken he was to be so dismissive of this growing body of scholarship, especially Anzaldúa’s work.

Leandra Hinojosa Hernández and Robert Gutierrez-Perez’s book, *This Bridge We Call Communication: Anzaldúan Approaches to Theory, Method and Praxis* is the book I needed so long ago, but, thankfully, has arrived in time to inspire a whole new generation of Latina/o/x and Chicana/o/x scholars. The book proves that not only do Gloria Anzaldúa’s innovative theoretical and methodological advancements belong in communication analysis, but as the editors note, her “theories are meant to be embodied as well as discussed within philosophical, political, artistic, and legislative circles” (xv). In reality, Anzaldúan theories, methods, and praxis cannot be contained to one discipline and in this moment of global democratic crisis, the radical promise of an Anzaldúan epistemology is needed more than ever. Herein lies the important scholarly contribution of *This Bridge We Call Communication*: It calls us to bridge the different forms of knowledge production (which ranges from poetry to autoethnography to critical archival discovery) and challenge normative *conocimientos*. As the editors further note: “We encouraged the authors to focus on communication research that addresses the importance of lifting our bridges to practice critical self-care and self-love, and we emphasized that creative works or research reports should share our commitment to Anzaldúan approaches that sharply critique and/or thickly describe intersectional systems of power and oppression” (xxiii). Thus, Anzaldúan concepts such as *nepantla* and *mundo zurdo* do make sense in the field of communication, and in fact, such concepts deepen the social justice

imperative that is vital if we understand communication as a resource that should be available to anyone, anytime, anywhere.

This Bridge We Call Communication is divided into six parts and contains a total of eighteen chapters plus the introduction. Some of the themes engaged throughout include (re)imagining borderlands theory, the Coyolxauhqui imperative, conocimiento, hybridity, coalition building, and critical (communication) pedagogy. A unique characteristic of the edited volume that demonstrates a praxis to disrupt traditional academic book narratives is the inclusion of poetry throughout the book. Gutierrez-Perez's poem at the beginning of part six, "I Get It from My Mother," powerfully expresses the anger and resistance we feel when we are "misread" and then must sobrevivir "the mistranslation of [our] presence" as Latina/o/x people in a white supremacist, heteronormative, capitalist and sexist world. The poetry and the consequential topics that are addressed in each of the chapters, such as reclaiming "Latina lives from multicultural feminism," decolonizing spirituality, transmedia autohistoria, and intersectional solidarities makes this edited volume a joy to read and should be recognized as making an important contribution to multiple fields, including communication and Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x studies. As one of the authors, Diana Bowen, states in her chapter, "Anzaldúa performs her theory of social change by recognizing her role as an agent of resistance and writing herself into the academic discourse" (164), and this edited volume builds a bridge towards Anzaldúa's trailblazing path.

