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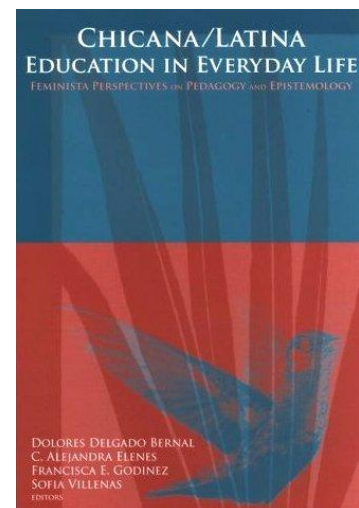
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Reviewed by Lirio Patton
University of Wisconsin—Madison

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How can a Chicana/Latina epistemology inform the field of education? As a response, consider *Chicana/Latina Education in Everyday Life: Feminista Perspectives on Pedagogy and Epistemology*. The book, edited by Chicana/Latina scholars working within the field of education, is an anthology that includes essays on Latinas. From personal *testimonio* (testimonials) to ethnographic studies, each essay explores the formation of Latina identity, with attention to culture, gender, and everyday lived experiences as sites of knowledge.

The authors use various identifying terms for themselves, in reference to their research participants, and to describe their epistemological and political orientations (*i.e.* *Chicana, Latina, mujerista, feminista*). Briefly defined, these terms imply various positionalities informed by raced and gendered identities in U.S. society. Chicana is a self-naming



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political term that is mostly used by persons of Mexican ethnic background who are raised in the U.S. and whose cultural hybridity of Mexican and American create a distinct Chicana/o orientation in the world. Latina is meant to encompass women from across various Latin American ethnic backgrounds. Mujerista expresses a Latina “womanist” approach toward knowledge and power that contributes to personal growth and “community uplift” (p. 7). Feminista refers to Latina American and Chicana feminism.

In the introduction, editors Villenas, Godinez, Delgado Bernal, and Elenes express three main goals for the anthology. First, they aim to show that Chicana/Latina women distinctly experience *education* as ethnically-raced and language-minoritized members of U.S. society. An example of this experience includes the metaphorical and literal characteristic of embodying an in-between status of border-crossing (*e.g.* un/documented status and being bicultural/bilingual). Second, the editors offer this book as a way of “redefining Chicana/Latinas’ everyday experiences and practices of teaching, learning, and communal ‘knowing’ as *education*” (p. 2). Thus, in reading through the sixteen chapters, a reader might come to better understand “the worldviews, theories, and ‘critical’ pedagogies” (p. 2) that Latinas have developed in navigating through multiple oppressive institutions of racism, patriarchy, and poverty. Third, the editors “insist that these chapters are not merely ‘descriptions’ of educational contexts and processes, but that they also constitute theories and methods with vital significance to the field of education and to feminist thought” (p. 2).

The book is organized into sections corresponding to a woman’s lifecycle. The first section addresses Latina youth at the secondary level of schooling. The second section is of Latina women in adulthood. The third section is of Latinas in mature adulthood. The last section provides essays that suggest using a Chicana/Latina/Feminista perspective for coming to terms with identity conflict, advancing research, and teaching toward social justice. As an anthology, it offers multiple examples of what scholars working within a Chicana/Latina/Feminista frame have done. Chapters vary in their academic approach, *i.e.* some focused on qualitative and ethnographic research on Latinas, others providing

reflections based on authors' life experiences, and some do a combination of both.

Greatly refreshing were the creative and emotionally compelling narratives of several authors, notably: Jo Anna Mixpe Ley's, "Huitzlapa: *Surtiendo Invisibilidad*/South: Sorting through Invisible" (p. 17-23); Cindy Cruz's, "Toward an Epistemology of a Brown Body" (p. 59-75); Karleen Pendleton Jiménez's, "Start with the Land: Groundwork for Chicana Pedagogy" (p. 219-230); and Sofia Villenas's, "Pedagogical Moments in the Borderlands: Latina Mothers Teaching and Learning" (p. 147-159). These essays highlight how Chicana, Latina, and feminsta experiences well weave into scholarship relevant to the educational field. For example, by using short story, Ley shares with the reader the identity conflicts brought on by her educational journey as a Chicana first-generation daughter of a single working-class Latina immigrant mother. Similarly referencing lived experience, Cruz uses a personal narrative to assert that there is an epistemology gained from being raced and gendered as Chicana/Latina. Chapters by Carrillo; Delgado Bernal; F.E. Godinez; Trinidad Galván; & Villenas also identified some of the Latinas' strategies learned from home and community that support their survival and success.

A salient theme of the book is the importance that Chicanas and Latinas place on personal history, spirituality, community, home, and family as part of self-identity. This multifaceted identity shapes Chicana/Latinas' learning and teaching strategies. The editors also propose that Chicana/Latinas' ways of understanding and acting in the world constitute *education*, *theory*, and *pedagogy* that formal institutions of knowledge and teaching should embrace.

Though sensitive to the editors' challenge of cohesively pulling together multiple singular pieces into one text, a critical observation is that more theoretical coherence could have strengthened the flow of the book. A case in point: the themed organization of chapters into the woman's lifecycle, though an intriguing approach, does not help the flow of the book as a whole. One alternative could have been to organize the essays by emphasis on the authors' overarching goal/s (*i.e.* to reflect on qualitative research, to share personal experience, to build and construct theory, to discuss "everyday" pedagogy). Additionally, though I admire the editors' desire to include a spectrum of Chicana/Latina

scholarship, a few of the selections did not seem to contribute to the anthology's coherence.

A dialogic analysis and/or reflective synthesis by editors in the book's conclusion could have also greatly added to the anthology's theoretical coherence. One suggestion: Acknowledge preemptively that even a Chicana/Latina/Feminista theory has its strengths and limitations, and that the process of creating knowledge founded on the experiences of "brown" women requires strategic inclusions/exclusions and a borrowing of existing essentialist or otherwise problematic logics, even if to challenge them.

For instance, a synthesizing discussion by the editors of how authors varied in their expressions of Chicana, Latina, Feminista identities—and the ways in which even thinking of these as expressing a unitary concept is potentially self-contradictory, yet necessary in a raced/gendered society—would have been theoretically useful. Consider the works of Cruz & Pendleton Jiménez, both of whose narratives espouse self-identity as emanating from the body, its genetic and ancestral relations, its sexual desires, and its social interactions in the world. Though Chicana, Latina, Feminista perspectives argue for an epistemology of the race-gendered body that contests the traditionally canonical knowledge dichotomy between mind/body, both a race-gendered epistemology and the mind/body notion of subjectivity attain logical consistency from a colonialist and ablest orientation. In so doing, these constructs leave untroubled the rationale that to experience=to know=to own. Positing that knowledge and power emanate foremost from one's raced-gendered body/physical domain, while reflective of social existence in U.S. society, does not challenge the racializing rationale that one's biology/race/ethnicity is legacy/property and one's essence in the world. Given that the Chicana, Latina, and Feminista works in the anthology are positioned against racism, sexism, and fragmentation—effective challenge of oppressive knowledge systems could have included a deconstructive critique of the very lexicons and logics by which racism, patriarchy, and homophobia have contributed to the necessity of a Chicana/Latina/Femista category. This excavation, I believe could in turn, also deepen

understanding of how Chicana/Latina/Feminista emerge as positions of non-traditional knowledge.

There may be no easy closures from engaging with the deconstructive task suggested. Yet, it is with sincere recognition of the epistemological contradictions and the complexities embedded in working toward a Chicana/Latina framework that I offer samples of the philosophical explorations that could further extend the coherence and impact of the Chicana/Latina/Feminista education theory-building project.

As the editors make clear, their book is a venture to provide “one of the first articulations of Chicana/Latina feminist pedagogies and epistemologies in the field of education” (p. x). They succeed immensely. The groundwork they lay is impressive making possible various next steps that readers might build upon. The book is a must read, especially for anyone interested in Latina/os and education.

About the Reviewer

Lirio Patton is a doctoral student in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Wisconsin—Madison. I would like to thank Dalelia Q. Davis and Lilliana P. Saldaña for their thoughtful feedback on earlier drafts.



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