



Association of Mexican American Educators Journal

A peer-reviewed, open access journal

Volume 17 Issue 2

2023

AMAЕ Special Issue

Critical Junctures along the Chicanx/Latinx Educational Pipeline: Interdisciplinary and Intersectional

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<http://amaejournal.utsa.edu>

ISSN: 2377-9187

***The Chicana/o/x Dream: Hope, Resistance, and Educational Success.* Gilberto Q. Conchas and Nancy Acevedo. Harvard Education Press. 2020. 219 pages. ISBN: 978-1-68253-511-0.**

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In the *Chicanx Dream*, Gilberto Conchas and Nancy Acevedo advance a powerful narrative of the Chicana/o/x higher education context. Their creative use of case studies focuses on the intersectional experiences of Chicana/x students across two-year and four-year universities. Drawing from Chicana Feminist theory and Anzaldúan theory, more specifically, Conchas and Acevedo provide numerous examples of how structural forms of violence impinge on the lives of Chicana/x students as they seek to resist coloniality and its long history in US schooling. From the introductory chapter, and beginning with their own testimonios, the authors introduce the overarching theme of the hope and resistance that evolves from Chicana/o/x students navigating oppressive structures. The testimonios provide an intimate look at their individual schooling experiences and lay the groundwork for a methodology that allows the reader to follow the participants' internal thought process as they reflect on their own lived experiences.

Conchas and Acevedo lay out a clear framework for understanding the myriad ways marginality has shaped Chicana/x educational experiences, and the unique ways they resist and

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24974/amae.17.2.483>

generate hope to persist. The book is divided into three sections that examine 1) context of oppression along the borderlands, 2) testimonios from the community college borderlands 3) and finally, testimonios from the 4-year university borderlands.

Conchas and Acevedo introduce the Framework of Atravesada/o/xs Nepantleando (FAN), which provides a lens to examine students' intersecting identities and how they are able to see structural inequities to provide a critique of institutional processes of marginalization. The authors provide a concise and clear overview of Chicana/x experiences and the legacy of coloniality in US schools through the concept of the Education Borderlands. Through othering processes Chicana/o/xs have been positioned as undeserving or non-intended, they are in effect *atrevasados* who are cultural deviants and transgressors in US schools and US society for seeking equitable schooling. Conchas and Acevedo deploy Anzaldúa's concept of *la facultad*, a 6th sense of sorts that provides the ability to "see beyond surface phenomena into the meaning of deeper realities," a critical consciousness that *atrevasados* use to nurture hope and resistance as they become *Nepantleras*, or "threshold people" moving across multiple conflicting and contradicting worlds. *Nepantleras/os/xs* transform perspectives and possibilities, they are those who are best positioned to build bridges across the multiple worlds they inhabit.

The authors continue to deeply explore Anzaldúa's notion of *la facultad* to explain processes of marginalization. Through a process they refer to as the *Facultad de los atravesada/o/xs*, they draw on student interview data to demonstrate the varied explanations students put forth for explaining their struggles when confronting oppression, helping them to assert that they belong in often hostile spaces. In other words, *la facultad* reveals students coming into a critical consciousness as they now see the legacy of coloniality through structural inequalities and how they privilege others at their expense. Conchas and Acevedo tease out the

negotiation processes students undergo seeking to make sense of the agency students enter formal schooling with, juxtaposed against the hard and cold reality of trying to make it in a white supremacist schooling system. Perhaps the most significant contribution of this section is the powerful way students' emerging critical consciousness is revealed when they push back on structures of marginalization where they previously had internalized dominant notions of schooling and achievement.

Conchas and Acevedo conceptualize community college institutions as educational borderlands that Chicana/x students navigate in pursuit of validation of their higher education journeys. Through testimonios, they intricately describe the community college educational borderlands with an intersectional analysis of students through attention to class, gender, race and ethnicity, criminalization, and (dis)ability. In all of these cases, the impact of support programs, family members, educators, and peer mentors drastically shifts the students' educational goals and definition of educational success to work toward the overarching need of achieving economic stability to provide for their families. The student experiences show that opportunities that support programs at community colleges, like MESA, provide exposure to careers that the first-generation student participants did not see themselves in prior to becoming nepantleras/os/xs, and materializes graduate school pathways as a real possibility. The students' trajectories illustrate the process of *la facultad* directly informing acts of resistance toward the marginalization they navigate in college, and propels them to mobilize institutional resources and agents that provide them with guidance to persist in their college and career goals.

The testimonios of Chicana/o/x students at four-year institutions reflect similar processes of students facing institutional barriers that posit them as *atravesadas/os/xs* in school

as they navigate and resist sexism, racist nativism, ableism, and the heteropatriarchy. A closer look at these testimonios reveals the common trajectory in the students' process to becoming nepantleras/os/xs in three pivotal points: 1) experiencing identity-based oppression in their preK-12 schooling, 2) engaging with a critical mentor, family member, or support program who provided opportunities and community for developing *la facultad*, and 3) developing hope that propels them to give back to their communities through movements for justice that directly impact them.

Through these powerful testimonios that reflect common lived realities of Chicana/o/x students, Conchas and Acevedo outline concrete practices and frameworks for preK-12 and higher education practitioners to enact and provide students with institutional support. To address the lack of belonging Chicana/o/x experience at a structural level, the authors provide sound recommendations to re-evaluate institutional practices such as inaccessible classrooms, hiring practices, and the lack of student career/research opportunities that pay a living wage. As shown in Araceli's testimonio of having a mentor advocate for her to receive a power scooter that was integral to her navigating the campus, the authors also urge educators to develop their own nepantlera/o/x praxis at the individual level. Not only did the mentors enacting nepantlera/o/x praxis in several student narratives play a pivotal role in students persisting in college, but they also provided culturally responsive advising and aspirational hope informed by their own backgrounds and experiences working with Chicana/x/o students. The authors hone in on practical recommendations for educators to disrupt the colonial space in education by resisting practices that posit institutional priorities over student needs, and rather places the onus on faculty to cultivate spaces that foster Chicana/o/x success.

As scholars in the field continue to build on the Framework of Atravesadas/os/xs Nepantleando that Conchas and Acevedo have powerfully captured through these case studies, we believe an important addition to this work would be the inclusion of testimonios of other racialized Chicana/o/x student experiences. Afro-Chicana/o/x students often navigate anti-Blackness and Indigenous Chicana/o/x students experience anti-indigeneity in Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x communities, further marginalizing them and impacting their ability to feel a sense of belonging in Latinx communal spaces. We believe an additional sample of Chicanx student participants who represent other racialized categories may reveal important insights into their process of developing la facultad and becoming nepantleras/os/xs. Additionally, as the focus and pursuit of HSI status in the U.S. continue to expand, we wonder how Chicana/o/x students outside of the California higher education context may experience schooling. With the state's highly stratified public higher education system (Community Colleges, State University, and the University of California) that significantly represent the state's college and university choices, it would be important to examine how the institution type may differ for Chicana/o/x students in other regions. In conclusion, we believe the Chicanx Dream is important contribution for K-12 leaders, higher education scholars and professionals, and other educators working to support Chicanx student populations across the educational pipeline.